



*Ann and Jane Taylor.*

FROM A PAINTING BY THEIR FATHER

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY

AND OTHER MEMORIALS OF

MRS GILBERT, (*FORMERLY ANN TAYLOR*).

WITH PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

EDITED BY JOSIAH GILBERT.

AUTHOR OF "CADORE; OR, TITIAN'S COUNTRY," ETC., AND JOINT-AUTHOR  
OF "THE DOLOMITE MOUNTAINS."

Volume I.

"Life, I repeat, is energy of Love,  
Divine or human; exercised in pain,  
In strife, and tribulation, and ordained  
If so approved and sanctified, to pass,  
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy."

WORDSWORTH.

HENRY S. KING & Co.,  
65 CORNHILL, AND 12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1874

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## P R E F A C E.

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“ Lord, what is Life?—if spent with Thee  
In duty, praise, and prayer,  
However short, or long it be  
We need but little care,  
Because Eternity will last  
When Life, and death itself are past.”

HYMNS FOR INFANT MINDS.

ANN TAYLOR was young when she penned the above stanza. She little thought that she was writing her epitaph. It was not a short, but a long life that was destined for her; and when at the age of eighty-five she was laid in her grave, they who knew her best, thought no words could be more fitting for a final memorial than those in which she had summed up life as “duty, praise, and prayer.”

To present a true picture of such a life to the reader is the object of the following pages. It was duty as she believed, though of an ordinary sort, that withdrew Ann Taylor from the literary career that brought others of her family into note; and while it will be due to



her memory to point out the large share she had in works long before the public, and to rescue wise and thoughtful words upon many topics from the oblivion of manuscript, the chief justification of this memoir is sought in the life it portrays—a life very active, very useful, and, despite inevitable sorrows, very happy.

The Autobiography with which the work opens, passes to some extent over the same ground as the memoir of Jane Taylor by her brother; but as a personal narrative of an almost unique family life, it is told very differently, and with large additions. It was addressed, it will be seen, to her children, and some discursiveness has been corrected, but its character of “Domestic Recollections” should be borne in mind. Yet the quaint personages, with their no less quaint surroundings, which appear in its pages,—the quiet old English places, half town, half village, where they lived, reproduce the old Puritan life—homely, frugal, studious, which is perhaps only known to most of us through the art of the novelist; and it may be interesting to compare the real with the ideal picture. A later phase of Nonconformity, also, is displayed in the other portion of the work.

The Autobiography ceases early, but it is believed that the loss will be compensated by the brightness and freshness of the extracts from correspondence, of which the

rest is mainly composed. A few selections, poetical and other, taken from a mass of material, as illustrative of character or circumstance, complete the portrait of a clear and active mind, and show the outlook of their author upon great questions, both of this day and of every day.

MARDEN ASH, *May 1, 1874.*



## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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To enable the reader to follow with more advantage the "Domestic Recollections" of my mother, I will extract from some notes upon the family history, drawn up by my mother's father, a few particulars, of which, had they been at hand, she would probably have availed herself. They illustrate the formation of hereditary tastes, and account for the adoption of certain family names.

Her grandfather, the first Isaac Taylor, was the son of a brassfounder at Worcester, and while learning his father's business, early showed a talent for Engraving. Upon the death of his father, who in some way had fallen into poverty, the young Isaac came to London, giving half-a-crown for leave to walk by the side of the stage waggon. In London he first entered the cutlery works of Josiah Jefferys, then employing sixty or seventy men in his business, and who afterwards retired to Shenfield, in Essex, where he died. A Nathaniel Jefferys, his brother, was at the same time Goldsmith and Cutler to the King; and Thomas, another brother, who became Geographer to the King, married a sister of the Mr Raikes of Gloucester, well known as the founder of Sunday Schools.

Josiah Jefferys had, at the age of eighteen, married a Miss Hackshaw, aged sixteen, as she was on her way to market. Her father, then a man of substance, with a rent roll from an estate near Raleigh of £1000 per annum, was extremely angry, and told her that, being his child, he would not turn her out of doors, but that if she ever went beyond them she should never return. Upon these strange terms she remained two years under his roof, when her brother interceded, and persuaded her father to set the young husband up in business as a cutler, in which, as appears above, he prospered. Her father, on the contrary—Robert Hackshaw—after mortgaging his estate, fell further into misfortune, and died of grief. The marriage was twice celebrated, the first having taken place before registers were kept. This young wife, when a child, sitting upon the knee of Dr Watts, received from him a copy of his *Divine Songs for Children*, which eventually came into the possession of the Taylor family; for the Isaac Taylor who had walked from Worcester, in due time married her daughter, Sarah Hackshaw Jefferys, but not till after the family had retired into Essex, for it took place at Shenfield Church, May 9, 1754.

The Hackshaws (or Hawkshaws) were either of Dutch extraction, or belonged to the Puritan emigration in Holland, for the father of the above-named Robert Hackshaw, was purveyor to King William III., and came over with him to England. He was called the "Orange skipper," from having been employed, before the Revolution, to carry despatches backwards and forwards, concealed in his walking-cane.

Isaac Taylor had engraved crests and other devices

at Worcester, and so distinguished himself in that department in Josiah Jeffery's works, that it led to his adopting art engraving, then recently introduced, as a profession, to which he added presently the business of an art publisher. His house became in this way the resort of several personages of note in art and literature. Goldsmith, the illustrations to whose works are often signed "Isaac Taylor," was frequently there, and upon one occasion, when consulted upon the title of a book with an apology for troubling him upon so trifling a matter, replied, "the title, sir! why, the title is everything." Bartolozzi, Fuseli, and Smirke, were among his friends, and he was one of the original founders of the Royal Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain, from which sprang the Royal Academy. The celebrated Woollett was for many years secretary to the Society, and Isaac Taylor eventually succeeded him in that office. Thomas Bewick was his valued pupil, who in his turn speaks of him in his autobiography, as "my warm friend and patron Isaac Taylor." And again, "he was in his day accounted the best engraver of embellishments for books, most of which he designed himself. The frontispiece to the first edition of Cunningham's poems was one of his early productions, and at that time my friend Pollard and myself thought it was the best thing ever done." The most important work executed by this Isaac Taylor was a large plate, the "Flemish Collation," after Ostade. Howard the philanthropist took such notice of one of his daughters, when a child, that in later years she named a son after him—Howard Hinton, an eminent Baptist minister lately deceased. Of the three sons of Isaac Taylor,—Charles,

Isaac, and Josiah,—the second was the father of the subject of these Memorials.

The long association with metal working, of both the Jefferys and the Taylor families, throws an interesting light upon the engraving talent which both the first, and the second Isaac Taylor, my mother's father, developed ; and the connection with Holland and the Revolution suggests early preferences for Nonconformity.—[E.D.]

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# DOMESTIC RECOLLECTIONS.

## CHAPTER I.

### *LONDON AND LAVENHAM.*

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# DOMESTIC RECOLLECTIONS.

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## CHAPTER I.

LONDON AND LAVENHAM.

1782-1789.

“My father! Well the name he bore,  
For never man was father more.”

ANN GILBERT.

“And found myself in full conventicle.  
—To wit, in Zion Chapel meeting.”

R. BROWNING.

AND now, my dear children, I am not about to enter the confessional. Such of my faults as you may not have discovered, may as well remain in what obscurity they can, and I feel that I do not here afford you, in these respects, the full benefit of my experience. Many you know, I wish you did not; forgive and forget them as soon as you are able, though doubtless your training has suffered more or less from some. The faults of a parent can seldom be so dammed up as to leave no taint in the stream, or feculence on the shores.

It is my heartfelt conviction, on the closest inspection of

my circumstances and character, that, excepting a few—very few—external trials, my unhappiness, whenever I have not been happy, has arisen solely from myself, or, at least, that it might have been corrected by a better state of things within. A pervading influential Christianity would, I am persuaded, have rendered my life one of the happiest possible, for I have ever been surrounded with the materials for happiness, many and abundant.

The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places ; I have had, almost to my heart's desire, a goodly heritage ; and as at present most of you enjoy similar advantages, I would press it upon you, with maternal earnestness, more fully to improve them than I have done, and not to suffer impatience, pride, self-will, indolence, or any other of our bosom enemies, to slip in between you and the cheerful enjoyment of the blessings surrounding you. Make the most of what God has given you, and you may be happy if you will.

You have often appeared interested when I have related particulars of my early history, and it seems but right that you, who (as I have said) are almost certainly either better or worse for my habits and tendencies, should know something of the circumstances amongst which they were formed, if only as finger-posts on your own road.

It has sometimes surprised me to perceive to how great a degree you were ignorant of things and events so long familiar to my own recollections, but of course you can know on these subjects only what you are told, and presuming that to know more may be either amusing or useful, I have long entertained a wish to leave for you a brief outline of what I have been, or felt, with the various

turns and interferences of Providence by which I have become what you find me.

To review my life will not in all respects be a pleasant occupation, for it presents much that I would fain erase. The close inspection of my character which it calls for gives me anything but satisfaction ; but when I refer to the course through which I have been conducted, and the flowery fences by which I have at all times been hedged in, my causes for gratitude are more than I can enumerate, and greater than I can express.

Few, perhaps, owe so much—certainly few more—to Providential arrangements than I do ; my intimate associates have always been, in one respect or another, better than myself,—not all in everything, but each in some things ; so that there has been a continually ascending influence acting upon me, and counteracting, in some degree, less favourable circumstances or tendencies.

Among these, the mercies of my position, I must place first the personal history and singular characters of my dear parents, of whom it would delight me to present you with a graphic portraiture. What little you know of them was not sufficient to furnish you with a correct idea, nor could you form one without knowing also the disadvantages with which severally they had to contend.

Your dear grandfather was an unusually single-hearted man and Christian. His life till nearly thirty was spent in London, but he caught not a taint from its atmosphere. So long as he remained at home his father, a man of sense and ability, and a well-known artist of the time, was not, it seemed, under the influence of Christian principle, though a strictly moral man ; and he exhibited towards



his family an austere reserve which was little calculated to awaken the domestic affections to genial life.

His mother, possessing no small share of practical good sense, and real concern for the interests of her children, was yet so more than occupied in the labours of rearing them, and withal of a temper so heedless of the graces of life, that it seemed scarcely possible for kind and tender dispositions to expand under her influence ; but my father not only revered, but as his nature could not help, loved her also. Her will was law, and in many respects her family reaped the advantage of such a parent, but it is perhaps surprising that a heart so warm as his, should have been trained under her hand. His willingness, docility, and obedience were a little "put upon" while a youth; he was made something like the "fag" of the family; but so great was his pleasure in *servi*ng at all times, and in all ways, those by whom he was surrounded, that it was less irksome to him than it would be to many.

At thirteen he commenced a life which became one of diffusive piety. At sixteen he joined the church under the Rev. Mr Webb of Fetter Lane, and from those early years, till he went down to the grave, at seventy-one, his character was one beautiful progress through the benignant graces of Christianity.

His love of knowledge was early, strong, and universal. Nothing was uninteresting to him that he had opportunity to acquire, and when acquired his delight was to communicate. Apt to teach he certainly was, and ingenious as apt; all his methods were self-devised, and the life of few men devoted to teaching as a profession, would have accomplished more than he attained

by husbanding the half hours of his own. Early hours, and elastic industry were the "natural magic" by which his multifarious objects were pursued, and labours performed.

Whatever I possess of knowledge came from his treasury, and far more than is now mine, for many engagements, and a memory never good, and perhaps in childhood too little cultivated, have deprived me of much. Too little cultivated, I say, because my dear mother having suffered from injudicious exactions upon memory when a child, erred perhaps in training her children in the other extreme. As far as I recollect, we were never required to learn anything by heart!

It was my father's habit, whenever a question arose in conversation on points of science or history which we could not accurately determine, to refer at the moment to some authority—the lexicon, the gazetteer, the encyclopædia, or anything from which the facts could be gained; so that much was in this way imbibed by his children without labour of any kind, and at the expense only of some little impatience at a digression with which they would at the time have been willing to dispense. "Line upon line," was, however, in this way gradually traced and deepened. Method, arrangement, regularity in everything, were the characteristics of his mind; as were a tranquil hoping for, and believing in the best, those of his heart.

The future he could at all times cheerfully commit to his heavenly Father, the present had ever some bright spot for which to be thankful, and on this his eye, as by a natural attraction, fixed itself, while his

wit or humour could strike a spark out of the dullest circumstances.

The two words which he adopted as his daily guide in education, were *mild*, but *firm*; and he was fitted by natural disposition for both mildness and firmness. He was not easily moved from an opinion once formed, but the kindness of his heart, and the sobriety of his judgment, habitually prevented him from forming hard or unsound ones.

Few, perhaps, have ever moved in active life for seventy years, retaining a tendency to judge so favourably of all he met with. Hope and cheerfulness were as the air he breathed, and these were confirmed and rendered habitual principles, by a faith in the providence and the promises of God, often tried, but never observed to fail. His activity was untiring, and stimulated by a glowing kindness it enabled him to do with his might for all whom he could benefit, whatsoever his hand found to do.

He was never a clog on plans of usefulness, or even of pleasure. His heart was love, and his life a holiday. For nearly half a century he was the lover as well as the husband, alive to all the impressions of tenderness, and constantly devising with considerate affection pleasant little surprises for my dear mother. Her forty years of incessant bodily suffering afforded ample field for such a heart to adorn with the flowers and evergreens of love, and with ingenious tenderness he did so to the last.

As a youth, he had accustomed himself to rise early, but the habit declined through disturbed nights during the infancy of his children. After a few years, it was renewed and never abandoned, and, if I am not mistaken, it was by

the following incident that he was induced to return to six o'clock as the commencement of his day. He had received a call from some poor minister, with a request that he would purchase from him a small hymn-book, beautifully bound in morocco; the price was half a guinea, a larger sum than he could prudently afford, but his open heart could not refuse the aid that was asked for in this form, and the little volume proved, in the end, of incalculable value to him, for, sensible of his indiscretion, he resolved to cover the loss by making a longer day for labour. This, though constitutionally disposed to sleep, he resolutely accomplished, starting from his bed at a quarter before six every morning, till within a short period of his death. It was not managed without difficulty. At first, an alarm clock at the head of his bed was sufficient, but becoming accustomed to the monotony, he placed a pair of tongs across the weight of the alarm, so disposed, that when it began to move, the sudden fall of the tongs should surely move him also.\*

My father's habits of devotion formed a valuable part of his example. Rising thus early, the time from six to seven o'clock was always spent in his closet—really a closet—enclosed by double doors. But though thus secluded, and in a remote part of the house, we were, at times, near enough, in a room below, to be aware of the

\* Another expedient dwells in family tradition which probably succeeded the above, to the horrid clatter of which there may have been domestic objections. He placed his watch under the weight of the alarm in such a position as to require energetic action, on the part of the awakened sleeper, to save it from utter destruction as the weight descended. The habit once formed, these extreme measures were discarded.—[ED.]

earnestness of his prayers, which were uttered aloud. He always preferred articulate prayer, and when retirement can really be secured, it is a habit I should warmly recommend. It prevents, in some degree, the vagrancy of thought which so often interferes with mental prayer, and it reacts upon the mind, deepening the impressions from which it springs.\* I would also, and with more solicitude, urge the habit of *stated* prayer. The heart is so apt to slide from under its intentions, if not compacted by the regularity of habit, that it is rarely safe to trust them; every hour brings its hindrance, and so often in the shape of all but needful business that "the path to the bush" will, in most cases, be overgrown, if not trodden at the stated period.

We may deceive ourselves with the belief that we do pray regularly, because we wish and intend to do so, but on many a day, I fear we should search in vain for the act, unless reminded of it by the hour. It is true that a perfunctory formality may be thus induced, but the benefits, as far as my own experience or observation extends, exceed greatly the disadvantages. It is "a world of compromise," and for this reason, we are exhorted to watch as well as to pray.

After a day of continued labour, such as my father's always was, he was again in his closet from eight till nine; occasionally when work had to be sent off by the night mail for London (he then living in the country), he might

\* A hymn sung aloud accompanied this private morning worship, and the editor remembers when the voice was cracked with age, hearing the cheerful though quaking notes—cheerful, whether heard through the open window of the study in summer time, or in the darkness and chill of winter mornings.

be prevented from devoting the full hour, but I do not remember the time when the season of retirement was wholly omitted.

How much of the excellence of his own character, of the providential mercy that so often appeared for him, and may I not add, how many of the blessings enjoyed by his children and by theirs, may not have been the gracious answer to this life of supplication?

It was not likely that a youth, warm with so many affections, should be long content with domestic solitude. He was, indeed, but a youth, and his prospects were not such as in these days of aim and show would have admitted the thought of a wife, as prudent, or even possible. His early wish to devote himself to the ministry, had been frustrated by an illness of such severity and continuance, as to destroy his hopes of study, and to unfit him for its labours.

Lodgings which had been taken for him by his mother at Islington—then quite a country place—and horse exercise, contributed to his recovery; and he then reverted to his profession, that of an engraver, for which he had been educated under his father, who was among the first to execute book plates respectably.\*

At twenty-two, my father married, and the income on which he calculated that he could live with comfort, consisted of half a guinea certain for three days' work in each week, supplied to him by his elder brother, Charles, after-

\* The plates for Rees' Cyclopædia were executed under his superintendence at his father's establishment, and he always considered that these, and his frequent interviews with Dr Rees during the progress of them, were a great means of awakening his desire for knowledge in all its branches.—[ED.]

wards known as the "learned editor of Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible," who was, at the time, in business for himself as an engraver and publisher,—and so much as he could earn during the remaining three days, when he was at liberty to work on his own account. This, with thirty pounds in hand, was his independency; my mother's dowry being one hundred pounds stock, bequeathed to her by her grandfather, with furniture supplied by her mother, sufficient for the pleasant first floor at Islington they were to occupy.\*

It delights me to revert to this day of small things, and to trace the goodness and mercy which did follow these dear, simple-hearted parents of mine all the days of their life, till they were called to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

My dear mother was a character more peculiar, and her disadvantages had been greater than those of my father. The sensibility of her frame, both mental and bodily, was extreme; her affections were strong and lively, and her sufferings (irrespective of bodily pain) from the sorrows and bereavements of her seventy-two years, proportionably intense. Her mother's father, the son of a clergyman at Beverley, had been ruined in some building speculation at York, and her mother, a beautiful girl of sixteen, was sent off alone on the top of the York coach for London, with, I know not, what prospect or

\* Investments were not so easily met with then as in these days. Mr Smirke, R. A., was commissioned to paint four small circular subjects, representing morning, noon, evening, and night, for the £100, which the young Isaac Taylor then engraved and published. There was a considerable foreign sale for English prints at that time, and the editor has seen prints signed "Isaac Taylor, Junr.," in some of the remotest spots on the Continent.

result, except that she resided for a time with a family in Kensington Square.

By some accident, her favourite brother had been prevented from seeing her off, but ran after the coach, and was just able to wave his hand to her as it turned a corner. It was the last she ever saw of him, or of any of her family; separation then was separation indeed! She married early a Mr Martin, the son of an estate agent at Kensington.

My mother was the eldest of two children, and at six years old lost her father, who died of fever at twenty-nine. Of him I know little except that he was one of Mr Whitfield's early converts, and thus happily prepared for early death. But he was probably alone in his religious preferences, for upon one occasion having taken his little girl to hear Mr Whitfield, she suddenly stood up in the pew and exclaimed, "what have you brought me here for, among a pack of Whitfieldites?"

His anxiety for my mother was more lively than discreet. He thought it wise to exercise her infant patience by inflictions which she recollected as producing paroxysms of anguish. He once called her to see a new and favourite toy thrown on the fire, hoping in this way to induce a salutary self-control! Such measures could not but exasperate instead of soothe the excitability of her temperament; but, nevertheless, the sensitive child entertained for him a strength of attachment much above her years. On the night of his death she dreamed that she was in a desolate and shattered dwelling, through the rents of which she could see the stars; suddenly among them her father's form appeared, departing upward in a



chariot, by gestures taking leave of her, and encouraging her to follow. On waking, she was told that he was dead, and to the excess of her grief her life was nearly sacrificed; nor did she through her more than threescore years and ten fail to commemorate the 13th of February, the anniversary of her loss.

On this first sorrow she was removed from her mother's house near Gray's Inn, to that of her paternal grandfather at Kensington, for change of air. There her health was soon renovated, but she fell under injudicious training, a mixture of weak indulgence with uninviting instruction. Yet her attachment to Kensington was extreme, and she regarded it as an Elysium to her life's end.\* Home had, indeed, become no longer home. Her mother, a very

\* It was here that she picked up several anecdotes of George the Second's residence in the palace, which, with more stirring stories of the Gordon riots, she sometimes repeated to her grandchildren on winter evenings. Among the former she related how the old king once spent an hour on his knees searching for a sixpence that had rolled on the floor, handing it when found to an attendant with stately gravity, and the remark, "I do not want the sixpence, but I did not wish it to be lost." How, walking one day with the Duchess of Yarmouth, and observing some people laughing at a window overlooking the gardens, he had a high wall built immediately, which shut out their view for ever after. And how George III. kissed his bride on her arrival at Buckingham House, the Duke of York waving his hat to the crowd outside the gardens and shouting—"he's got her, he's got her." The Gordon riots had made a deep impression on her memory. Her mother's house was near Meux's brewery, having fields then close behind it. Preparations had been made at the brewery to play hot water upon the rioters, and the mob were advancing to the attack when the trumpets of the dragoons and the discharge of firearms created an awful pause. Sometime afterwards she saw swinging the corpse of a neighbour's son on a gallows at the end of the street. He was condemned and executed for participation in the disturbances, of which it was believed he had been only an accidental spectator.—[ED.]

beautiful woman, married again, but not long afterwards lost her second husband, and married a third. The result was an increasing family, and the solitary little girl was made to suffer in their bitterness most of the sorrows of such a situation. Even her mother did not defend her from the selfishness of a stepfather, and the oppression of his children. She was the slave of all; she seemed abandoned, with scarcely an eye to watch, or a hand to guide,—yet, who that should trace that young life to its close but would thankfully acknowledge an Eye that did watch, a Hand that did guide!

A day-school—a good one, as day-schools were a hundred years ago—afforded all the education that as such she enjoyed, but her character was too original and interesting to escape attention, and she attracted the notice and kind regard of several intelligent persons, who perceived her ability and aptitude to learn, and by the loan of books, and other means, awakened the dormant energies of her spirit, excited a thirst for knowledge, and raised her by imperceptible degrees above the brothers and sisters who were allowed to tyrannise over her; and on whom, nevertheless, she lavished a warm affection,—afterwards repaid by the honest love of some of them.

She very early discovered expertness at her pen, and its poetic and often satirical effusions soon gained her a local celebrity. My father was one of a group of young men occasionally visiting at her mother's house, but their first approach to each other, if such it might be called, was when at some breaking up of the school he attended, she was the admiring spectator of his receiving a silver pen (a rarer

thing then than now) after reciting, with applause, a piece from Shakespeare.

They were only children then, and a more important incident was the exercise of his skill in engraving her initials upon the silver shield in front of the beautiful little teapot, still in our possession, and in which he deposited a copy of verses upon returning it to her. These led to a smart rejoinder, and that to a paper war which, for a time, made the gossip of the little circle, till it was terminated by a treaty of peace, never afterwards infringed.

But interesting as was my mother's character, and attractive to many, some of them literary men, who would fain have rivalled my father in her affections, she was but ill-furnished with that practical knowledge of the details of housekeeping, without which marriage involves a girl, not in a rank above domestic management, in the deepest anxiety. When she married, at the age of twenty-three, she had everything to learn, and most sedulously, with the resolve of a sensible woman, and the diligence of a conscientious one, did she set herself to learn. She became an excellent housekeeper, for with a humility that often surprised me, she would accept the smallest particulars of information from the youngest or the humblest. To the latest hour of my observation at home she had always the rare wisdom to acknowledge ignorance.

On their wedding day, April 18, 1781, my parents entered their first home, in a house standing back from the street, and exactly opposite Islington Church. It was a first floor only, but from the back room, the best one, there was a view over an extent of country, including the Highgate Hills, and on the day of their marriage, though

so early in the year, a vine was in full leaf over their windows. There, on the 30th of January 1782, on which day my youthful father reached his twenty-third year, I was born ; and on the 23d of September the year following, their second daughter, Jane Taylor, known, perhaps, I might say, on the four continents, and known only for good, came into the world ; but at this time they had removed for the convenience of business to Red Lion Street, Holborn, then a sufficiently quiet place.

Here their first son, and third child, was born ; and here, scarcely allowing herself an hour of recreation either for body or mind, practising the utmost economy, and with her children filling every thought of her heart, my poor mother broke down in health, and might have surrendered herself to be the mere drudge of her family, had not a wise friend suggested to her that it would be well if her husband found in her a *companion*, as well as a house-keeper and nurse. She took the hint immediately, and resolved to secure the higher happiness that had nearly escaped her. For this purpose she commenced the practice of reading aloud at meals, the only time she could afford for mental improvement, and for nearly half-a-century it supplied her daily pleasure, while it sustained the native power of her mind.

But now the rapidly increasing family, and its consequent expenses, suggested the desirableness of removing to the country, and my dear parents, young, poor, loving, simple-minded, with nothing to call experience, resolved to transplant their household to what then appeared a remote and dreary distance from every relative or friend. They had neither of them been more than twenty miles

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from London in their lives, and my father, always methodical, obtained a list from Homerton College of all the ministers supplied from that Institution to within a hundred miles from the metropolis, and wrote, I believe, to all of them as to the cheapness of rent and of provisions in each locality, with some other domestic items. One of these applications reached a minister at Baddow when a cousin of his, the Rev. W. Hickman, of Lavenham in Suffolk, happened to be visiting him. They laughed over the questions propounded, which they attributed to some antiquated bachelor, but Mr Hickman remembered a house at Lavenham, which he thought he could recommend, and, writing to that effect, with other suitable inducements, my father undertook the formidable journey of sixty-three miles to reconnoitre.

He decided upon the venture, but the trial to the feelings of my dear mother was extreme. The removal to such a distance from all she loved was an anguish almost as much as she could endure. Owing to great susceptibility of nature, nervous, anxious, and foreboding, and with these tendencies during the greater part of her life aggravated by incessant pain, yet there was in her character a steady strength at hand for emergencies, which sometimes carried her through difficulties under which it might have been supposed a mind like hers would reel.

It was in June 1786, the fine old-fashioned weather of the eighteenth century, as my memory pictures it, that the little colony set forth—I well remember the freshness of that six o'clock on a summer's morning—in a hackney coach for the stage. My father had gone before to Lavenham to receive and arrange the furniture, and never

was "Queen's Decorator" more busy, more anxious, (in some respects more capable,) than he that everything should appear in tempting order, and in the best style of which it was susceptible. His materials, indeed, were few, but his taste and contrivance inexhaustible. The house, which a cottager described as "the first grand house in Shilling Street," was indeed so, compared with former residences.

It was the property of, and had been inhabited by a clergyman. On the ground floor were three parlours, two kitchens, and a dairy, together with three other rooms never inhabited; and above them were six large bedrooms. An extensive garden, well planted, lay behind. A straight broad walk through the middle was fifty-two yards in length, with an open summer-house on rising ground at one end, and ha-ha fence separating it from a meadow, of which we had the use, at the other. There was also a large yard, with a pig-stye, uninhabited, till my sister Jane and I cleared it out for the purpose of dwelling in it ourselves. It was a substantial little building of brick, but, having no windows, and the door swinging from the top, it was somewhat incommodious, yet there, after lessons, we passed many a delighted hour.

For this spacious domain, (house and garden I mean, not the pig-stye), it will scarcely be credited that my father paid a rent of only six pounds a-year, but by such a circumstance the perfect out-of-the-wayness of the situation may be conceived. Neither coach road nor canal approached it, though I remember that the advantage the latter would be to the little town was often discussed. The postman's cart, a vehicle covered in for passengers, made its enlivening entrée every day from Sudbury, sever

miles distant, about noon; and the London waggon nodded and grated in, I forget how often, or rather how seldom; I believe about once a week.

In a neighbour's large old fashioned kitchen I remember a painting representing the church standing in the middle of the town, and it must have been a place of some importance when that was the case; but, when we knew it, the church was quite at the extremity to the north, where the Sudbury road entered the High Street, which long street, at the further end, issued upon the road to Bury St Edmunds, ten miles off. The church was a noble Gothic edifice, built by the Earls of Oxford. Many of the details were drawn and engraved by my father, and published in one volume by his brother, then an architectural publisher in London. One of my brothers and two little sisters lie in the churchyard near one of the doors. The rector and curate of our day were of the old school,\* free livers, yet religiously hostile to the little band of dissenters who occupied a small "meeting-house" that nestled under the shade of some fine walnut trees, standing back from the street. In this reviled conventicle (for the spirit of "Church and King" was the demon of the neighbourhood, or rather of the times), there assembled a friendly and intelligent congregation. It was generally well filled, and for my own pleasure, more than for yours, shall I record the names, still familiar to me, of those who chiefly composed it?

Well then, first, were Mr and Mrs Perry Branwhite, with their daughter Sally, one of my first playfellows, and their

\* Belonging to an *older* school was William Gurnal, Rector of Lavenham, author of "The Christian in Complete Armour."—[ED.]

sons Nathan and Peregrine. Mr Branwhite was a quaint, upright, stiff, but somewhat poetic schoolmaster, having charge of a branch of St Ann's Charity School, located at that distance from London for the advantage of cheap provisions. I say poetic, because he had done the Copernican system into rhyme, printed on a large sheet and framed. By him and his, four or five seats were occupied.

Next to them sat Mr Stribbling, the blacksmith, and family, plain respectable people, though he, to my youthful eyes, was very ugly. He was certainly stone deaf, notwithstanding which latter disadvantage he attended very regularly, troubling his minister occasionally by complaining of him as a "legal preacher," on the ground that he selected "Arminian texts." These at every service were looked out for him by his children, and upon them alone he founded his suspicions of Mr Hickman's orthodoxy. "Ann and Jane" sat *vis-à-vis* upon little cross seats at the ends of the next pew, and had ample opportunity thereby of forming an opinion upon Mr Stribbling's personal attractions.

Beyond our's was the seat of Mr Meeking, the baker, a personage who occupies a grateful niche in the recollections of my childhood. He was a good-natured, fresh-coloured, somewhat rotund old man, with blue eyes, a light flaxen wig curled all round in double rows, and a beard duly shaven once a week. He kept a bakehouse of local celebrity, and with it a small shop, amply provided with that nondescript variety of grocery, drapery, and haberdashery, farthing cakes, and penny bindings, suitable for humble customers, or needed at a pinch.\* Three sons

\* It is curious to note how frequently in many a provincial town the pro-



and two daughters, all grown up, at least so they appeared to us little people, composed his family, and the old-fashioned kitchen, or house-place, in which they lived, is fresh in my memory as the scene of warm and bountiful hospitality to all, and of indulgence to us little girls, who frequently found our way there at times of any domestic discomfort. The floor of this kitchen was of brick, uncarpeted, one small window (of course you do not care about it, but please let me tell you) looked into the street, and a very large one opposite, with diamond panes and brick mullions, into the garden. There was a door from the shop, another towards the parlour, and a third large heavy square one, studded with iron-headed nails, leading to the garden and orchard. But, notwithstanding, this various provision for the admission of fresh air, nothing could exceed the comfort and glow of the chimney corner, large enough to admit the bulky arm-chair of the master on one side, and a seat for small folk on the other; the whole hedged in by an ample screen.

And, O, the piles of hot toast, thick, heaped, and sodden with butter, that used morning and evening to crown the iron footman in front of the fire!—toast not cut from a modern neat tin-baked loaf, but from such a loaf—a rugged mountain! Here “Nancy and Jenny,” as we were called, were always, and heartily welcome, or indeed to anything we could contrive to wish for; and in this friendly circle my sister was fairly released from the timidity that concealed the rich store of humour

prietor of just such an *omnium gatherum* shop afterwards developed into the substantial banker of the district, and how generally, too, such, as in the present case, were nonconformists.—[ED.]

in her arch little nature, and became the centre of fun and frolic.\* To the wise restraint and plain fare, and limited indulgences of home, Mr Meeking's chimney corner afforded the widest contrast; and the good-natured kindness, less judicious than generous, which always greeted us there, placed our occasional visits among the red-letter days of our calendar.

Once a year, somewhere about Christmas, the "best parlour" was duly warmed and inhabited. The young men were musical, there were several in the congregation who could either sing or play, or liked to hear others who could, and on these occasions they would get up something like a concert, where a bassoon, played by the eldest son, with sundry flutes and clarionets, afforded pleasant amusement to as many of the "friends" as could be crowded in. A piano was at that time quite beyond the Lavenham style, though I remember a spinnet or harpsichord in the best parlour of some other friends, presently to be mentioned.

My dear mother had always the strongest objection to leaving her little girls to the care of servants, and seldom visited where we were not invited,—we were but two, not troublesome, perhaps something of favourites, so that completely social as these and similar parties were, we were often admitted to them at an age when now we should scarcely have emerged from the nursery. But nurseries at Lavenham, and at that time of day, I do not remember. The parlour and the best parlour were all that was known

\* It is related in her memoirs that she used to be placed on the kneading-board in the shop, in order to recite, preach, or narrate, to the great entertainment of the many visitors.—[ED.]

beside the kitchens, and thus parents and children formed happily but one circle.

Of course it was necessary under the circumstances that the latter should be submissive to good regulation, or domestic comfort must have been sacrificed; but my father and mother were soon noted as good managers of their children; for little as either of them had experienced of a wise education themselves, they had formed a singularly strong resolve to train their young ones with the best judgment they could exercise, and not to suffer *humoured* children to disturb either themselves or their friends. There is scarcely an expression so fraught to my earliest recollection with ideas of disgrace and misery as that of a "humoured child," and I should have felt truly ashamed to exhibit one of my own at my father's table.

Yet, I can only say that it has been my endeavour to steer clear of this evil. It is inexpressibly difficult, pressed by daily business and perpetual interruption, to judge correctly of the course we are pursuing, or to retrace it if in error. On this account I should recommend every burdened mother to allow herself an occasional visit away from home *without her children*. She will then be much better able to review her habits and plans, and, if needful, to reform them, than while surrounded by the din, and borne down by the pressure of daily employments.

She will look at herself and her proceedings, as from a distance, and sometimes in the solitude of the chamber, or the garden, will find it no unhealthy exercise to describe herself *aloud*. Many things look unexpectedly ugly when put into words; and in order to derive unadulterated bene-

fit, so far as may be, she will take care at such times to keep aloof from the excellences. In other families also she may silently observe what is right or what is wrong, and amend her own doings accordingly. A degree of freshness is imparted to both body and mind during such a process, and probably she will go in the strength of that meat many days.

In rearing a family it is scarcely till the youngest has been educated, and often not then, that we come to a satisfactory conclusion respecting the course most desirable to pursue. The elder ones may have been sacrificed in part to inexperience, and the younger to burden and pressure.

Happy the mother who can hold an even balance between the *strict* and the *lenient*, for, perhaps, on this ability depends the characters of her children more than on any other part of her conduct. The aim is all I can boast of; to inspire the confidence of love by kindness, and to secure obedience by adhering steadily to principles, or regulations once laid down. But if, on reviewing the sins of our youth, we feel it often necessary to ask forgiveness from dear departed parents, equally imperative shall we find it, as we reflect on the failures of after-life, to make the same request to our children; and thus, dear children, do I with love and sorrow ask pardon of you.

But to return from this long digression. Mrs Snelling, the old pew opener, will wonder what I am doing if I do not pass along the aisle more briskly. We are come now to the "table pew;" William Meeking has the bassoon to his lips, and some dozen of country beaux, each with a leaf from the walnut trees in his button-hole, with perhaps a

pink, a stock, or sprig of sweetbriar, are raising the Psalm. In yonder square pew, entered only from the vestry, sits Mrs Hickman, the wife of the minister, amongst whose family a little boy, rather younger than myself, lived to become the highly respected minister of a congregation at Denton in Suffolk ; but passing on to the furthest of four square seats under the line of windows in front of the pulpit, I must introduce a family of singular excellence, and high esteem in the neighbourhood.

The staple trade of the town was wool, and Mr Watkinson was one of the master woolcombers, wealthy for such a locality, for he was reckoned to be worth £30,000. He owned one of the best houses in the town, built by himself with every accommodation for a family of twelve children.\* Beyond the extensive yards and warehouses were a bowling-green and pleasure garden, with a shrubbery enclosing a swimming bath, and a large kitchen garden with orchard adjoining. With Anne and Jane Watkinson, the two youngest daughters, it was the privilege of Ann and Jane Taylor to be intimate. The family were well ordered almost to a proverb, and well educated too. Mr Watkinson had been a member of the Society of Friends, and never relaxed, so far as my observation went, in the formality and reserve formerly distinguishing that community. His wife was a plain, sensible, domestic woman, of perhaps the fewest words that in such a family could be done with. Of the host of sons and daughters I can dis-

\* At that time wool was combed by hand, given out about the country to be spun, sent to Holland to be woven, and brought back to England to be sold. A direct ancestor of Mr Watkinson fought under Cromwell.—[ED.]

tinctly call to mind the features of each, but I could have had but slight knowledge of their characters. Of Anne, however, my own companion, though she left England with her family for America at fourteen, I have heard Mr Hickman say that he always felt something like respectful awe in her presence ! Such was the merciful provision for my earliest friendship.

The Lungleys, shopkeepers of repute and means, as most of those good folks were, occupied one of that set of pews. Mr Lungley was a singularly simplehearted, and free spirited man ; Mrs Lungley, a clever, active, managing woman, as much at home with the young as the young themselves. Their house was always open, the rendezvous of as many as could anyhow reckon themselves friends or cousins.

Their one child, a daughter, spent the closing year of her education under the care of my father and mother, after they left Lavenham, and years later, when at the head of a large family of her own, she told me that her first permanent religious impressions were made by my dear father's conversations, and that important arrangements in her family were founded on a recollection of his plans. One of these, the assignment of a separate "study" for each of the children when old enough to use it, the wealth of her husband enabled him to carry out to the fullest extent in building a new residence.

Mr Buck, a stiff, old-fashioned linen-draper, is waiting for notice in the adjoining pew ; what I chiefly remember about him is, that in his best parlour there hung a large frame, containing what I never saw anywhere else, varieties in "darning," all sorts of fabrics being admirably imitated,

from plain muslin to various damask patterns, the performances of Betsy Buck his daughter. I have sometimes wished for a leaf out of her book.

Mrs Sherrar and two maiden daughters occupied one of the upper seats in the synagogue; and her son-in-law, Mr Hillier, the "squire's pew," carefully screened at both ends from the vulgar gaze. These ranked among the small gentry of the neighbourhood; the Sherrars keeping what was no mean establishment for the little country place, two maids and a man; the Hilliers living in a handsome house with grounds at the lower end of the town. He was in the main a worthy man, and though a regular attendant upon Mr Hickman's ministry, might be called the squire, not only of the humble Meeting-house, but of Lavenham itself.

His wife was a clever, showy woman, reckless of such graces as are deemed specially feminine, and able to utter speeches not so easy to repeat as to remember. The infirmity of both, if my recollections may be trusted, was pride—Mr Hillier's a quiet reserved pride, his wife's a bold and open pride; and a circumstance occurred that sufficiently stirred the pride of both, proved disastrous to the interests of the small community, and though little suspected then, affected greatly our own future destiny in life.

This brings me to the pulpit, which has been almost forgotten in the pews. Mr Hickman, the minister, was a plain sensible man, of no aim, in manner or anything, but with a fund of natural humour in conversation. He was, perhaps, as little likely to make the venture that he did as any one we could think of; yet, having become a

widower, in process of time he thought of, and—singular presumption—addressed, prevailed with, and married Mrs Hillier's sister, Fanny Sherrar! She was neither young nor handsome; neither rich enough to render it a tempting speculation, nor, as was supposed, specially qualified to become an intelligent companion.

The gentry of a small country town could then afford to do with humble attainments in that line, and I am inclined to think the tradespeople were as a rule better informed. Upon one occasion, at a party in honour of a bride who had belonged to this higher grade, the lady addressed my father across the room with, "Mr Taylor, who wrote Shakespeare?" The husband, feigning an amused laugh, could only say, "Just hear my wife!" It was a question none of the humbler folk there needed to ask. With Fanny Sherrar, however, Mr Hickman was somewhat captivated, and he proceeded to the offensive extremity of making her his wife. Nothing could exceed the righteous indignation of the Hilliers on this occasion. He, worthy man, actually made a church question of it, on what possible grounds it is difficult to conceive. There was for a long time a scene of grievous contention, convocations of neighbouring ministers were called in to arbitrate, and it ended in the Hilliers leaving both the Meeting and the town. I should add that Mrs Hickman's conduct as a wife, and especially as a step-mother, went far to redeem the credit of her husband's discernment.

The poor of the congregation sat in the galleries, the men occupying the one, the women the other; the girls and boys of the small Sunday School being similarly



apportioned in one or the other gallery.\* This could not be long subsequent to the reputed origin of Sunday Schools in the benevolent heart of Mr Raikes. That at Lavenham was collected, I have reason to believe, greatly through my father's personal exertions. He was active in everything, regular, I may venture to affirm, and never weary in well doing.

A small volume, entitled "Twelve Addresses to a Sunday School," contains the substance of some spoken to this very early congregated little band.† He did not take a class, but acted rather as superintending visitor. And when, after an interval of more than sixty years, I visited

\* In some old fashioned rural congregations of Nonconformists this separation extends to the whole congregation. The custom is common among the Protestant congregations on the Continent, and universal among the Friends.

† In a paper entitled "Sixty Years Ago," contributed to the *Sunday School Magazine* in 1848, by Mrs Gilbert, she says, "I am old enough to remember that in a little country town, about 200 miles I should think from Gloucester, there was a Sunday School very nearly sixty years ago, and one in which my dear father used to labour with all the activity of a warm Christian heart. I was a very little girl, and perhaps for that reason I do not forget the grand gala days, in which long tables were set in Mr Watkinson's barn, and well covered with roast beef and plum puddings, for which the young people of his family (there were twelve in all, sons and daughters) had been merrily busy in stoning raisins. Yes, I remember them! And there came the schools, winding up the quiet street, for it was very quiet generally, though then of course, the neighbours would stand at their cottage doors to gaze at the procession, and the young gentlemen at Mr Blower's school would look over the blinds to wonder about it; and people, perhaps, who had not yet sent their children might wish they had. There have been many Sunday School treats and dinners given since that time, but I just mention this, to prove that at the remote little town of Lavenham, in Suffolk, there was at least as early as the year 1790, a happy, well regulated Sunday School; so that if Gloucester should ever think of erecting a monument to the founder, it might do well to inquire whether or not the first thought were really there?"

Lavenham, I found, among surviving members of this school, proofs that "the memory of the just is blessed." Wherever he moved his name is still fragrant.

Mr Hubbard, a basket-maker, a young man of very peculiar character, part simple, part conceited, part worthy—yes, a good part worthy—part thinking, and very theological, was engaged, as the paid teacher of the boys, sitting with them in the gallery and supplying the want of gratuitous teachers. Teachers of this sort were indeed, at that time, as little known as schools. There was scarcely one department of Christian usefulness, as it is now understood, at that time, occupied or even thought of by our churches as necessarily belonging to church work.

I must not, in my present review, forget "Old Orford." But where shall we find him? Not in a pew—it may have been half a century since he sat in one—but high up on the pulpit stairs, for he is very deaf, and does not, I fear, contrive to hear much even with his conspicuous trumpet; but he tries. His aged features, surmounted by a red night-cap, are among a set of pencil studies, still extant, by my father. How old he really was, I cannot say, but so long as I remember him, "Old Orford" was popularly reputed to be a hundred years old, though, I suppose, he moved among the figures at about the same rate as most of us.\*

\* A similar aged worthy occupied a seat, at the top of the pulpit stairs, at Ongar, during my grandfather's pastorate there. Leaning against the pulpit door, he looked like the minister's henchman. His venerable and rheumy countenance, his drab knee breeches gaping above his corded grey stockings, are deeply graven on my memory, and not less so, a certain occasion, when his huge tin snuff-box slipped from his pottering fingers, and rolled bump, bump, down the uncarpeted stairs with portentous noise. John Day,

And, certainly, Peter Hitchcock, the clerk in the "table pew," ought to have been named earlier—as much a character as could be found in the congregation. A stout, thickset little man, of, as one might say, the "cock robin" build was he, with the peculiarities of the bachelor, and betraying some of its least offensive propensities in his queer physiognomy.

As a retired flour dealer, he possessed a snug independency, and had fitted up, for himself, a small house, for the garden of which my father, early in repute as a landscape gardener, kindly drew a variety of plans. Yet it was but a slip, and the economic Peter saved the expense of a man, by clipping the grass-plots himself with a pair of scissors.

Two maiden sisters, Miss Sally and Miss Betsy, never otherwise called, lived with him, each a perfect specimen of an "old maid." Miss Betsy, the youngest, had, perhaps, the most fretful, unhappy expression of countenance that could well be conceived. Verily, she looked as if it had been half a century, at least, since

no whit disconcerted, watched its course, and then, with his heavy highlows, descended after it, one stair at a time, returning in like manner. The whole operation took nearly a quarter of an hour; yet the sermon halted not, nor did devout attention fail. In those days, if any one suffered from drowsiness under the subdivided discourse, he would rise and stand in his place. Several grave elders, in an afternoon, might be seen thus upon their legs, and it is recorded that my mother's great grandfather, Martin, leaning, unluckily, upon his pew door in Kensington Church, it opened suddenly, compelling him to follow its semi-circular movement at a smart trot, till brought up sharp against the pew side. Then the grave figure in snuff-coloured suit and protuberant wig, took it in hand and walked back into his place, with probably no visible disturbance of the congregation.—[ED.]

the world had smiled upon her, if, indeed, it had not been ill-using her for quite that period.

No doubt, she was unhappy, and benevolence, even Christian benevolence, does not seem to extend to this description of sufferer. Fathers and mothers, and young people of both sexes, appear to have received dispensation for heartlessly adding to the sorrows of that solitary condition. In parents, nothing can be more indiscreet; in young women, less delicate; in young men, nothing more ungenerous.

What can that father expect from his daughters, who allows himself to taunt, with "cruel mocking," the unmarried women of their society? What but the conviction that to marry is indispensable, and therefore, at whatever risk? Yet is it always the least excellent, the least valuable of a family who is left to fill the withering ranks at which the young and the thoughtless—the *old* and the thoughtless, I may safely add,—point the finger? If constrained to guess at histories, I should be disposed to affirm that, more frequently than otherwise, the useful retiring, affectionate daughter, is left to expend her womanly love on the declining years, and trying infirmities of her parents, while the colder heart plays a successful game, and sports the honours of the wedding ring.

Perhaps there would be more of romantic history in the biographies of the old maids of society than in those of twice the number of flourishing wives,—history that would excite, if known, the tenderest sympathy, the truest respect. Many might be the causes enumerated that have led noble and virtuous women to refuse marriage—women among whom might be found some of that almost extinct

class, whose New Testament includes that awkward text—  
“only in the Lord.”

What, however, may have been Miss Betsy's history, I know nothing, beyond the obvious discontent of her countenance; but of Miss Sally, there were traditions of some interest, how far correct, I cannot say. She was, I think, the senior by several years, and must have been pretty in her time, while her now aged quiet face had none of that expression which made her sister so conspicuous. But she was admitted to be “not quite right, you know,” for, as the mood came over her, she would retire to the corner of the room (I have seen her do so when it was filled with company), and stand there, for a length of time, straight upright, with her face to the wall, and occasionally whispering a little to herself.

It was something of a trial to “Ann and Jane” to see Miss Sally making so queer an exhibition of herself, but I do not remember having our gravity upset by it; it was only Miss Sally in one of her freaks, and we were too young to understand the mysterious hints occasionally floating, “that, many years ago, she had a disappointment, and had not been quite right ever since.” I think, also, that one of her arms was paralysed, and hung useless at her side. Such were the hieroglyphics of one mournful, yet not uncommon history.

In a circle, such as I have now described, we children, of five and six years old, were placed on our parents' removal from London. It was a happy seclusion. Yet my mother had gone down to it with an almost breaking heart, bringing, to this circle of strangers, a recent grief in the loss of one lovely child, and before the year was out, losing

another ; so that all the assiduities of my father, and the novel charm of a summer in the country, failed to reconcile her to the banishment, till the first dreary winter had passed away, and then a heart, sensitive as was my dear mother's, could not remain long untouched by natural scenes and pleasures.

But the winter was dreary. In the course of it, my father was called (as, indeed, he frequently was) for a month, to London, in prosecution of his profession as an engraver ; and with her two little girls, her young half-sister, and a single servant, with the recollection of her lost children bleeding in her bosom, and in a house large enough to have accommodated half-a-dozen such families, my mother dragged wearily through the dismal evenings of this, to her, forlorn exile. One of them is still fresh in my memory, as I have heard her describe it.

It was a dark and stormy winter's night, the wind roared down the huge kitchen chimney, and screamed in the trees across the road. "Ann and Jane" had gone early to bed, the last dear babe had recently found its resting-place in the churchyard, and my poor mother sat in her grief beside the parlour fire. Suddenly a dreadful crash was heard ; the kitchen chimney was exactly over the room in which we slept, and her instant thought was that it had fallen, burying us in its ruins.

She ran to the foot of the wide staircase and called, I was always a wakeful sleeper, but now there was no answer, and she felt no doubt of the terrible meaning of the silence. Her sister jumped out of the parlour window, and, my mother and servant following, fled up the

dark street to Mr Meeking's, the nearest friend in need. She fell on the high steps leading up to his shop-door, and his little dog, rushing out, tore off her cap before she could regain her feet. "Oh! Mr Meeking, Mr Meeking, my children are both killed!" "Let's hope not, madam, let's hope not," and the worthy old man, with sons, staves, and lanterns, hastened back with her to the scene of disaster, first, of course, visiting our bedroom, where, holding a lantern at the foot of the bed, "Nancy and Jenny" were seen sound asleep.

That was enough; and when they had searched in vain through all the upper rooms of the large house, they began to smile at the alarm as one of imagination only, till entering the kitchen a mound of bricks upon the floor, that had fallen down the ample chimney, explained what had happened. The cracked grate long remained to attest the peril.

But my father returned—returned with sufficient employment in his art for months to come. Spring returned also, the winter had passed, the rain was over and gone, the time of the singing of birds was come, and my dear mother awoke to the beauties that surrounded her. Not that the style of country was particularly attractive. Suffolk, or at least that part of it, swells into shoulders of heavy corn land, with little wood, and these undulations shut out extensive prospects; a small river creeps dully through a succession of quiet meadows, and I think it must be partly owing to this tameness that a real taste for the country was not sensibly awakened in me till ten or twelve years later in my history.

I can hardly otherwise account either for an impres-

sion of gloom which, though it was seen under the sunlight of childhood, still hangs over that Lavenham scenery. Enthusiasm must have been enthusiastic to be kindled among those flat meadows and cold slopes, with their drowsy river; but there might be other causes that make me feel even now that to walk in broad daylight, but alone, by that river's brink, or up the rugged "Clay Hill" beyond, would try my nerves. I came to love the real country afterwards, have long loved it, and have craved, perhaps, no earthly blessing more than a home and a garden in the country, and happy am I to say now, at sixty-two, that the delight derived from such pleasures is still healthily vivid within me.\*



And, whatever the surrounding country might be, there was at Lavenham a large and beautiful garden. We lived not in either of the big front parlours, but in a small pleasant room opening into it. There my father's high desk, at which, during his whole life, he stood, as the most

\* She would have expressed the same fresh delight at eighty-five.—[ED.]



healthy position, to engrave, occupied the corner between the fire and a large window; my mother sat on the opposite side, and we had our little table and chairs between them. One wing of the premises seen from this window was covered with a luxuriant tea tree, drooping in long branches, with its small purple flowers; \* on a bed just opposite was a great cinnamon rose bush, covered with bloom; a small grass plot lay immediately under the window, and beyond were labyrinths of flowering shrubs, with such a bush of honeysuckle as I scarcely remember to have seen anywhere. Then there were beds of raspberries, gooseberries, and currants, espalier'd walks, ample kitchen garden, walls and palings laden with fruit, grass and gravel walks, a honeysuckle arbour, and an open seated summer-house; flourishing standard fruit trees, and no end of flowers and rustic garden seats—all this world of vernal beauty, all to be enjoyed by only stepping into it, won my mother's heart in this first springtide out of London, and the country retained its hold on her affections to the last. She never loved the town again, and entered fully and for ever into the truth of those lines written long afterwards by her little Jane,—

“ Happy the mother who her train can rear  
Far 'mid its breezy hills from year to year !”

Here our habits and, to some degree, our tastes were formed, and here began our education. In that little back parlour we were taught the formal rudiments, and in the garden and elsewhere, constantly under the eye of our parents, we fell in with more than is always included in

\* *Lycium Barbarum*, Willow-Leaved Box Thorn.

the catalogue of school learning at so much per quarter. Books were a staple commodity in the house. From my mother's habit of reading aloud at breakfast and at tea, we were always picking up something; to every conversation we were auditors, and, I think, quiet ones, for, having no nursery, the parlour would have been intolerable otherwise.

There was a large room adjoining, having a glass door into it, and there, or in the garden, we were at liberty to romp. A closet in this room was allowed us as a baby-house, round the walls of which were arranged our toys, but I must acknowledge that here we were not the aborigines, an interminable race of black ants had taken previous possession, and we could only share and share alike with them.

I do not know how far children so completely invent little histories for themselves as we did. We most frequently personated two poor women making a hard shift to live; or we were "aunt and niece," Jane the latter and I the former; or we acted a fiction entitled "the twin sisters," or another, the "two Miss Parks." And we had, too, a great taste for royalty, and were not a little intimate with various members of the royal family. Even the two poor women, "Moll and Bet," were so exemplary in their management and industry as to attract the notice of their Royal Highnesses the Princesses ("when George the Third was King.") When these two estimable cottagers were the subject of our personation, we occupied (weather permitting) either the summer-house or the *ci-devant* pigsty. On the grassy ascent upon which the summer-house stood, terminating the long walk, the grass was mixed

with a small plant, I fancy trefoil, but I have never been botanist enough to know; however, its name to us was Bob, why, I cannot imagine, unless from the supposed similarity of the three letters to its three small leaves. This we used to gather for winter food, (so hard bestead were we) and the seeds of the mallow we called cheeses, and laid them up in store also. These were simple, healthy, inexpensive toys and pleasures, and, having such resources always at hand at home, and without excitements from abroad, we were never burdensome with the teasing enquiry, "What shall we play at? What shall we do?" Yet we had always assistance at hand if needed. Both father and mother were accessible, and many a choice entertainment did we owe to their patient contrivances. My father, especially, was never weary of inventing, for our amusement or instruction. I have still a little glass case containing a cottage cut in cork, a few trees of moss, a piece of looking-glass for pond, a cork haystack, and so forth (a Suffolk idyll) which was one of these productions. Another was a small grotto fitted up with spars and minerals. But there was one of these home-made toys which I can hardly think of now without pleasure; it was a landscape painted on cardboard, cut out and placed at different distances, through the lanes of which, by means of a wire turning underneath, there slowly wound a loaded waggon and other carriages; it was contained in a box about seven inches by twelve, and two in depth, with a glass in front. What became of this masterpiece of mechanism I do not know, but it greatly delighted me, and I sometimes think that I owe to it the

pleasure I have felt up to this day at the sight of a tilted waggon winding along a country road.\*

Of course my dear mother, with health never strong, and all the needlework of the household on her hands, could not undertake our entire instruction. Reading, the Needle, and the Catechism, we were taught by her, and as my father was constantly engraving at the high desk in the same room, it was easy for him to superintend the rest. We were never severely treated, though both my parents were systematic disciplinarians. But I record one instance of mistaken punishment only to show how possible it is, when a child is confused or alarmed, for parents to fall into that error. It must have been when I was very young, for it was owing to a supposed obstinacy in not spelling the word *thy*. I had been told it repeatedly, t-h-y, in the same lesson, still at the moment it every time unaccountably slipped from the memory. My mother could only attribute it to wilful perverseness, though I believe that was a disposition I could not be charged with. She felt, however, so fully persuaded that I knew, and would not say, that she proceeded to corporal punishment, very rarely administered, but not so entirely abandoned as is the fashion now; a fashion, as I conceive, not countenanced either by reason or scripture, so long as the child is so young as to be sensible to little beyond bodily pleasure and pain. "He that spareth the rod hateth his child," but the proper season must be borne in mind. Wholly to withhold it in early childhood, and to

\* It will be observed that the intention of all these toys was the healthy excitement of the imagination, and to stimulate a taste for rural objects and the picturesque in nature.—[ED.]

continue it when higher feelings might be appealed to, are errors perhaps equally mischievous. Happy are they (and happy theirs) who with a nice discernment pause at the moment when affections and principles may be brought to bear.

The precise hours allotted to our instruction I now forget, but they were regular, and regularly kept. I remember pleading once in vain for some temporary deviation. We breakfasted at eight, dined at half-past one, took tea at five; then at eight we went to bed, and my father and mother supped at nine. On Sundays, however, we were indulged to sit up to supper, a treat indeed.

Of our Sunday habits I am thankful to remember that, though never gloomy, they were after the olden fashion—*strict*. It was a day unlike to other days—a feeling I should wish to preserve as a perpetual safeguard. I will not say how much I was profited by accompanying my father, at seven o'clock on a winter's morning, to the early prayer meeting, as I conclude, to be out of the way during early duties at home. The only vivid recollection now in my memory is of the astonishing noise made by the blower in raising the vestry fire. This, with the assiduities of Mrs Snelling, the pew-opener, have survived the friction of much more than half-a-century. As Lavenham lies embedded in clay, and there was neither paving nor lighting, Water Street, which frequently well deserved its name, offered sometimes difficulties to Sunday chapel-goers, and not a few of the gentlemen wore pattens. A massive pair, belonging to our friend, Mr Watkinson, the tall, sedate, immoveable man, never guilty, if he knew it,

of saying or doing a droll thing, was, when with his family he removed to America, given by him to my father.

Occasionally, when my mother was not well enough to go from home on the Sunday, I have been left to stay with her, and one of our quiet Sundays was signalized by an incident that shook my nerves. She had fallen asleep in the little back parlour, leaving me sole guardian of the premises. Suddenly I heard a tremendous noise somewhere in the kitchen, a knocking and a battering so long and loud, that nothing less than determined burglars could account for. My mother was so poorly that I dared not wake her, and even then so deaf that she did not hear the noise. With inexpressible terror I listened and watched to see the ruffians either enter the room or emerge from the back door into the garden, and, only eight or nine years old as I might be, armed myself with the poker for the worst. If I had not happened to catch sight of the culprit at the precise moment of escape, the mystery might have remained to this day unaccounted for. But I did; an immense dog issued suddenly with prodigious speed from the back door with the remains of a large, deep, stone milk-jar about his neck! Doubtless a small quantity of milk had been left at the bottom, the poor fellow had unwittingly thrust in his nose, the neck was narrow, the milk beyond his tongue tip, he thrust, and thrust, till he found himself in dreadful custody. Then began the sound that had chilled my blood as he banged his portable prison about the kitchen floor, till the bottom giving way, he made use of recovered daylight, though still with a good portion of the pot about his neck, and decamped through the garden, wearing, to

my astonished eyes, something like a close cottage bonnet. Whither his terror carried him I never heard, though if he scampered through the town in such a guise I think it would have made some stir.\*

And another Sunday afternoon had its terror. From my earliest childhood I had a nervous apprehension of the sudden death of those about me, so that any inequality in the breathing, if asleep, or anything unusual in appearance, excited my alarm. This time, my father being slightly unwell, I was left at home alone with him. For our mutual edification he read aloud Wilcox's Sermons, not the liveliest volume in the world, and after a time I perceived something very singular in his pronunciation and tone, a confusion of syllables, a lengthening and a pause! I thought he was going to die! He did not die, but soon safely recovered; yet it was years afterwards that, recalling the symptoms of this appalling seizure, the true character of it occurred to me, my good father had been—almost asleep!

I had always a conscience, whether or not enlightened, yet always a conscience, and especially with regard to the Sabbath. One Sunday I was myself alone at home, from some trifling ailment, and employed the morning in reading

\* Jefferys Taylor afterwards versified this incident for his "Æsop in Rhyme," ending with—

" At last he broke the bottom out  
Of this disastrous jug,  
But still the dog was not without  
The remnant of the mug.  
With this the trophy of the day  
In haste forth trotted he,  
And if 'twas ever knocked away  
They have not told it me."

a little book by the Rev. George Burder, containing the "History of Master Goodchild," and various other strictly Sunday readings. Towards the end is the fable of the kite and the string, but this stopped me—a *fable* might not belong to Sunday reading?—and I left the book open at the place, till my father returned from Meeting, to know whether I might proceed. He silenced my apprehensions, while approving the hesitation. I should prefer so to educate a child as that his errors should lean to the safer side. If misconceptions cannot always be avoided, those which shall early imbue his *feelings* with a reverence for the Sabbath are at least less perilous in their tendencies than an over liberal view in the opposite direction. I have, as before stated, no gloomy associations with the Sundays of my childhood, but habits were then formed such as afford a safe groundwork on which principle may build with advantage.

The time at which I began to string my thoughts (if thoughts) into measure I cannot correctly ascertain. It could not be after I was ten years old, and I think when only seven or eight, and arising from a feeling of anxiety respecting my mother's safety during illness. Not wishing (I conclude) to betray myself by asking for paper at home, I purchased a sheet of foolscap from my friend, Mr Meeking, and *filled* it with verses in metre imitated from Dr Watts, at that time the only poet on my shelves. What became of this effusion I do not know, but I should be glad to exchange for it, if I could, any of my later ones,—

"Not for its worth, we all agree,  
But merely for its oddity,"

as Swift says of learning in ladies.



The earliest stanza that dwells in my memory, whether belonging to this production or not I cannot tell, is the following

“ Dark and dismal was the weather,  
Winter into horror grew ;  
Rain and snow came down together,  
Everything was lost to view.”

Certain it is, anyway, that from about this date it became my perpetual amusement to scribble, and some large literary projects occupied my reveries. A poetic rendering of the fine moral history of Master Headstrong; a poem intended as antecedent to the Iliad; a new version of the Psalms; and an argumentative reply to Winchester on Future Punishment, were among these early projects, and more or less executed.

Though from the result in substantial pecuniary benefit to ourselves (as much needed as unexpected), together with, I venture to hope, some good to others, I have great reason to be thankful for the habit thus contracted, yet I have certainly suffered by allowing the small disposable time of my youth to expend itself in writing rather than in reading. My mind was in this way stinted by scanty food. Of that I am fully sensible, and leave it as a warning to whomsoever it may concern. If I had not breathed a tolerably healthy atmosphere it would have been lean indeed. But there was always something to be imbibed; either from my mother's reading at meals, or that in which we afterwards all took turn in the workroom; from my father's untiring aptness to teach, his regular habit of settling all questions by reference to authorities, and the books that were always passing through the family.

Wherever my father moved there soon arose a book society, if there had not been one before. One word, however, about the reading aloud at meals. I believe my mother fostered thereby a habit of despatching hers too quickly, by which her digestion was permanently injured; and, again, it hindered our acquiring readiness in conversation. To listen, not to talk, became so much a habit with us, as rather to impair fluency of expression—at least in speech.



DOMESTIC RECOLLECTIONS.

CHAPTER II.

*LAVENHAM.*

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## CHAPTER II.

LAVENHAM.

1789-1795.

“The simple ways in which my childhood walked.”

“Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up,  
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.

WORDSWORTH.

QUIET, and destitute of amusement as Lavenham was, we yet had our holiday seasons and pleasures, all in keeping with life in the country. In very fine weather, the tea, or even dinner, in the garden, for which there was a choice of spots whether in sunshine or in shade, was an occasion to the children. But the great thing was a whole day's ramble, on what would now be called a pic-nic excursion—father, mother, children, and servants—my father with his pencil, my mother with a book, the servant with provisions. And wherever there was a cottage, a stump, or a tree, worth sketching, there we gathered round him (those of us who did not prefer to hunt for violets), and my mother read till the sketch was finished. Well I remember my father's signal, for attracting our notice to any slip of the “picturesque” that might catch his eye “Lookye, lookye there?” It was certainly not his fault if my love for it was not kindled so early as might have been. Several

drawings and small cards are still in my possession, the result of these happy excursions.

But of all our rural holidays the most exciting was an annual visit to Melford fair. Melford was, perhaps is, a very pretty town of a single street, terminating at the upper end in a large, open, and extremely pleasant green, with respectable houses on one side, a fine old church at the top, and fringed on the other by the park of Sir Harry Parker. On this green was spread the fair, not, as my recollection serves, rude and riotous, but attracting an assemblage of respectable country people from several miles round. Yet the fair made but a part of the pleasure, for on the return walk of about four miles was there not tea at Mr and Mrs Blackadder's, a worthy couple, the perfect personification of farmer and wife far up in Suffolk, say a hundred years ago, for they were still quite of the olden times. Their little homestead was the very centre of old-fashioned hospitality, and tea from the best china in the best parlour was no small delight. *Best* parlour, however, I should not call it, for the "House, or houseplace" as it is called in Lincolnshire, on the other side of the entrance, could not aspire to anything like so genteel a name. There the 'min' were admitted to regale themselves,—master and men together after their daily labour, unless there was "company." But of the parlour the great attraction for us little girls was the mysterious weather-house on the mantelpiece, from which, if fine weather was to be expected there turned out "a full-dress" lady, or when storms, a gentleman. Home again, it was a pleasant three miles summer evening walk, perhaps with moonlight, all of the olden time! Once, Jane was retained for a few days, a

great treat for her, in the midst of farm occupations ; but it was with a dash of terror in the enjoyment, that she used to accompany Johnny Underwood to collect the cows for milking. Sometimes, but this was later, when my father's circumstances were becoming easy, there was tea at the " Bull " at Melford, and a drive home in a post-chaise, with its bob-up-and-down postilion, the invariable vehicle for a party in those days. For the clay-roads, however, and among the foot-deep ruts of Suffolk, a lighter vehicle was in use called a " whiskey " or a " quarter-cart." This was constructed to run beside the ruts, and the horse did not occupy the middle of either the carriage or the road, but ran in shafts on one side, so as just to escape the heavy dragging fissure made by the waggon-wheels. Now, so long as the animal kept the track, and especially so long as the side on which he ran did not suddenly sink, all was safe, the weight of the horse counterbalancing the sway, but if suddenly raised on the opposite side, horse and chaise would go over together. To drive a " quarter-cart," therefore, along a Suffolk road required some skill, yet, my father, who had a regular engagement to supply the drawings and engravings of the gentlemen's seats of the county, for Geddes's Pocket-Book, published at Bury, drove continually in a " quarter-cart " and never met with an accident.

On the 9th or 10th of October (perhaps both), Lavenham Fair was held in the " market place," though it boasted no market. And on the 5th of November, Guy Fawkes came out in all his glory. That night (if one may speak for another) the excitement was intense. Exactly opposite our house was the playground of Mr Blower's



school, and it was matter of moment to ascertain whether the young gentlemen intended to make their annual display of fireworks on the premises or in the market place. If the former, we had an excellent view from our upper windows, alloyed by only two circumstances; the one, that the principal front of all the fireworks was directed towards a bevy of ladies assembled, for the evening, in the gardens of the bachelor clergyman; we little people, therefore, could only rejoice in the happy freedom of squibs, sky-rockets, and Roman candles, which confessed neither law, limit, nor politeness in their eccentricities. The other detraction from the pleasures of the evening, consisted in the dark uninhabited remoteness of the large chamber, from which we witnessed the exhibition; a flight of dark stairs led up to it; a few pieces of ambiguous lumber were its only furniture, and even by daylight, I did not pass the foot of that flight without a response from my nerves. But at night! It was only the fireworks in front, and papa and mamma behind, that rendered it tenantable.

If, however, Mr Blower's young gentlemen "let off" in the market place, the interest and anxiety were greater still. We had then to be conveyed through innumerable perils by our dear, careful father, to "Bob Watson's," a fat, good-natured hairdresser, from whose large upper window the view was excellent—except, that again, as fate would have it, the most brilliant Catherine wheels and every determinable article were always set, would you believe it?—opposite the house of Mr Brook Branwhite, who possessed a numerous family of unmarried daughters! Nay, the two young doctors, brothers, usually known as

Dr Tom and Dr John, displayed exactly the same perverseness, calculating all their effects for the same bay-windows! very provoking, but historians must be faithful.

These brothers, Dr Tom and Dr John, carried on the various departments of the medical profession for miles round Lavenham, and lived together in the same house, but, according to popular report, without ever speaking to each other! The patients, however, were never interchangeable. We belonged to Dr Tom, the youngest, a handsome man, who, as surgeon in the militia, sometimes quickened the pulses of little patients by appearing in the uniform of his regiment. For myself, he won my heart by the gift, one day, of a most diminutive pill box, a real original Dutch-made wooden pill box—not one of the paper substitutes to which we were condemned when the trade with Holland was broken up by the French war, and with which the country has remained apparently satisfied ever since—cured or killed, as before!

I have hesitated whether to give the local colloquial appellation of "Bob Watson" and others, but I am amused (as, perhaps, you may be) at the extent to which this homeliness of style was then and there carried. Whether from the seclusion of the place or the distance of the period, most of our poorer neighbours were always so spoken of: taking the cottages, as they stood nearest to us, there was Poll Porter, and Bet Carter, and Bob Nunn, Billy Joslin, and Sam Snell. Wishing, as far as I can, to photograph both place and period, this homeliness cannot be excluded. Be it remembered that it was as far back as 1786 that the sun first shone on Lavenham for me. Such as it was then, I give it you, and pleasant it was on a

summer's afternoon to see the street lined with spinning wheels (not spinning-jennies, but Jennies spinning); everywhere without, the whiz of the wheels, and within, the scrape of the shuttle, the clatter and thump of the loom at which the men were at work. Picturesqueness was got out of it all, if not gold.\*

Upon "Bob Nunn," a journeyman carpenter, I remember to have expended much compassion and worlds of contrivance, by which he was never benefited. Very early, I took to castle building, and the desolate condition of this poor man laid the first stone, as far as I can remember, of these aerial edifices. He was one of the ugliest, dirtiest, and most forlorn looking persons I can call to mind; but withal, reputed industrious and honest, so that his misery must have sprung from an indolent, ragged, offensive, dawdle of a wife. His mud cottage, with its mud floor, and wretched destitution, were the pity of the neighbourhood. It was, therefore, a favourite speculation of mine to take him in hand, and, in some way, ridding him of his female incumbrance, I conferred upon him the advantages which industry and honesty ought to secure; in fact, I made a new man of him. This was one

\* Along with this picturesqueness should not be forgotten the occasional horrors of a bull-baiting through these streets, when, "after due notice from the bellman, and with a hideous hubbub of yells, screams, and the barking of dogs, came the bull at a rolling trot, with a pertinacious cur or two swinging from his lip and nostril, a dozen at his heels, his scarlet eye-balls ogleing from side to side as he goes—no help or mercy for him—for it is his doom's-day! torment to the death is the rule and reason of all this hubbub." See Isaac Taylor's "Personal Recollections," Good Words for 1864. It is singular that his sister's recollections make no reference to what, even in my own remembrance, was a constant source of terror in certain neighbourhoods.—[ED.]

of my castles, and for years, I can assure you, they were of the most benevolent and even patriotic character. I had another protégé. Billy Joslin was, by trade, a hand weaver, with a wife, a clever char-woman, perhaps of doubtful integrity, but occasionally employed in our service. He was a member of our church, had a large family, and was worthy enough, and poor enough, to become a recipient of my bounties. For this family, I did wonders. There was a house on the common, shaded by two fine trees, which, repaired and white-washed, would be very pretty; this, therefore, I mentally repaired and white-washed accordingly, and next, provided the family with suitable clothing, determining the number and patterns of every article, being greatly indebted for the colours of the little frocks required, to the diligent study of the patch-work quilt under which I slept—or should have slept, when these perplexing cares sometimes engaged me. Having thus made full preparation, I enjoyed the satisfaction of breaking to them the singular secret; when, having them all clean and dressed, I took them in procession, two and two, to their new habitation, where, I have no doubt, that I supplied any deficiency in their means of subsistence.

I believe that all this good was done before I was twelve years old—perhaps I should rather say all this evil! For what a ruinous pre-occupation of mind does it imply? The habit itself, whatever be its object, is so grievously injurious, that I would leave it, stamped with double earnestness, as a charge to my children and to theirs, never to indulge in it; the best way being never to begin. How must they be characterised, who, passing like

shadows only, among the realities of living duty, inhabit hourly, daily, and for years, a world of imagined interests, wasting mental vigour upon exertions never made, and dimming common comforts by an ever-hovering mist of vain imaginings!

When, during my youth, something like religious impression was made upon my mind, I felt the disadvantage, was convinced of the sin, and made severe struggles to disentangle myself from the snare in which for so many years I had been a prisoner. And for a time, I think a considerable time, I sustained the resolve; but at length a small circumstance, nothing more than having to copy a beautiful landscape, carried me over again into fairy land, and led my musings into the seductive regions from which, as I thought, I had escaped. It had its day—a day too long—but eventually the realities of life made forcible entrance; though duty itself has sometimes had to pioneer its way over the rough roots and broken stems of an imperfectly cleared wilderness. Oh, my foolish heart, what hast thou to say to such a retrospect!\*

We had been in the country about three years, when

\* It may be objected to this severe condemnation of day dreams, that in the writer's case they were evidently the result of a lively imagination, innocently working out pictures and fictions for itself, as such a faculty would be sure to do, and in preparation for a legitimate and useful exercise of it; while, again, it did not prevent her becoming an eminently practical and active person in after life. Still, many indulge in such dreams whose imaginative powers are not of the quality which would render them in any way serviceable; and few, indeed, possess the sensitive conscience, the indomitable energy, and strength of will, which compelled and enabled her to take up the nearest duty so soon as it was plainly before her. Jane Taylor confessed and lamented the tendency. "I know," she said, "that I have sometimes lived so much in a *castle* as almost to forget that I lived in a *house*."—[ED.]

my mother's yearnings to see her family and friends in London were brought to a point by the expected visit of the king (George III.) to St Paul's, to return thanks for his recovery from mental illness ; a scene of excitement little calculated to continue a sane condition, but there was probably some unacknowledged political reason for amusing the public by the fearful venture. Among the thousands who on that occasion flocked to the metropolis were my mother and her two little girls. I was then, June 1789, somewhat more than seven, and Jane not quite six years old. We were to travel by the Bury coach, which passed through Sudbury, seven miles distant, as early as seven in the morning on its road to London. Between one and two, therefore, that summer morning we left our beds in order to start by "Billy East," by which must be understood the postman's cart. Loaded, and covered in as we were, behind our single Rosinante, I soon began to feel very sick ; and being asked how I was, replied, "I am inclined for what I have no inclination to." That I should have borne this early sprout of the pun in mind for much more than half a century, seems something like a waste of memory, does it not ? Yet, if in my wisdom I were to try and forget it now, I daresay I should not be able. My father accompanied us to Sudbury, then returning to his high desk, and the sole companionship of his promising little boy, Isaac, third of his name, my still living and well-known brother. He was at his birth (1787) a remarkably fine child, as is fully attested by a sketch taken of him when less than twenty-four hours old, by my father ; but he began immediately to pine, his death at one time was hourly expected, and a glass held

over his mouth alone detected his breathing. In this state Mrs Perry Branwhite insisted upon taking him to a wet-nurse, a young woman of nineteen, and the change for life was almost instantaneous. He was thenceforward carried daily to "Nanny Keble," of whom there is a small portrait, painted as a gleaner, at Stanford Rivers.\* For size and beauty as a child he became after this almost proverbial. Martin, born fourteen months afterwards, was also placed out with her, and Isaac, therefore, was the only one left at home when we set out for London.

Of London, and its brilliant doings, I can recal but here and there a shred. We had friends in Fleet Street, on the left hand side, looking up to St Paul's, and there we were to take our stations. A better position could scarcely have been selected from which to witness the cavalcade. We went to the house at five in the morning of the 25th of June, the room, a first floor, being fitted up with seats rising from the windows a considerable height behind, but we as little folks were happily placed in front. There we waited, oh, so long! There was amusement, however, in watching the throngs below less fortunate than ourselves, and the ladies in the room, many in full dress with their hair curled and powdered, and head-dresses adorned with white ribbons carrying in gold letters the words, "God save the king." At length, towards noon, the splendid pageant arrived, and fortu-

\* Writing now, so late as 1865, I may point you to the graphic and grateful notice of "Nanny Keble," by your uncle Isaac in *Good Words* for 1864. In a late visit to Lavenham, I had the pleasure of seeing again this poor woman, then nearly ninety, but she started up almost wildly at the name of Isaac Taylor, and said, "Yes, and there was Martin, too."—[NOTE BY MRS GILBERT.]

nately for us a carriage with several of the princesses was detained a considerable time under our windows. They were dressed in white, and some sort of golden ornament lay in the lap of one of them. Poor things! I have thought since, for the lot of English princesses has not always been enviable. So the cavalcade passes into the mists of memory, which refuses to produce more of that long forgotten day.

The evening of the following day London was splendidly illuminated. We children saw a little of it in Holborn, but my poor mother was induced reluctantly to accompany a party to the India House, which was reported particularly brilliant, and from that night dated much of her after life of suffering. Whether from fear of fire, or some local accident, the plugs in that neighbourhood were up and the streets under water, while, to make matters worse, in the midst of the overwhelming crowd both my mother's shoes were trodden off. Many others it seems were equally unfortunate, for in the course of the night she met a woman with a barrowful of lost shoes, amongst which she had the strange luck to pick out first one, and then the other of her own! The cold thus taken, however, became so threatening that my father was summoned to town, and though she recovered the immediate effects, her health was never sound afterwards.

Among the few additional circumstances which I retain of this excursion is a visit to Kensington, to see that James Martin (my mother's uncle), of whose conduct to his aged father you have heard me speak.\* Yes, and my

\* In the sixth chapter, further reference is made to this painful matter, in explanation of certain passages in the "Nursery Rhymes."—[ED.]



terror at passing a door in my uncle Charles Taylor's house, leading to a room, as I was told, full of "dead men's arms and legs," a terror which scarcely yielded to the information, afterwards obtained, that it was only a depository for plaster casts. The "dead men's legs" continued to speed after me, notwithstanding.

My mother having sufficiently recovered, we again left London for our pleasant country home, to her with feelings how different from those under which she first entered it! It was now a home, and with the prospect of more than comfort. The work, to complete which in cheap retirement my father had quitted London, was a set of plates to an edition of Shakespeare, published by his brother Charles. These had been so well executed as to establish his reputation as an artist. Alderman Boydell about this time projected what was to be a great national work, calculated to give employment for many years to the first talent in the country, both in painting and engraving. All the artists of note were engaged to furnish pictures in oil, most of them illustrative of Shakespeare, and all the engravers followed in their wake. Upon my father showing to Mr Boydell some specimen plates of his small Shakespeare, he was immediately entrusted with a large plate (measuring about 24 inches by 18), the subject being the death of David Rizzio by Opie. For this engraving, an immense advance upon anything he had done before, my father was to receive 250 guineas. I have heard it said that the painter having some cause of pique against Dr Walcot, the notorious Peter Pindar of the day, introduced his portrait as the principal assassin. It is possible that Peter in some of his satires may have justly incurred the rebuke.

I have heard my dear father say with what a pang of depression and anxiety he contemplated so large an undertaking, which must be carried through with his own solitary hand, and upon which so much of the well-being of his family was suspended. But his was not the heart to cower before difficulties. Hope, faith, activity, patience, cheerfulness—what a train of angel helpers!—were at his side, and to it he went. The work was admirably executed, though not without difficulties. It was necessary to send the plate frequently to London for proofs, and at every such time the painter revised it, suggesting alterations of effect by black and white chalk. Who but an engraver knows the doleful meaning of a “touched proof?” An alteration freely made while the painter could count ten, might cost the engraver more, probably, than as many days, or even weeks to effect. However, the plate was entirely successful, and being exhibited at the Society of Arts in the Adelphi, obtained the gold medal, and a premium of ten guineas, as the best engraving of the year.\*

My father was now loaded with commissions, and the large parlour which, unoccupied, had been our play-room, became the centre of attraction to the neighbourhood. “The Pictures at Mr Taylor’s” became the lions of Lavenham. One of them, a noble picture by Stothard—the

\* The picture from which this engraving was made was exhibited in 1862 at the great South Kensington Exposition of that year. Though considered one of the best of Opie’s works it looked poor beside the engraving, which is marked by great vigour. To Isaac Taylor, who was a little boy at the time it was executed, the picture, which was of large size, recalled his favourite amusement of creeping behind the great canvas, and using it as a portentous drum.—[ED.]

first interview between Henry the VIII. and Ann Boleyn—contained sixteen figures, rather larger than life, so that it filled the side of the room. A beautiful one by Hamilton, about eight feet by six, represented the separation of Edwy and Elgiva. That of Jaques and the wounded deer was of the same size, with many others. For engraving the Ann Boleyn the price was 500 guineas. It was now necessary to take apprentices, and two were engaged, one of whom, Nathan Branwhite, the eldest son of the schoolmaster, afterwards became an artist of repute. Both lived in the town, and did not, therefore, intrude on the comfort of the fireside, to which my father and mother would not willingly have submitted. Another room, however, was fitted up as a workroom, to which my father's high desk was removed; and, as various smaller works were in hand at the time, a printing press was procured for "proving," and a young woman, glad to earn a few shillings apart from the spinning wheel, was instructed to work it; the building intended for a brewhouse being converted into a printing office for the purpose.

A course of easy prosperity appeared likely now to reward my father's industry; but an immediate difficulty arose from the fact that our pleasant house was required by its owner, the Rev. William Cooke, and enquiry in every direction for another was made without success. After much anxiety it was found necessary to purchase one close by, having ground sufficient for a garden, and with three cottages adjoining. It was in ruinous condition. For the entire property the purchase-money was £250, and it was to cost £250 more to render it habitable.

This work, now commenced, therefore, and with all the

pleasure that a thorough contriver, architect, and gardener, such as my father by nature was, could not but feel in the seducing business of brick and mortar, paint and paper, grass and gravel. Time, thought, ingenuity, and hope were occupied to his heart's content. Here, in a home of his own, contrived in every particular on his own ideas of convenience and comfort, and with a large garden laid out to his own taste, he hoped to rear his family, and spend his life. But a cloud the size of a man's hand was in the sky.

On the 30th of October in this year, 1792, your Uncle Jefferys was born. Nanny Keble was then out of date, and the infant was consigned to the care of nurse Hunt, a very clean cottager living up an entry in the High Street, but open to the country behind. He was about six weeks old, when my father started on one of his annual journeys for the Pocket-Book. As usual it was in a "quarter-cart," and this time as far as Thetford in Norfolk. The season was advanced, it came on continued rain, and having no shelter, he returned with a severe cold, and rheumatic-fever ensued. It was the commencement of a time of trial, not perhaps exceeded by any of the subsequent afflictions of my mother's life. For three months he was confined helpless, and almost hopeless, to his bed. Very soon it was requisite to stop the workmen at the other house, which, close in view of the room in which my father lay, was a sight of agony to my poor mother; it stood dismantled and desolate, and with every probability that it would never be inhabited by him.

On my father's personal exertions depended our entire provision. Nothing had as yet been realised beyond what

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was required for the purchase of the house. Two apprentices, not sufficiently advanced to do anything but of the humblest order, were left unemployed. The four children at home, the eldest not eleven, the youngest only four years old, were left to the tender mercies of a kitchen, full of the helps and sitters-up that disorganise a house on such occasions; while my mother, weak from her recent confinement, stricken in her tenderest affections, giving up in one desperate abandonment every care of which her husband was not the object, confined herself night and day with little sleep or food to his bedside. What it cost her to give up her children none can estimate who did not know the depth of tenderness with which, till then, she had devoted herself to their interests. It was sorrow indeed!

I have wondered since that I was not admitted to render more assistance than I recollect was the case, but I suspect the typhoid form, which I believe the disease assumed, prevented this. I remember well the forlorn foreboding that was continually upon me, for, though I was not told my papa was dying, yet the daily visits of the Lavenham doctor, then those of Dr Drake of Hadleigh, and at last the summons of Dr Norford from Bury, told me of the danger; and when on the Christmas morning I awoke and heard the bells, my first fear was that they were tolling for his death. But on Christmas-eve a special prayer-meeting was held in behalf of him of whose recovery little hope was left, and he was restored, as it seemed, at the supplication of the sympathizing Christian friends who then assembled. On the same dreary evening, Dr Norford at his bedside, after fixing his eyes upon him, and apparently with deep attention watch-

ing his pulse for a long time,—my mother breathless on his eyes and lips, said cheerfully,—“Well, sir, you are not a dying man to-night.” Oh! the moments of intense joy that sometimes sparkle like stars in the midst of trouble! No seasons of what is called happiness are half so delightful. It was a mournful circumstance that within a month of this visit when Dr Norford's words brought life to the household, he was himself removed by sudden death.

It was at the most alarming period of my father's terrible illness that the mind of my dear mother seemed on a sudden to give way. She had done and borne everything with indefatigable patience and energy; a single egg in the day was for a length of time all the sustenance she could take; she never left the room, and committed the personal attendance requisite to no other hand; but on one of those gloomy winter days she was suddenly missing. The alarm of the whole house was very great. Mr Hickman was sent for, and at length she was found alone in the solitary meadows, walking on the brink of that dull river. He soothed and brought her home, but for an hour or two she did not seem aware of the circumstances. She presently entirely recovered, and never sank afterwards.

So at last the winter of sorrow, deeper and more gloomy than that of the season, began to break up. Relapse, it is true, came upon relapse, and I well remember the undefined terror with which, from time to time, I heard that word, but still our dear father was evidently recovering. With spring came hope and glimpses of happiness, and at last the workmen were summoned to the abandon-

ed house again. After five months' confinement, my father once more appeared amongst us. There were large bills to pay—besides physicians' fees, £30 to the surgeon, the cost of a bushel of phials left as perquisites on our hands—innumerable derangements to rectify, anxious work to resume, and strength wasted all but to the grave to recover; but, nothing dismayed, he took his place among various and pressing duties, with thankfulness, faith, and hope.

At the mid-summer of 1793 our new house was deemed habitable, and thither, as to a new life, we were delighted to remove. By his unfailling contrivance, the house was made to suit us exactly, and the garden, beautiful and pleasant, to our heart's desire. The best parlour (a "drawing-room" was not then known in Lavenham), till a little of the pecuniary pressure was worked down, was left unfurnished at the disposal of "Ann and Jane" to whip their tops in, but the common parlour was as pretty and comfortable as it could be, with a door and a large bay window into the garden, and a sliding panel for convenient communication with the kitchen. China closets and store closets were large and commodious; all was so convenient, so contrived for the comfort of every day, that to live and die there was the reasonable hope, as it was the highest ambition, of my parents. The garden, too, was an especially nice one. Happily there were several well-grown trees already on the ground, and a trellis arbour covered with honeysuckle, stood on a rising ground underneath a picturesque old pear tree. Then there was a long shrubbery walk, and an exit by a white gate and rails to the common. A poultry yard, containing sometimes

seventy fowls of different sorts was on the premises behind, and an excavated and paved pond for ducks.

To this agreeable residence, however, my mother carried a state of health, which effectually prevented her from enjoying it. Doubtless the demands made on both mind and body during my father's illness conduced to this result. But so it is, that in various ways it almost uniformly happens that the entrance upon any scene from which much has been anticipated is spoiled. The thorns and briars threatened as the spontaneous growth of a sin-smitten world seem here to be planted thickly, and with clear design to obstruct the path. Yet, though assisted by these constantly recurring intimations, how long it is before we learn effectually, if ever, that the next projected change—the home we have selected and furnished for ourselves—does not contain a single element of substantial happiness; that it is not fitted to be our *rest*; that it might be a greater curse than any other if we could contentedly feel it to be such! Perhaps in time, after numerous disappointments, we begin to spell out the meaning, to regard the future with chastened expectation, and to enjoy with more sobriety the comforts that are vouchsafed to us. Happy if such is the result rather than a dull unthankful impatience!

But even if no obvious interference occurs with our designs, yet to every spot whither we go we carry *ourselves*, and with ourselves the root of evil. An ill-governed mind, and may we not say that every mind is more or less so? cannot be entirely happy anywhere, and blessed is he who can honestly say, "I have learned in



whatsoever state I am to be therewith content." Till then,

" 'Tis but a poor relief we gain,  
To change the place and keep the pain."

But even the Christian heart, controlled and regulated as in some degree it is, needs the constant memento. Some bitter must needs be infused into every cup of enjoyment in order to sustain in the spirit the recollection of its true character. There is but one remove respecting which a hope without alloy may be safely indulged, if even this always safely.

The scene of comfort with the prospect of temporal prosperity now before us, was such as fully to meet the quiet ambition of my parents. I sometimes heard their speculations for the future, but a change of *style* was not among them. Would that such were now the spirit of the times! To live as they were, but without anxiety, and to command all that was needed for the education of their children, formed the limit of their wishes. Yet, even in such a secluded sphere, we were not quite secure from moral hazards.

Our nearest neighbour was the Rev. W. Cooke, whose tenants we had recently been, and with his daughter, a sweet and beautiful girl of our own age, we became acquainted at the dancing school, the pupils of which consisted, besides ourselves, of the younger Watkinsons, and a selection from the young gentlemen of the school opposite. Our fat dancing-master—for light as might be his professional step, his reputed weight was eighteen stone—came over weekly from Bury to a room at the Swan Inn, and it has been no small pleasure to me to

meet in after years with one of my dancing partners of those days, in General Addison, belonging to a Sudbury family of Nonconformists, and who showed himself to the last not ashamed of his colours. With the Cooke's we were soon at home. He was quite a clergyman of the old style,—slender in make, courtly in manners, his wife something between a fashionable and a motherly woman. The Favells, mother and daughter, generally resided with them, and during vacations young Favell, a gay good-natured Cambridge-man, fuller of amusing tricks than of qualifications for the clerical profession, for which he was training. In this family, while the elders took their evening game at cards, the children amused themselves with an old pack in the corner, and I became exceedingly fond of the diversion. About the same time an elderly lady, a relative of my mother, whose sources of amusement lay in narrow compass, visited us, and we were allowed to borrow a pack of cards for her entertainment. They were returned as soon as she left, not without urgent entreaty on our part that we might have a pack of our own. My wise father firmly refused. He believed in the “stitch in time.”

Bury St. Edmunds fair, was a mart for all the surrounding country. There, not “dresses” but “gowns” were bought, destined not for the dressmaker, but the “mantua-maker.” Prints of 3s. 6d. per yard, calendered, as we now do our chintzes and curtains, made handsome “gowns” for a married lady, a square neck-handkerchief of book muslin, duly clear-starched, being pinned over the dress. It was one of our Autumn holidays to drive over in a post-chaise and spend a day at Bury fair, making necessary

purchases. There our winter clothing, as well as my first wax doll, were bought. On one occasion when, after dining at an inn, our chaise was ordered for the return, troops of enviable holiday-makers were flocking into the theatre opposite. We were urgent again, "just for once," but again my father refused. In these cases the narrow end of the wedge may have been in his mind, and the remembrance may be worth preserving.

At the Watkinsons', grave people as they were, there were Christmas dances, and of course at the Cookes', but to these we were too young to be invited.

On one occasion, however, we were allowed, under my mother's wing, to go to what was called a dance. It was at a farm house, to the family of which we had been introduced under circumstances illustrating the habits of the place and time. The small-pox was not allowed to make its appearance within an inhabited district. A singularly deplorable building, at a short distance on the road to Bury, was appropriated to the reception of cases occurring among the poor of Lavenham; nor shall I forget the feeling of mingled terror and mystery with which we regarded it, if ever we passed within sight of this forlorn receptacle of disease and misery. But from the same rule, when respectable families had resolved on inoculation, it was necessary to take lodgings for the purpose at a distance from the town. Mr Coe, of the farm house referred to, was about to inoculate his own family, and it was decided that my mother and I should remove thither, in charge of my three young brothers, that they might submit to the anxious process. (My sister and I had passed favourably through it in London.) As none

throughout the household were seriously ill, the sojourn amongst them was more of a holiday than anything else ; and now at Christmas we were invited to the dance, where no less than sixty rural belles and beaux assembled. The chamber of arrival was thickly strewn with curl papers, my own hair was dressed as a wig two or three inches deep, hanging far down the back, and covering the shoulders from side to side, a singular fashion which I have lived to see re-appear among my grandchildren. Perhaps I had better confess that, though having learned to dance, an advantage not general to the company, I might have expected some appreciation as a partner, the full-formed easy figures, glowing complexions, and merry eyes of the farmer's daughters, were undeniably more in request. There was one among them that, if my impressions are correct, was in all respects the most beautiful young woman I have ever seen. I am now in my eightieth year, where is she? Her history, whatever it has been, we may be almost sure is closed. To me it is very impressive to review the associates of my childhood with the thought—still existing—gone somewhere—but whither?

I have frequently adverted to a nervousness of imagination, from which, indeed, I have suffered through life. The mention of Hadleigh, the residence of Dr Drake, of literary celebrity, recals to my mind a torment of my childhood, with which one of the martyr-worthies of the reign of Queen Mary, Dr Rowland Taylor, who was rector of that place, had some connection. Low, sloping hills rise on almost every side of Hadleigh, and from their summits may be seen the winding river, the green meadows, the substantial bridge, and the ancient houses

of the town; a steep lane, between banks, leads up to Oldham Common, where an old rude stone bears this inscription:—

1555.

DR. TAYLOR,

Defending that was goode,  
At this place left his Blode.

He had been taken to London and imprisoned in the Compter. After degradation by Bishop Bonner, and an affecting interview that evening with his wife and children, the sheriff and his officers led him forth in total darkness, for it was two o'clock on the morning of the 6th of February, to the Woolsack Inn in Aldgate, "but"—here I quote from a brief biography—"as he passes through St. Botolph's Churchyard, his wife and two little girls are waiting, shivering with cold. They spring out to meet him, and they four kneel down to pray for the last time. He gives them parting counsel and his blessing, kisses his children and his wife, and the brave woman says, 'God be with thee, dear husband, I will, by God's grace, meet thee at Hadleigh.' At this spectacle the sheriff weeps, and the officers, strong men as they are, are bowed down. And now, committed to the custody of the sheriff of Essex, and guarded by yeomen and officers, the prisoner is placed on horseback, and the cavalcade moves on to Brentwood, to Chelmsford, and so to Lavenham. Two days are spent at Lavenham, the last halting-place. Many gentlemen assemble there and try to turn him to Popery. Pardon, preferment, even a bishopric are offered him, but all in vain." And so he passes on to Oldham Common, but a few miles off, is chained to the stake, and breathes

out his last words amidst the flames, 'Father, for Jesus' sake, receive my soul.'"

Familiar with this mournful narrative, a nervous terror fell upon me whenever I had to pass the old brick building in which Dr Taylor was said to have been confined. It stood at some distance behind a wall, so that I could see little of it except the upper storey—in my time, I fancy, a hay loft. In this was an opening, not exactly a window, but an orifice closed by shutters of time-blackened boards, sometimes left open, and disclosing a *dark unknown*—the very chamber, as I either heard or supposed, in which the martyr had been immured! Whenever I had to pass this haunted spot alone, I well remember that I always *ran*. You will wonder that I have not been frightened to death long ago. You will understand, at least, why I so regularly refuse to listen to a ghost story.

We had, in our new house, a large room, running the entire length of one part of the building, this was appropriated to business. My father's high desk was placed at the upper end; a row of windows facing the yard, was occupied by the apprentices, and another, overlooking the garden, was filled by the children pursuing their education, with whom, two or three times a week, were associated some of the juniors of the Watkinson family, to share advantages which were now well understood by our neighbours. One young lady became an inmate for a time, who was endeavouring to learn the art of Engraving, to which, however, neither her taste nor her health proved equal. Another addition, too, was made about this time, in a Mrs Salmon, a sister of the Dr Norford who

has been mentioned. Her history was singular and mournful. Early in life, she had been on the stage, had married an officer, and accompanied him to America during the war there; she was now a widow, in nearly destitute circumstances, and having been brought through accumulated trials to her "right mind," had fallen, in some way, among the Christian people at Lavenham. My father and mother, much interested in her condition, offered her a temporary home under their roof, and her lively manners and variety of anecdote, rendered her a not undesirable guest. Our house was thus a scene of active and intelligent industry, and our circle not wanting in diversity of interest, yet notwithstanding our numerous household (to which Nathan Branwhite was now added), we never kept more than one servant! Incredible, and therefore impossible it would be thought now, yet the home of my childhood was not disorderly. We were always punctual as to time as well as early, in part, perhaps, the secret of this creditable state of things; and though, during the ten years at Lavenham, we had our share of indifferent or unworthy servants, we had the good fortune to have, at least, two who deserved the favourable mention made of them by my mother, in her "Present to a Young Servant," under the names of Susan Gardener and Sarah Leven; both remained with us till they married, and the latter came occasionally afterwards. Needlework was never put out, but the abundant ornament now thought necessary for children, was happily not thought so then. My mother used to say that "a child is pretty enough without trimmings."

Yet, with all this activity, my mother suffered con-

stant pain, and at this time, though drives two or three times a week were recommended, the jolt over a small stone in the road was almost more than she could bear. It was determined, therefore, that, leaving Mrs Salmon to act as housekeeper, she should visit London, and take the best advice there. My father, mother, and I, then twelve years old, made up the party, and remained in lodgings at Islington about a month. She derived, however, little benefit from the treatment prescribed. But it was at this time that I was first introduced to the valued friends of my youth, Susan and Luck Conder, the only surviving children of Mr S. Conder of Clapton. A distance of more than half a century, and half the globe, has not yet severed associations then formed. Their father and mother, even before their marriage, had been the friends of both my parents, and it gives me pleasure to feel that the entail has not yet been cut off. The changes of situation, and too often of feeling which frequently terminate early friendships, are, to me, peculiarly painful to contemplate. It is true that, in many instances, the local associations of childhood and youth are better dropped than continued; moral differences may widen, and tastes so opposite may develop themselves, that continued intimacy might be as burdensome as dangerous. But where it is only that one party has been fortunate, the other unfortunate, the separation is mournful indeed. How much more so when the inequality divides the brothers and sisters of the same nursery!

I please myself in the belief that, among you, dear children, there is a feeling too deeply fraternal and sisterly to fear much from the blights of time or circumstance.



Still, who shall predict the irritations, supposed or actual wrongs, which, as life sweeps roughly over you, may interrupt the harmony! "The mother of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing," and, as in a sea bank, you would dread a fissure, however small, rid yourselves with loving ingenuity, speed, or sacrifice, of the first feeling of suspicion, of jealousy, or any of the thousand wedges, hot from a forge below, by which hearts and families are sundered,—above all, dreading the "wedge of gold." Ah, I cannot help pausing over the bitter possibility, and by all the tenderness that consecrates a voice from the grave, would entreat you not to allow a breach to commence. Will circumstances never arise to try the elasticity of affection? strange if they do not! But are you obliged to succumb to them? No, you were born probationers. Life is but one advancing trial; the best of its possessions have to be paid for—some by industry, privation, suffering; others, and the best of all, by forbearance, self-control, self-denial; by the reflections and resolves of a rational and Christian mind. Habituate yourselves to realise the feelings natural to those around you, and deal as tenderly with them as with your own. Above all, and may that be the master key to all your hearts, "Be tender, be pitiful, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." So prays your mother, living and amongst you, so, with intensity of emphasis, would she pray, if allowed to address you from her final resting-place.

But to return to Lavenham. A change of weather was in the sky, and it blew from different quarters. The Revolution in France had produced, in England, universal ferment, and with it, fear. Parties in every nook and

corner of the country bristled into enmity, and the dissenters, always regarded as the friends of liberty, fell under the fury of toryism, exploding from the corrupt under-masses of what, in many places, was an all but heathen population. "No Press, no Press," meaning no Presbyterians, was the watchword of even our quiet town. Troops of ill-disposed, disorderly people often paraded the streets with this hue-and-cry, halting, especially, at the houses of known and leading dissenters. On one occasion, as has been related, both in my sister's "Life" and in my brother's "Recollections," our house was only saved from wreck by the appearance of our clerical neighbour, Mr Cooke, at his door, with a request to the vagabond concourse to pass on, but the credit of which interference he entirely disclaimed to my father when he went to thank him the next day, coolly giving as his reason that Mrs Cooke's sister was unwell at the time, and the disturbance might have been injurious to her.

And it was not from an ignorant populace only that danger was to be apprehended. A system of oppression and espionage was adopted, which threatened to violate the free privacies of life. No one felt safe in expressing a political opinion, even at his own table, if a servant stood behind his chair. The shades of Muir and Palmer raised a warning finger in even the least suspecting companies. The safeguards of Habeas Corpus were removed, and the counsel once given, "let them that are in Judea flee unto the mountains," seemed fearfully appropriate to the day. America was the home of safety to which all who could emigrate began to cast a longing eye, and under the conviction that England would become less

and less of a mother country to her children, our friend, Mr Watkinson, to the inexpressible regret and loss of the circle with which he was connected, announced his intention of transplanting his family to that land of liberty. Of Mr Watkinson's twelve children, one daughter had married a gentleman holding a farm not far from Lavenham, and not only did they consent to share the removal, but others, to the number of sixty in the neighbourhood, took advantage of the convoy, and left at the same time.

It was the first serious breach upon the prosperity of our little church, and it was speedily followed by another. This was in 1794, when "Ann and Jane" were respectively twelve and eleven years of age; yet the correspondence was kept up with their friends across the water, till the death of Jane Taylor in 1824, broke one link of the friendship, and that of Ann Watkinson in 1835, the other.

Though Mr Watkinson was eminently the wealthy man of the congregation, my father was the friend from whom, when quarter day did not come quite soon enough, the minister was accustomed to borrow. If in need of temporary assistance in this way, Mr Hickman would come into the workroom, and exhibit five or ten fingers on the edge of my father's desk, when the dumb show would be adroitly responded to without exposing the business to children, apprentices, or standers by. My father and mother made early confidants of us in their *own* affairs, but they held it to be neither kind nor wise to be equally frank with the affairs of others. *Our* children they thought are not *their* children, and this to them makes all the difference. My mother had a truly Christian delicacy in these respects, and used frequently to say,

“People excuse themselves by saying, it was only my husband, only my child, to whom I told it ; but unless it were *your* husband or *your* child, this renders it not a whit more agreeable to the confiding friend.” My mother, who was anything but reserved, made a strong distinction between concerns simply her own, and those with which she might be entrusted.

Let me add a word upon this. There are two things in our intercourse with society which it behoves us to keep in mind : one is, that a burdened spirit in the relief afforded by communication and sympathy is sometimes led into disclosures which may afterwards be sorely regretted. It should be felt binding, therefore, on the honour of the receiver to hold sacred even an implied confidence. Many little occasions may arise trying to this integrity of friendship ; but they are moments of temptation. Remember that for the short-lived pleasure of *telling*, you barter the approval of your own heart, and forfeit, if it come to light, the confiding esteem of your friend. Remember, too, that once told, neither skill nor regret can recall the wrong. The thing is known, will always be known, and unless others have more delicacy than yourself, it will also spread. The other point refers to such a case as this : you have come into possession of some scandal, by which the standing of persons within your circle is irrecoverably lowered, though it may have occurred early in life, or been followed by a complete change of character, or years of consistent usefulness ; and then some stranger has scarcely set foot in the locality when you are impelled to dole out to him all the grievous history ! A mischief this as irreparable, as it was need-

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less, has been committed ; the disgrace of the unconscious victim is handed on, and no length of blameless conduct can avail to deliver him from the grip his sin has got upon his name. No doubt there are cases in which it becomes a painful duty to instruct a stranger in the real character of persons to whom he may be unsuspectingly introduced, but let it be seen to, that such is the necessity, before the wrong be done.

It was at this juncture, when infidelity and crime seemed to have come forth with shameless ferocity, that the Missionary society (not to mention the Bible Society) took its rise. Its history you will better learn elsewhere, but it is curious to recollect the hesitancy with which it was met. Mr, afterwards Dr Bogue, was among the first actual movers in this great Christian enterprise. If only permission from Government could be secured he wished to transport himself as a missionary to India, but great objection was in the way, and application was made, I conclude, to the churches generally, to unite in petitions to Government to that effect. The strange proposal was discussed in our parlour between Mr Hickman and my father; and forward as he was in every good word and work, I remember the doubt with which he entertained it. Could it be a duty? was it not running before Providence? and so forth. Where could the antiquated christian be now unearthed, whom we could find harbouring such suspicions? What hath God wrought!

From such a state of feeling generally towards the great missionary work, it might be supposed that vital religion did not exist in the country. But the suspicion would be as unjust as it may appear natural. The religion

of the State—that by law established—was indeed snoring in its sleep, or if a little more awake, was speaking only the great swelling words of vanity, which the pet of kings and statesmen is sure to utter. It is true there were Scotts and Newtons to be found weeping for the evils by which they were surrounded, and diffusing a clear light within limited spheres ; but as far as, either at Lavenham, or afterwards at Colchester, my own knowledge extended, it might be charitable not to depict the character of our authorized teachers generally.

It was more than half a century earlier than the period to which I refer, that Wesley and Whitfield darted, as by electric flash, the light of heaven through the stagnant masses of a church-going population, and from that time vital religion found new homes. Brutal, senseless opposition could not extinguish a work that was of God, and the good of Methodism will survive whatever may become of it as a system. But it was of the Independent Churches that I knew the most, and many were the excellent of the earth who found a shelter among them. They had, however, been hemmed in by early persecution, they were isolated in narrow localities, and had yet to learn, among other things, the practical meaning of those words, "Go ye into all the world." The command had been addressed to the earliest church, but seemed now quietly consigned to the churches of times yet long to come. But day was dawning, and the injunction was at length spelt out and obeyed.

But I shall finish my life before my memoir if I indulge in these perpetual digressions. The sore feeling which had been excited in the church at Lavenham by Mr Hick-

man's marriage, and the removal about the same time of so many from the congregation by the Watkinson exodus to America, decided him shortly after, to surrender his little charge under the walnut trees, and to accept an invitation from another church. There was still a nucleus of intelligent hearers, but little prospect of sufficient support for a respectable minister; and under these circumstances a suggestion was made which it might have been wise to adopt. My father had been for several years a deacon in much esteem, and during the occasional absences of Mr Hickman had been accustomed to conduct a service in the hall of our house, which, on such occasions, was generally well filled. His early aspirations had been directed to the ministry; his qualifications both as a christian, and a man of thought and knowledge were probably superior to what the church as now situated would be likely to secure, and he had, moreover, the opportune advantage of an income which would relieve its now crippled resources. It occurred, therefore, to Mr Hickman to propose him as a successor. But it was not to be. The ministers and churches of the neighbourhood did what they could by opening their pulpits to my father to sanction the proceeding, but the majority of the Lavenham church apparently could not brook that a fellow-member should thus become their minister.\*

\* It should be remarked that, though unusual, the selection of a minister from among the members of a church is legitimate according to the principles of the Independent Body. They believe the ministry to receive appointment and authority directly from the Church; and by the *Church*—they understand, according as they think to Scriptural precedent, and primitive Catholic tradition—"a body of believing men and women who enter into open recognised relation with each other for the purposes of common worship, mutua

Yet by this means, a door was opened to ministerial labour elsewhere. In the course of his above-mentioned services in the neighbourhood my father preached on Sunday at Nayland, a small place within six miles of Colchester, and on Monday walked over to look at the interesting old town. There he met with a Lavenham friend, who, hearing how matters stood, immediately formed the design of transplanting him into his own locality. There was at the time (besides the influential "Round Meeting" as it was called) a small congregation of Presbyterian origin, which had degenerated into a condition, not so intellectual, but as cold as Unitarianism. There was a good building, some small endowment, and two or three substantial families; while a return to something like evangelical sentiments seemed the only chance of revival. It happened that a Monday evening lecture was held at the Methodist Chapel, and the Lavenham friend arranged that my father

edification, and combined Christian service; and who under a freely constituted government, in submission to the law of Christ, maintain the ordinances, and sacraments, and discipline enjoined by his law." Such a Church (distinct from the congregation of hearers only), they hold, must be a local and limited body, but bound to associate with other churches similarly constituted, so as to form the Catholic Church of Christ, and to exhibit to the world its true unity.

Ordination is the solemn recognition and sanction of the choice of the particular church, by the ministers of churches of the same order, and is frequently accompanied by the laying on of hands. But the selection of a minister in the manner proposed to the church at Lavenham is exceptional, since special education for the office is in most cases desirable. A young man wishing to devote himself to the ministry is recommended by the Church, of which as an essential condition he must be a member, to one of the colleges instituted for ministerial training. The course of instruction varies from four to six years, and the candidate is then eligible for the pastorate over any church which may call him to the charge.—[E.D.]



should be invited to officiate, while some of the principal members of the vacant church were apprized that a stranger would preach that night, who might be available if they wished. It illustrates the state of feeling with regard to Methodism, that one of them confessed to having hidden himself behind a pillar to hear the sermon, from shame of being seen at a Methodist Chapel! So, however, it came about that my father was scarcely at home again before the friend who had been so active in the matter appeared, commissioned, if practicable, to secure his services.

My mother foresaw at a glance the speedy termination of all her hopes and plans for Lavenham, and her heart sank at the prospect that was opened. She disliked both change and publicity. To the country she had now become deeply attached, and to exchange the domestic privacy which her deafness and constant suffering rendered additionally grateful, for a conspicuous station in a large town was a grievous trial. But she was not the woman to suffer tastes and feelings to interfere with duty. My father preached his first Sunday sermon at Colchester on the 1st of November 1795; and on the 20th of January, 1796, Jane and I took leave of the pleasant home of our childhood at Lavenham, commencing with the new era, the perils, the follies, the enjoyments, the vanities of youth! "Oh Lord, remember not against me the sins of my youth nor my transgressions!"

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[ED.—Seventy-five years, and more, after the last-mentioned date, two grandsons of Mr Taylor set off one after-

noon from Hadleigh, to walk to Lavenham. They took the ten miles by pleasant footpaths, that wandered up and down from village to village, noticing among the cheerful Suffolk cottages, the gable ends, and projecting storeys, and thatched roofs, and embowered porches, familiar to them in their grandfather's sketch-books.

Towards evening, a lofty tower rose in the distance, and marked where Lavenham stood. But the way soon sank into a wooded hollow, where uncared-for timber, avenues all overgrown with weeds and bushes, and a deserted mansion—it had been years in Chancery—seemed to burden the air with memories. A footpath traversed meadows where lavish herbage concealed a silent stream, and suddenly the dun roofs of a small town, with almost as many trees as houses came into view—the lordly tower retreating to the left. They then recognised in the “solitary meadows, and the dull stream,” the scene of the wife's anguish during the supposed death-illness of her husband.

A street of low nodding houses strayed upwards from a small common. Upon the gable fronts, elaborate devices in plaster work, bulging with age, justified the dates they carried—1690-1695, and so on; while some black carved doorposts, or cornices thick with whitewash, indicated dates still earlier. No spinning-wheels encumbered the pavement, but the sound of the handloom and the song of the girl weaver were heard from several open windows; the fabric, however, was only horse-hair.

A succession of lanes branching off, and all climbing upwards, were bordered as much by old gardens and orchards as by houses; while these, again, were sometimes

cottages, and sometimes many-peaked mansions. At the foot of one such lane the travellers stopped and gazed with curious interest, puzzled by alterations, and, yet, with a dreamlike consciousness of identity. "Is this Shilling Street?" they asked. "Yes, sure," replied an ancient; but he was not quite ancient enough to tell all they wanted, and further on, a lean old man, resting upon the dilapidated steps of a doorway, was referred to as a better authority. "Yes, yonder was Cooke's house, and he had heard say that a Mr Taylor once lived there, and in the one next below, too." "And which was Mr Meeking's?" "Why, here to be sure, this very door, but it's not as it used to be, you see; it was all one then from end to end."

It was somewhat difficult to choose quarters for the night; one or two antiquated inns, of which the "Swan" was one, showed gaping gateways, where the London wagon might erst have rumbled in, but bed-rooms looked fusty and forlorn. They found accommodation at last, where the ceiling of one large chamber was richly decorated, and a recurring device showed that the house must have had something to do with the "Springes," a name older than the fifteenth century in Lavenham, and of great note in woollens—now perpetuated as "Spring Rice."

Morning, in the market place, showed it crowning a knoll, from which lanes of old houses dropped down on every side, an old-world town. At one corner a very picturesque half-timbered house, quaintly carved, went by the various names of the "Guild Hall," its first designation, the "Poor-house," and Mr ——'s wool store. Connected with its premises at the back was a weird old building, abutting on a wall, and answering to the descrip-

tion of Dr Rowland Taylor's last resting-place on his way to the stake at Hadleigh. But the two houses that had belonged to their grandparents were of course the chief attraction to the visitors. One of them, "Cooke's House," the earliest and the longest occupied, was in all the antiquated condition that could be desired, though showing a decent front to the lane. The large parlour, where Stothard's and Opie's great gallery pictures used to rest against the wall, lacked only them. The little work-room where Ann and Jane sat at their lessons, while the father handled his graver and the mother sped her needle, was, like all the rest, intact. The house gables towards the garden were a tangled mass of luxuriance—vine, and pear, and jasmine, and many coloured creepers, and the garden itself, abundant in careless flower and fruit, stretched away into an orchard of grey-stemmed trees and cool grass. Upstairs they explored rambling ghostly rooms, one of them that in which the Isaac Taylor, most known of the name, was born. It looked over to the second house inhabited by his father. This was too modernized to retain much interest, though work-room and printing-room and the place of the charming old "bay window" could still be recognized. The Branwhites, and Watkinsons, and Meekings were remembered names in the place; an honoured representative of the latter occupying the Watkinson's house. The venerable depopulated grammar school, slumbered among its walnut trees. In Water Street, the water course was now controlled or hidden, and pattens would no longer be needed to reach the Meeting-house, lying back from the street, but now replaced by a carpenter's yard.

In the evening, the church, a grand edifice standing on a hill apart, was visited. The tower, lofty and massive as a castle keep, shewed, on nearer view, that it was intended to carry pinnacles, of which the bases only remained. The explanation lay in a half-demolished tomb before the church door, described as that of the architect, killed by falling from the tower's "dreadful height," upon which, in consequence, not another stone was laid. Notes of an organ, and of choristers, drew the visitors within, where a few lights mingled with the yellow dusk. The chanting ceased, and a voice was heard reciting,—“And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” and the listeners thought that among the ancestry they were come to honour were some who had worthily filled more than one of those noble offices.]

DOMESTIC RECOLLECTIONS.

CHAPTER III.

*COLCHESTER.*

**CONTENTS OF CHAPTER III.**

**The Colchester House—Colchester Town—Colchester People—The  
Work Room, and Engraving Mysteries—Youthful Friends—  
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Wife -Umbelliferous Society.**

## CHAPTER III.

COLCHESTER.

1795-1798.

“Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite  
Beyond it.” . . . .

TENNYSON, *The Gardener's Daughter*.

“And I must work thro' months of toil,  
And years of cultivation.”

*Ibid., Amphion.*

To remove from a country seclusion like that of Lavenham to a gay and busy garrison town such as Colchester, was to a girl of fourteen a move of some peril. My father, as before, had been our pioneer, and he had succeeded in obtaining a house with a garden, almost the only advantage for which my mother and he were disposed to stipulate. But it was nearly in the centre of the town, in a street which, though narrow and disagreeable at one end, became wider, and owned several excellent houses at the other. Ours was among the excellent houses, but it was not one of them. It was just respectable, and would just hold us; and the garden, not a small one, contained some well-grown trees. Speedily, under my father's hand, it showed grass plots, and winding walks of good Essex gravel, a white seat, a vine-covered arbour, and so forth, besides laburnums and lilacs that warm my heart to think of even now.



Our travelling party consisted of my mother, Ann, Jane, Isaac, Martin, Jefferys, and our favourite cat. Of myself I cannot think as other than stiff and awkward, as I was certainly thin and pale, though enjoying good health, and a strength beyond that of my companions generally. Jefferys was a delicate child of three, for he had suffered from measles, whooping cough, and fever successively. The beauty of the party was the cat, as "Beauty" was her name, but she became so unwell a few weeks after our arrival that it was deemed best to consign her to a watery grave. She was taken down two or three lanes to the river, a brick was tied round her neck, and she was thrown into the stream. The next morning, however, she appeared at our back door in excellent health (perhaps the earliest "water cure" on record.) Not the least puzzling circumstance was her scenting out the new dwelling in the midst of the strange town. Yet a far more extraordinary instance of sagacity was related of a cat belonging to a lady of Lexden, two miles from Colchester. This lady also possessed a house in Bedford Row, London, to which she was in the habit of removing for the season. The cat always travelled with her, but on one occasion was forgotten and left behind in London; yet within a fortnight she made her appearance at the country-house in Lexden. By what means had she steered her way over the sea of roofs and hedges intervening between one home and the other? Many similar exploits, however, are related of dogs, and I do not know—does anybody?—why cats should not be as clever.

On arriving at Colchester we were located for a few days under the hospitable roof of a Mr Mansfield, one of

the deacons, a worthy man of some property, a manufacturer of "says" and baize, the former a sort of poor flannel, then the lingering staple of the town.\* Here we were struck with the singular concatenation of relationship among those who assembled to greet the new minister's family—it was my "Cousin Dolly" and my "Cousin Jerry," &c., without end.† Mr and Mrs Mansfield completed their wedding jubilee soon afterwards, when house and garden were thrown open to all comers, and they were filled with children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and relations in every degree.

With as much speed as possible our new residence was got into order, and only a month after we had entered it, my brother Decimus, the tenth child of my parents, was born. He was a dear quiet little fellow, and, though dying from scarlet fever when little more than five years old, he lived long enough to leave a trace, and his loss a thorn in my memory, up to the present time.

It surprises me to remember that, although now at the womanly age of fourteen, one of my first cares, in conjunction with Jane, was to fit up a closet in our bed-room as a doll's house. That this was a pleasure shortly to wane we did not foresee. The closet was duly furnished, but it did not do; and I remember the pang of regret and disappointment with which the discovery broke upon me

\* The "bay" and "say" manufacture was brought into Colchester in 1570 by eleven Dutch families flying from the Alva persecution. "Say" was a kind of serge, all wool, much used abroad by the "religious" for shirts, and by the English Quakers for aprons. The word is said to be derived from *sagum*, a soldier's coarse cloak, or a kind of blanket.

† The remarkable consanguinity mentioned was, no doubt, due to the Huguenot immigration, as also to some extent were the Nonconformist communities.—[ED.]

that dolls and doll's houses did not maintain their interest for ever. The closet was arranged, but, that done, we could never enjoy it afterwards. The new interests of Colchester consigned the doll regime to oblivion. Yet I never could sympathize with the philosophy which proscribes the doll. What harm does it do? Certainly in our own case it did not interfere with or curtail the processes of an assiduous education. No more time was expended in the doll house than formed a reasonable relaxation, and many were the good results, with, as far as my convictions reach, no bad ones. A cheerful use of the needle is acquired in dressing these innocents; much thought, contrivance, arrangement, and prelusive affection are brought into play; and the natural avidity with which a little girl, left to her own choice, seizes, caresses, loves a doll, seems to indicate the suitability of the amusement. Yes, do let the little girl alone, she knows about it better than you do. For my part, I like the old-fashioned arrangement; that children precede adults—girls women. It is prettier, at any rate.

I have already remarked that, from whatever cause, my local recollections of Lavenham appear always as if under a cloudy day; though certainly not because I was unhappy there. Those of Colchester, however, never present themselves but as bright and warm with a summer's sun. I do not use the terms figuratively, they express the real colouring with which the two scenes are suffused whenever they appear to my mind's eye. It is a nice old town, and the country has just that cheerful pleasantness about it which is inviting to the evening walk or the social ramble. The town, clean, open, and agreeable, is situated

on a healthful gravelly hill, descending towards the north and east, commanding from many points a view of the Colne, the meadows through which it winds, and the horizon fringed with wood—"the High Woods," which formed the most delightful portion of our longer evening excursions. But in this direction I am told that the engineer has been defacing with his iron lines, and brick station houses, one of the prettiest spots, and, to our memories, one of the dearest in the whole vicinity. Yet I must not be unjust to the beautiful village of Lexden, terminating a pleasant walk west of the town, or the ornate path through Lexden springs. Innumerable happy associations place them among the brightest of our mental pictures. Large barracks adjoined the town on its southern side, and an air of business and activity was given to the place as a great military station, while the High Street was quite a gay promenade. The music of the evening bugle is still a pleasant note in my ears, as well as that of the eight o'clock curfew bell from the tower of Old St Nicholas.

The castle, which, in one shape or another, has braved the storms of a thousand winters, forms the conspicuous feature from the northern meadows, as well as a giant poplar towering above the broken ivied tower of St Martin's Church, and denoting, within a few yards, the house in which we resided. Colchester was quite remarkable for its churches. Though containing not more than 14,000 inhabitants, the town was divided into fourteen parishes, and there were still twelve churches, more or less dismantled, and with dilapidations dating from the rough work of the civil wars, especially of the siege by Fairfax.

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Large portions of the town walls remained entire; and the fine ruins of St Botolph's Priory and St John's Gate, added to the picturesque and historical interest of a place which was full of interest for both antiquary and artist.

The number of chapels, at the time we knew Colchester, was small. Dissent there was not many-headed, but neither was it intelligent, nor of a sort to promise increase. There was a tendency to "high doctrine," (leaving a low sediment,) in most of the congregations. In the large old "Round Meeting," holding about a thousand people, and generally well filled, there was an elderly, heavy, unattractive minister, under the singular chant of whose slow, monotonous delivery the young people of his charge just thought their own thoughts, and considered they had paid sufficient respect to Sunday. Indeed, so sad was the state of things when we entered Colchester, that no young person of good education, position, and intelligence, was associated in the membership of any Nonconformist church in the town. In our own congregation there were a few substantial families, and two or three wealthy individuals, but these were the only present materials. The dissenters of the town were men of habit more than men of piety, and few knew or thought why they dissented. This condition, however, did not continue; many *felt* there was a reason before they saw it, and the consciousness of a principle came at last. Among the twelve churches in the town the ministrations at one only were accounted evangelical, at that time the sole form of life in the Establishment, and the abilities of the clergyman officiating there, excellent man as he was, were about as commonplace as were likely to obtain holy orders. Of the clergyman of

our own parish, the Rev. Yorick S——, I can only record the sacerdotal-looking but very portly figure, the rotundity of which was the more striking, from his habit of walking with his hands behind him, and which occasioned at last his melancholy end; for not observing thereby an open cellar, he fell into it, and was killed! “Alas, poor Yorick!”

In those early days my father, in such an atmosphere, had certainly much to struggle with, and the decay of religious sentiment in the place that had chosen him for its minister might afford ground for suspicion that he could scarcely be quite sound himself. At his ordination, however, which took place April 21, 1796, his orthodoxy was sufficiently attested by the presence and assistance of many known ministers, and thenceforward no apprehension of the sort could be honestly entertained. My father's manner, though always methodical, still had more of animation and extempore freedom than was then known in the town; so that, though the place was somewhat large, his Sunday evening lectures were crowded, and at last it was arranged that they should circulate among the three congregations, the other ministers taking their turn. The intervening evenings thus left at liberty my father employed in village preaching, these evening services being in addition to the regular morning and afternoon ones at home. There were, however, no societies, no committees, no public meetings on the week days to divide his attention or expend his strength; but the labours requisite for the maintenance of his family, along with the necessary ministerial preparation, more than fully occupied his time.

We were many to provide for; the two apprentices still

formed part of the family, and at this time a change was passing over the country—over Europe, I should say—which blighted the prospects of almost all the artists, young and old. Engraving had offered so fair an opening just previous to the French war, that almost every family having a son who could draw, hastened to place him with an engraver, as in later times, every likely lad has been for trying his skill as an engineer. But the foreign market being suddenly closed by the war, a fearful stagnation in art employment was the consequence. The larger works were at once discontinued, and book engraving was carried on in a very small way, while troops of young men, just entering their profession, and sorely needing bread and cheese, were glad to engage in it at almost any prices. My father, at fifty miles distance from London, was naturally at a great disadvantage in the struggle, and a grievous reverse of fortune thus fell upon him. All prospect of making money passed away, and to feed his large family and keep out of debt was the utmost he could hope for.\* Had we remained at Lavenham, where there were no other resources, we must have

\* A relic of those trying times remains in a scrap headed—

“THE ACCURATE DATE.”

“ ‘When, you say, did it happen?’ ‘I’ll tell you, my dear,  
 ’Twas about—let me see—that unfortunate year,  
 When the bread was so high and the meat, as you know,  
 And our cash, on the contrary, ran very low ;  
 That year you were ill—-you remember it, wife?’  
 ‘Yes, indeed ! for this suits every year of our life.’”

In happier times my grandfather, pointing on one occasion to his fine work, the Ann Boleyn, said, with a tear in his eye, “Yes, and the hand that did that was once glad to engrave a dog collar.”—[ED.]

suffered indeed, but just in time we were providentially removed, and so enabled to retain a loaf and a little more on the pantry shelves.

The two apprentices, when they left us, shared in the common misfortune; one soon died, and the other turned his ability into another walk of art. It pleases me sometimes to recollect that it occurred to him, some three or four years later, to make me an offer; because perhaps it is not in every instance that an offer would be made after so much probationary acquaintance as living so long under the same roof implies.\*

Again, it was speedily discovered (for he never made application) that Mr Taylor's modes of education were worth participating in, and several families requested that their young people might share in them. This was another signal mercy, for by the addition thus made to his income, he was able to withstand the pressure of many trying years. We had, as before, a large room designated the "Work-room." It was not originally part of the house, but a door was broken into it, while there was also a general entrance from without. A large diamond-paned window occupied the middle of one side, and sash windows were put in to light the entire length. Here, at his high desk at one end, stood my father, and long tables ran from thence the length of the room, where the eldest of us were soon prac-

\* The self-depreciation of the writer, and her characteristic reticence upon certain points, might suggest that as a girl she possessed few outward attractions. From the circumstance, however, not recorded in these memorials, that while at Colchester she received several offers of marriage, some of them very eligible, that inference would not seem to be correct; and the attentions of which she was the subject may account in part for the very sunny memories which, as she tells us, Colchester left upon her mind.—[ED.]



tising the engraver's art. Nearest to him sat my brother Isaac, then Martin, then myself, and next to me Jane. Behind us a second range of tables was occupied, two or three days a-week, by pupils. Happy days,—mornings, evenings,—Happy years!—have I spent in that shabby old room! From the windows we could just see over the garden, and beyond the roofs, Mile End church and parsonage in the pretty distance, reminding us of the evening walk by which the day's business was so often closed.

Our many callers in after years never thought of finding us "in the parlour," like other young ladies, but regularly turned into a back yard from the street, ascended the short flight of brick stairs, and placed themselves each on some wooden stool beside Jane and myself, watching what they were sometimes pleased to call our "elegant art." I must say we were never ashamed of it, and why need we have been? We had, I might almost say, the honour of stepping first on a line now regarded as nearly the one thing to be accomplished, the respectable, remunerative, appropriate employment of young women. It was not the prevision of such a course by which we were led, but happy domestic circumstances brought us into it, and thankful should I be if opportunities such as we enjoyed were more generally available.

A paragraph has fallen under my eye which induces me to add a few words to my honest outburst of happy recollection. In the April No. for 1859 of the "Edinburgh Review," under the head of "Female Industry," it is said—"It seems not very long ago that the occupation of the Taylor family was regarded as very strange. The delightful Jane Taylor of Ongar, and her sisters (N.B. *Sister*),

paid their share of the family expenses by engraving. Steel engravings were not in very good demand, yet the young women were incessantly at work, so as to be abundantly weary of it, as Jane's letters plainly show." Now, notwithstanding the first rate literary authority of this passage, I must challenge its correctness. Doubtless, we were sometimes weary (I have heard of people weary of doing nothing), and sometimes should have preferred a favourite employment of our own just then in hand; or, with a zest the unemployed cannot feel, should have enjoyed a holiday; but, nevertheless, the life in that "shabby old room" was a happy one; and if Jane did at times dislike the monotony, it never reached habitual weariness.\* For myself, what I have said, I have said, and that most truly. Nay, the time has been, when I have risen in the morning with exhilaration to put on the brown-holland bib and apron, with sleeves to match, in preparation for two or three days of "biting," this not very charming employment frequently falling to my lot.

But you will hardly know what "biting" is, and I will endeavour to explain it, as I have often done to interested and interesting visitors.

Singularly ignorant about it people often are! I remember once after my father had spent much time in explaining the various processes of engraving to a lady, she exclaimed with sudden perception—"O then you only prepare for the printer!" while, not long ago, on my showing a gentleman the engraving of the Ann Boleyn, and saying that my father received 500 guineas for it, he remarked—"I

\* "Ah! but Ann was always such a dog trot!" exclaimed her only surviving sister on reading this passage.—[ED.]

think neither you nor I would have cared to give that," supposing that the print alone cost that sum! Well, then, as to "biting." A plate of polished copper (not steel at that time), of the size intended for the print, having been thickly covered with a sort of waxy ground; the subject to be engraved is etched upon it with a steel point, as you might say *drawn* with a strong needle, much as you might with a pencil or pen, but cutting through the ground to the surface of the copper.\* The lines, however, are of no depth, and of course all alike, and to increase and vary both depth and width, the work must be "bit." To effect this a wall of wax is raised round the plate, with a spout, moulded at one corner, by which to pour off the liquid, and a dilute preparation of aquafortis (nitric acid) is poured on, which eats away the copper in the exposed lines. It is now a delicate matter to watch the operation, ascertaining when the needful depth of the lightest portion is attained; at the moment, the acid is poured off, water plentifully applied, and then dried out of the lines. A thin coat of varnish is now painted over the parts that are sufficiently deepened, technically speaking they are "stopped out," and the process of biting is recommenced. But all this is subject to accidents; and one trying misfortune is, when the ground, from some defect in its composition, or from being laid on under too great a heat, "blows up," as it is called, and the acid penetrates to the copper where it is not wanted, causing innumerable specks which must be immediately stopped out, and requiring a grievous

\* It should be understood that in a line engraving, portions only of the subject are etched, and that the most skilled and distinctive part of the process follows in the use of the cutting-tool—the "graver."—[ED.]

amount of labour afterwards with the "graver" to repair. An engraving after Ostade, the interior of a Dutch kitchen, was etched by me, and covered almost entirely with work, but in biting, the ground blew up largely, and it was my business for three months afterwards to sit at the patient repair of it, speck by speck. I should not wonder if during this time I did feel "abundantly weary." So much for weariness, and for "biting," a part of the process for which it will be seen there was good reason to be armed with bib, apron, and sleeves.

One further remark I am bound in honesty to oppose to the reviewer's assertion. I cannot please myself with the thought that we contributed much towards "the family expenses" by our daily toil. Our dear father, always liberal to the extent of his ability, gave us not only board and lodging, but also wages, so that in keeping us at home I am sure he did not consult his own advantage. He thought he was fitting us for self-support in after life, not otherwise than feminine; and in keeping us around him at home he retained a domestic feeling, strong in every one of us. Providence, as it proved, had different designs for us, but little at that time could they have been predicted.

But these work-a-day times do not belong to our first years at Colchester; I am forestalling our engagements by two or three years. At Lavenham I had but one quiet story to tell, but I find myself now surrounded by so many scenes, circumstances, people, and interests, that I fear to become sadly prolix. If among the points I select some should appear to me more worthy of note, than to you, forgive me. The nearness of my point of sight may prevent a correct vision—yet not near either, when much

more than half-a-century is interposed between the facts narrated and the narration. Who shall say how they have been stored? Surely there is nothing about us more wonderful—wonderful as is every thread of our frame—than memory! For what purpose is this great deposit, the wealth of which only appears by glimpses? Is it some day to form the ground of amazing thankfulness when we review the course through which we have been led? Or, fearful alternative, the vitality of that worm, which is to be fed by unquenchable recollections?

Let me introduce you to the society now surrounding us. In our own congregation there were no young people of similar age and education with ourselves, but we were soon introduced to others, with whom we formed lasting intimacies. The plain respectable household of the Keeps, was almost within call of us. There were ten children, but Mary Keep was the only one near enough to our own age to become our associate. With her we soon reached blood-heat—fever-heat on the thermometer of friendship. And through the Keeps we were next introduced to the Stapletons—a name interwoven with our history for many years. Dr Stapleton was a physician, a dissenter, a plain good man; Mrs Stapleton was every way a superior woman, the backbone of the family, and maintaining in it a calm and wise authority. She had been married, I suppose, not twenty years before we knew them; but I have been told that on the Sunday of her bridal appearance, the party being discomfited by a heavy shower, it was opportunely recollected that an elegant convenience called an umbrella had been seen in one of the shops, which was sent for and borrowed for the occasion. It was, however, deemed an

ill-omened assumption of style on the part of the bride. At Lavenham, even in my time, it was considered a mark of luxurious refinement for a man to carry one.\*

Four very interesting, and, in different ways, lovely girls, and one son, composed their family circle. Mira, the eldest, seventeen, when we arrived in Colchester, was too much our senior at first to become a familiar associate. Her face was beautiful with intelligence, and the intellectual pride, which was perhaps her tendency, was scarcely indicated beneath the mild and lovely expression of her features. Bithia was a strong contrast to her sister; animated to enthusiasm, daring, spirited, affectionate, and very near my own age, a sort of spontaneous combustion, and inter-fusion speedily ensued. Eliza was a fine showy girl, with less of mind, and perhaps of heart, than her sisters. Letitia, similar in age to my sister Jane, became by instantaneous attraction her bosom friend. She was very pretty, but her tastes, pleasures, and pride were all intellectual, and certainly at that time not far from romantic. To read by moonlight some favourite poet, among the picturesque fragments of the old town wall on the Balkerne Hill, was sufficient happiness for them both.

The Stapletons were among the first to become my father's pupils, so that we had almost daily opportunities of intercourse; nay, it was so incessant, that my mother

\* Isaac Taylor records that it was Mr Watkinson, "in his pattens full three inches high, that carried him, bright shoe buckles and all, clear of the mud," who, at Lavenham, first availed himself, "on Sunday, at least, of a happy novelty of that age of marvels—an umbrella! And what sort of a thing was this? . . . a handle it had like the mast of a yacht, and a covering of oil-skin tarpauling, and whalebone ribs. The weight must have exceeded that of a soldier's musket."

used to remind us of the ancient counsel, "keep thy foot from the house of thy friend, lest he be weary of thee." Our acquaintance had subsisted for little more than a year when Dr Stapleton died. He had been seized with apoplexy early in the morning, and with the strong affection of her nature, Bithia, who was not quite dressed, ran without shoes or stockings along the very rough pavement of one of the principal streets to obtain medical assistance. He rallied slightly, but only for a short time.

Considerable changes necessarily took place in his family. Mira had, during the life of her father, occupied herself as a teacher in a boarding-school in Colchester; it was at that time a new thing for a young lady, under no pecuniary necessity, so to employ herself, and it was as usual wondered at by the wonderers, a class existing in most communities; the wisdom of such a step has been since better appreciated. Mira occupied a separate room, and it was there that I learnt from her, going for an hour daily, what little French I once knew, and also the practice of ornamental needlework. It was the only sight I ever had of the interior of a school. I have sometimes been surprised that my father thought needlework an accomplishment worth the time we bestowed upon it; but Miss Linwood's pictures in wool work were just then talked about, and it might be this, together with an unappeasable disgust at the *bad* in any production, whether of art or mechanism, which suggested an attempt to improve the raw taste of the times in this matter. A girl and doves in tambour, a cat and mouse in marking stitch, a small oval imitation in "print-work," as it was called of a painter's etching, a landscape in coloured worsteds from a good drawing, and a

small group of flowers in embroidery, remain to attest my industry in this line ; but it was one of the very few points—I do not recollect another—in which it has struck me that labour was ill bestowed in our education.\* Yet a lady of not less than fifty years of age, placed herself at the same time under his instruction, and executed a large piece of worsted from a good mezzotinto print—a cupid and lion. There was a mournful tearfulness in her face to which I have often since thought there must have been a history attached, but we knew only that she was a lady residing in the neighbourhood.

We were perhaps rather sought after as “clever girls” at this time, and of the two, Jane always conceding a large share of birthright to me, I seemed to be generally

\* The study of fortification might be reckoned (as indeed a reviewer of the present day has so reckoned it) another instance of ill-bestowed labour, especially for girls. But the father of this family desired that all his children should be able to take an intelligent interest in what was going on in the world, its present history included, and it was then an era of great wars. In order to facilitate the reading of voyages and travels he had strained a large Mercator’s chart, round a revolving cylinder, upon which, with pith-headed pins, representing the Pacific voyager or African traveller, his pupils could follow the wanderings of each. He adapted this method to the illustration of the campaigns then in progress from Moscow to Oporto. The pith-balls coloured to represent the different armies in the field, followed their movements over the face of Europe, according to the news of the day, and it is not surprising that some knowledge of the *elements* of fortification, exemplified by diagrams, the construction of which exercised hand and eye, was considered helpful to such a circle. During the stress of the Crimean war, the editor happened to encounter some young ladies diligently reading their “Rollin,” but having only the faintest notion of the history that was thundering on its course almost within earshot. If they had received the instruction to which this Colchester family was accustomed, the morning telegrams might not have proved so puzzling and therefore uninteresting.—[ED.]



accepted as the cleverest.\* The mistake has been rectified by the public since, and indeed so as to swing a little beyond the mark, attributing to her many productions that are really mine. Publishers have frequently given a convenient wink, and announced "by Jane Taylor," when "Ann Taylor" was the guilty person. Dear Jane never needed to steal, while I could not afford to lose. But what signifies it? When you read this, what will remain to me save the moral results of my life, and of the "talent," the one, or more than one?

I must have scribbled a good deal, but about this time, being accused of literary vanity, perhaps justly, or the suffering would have been less, I made a magnanimous conflagration of all my MSS., and resolved to go humbly all my days. For a time, my favourite amusement was laid aside, but it could not be for long. Writing, as a mere manual exercise, was always agreeable to me, independently of the pleasing necessity of giving expression to the emotions, new and innumerable, of the young bosom, though in truth as old, and as often repeated as the moonlights and spring days, the hopes and affections by which, in every age, they have been elicited. It was, I think, in 1797 that I made my first poetical appearance in print on the occasion of a contested election, when

\* "My Ann, you had taken the lyre ;  
 And I, from the pattern you set,  
 Attempted the art to acquire ;  
 And often we play a duet.  
 But those who in grateful return,  
 Have said they were pleased with the lay,  
 The discord could always discern ;  
 And yet I continued to play."—JANE TAYLOR.

Robert Thornton being the Tory candidate, and a Mr Shipley the Whig, I ventured an election song for home-reading solely. But it happened to be seen, and was speedily printed, a distinction that no doubt I felt as somewhat dazzling. The production, I am constrained to say, exhibits sadly little wit, and much more than was appropriate of the moral lecture. I knew, by report, the excellence of the Thornton family, and felt aggrieved by his taking, as it appeared to me, the wrong side!

While our intimacy with the Stapleton's was at its height, our circle was enlarged by two interesting girls, somewhat older than ourselves, Cecilia and Fanny Hills, orphan sisters, each attractive in her way, but of characters wholly different. They resided with an aged grandmother, and on coming of age, were to possess a pleasant independency of about £400 a year each. They belonged to the Church of England, and were educated for the "world." Cecilia was of a quickly impressible, enthusiastic character, exposed to powerful impulses, and with courage, perhaps eccentricity, sufficient to carry them out. Through the Stapleton's, she became a pupil of my father's; was pleased with his ministry, and from something like a fashionable church-goer, became subject to religious impressions, proved to be genuine, by a long Christian life afterwards. But she was not formed for a medium in anything. Having once broken loose from the society and habits to which she had been accustomed she was prepared for any lengths; and being seized upon, while young and unfixed in her new principles, by some religionists, certainly not attractive in themselves,—plain good people, but of low manners, narrow views, and,

with a tendency to what was then the bane of Colchester, high (antinomian) doctrine, she was readily drawn aside, assumed a peculiar style of dress, would walk arm in arm with some of their leaders of a low grade in life, presently joined their persuasion, and in the presence of a crowd of her former fashionable associates, was publicly baptised.\* Her attendance upon my father's ministry ceased, but our intimacy did not ; yet it was between her and the Stapleton's that the attachment was extreme, and from this time, I was sensible of some decline in that of Bithia to me, a change which I felt bitterly. But, little as I then could have borne the thought, these first friends of my youth were to yield, before long, to a new circle, in the midst of which I have found my liveliest interests, not only during the period of my youth, but up to the present late autumn of my life.

Fanny Hills, the youngest sister, was altogether a different character. Lovely, not so much from direct beauty as from the frank sweetness of her countenance, pretending to nothing but to please and be pleased (which was no pretence), still retaining her intimacy with gayer companions, together with the Stapleton's and ourselves, I can give to any of her admirers the credit of loving *her*, if capable of love at all, notwithstanding the attractions of her fortune. A young clergyman of the town was one, but she did not like him, or thought, at least, that she liked some one else better. I happened to be at her house, when a call was made by the less fortunate lover, and heard the well-trained servant, notwithstanding many questions, continue to aver, with ingenious variations, that

\* It is right to add that she soon abandoned these early eccentricities.—[ED.]

her mistress was "not at home," poor Fanny listening with tremor for the result. I was shocked then, and am not less so now. In what way are we to secure the honesty of servants towards ourselves if, for our own purposes, we inure them to complicated falsehoods?

It was not long before Fanny passed out of our connection. A captain of artillery, then stationed in the town, of interesting appearance and manners, shortly won the open-hearted girl; and the last recollection I have of her, is as a recent bride driven past in the elegant phaeton of her husband. Many years passed away; we were, by time, distance, habits, everything, widely separated, and we knew nothing of her history. Long after my own marriage, I heard a melancholy fragment of it. My mother, then residing at Ongar, was one day visited by a shabby, sickly stranger. Whether she recognised the once attractive features, I now forget; but the outburst of feeling was strong and mutual, when it was found that Fanny Hills had come to seek her former friends. She told her story with frank simplicity. Captain M—— had not long remained the enamoured husband; her property had been wasted, and they were now living at a lone house in the neighbourhood, where a person, thought by the wretched man, more attractive than his wife, was mistress. Fanny herself, broken-hearted and broken down, was little better than a servant. Beyond that sad point in her history, I know nothing more.

It was in the year '98, and again by Mary Keep, that we were introduced to a young friend of hers from Camberwell, who had been visiting in the neighbourhood. We had heard much of this young lady, and were in high

H

expectation. She was within a year of my own age, of appearance, disposition, and manners, not a little interesting, and possessing an intense vitality, that left me far in the rear. A few among my associates, and she was one, have so far exceeded me in speed of wing, elegance of plumage, in, if I may so say, ethereal buoyancy, that I have always felt in their society, less like a bird of kindred feather than a lame chicken, expected to accompany a lark in its flight. Yet, notwithstanding this discrepancy, my intimacy with Anna Forbes, not only commenced quickly, but without one interval of estrangement, has grown, and strengthened, and matured, till our respective families have risen to enjoy, and perpetuate the friendship. Begun in the glow of young extravagance more than sixty years ago, it has been at last rivetted by the endearing connection which linked a daughter of hers with a son of mine.

It had been on the 12th of July 1797, when I was in my sixteenth year, that the design always kept in view of educating Jane and me to engraving as a profession, was first put in practice; but in order that my mother might enjoy the assistance she needed, as well as that we might become sufficiently domestic in our acquirements, we took our places at the work-table only in alternate weeks; the one employed in the workroom being known as "Supra," and the other as "Infra," the latter a slight improvement upon the humble title of "Betty," which had been previously bestowed on the housekeeping sister. To "Infra," below stairs, belonged *pro tem.* numerous domestic duties, from essays in cookery, to washing and getting up the fine linens; so that the assistance we could render in needlework was really very small, and a heavy

burden was still left on my dear industrious mother. But this the kindness of a thoughtful young friend frequently lightened for her—a kindness of which none can fully estimate the value, excepting those who have experienced it. I trust, any to whom these lines may come, who are able thus to assist their minister by assisting his wife and family, will not be backward to render this labour of love.

From the minister's wife, often a woman with small resources, a large family, and little assistance, more is frequently required in the way of public activity than from any other—unjustly as I have always thought, and possibly the occasion of irregularities sometimes complained of in ministers' families. If she have no children, or is so assisted as to be able to leave them without injury, let her stand foremost in every good work committed in these busy times to female hands: but if the little band, entrusted by special seal from heaven to her vigilance, must suffer while she labours abroad, would she not do well to heed the touching lament—"They have made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept?" Would that there were something like parish boundaries clearly defining the limits of contiguous duties! Opposing duties, though sometimes talked about, do not, as I conceive, exist. That which God does not require is not duty, and he never requires exertions inconsistent with each other. What we need is wisdom to draw correct lines, and then vigour to fill them up with our might. The minister's wife has, at least, the warrant of Paul to be "a keeper at home." To her own master she ultimately stands or falls, though the "many masters" to whom, as the wife of a minister, she may be supposed amenable, may possibly come to a verdict less

gracious on her conduct. Happy is she who "condemneeth not herself in that thing that she alloweth."

Another kindness shown to my mother, not in its nature inimitable, was by an excellent lady, a widow, residing alone with two servants of truly primitive style and character. They were Betty and Polly Tillett, and deserve a place in the list of our friends. Many years afterwards, when my brother Isaac visited Colchester, he found out Polly, the then survivor, whom he described to me as resembling a "faded primrose, stiff and dry." And such I can easily conceive her to have become. She was much attached to her minister, and most cheerfully seconded the considerate kindness shown by her mistress to his family. Almost every Saturday evening she came down with her pleased prim look, as the bearer of some little nicety under a white napkin for his Sunday's supper. Or, whenever a party had been entertained at the house, some of the remaining delicacies were sure to find their way in the same direction under the modest care of Polly. But the greater kindness referred to above, was when these willing and assiduous sisters would come with their "mistress's kind respects"—to fetch the fine linen of the family to be "got up"—and how beautifully!—in their ample leisure. Pleasant is the memory of such a friend, and of servants such as these. I must say, to the credit of our small congregation at Colchester, that they were not forgetful in this matter of their minister. He claimed no tithe, but in many a shape it came, freewill offerings whenever the opportunity occurred. Ah! I have felt a little, and seen more, of the difficulties under which many an excellent man has to labour, and appear cheerful. Do not fail, I beseech

you, to the best of your ability, to think kindly for him who thinks, how responsibly, for you!

I have already hinted that the renunciation of my beloved pen did not last very long, and in April of 1798, I entered with great zeal into the formation of a society suggested, I think, by my father, intended to improve the talent for composition, and let us hope, the ability to think also. The title, I am sure, was suggested by him—"The Umbelliferous Society," designed, of course, to indicate many buds, blossoms, flowers—whatever we might consider ourselves most to resemble—on one stem. The original members were, Mira, Bithia, Eliza, and Letitia Stapleton, Mary and Betsy Keep, Jane and myself, to whom some others were afterwards added. We were to meet once in every month, rules were drawn up, officers duly appointed, and each member was expected to furnish some original production in either prose or verse, as well as written answers to questions proposed at the preceding meeting. Besides this we had readings in useful authors. Whether or not we derived benefit from these early exercises I can scarcely say, but pleasure we certainly did, and as all we wrote was in over-hours, either before or after the business of the day, we were excited to habits of industry at least.

We always breakfasted at eight o'clock, were allowed an hour's interval for dinner, half-an-hour for tea, and closed the daily routine in "that dear old workroom" (as more than one of our friends called it) at eight in the evening. It was chiefly, therefore, or according to the letter of the law, *only* by rising early and supping as late as half-past nine, that we could effect anything. But I must confess to having had pencil and paper generally so near at hand, that



a flying thought could be caught by a feather, even when engraving or biting was going on ; or, in cases of extremity, when it was to be feared that all would escape me before eight o'clock came, I have made a sudden exit, and in honest haste and unintelligible scribble, pinioned the fancy or the lines to the first slip of waste paper I could find, there to abide till happy evening. Instead of engraving, I was going to say etching, but this would be scarcely correct, for while etching it was generally desirable to keep the "point" unchanged in the fingers from meal to meal. Only a very beautiful point indeed would be so exquisitely true, that no inequality of stroke would result from changing it. To render the point perfect by grinding all the angles, was often not a little difficult, and would cost much time ; as a hone for this purpose, a fragment of Roman brick, picked up among the ruins in the town, proved the finest and hardest substance we could meet with. And if I have said "bitings" it must be understood to mean, at times when the water was off, and the plate safely dry.

It had always previously been the custom to sup at nine ; but when writing became most unexpectedly a business, as well as a pleasure, we petitioned for an additional half-hour, and considering the perfect regularity of my father's habits, I feel that we owed much to his good nature in granting it. Nor should I, perhaps, refrain from mentioning that of this precious hour and a half, part was occupied by a short devotional retirement, which, won by the example of our parent, we rarely omitted.

My father's plan of providing, as far as possible, separate small rooms as "studies" for his children, has been already mentioned ; he carried it out, as far as our con-

finer space at Colchester would admit. What, either of mental improvement or of personal piety, can be expected to flourish where numbers are crowded into one room? How much may not be expected from those happy ones who enjoy the luxury of a chamber, or a closet to call their own? How delightful and salutary is the morning hour under such an advantage? Let those who possess it remember that it is a talent for the use of which they are accountable. Isaac and Martin here contrived, each for himself, a small "sanctum," composed chiefly of paste-board, and secluded by a humble door. It was in an unoccupied room, through which we had to pass continually. Of this, Isaac enclosed for himself the small window, and Martin secured sufficient light by removing a few bricks, and inserting a pane or two of glass. *Contrivance*, might have been our family motto. It was longer before Jane and I succeeded in making a similar arrangement. We had hitherto occupied the same room, in which was a small dark closet (the workroom being also at liberty, except during working hours) but there was a not very desirable attic, used as a lumber-room, on which she cast a thoughtful contriving gaze, and by vigorous measures she managed to fit it up as a bedroom sufficiently comfortable. From its window it had a peep of landscape over the roofs, of which, before we left Colchester, she took a view, still in my possession.\* The

\* By night as well as by day her little window was a boon to her. She wrote—

"I used to roam and revel 'mid the stars :  
When in my attic, with untold delight,  
I watched the changing splendours of the night."—[ED.]

lower-room of the house opposite, shown in this drawing,\* was used as a dame school of not very high pretensions, and there Isaac, the future author, learned to read, my mother having found his initiation into that distinguished art a matter of quite unusual difficulty.



I believe the Umbelliferous Society continued about two years, for changes soon came over this second circle of my friendships. Those of my childhood had passed out of sight before we left Lavenham, and nearly all of this my early youth long before we left Colchester. So far as they are concerned, here I stand alone among the dead!

“ Yes, Memory! gaze the vista through,  
On scenes of love that once we knew,  
That cheerful home, in which we spent  
So many a year of young content.”

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\* The Taylor house is that on the right, with four upper windows. It is now made into two.—[ED.]

DOMESTIC RECOLLECTIONS.

CHAPTER IV.

*COLCHESTER.*

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## CHAPTER IV.

COLCHESTER.

1798-1802.

“ When each by turns was guide to each,  
And Fancy, light from Fancy caught,  
And all we met was fair and good,  
And all was good that Time could bring,  
And all the secret of the Spring  
Moved in the chambers of the blood.”

TENNYSON.

“ Christiana did also begin to consider with herself.”

BUNYAN.

So far had I written years ago ; and now in my eightieth year shall I live to complete the narrative ? O Lord, Thou knowest ! Ah, my children, would that you could realise, while much of life may yet be before you, the sad reflections of a spirit sensible of many practical errors and neglect of opportunities, and of attainments wholly inconsistent with long continued advantages. Would that it might be your daily habitual request, “so teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom.” Yet, what empty words, what a thrice-told tale, till the mind awakes to *all* the realities of existence !

Towards the end of the year 1798 an astronomical

lecturer of repute delivered a course of lectures at the Old Moot Hall at Colchester. To such advantages my father was always anxious to introduce us, and the young people who had become his pupils; but in order that the lectures should be fully understood, he thought it desirable to give an introductory one at home. This he illustrated by familiar diagrams, drawn either by himself, or by us under his direction. A considerable number of our young friends availed themselves of the opportunity, and so much were all interested, that a strong desire was felt to extend the benefit beyond the immediate occasion. From this time, therefore, he continued to deliver rudimentary lectures once a month, to as many as chose to come; and it became a day of much interest to us, and to many more. They were delivered in our own parlour, and as many as sixty or seventy young people, and their friends, were glad to attend. The subjects, admirably simplified and illustrated, were, as far as I now recollect them—astronomy, geography, geometry, mechanics, general history, and anatomy; the diagrams, rough, but vigorous and picturesque, when that was appropriate, being executed on large sheets of cartridge paper. I have sometimes been occupied for three days in preparing them. My father's aim in teaching was, wherever practicable, to address the eye, as being much more retentive than the ear. I especially remember the course on anatomy; representations of arteries, veins, bones, muscles, detached or combined, accompanied each lecture, of which there were several in every course, and we could not fail to learn a great deal which it was well to know. These lectures were continued for three or four years; they were

gratuitous, but the time occupied, labour bestowed, and trouble occasioned, were most cheerfully submitted to; for he was willing to communicate in all good things. How many now survive to whom the recollection of those happy evenings would bring a glow of pleasure? The bright eyes have most of them long ceased to sparkle, and none could be found but shaded by the white locks of age or sorrow!

Although at this period we had scarcely a thought or feeling apart from the Stapletons, various circumstances were gradually bringing our intimacy to a close. Unable to meet with a suitable house, they were obliged at last to remove to Dedham, a village about seven miles from Colchester. It was to all of us a sore trial to be thus separated, and our lives assumed almost a new character. For a time there was frequent interchange of visits, and they generally came over on the evening of the philosophical lecture. A van passed within a mile of Dedham, but when the weather permitted we preferred to walk; once I remember accomplishing the seven miles in patten! The road was pleasant, and in the evening we could put ourselves under the protection of old Howlett, the postman, who for many years carried sundry small parcels, together with his Majesty's Mail, between Dedham and Colchester. He was a picturesque old man, and I well remember walking alone with him, in the dusk of a summer's evening, and feeling a little nervous as the road sank into a hollow, with a wood on each side. We could have made but humble resistance with our united forces if attacked.

Upon the small house first occupied by the Stapletons



we conferred the title of "Nutshell Hall," but they presently removed to a more commodious one, the property of Mr Constable of East Bergholt, whose son, John Constable, R.A., the eminent landscape painter, afterwards rendered the rural scenery surrounding his native village classic ground. It is still known as "Constable's country." It was in December 1799 that I was first introduced to his family, and I may venture *now* to say, that so finished a model of what is reckoned manly beauty I never met with as the young painter; while the report in the neighbourhood of his taste and excellence of character rendered him interesting in no small degree. There were, too, rumours afloat which conferred upon him something of the character of a hero in distress, for it was understood that his father greatly objected to his prosecution of painting as a profession, and wished to confine him to the drudgery of his own business—that of a miller. To us this seemed unspeakably barbarous, though in Essex and Suffolk a miller was commonly a man of considerable property, and lived as Mr Constable did, in genteel style.

I have pleasure in finding that the opinion formed at that time of John Constable by a jury of girls between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one, is attested to be true by his life, now published. He lived and died, it seems, the same man of taste, feeling, and truly domestic excellence that he appeared to us. His sister, Mary Constable, was in person as much distinguished as himself; but with a loveliness especially feminine. One little incident of our introduction to the Constables I am amused to remember. We had been invited to walk over to Bergholt to see his paintings, together with a portrait recently taken of him

by his friend Mr Reinagle, and availing ourselves of this, one morning, we found his mother, Mrs Constable, a shrewd-looking, sensible woman, at home. There we were, five girls, all "come to see Mr John Constable's paintings," and as we were about to be shown up into his studio, she turned and said dryly, "Well, young ladies, would you like to go up all together to my son, or one at a time?" I was simpleton enough to pause for a moment, in doubt, but we happily decided upon going *en masse*.\*

. In December 1798, when our number at home had been supposed complete, my youngest sister was born. This eleventh and unexpected addition to the cares, labours, and expense of the family occasioned to my suffering and burdened mother a degree of anxiety which many with less cause might well understand. She was ready to exclaim, "All these things are against me." Yet if she ever had occasion for thankfulness for an earthly blessing it was for that child! She grew up in all respects the best looking of the family, and though by far the youngest, and therefore the one whom it is reckoned innocent to spoil, she was at six years old so good a little girl that a friend remarked, "One would think that child had been born before the fall." Need I tell you through how many years she was the comfort, the nurse, the solace, day and night, of her aged parents, with whom she remained till the latest look of affection had soothed them to the grave? I was the first to whose arms she was committed as a babe, and an affection grew up towards

\* The scene of this visit, Flatford Mill, is one of Constable's subjects. It is a picturesque spot in the meadows of the valley of the Stour, just at the foot of the East Bergholt Hills.—[ED.]

her which I believe was quite as vivid and anxious as that of any mother.

She was nursed from home for nearly two years in a cottage on the Wivenhoe road by a Mrs Bolinbroke; and generally after the morning service on Sunday we all walked down to see "baby." She was always clean and rosy, but my mother's principle was never to "dress" babies—pretty enough without it. I recollect that among several baptized in public at the same time by my father, she was the only one with simply a corded muslin cap, and no lace for a border. Happily the dear little heads are left now without such costly and troublesome encumbrance.

Belonging jointly to 1798 and 1799 was a small event, important as unexpected in its consequences to Jane and me. I had made the purchase of a "Minor's Pocket Book," and on reading the solutions of enigmas, and other poetic contributions to which prizes were adjudged, it struck me that, without great presumption, I might aim at as much literary distinction as these prizes conferred. With lively interest, therefore, I possessed myself of the prescribed conditions, unravelled enigma, charade, and rebus, and forwarded the results under the signature of "Juvenilia," as directed, to 55 Gracechurch Street. I little thought that it was bread I thus cast on the waters, or rather that it would return as bread after many days. I had, indeed, to wait long, and as the interesting season approached for the new pocket books to make their appearance in the window of old Mr Gibbs the bookseller, frequent and anxious were my glances in passing by. At last they arrived, and on turning them

over on his counter with as much indifference as could be assumed, I ascertained that the first prize—six pocket books—had been awarded to “*Juvenilia*.” Besides the general poetical solution, I find six charades with the same signature, some of which might not be worse for a little correction, but I must regard them gratefully, as productive of long continued advantages. From this time I was a regular contributor for twelve or fourteen years, and latterly became the editor, resigning only on my marriage.

From this early connection with Darton and Harvey arose our regular, and as it proved profitable employment as writers for children. Never doubt the gracious direction given by our Heavenly Father to the small, no less than the larger events of our lives. When you see a bee or a butterfly left unfinished, as beneath the exertion of creative wisdom, indulge your suspicions, and believe only in the obviously magnificent; but till then hold it as not less philosophical in principle, than true in fact, that to Him, our Creator, Provider, Governor, nothing is either small or large, whatever the aspect it may wear to us. It was the purchase, accidental, shall I say? of the pocket book for 1798 that gave direction, and I hope usefulness to our lives.

When I was eighteen I paid a visit to London. The half brothers and sisters of my mother there, whose experiences at home had been little likely to inspire religious habits, still less religious tastes, had surrendered themselves to evil influences, from which a sad downward course ensued, that led them at last, notwithstanding my mother's efforts, quite out of our knowledge. But one of

them, my uncle John, I remember with interest and gratitude. Open, affectionate, generous, it was a pity he could not be rescued from the fortunes—the misfortunes—of his family. A rare chance in a lottery gave him for a time a competence that soon escaped him, and it was during this brief sunshine that I visited him. He was always devising something to please me, and, as a matter of course, proposed to take me to the theatre. No parental interdict had been laid upon me, and at that time the line had not been drawn so strictly in the case of amusements as it came afterwards to be in many Christian families. I hesitated, but consented. Under the novel attractions of the scene my scruples soon vanished, and I would have readily sacrificed many an evening to its fascinations. Happily, as I think, I never went again. Not long afterwards the question of such amusements was brought before the Christian public. A sermon, preached as one of a monthly series in London, by the Rev. George Burder, was published under the title of “Unlawful Amusements.” The subject was extensively discussed; Mrs Hannah More threw her influence strongly into the scale, and Christian parents felt it more a duty to withdraw their children from indulgences of this kind.

In my belief, excitements of this nature are not needed to the due circulation of youthful blood. The mind is inebriated, and for a time unfitted for either religious or intellectual occupation, the hours, the intercourse, the various allurements of such scenes impair the healthful condition alike of mind and body; I speak of my own sex; whether evils still more formidable may not result to the other I do not say.

There is besides, as I think, a beauty and a safety in preserving a well defined boundary between the church and the world. It should be visible to which you wish to belong. It is a fruitless attempt to blend the one with the other, hoping yet to remain uninjured by the amalgamation. It is true that the line between a forbidding reserve, and dangerous concession, may require some wisdom to decide, especially in certain circumstances ; but a simple desire to do right, and to maintain a Christian consistency of conduct with a conscience void of offence, will generally well supply the place of laborious discussion. A delicate mind feels in its own blush the difference between the pure and the impure, and so it is with the simply conscientious Christian. Such amusements as tend, unless under strong control, to excite the dangerous tendencies of our nature, it would surely be wise to let alone.

Yet I once wrote a prologue ! My brothers, Isaac and Martin, received part of their education under a Mr Levett, a respectable man, who lived close by us at Colchester. During one of his holidays a little performance was got up among his pupils, the drama of Alfred, from "Evenings at Home," and we took in its preparation a lively and leading interest. My father, always ready to help, furnished the scenes, which were painted roughly, but effectively, in body colours, and we contrived dresses tolerably correct in costume. The Prologue, of which I was the author, beginning, "Now when assembled round the new built stage," was spoken by Isaac, who sustained not inappropriately the part of Alfred ; while Martin took that of Gubba.

Well, none of the little company became actors in ear-

nest, or contracted even a taste for the stage, though on the stage of life some have filled honourable parts. Three of them, all of one family, became clergymen, and the memoir of one, the late Rev. W. Nunn of Manchester, has been published. He was then a rather rough, unpolished, but active lad, and he and Martin, both fond of country occupations, indulged this healthy taste by renting between them a small field near Mile End Heath, which, by rising at four o'clock in the morning, they contrived to cultivate themselves. It was planted with potatoes, and, if it brought them little money, conduced much to health and pleasure. On reading the life of this William Nunn, I am not surprised at the lamentable want of clearness in his views of gospel truth. His early training had been under the ministry of the only evangelical clergyman at that time in Colchester, to whose humble intellectual powers I have already alluded, and who, though a man of sincere piety, adopted the "high doctrine" so rife among the religionists of the town. Under this superficial, hot-bed teaching it was not likely that a youth of ardent temperament, and defective judgment, should become other than a one-sided theologian. Such, to a grievous extent, he appears to have been. Self-denying, laborious, economical, zealous in no common degree, and collecting around him a circle of "God's dear people," he was yet; as I cannot but believe, ill-fitted to lead the sinner to the Saviour. To leave him in the dark to his fate, unassisted till it should please Heaven to enlighten him, seems to have been his only thought; though when once "found of Christ," no one could have offered warmer congratulations. No delineation I have ever met with of the life and cha-

racter of a really good man, has appeared to me so evil in its tendency as this memoir, aggravated as it is by the still "higher" sentiments of the biographer. How sorely uninviting is such a gospel! How useless, one might say, to preach it at all! Better leave the whole affair to Him who, as we all acknowledge, alone can give the increase, but who notwithstanding commissioned his servants to go into all the world and preach the "good news" to every creature.

The year 1800 commenced, as did I believe the year 1700, and will, I daresay, the year 1900, with a warm, general, still unsettled dispute as to the period at which the old century should be understood to close, and the new one begin; and as possibly you may not witness the arrival of the next, I give you notice that you may amuse yourselves by deciding the question beforehand. There was just a year's difference in the calculations of the disputants, though to each the question appeared to admit not a shadow of doubt. Did the eighteenth century close on the 31st of December 1799, or of 1800? that was the point. The opinion generally adopted I now forget. Close, however, it did, and here we are more than half through another!

In "the Minor's Pocket Book" for 1800, I appeared under the signature of "Clara," and we were now so far known to Darton and Harvey as to be frequently employed on small plates for their juvenile works. Writing was as yet only the amusement of my limited leisure, and a visit to London with my father, with which he indulged me in May of this year, greatly stimulated my zeal as an artist, and for a time rendered art almost the favourite



pursuit. He made it his business to show me all he could, and introduced me to several artists of note, by whom my ambition was not a little excited. To Mr Byrne, an eminent engraver of landscape, and his three daughters, all of whom he had educated for the profession, I was particularly indebted. One of them etched landscape, another painted flowers exquisitely, and the third, miniatures in oil. All were admirable artists in their different lines. They kindly lent me works in different styles to copy ; the head of a Madonna slightly tinted, landscapes in Indian ink, and studies of trees, chiefly with the pen, are amongst the copies taken at this time, and still remaining to me. The pleasure of this employment induced me, during the ensuing summer, to rise at half-past five instead of six, we had the work-room then to ourselves till eight o'clock ; and even in winter mornings we felt sufficient stimulus, from either drawing or writing, to pursue these favourite employments during that uninterrupted, unrivalled hour,—clothed, of course, as warmly as we could be, for the fire was not lighted till we left the room for breakfast. On many of these fine cold, bracing mornings, too, we would sally out—Ann, Jane, Isaac, Martin, perhaps also the children Jefferys and Jemina, to take a breathing run from the bottom of the Balkerne hill on the backway to Lexden. Pleasant recollections these, as will always be the *domestic* enjoyments of early life. They recal the freshness, the tenderness, the happy gaiety of youthful feelings, and by-gone days ; tainted with less to deplore and repent of, than belongs to more exciting pleasures.

I often wonder, however, that sitting thus in the cold

workroom, meeting in these morning walks the sharpest air, living during the day in a room unhealthily heated by a German stove, and then, as we often did, braving the cold again at eight in the evening, paying our "morning calls" on our young friends who rarely expected us earlier, and knew the reason why,—I often wonder that we sustained it all without injury, especially under an employment entirely sedentary, and continued during twelve or fourteen of our youthful years. Sorely, indeed, did my mother grieve over it, predicting for us premature old age at thirty, but so it did not prove; witness my hand copying this MS. in 1861. My father's regular health prevented him from feeling the danger; but he yielded at last to the fears of my mother, and allowed us to leave the workroom daily, weather permitting, at one o'clock, to secure a walk before the two o'clock dinner.

It was during the visit to London just mentioned, that I was first introduced to the family of Anna Forbes—that dearest friend of my life! They were a family bearing scarcely a trace of this world about them—a sort of oasis of evergreen simplicity in the great desert of London. The father, a surgeon in extensive practice, was a very child in feeling and manners; the mother, not a child, yet not a woman, such as we usually expect to see a woman in such a circle. She was quiet, reserved, always and imperturbably the same; her voice, one low even note; her person, neat and prim; her thoughts heavenly; but though safely, as none could doubt, in the narrow way, it was especially a narrow way for her. I do not mean that she was incommoded by its confinement, but that her mind had naturally little compass, or capacity for range. Her

eldest son, strangely diverged from the family ways and rose to distinction as an army surgeon.\* The second son died a few years later than the period of my introduction, in a state of mind enviably happy; and the youngest was that dear "Uncle William," whom you knew so well, inheriting largely the simplicity, kindness, and excellence of both his parents. Eliza, the youngest daughter, an elegant and lovely girl, became the friend and correspondent of my sister, many of whose published letters were addressed to her.

And another intimate association of my life comes first into notice during this London visit. I accompanied the Conder family to the midsummer breaking up of a school of some repute at Hackney, where Josiah Conder was honourably distinguished among his schoolfellows. He soon exhibited literary taste and ability, and became in a few years almost the centre of our poetic circle, or, as we ventured to entitle it, the "Wreath." Shortly after my return home his cousin "Luck" paid her first visit to us; she was one whose friendship I tenderly valued, and enjoyed till her death.

Thus were gradually supplied the vacancies already making in our earlier circle; for the remove of the Stapletons to Dedham was the precursor of further changes. Mrs Stapleton had relatives in Dublin to whom she naturally wished to introduce her daughters. They moved in a superior circle, and were persons of fascinating manners, much intelligence and general excellence. The inducements were considerable, but certain consequences might, perhaps, have been anticipated.

\* He became Sir Charles Forbes, and was selected by Lord Winchelsea to accompany him in his duel with the Duke of Wellington.—[ED.]

It was an entirely Unitarian connection to which they were introduced, and certainly a very gay one. Mira and Eliza commenced a long visit there in January of this year, and late in the summer my especial friend Bithia followed them. There had been little in the religious circles of Colchester to attract the young towards what we regard as the doctrines of the Gospel, little to induce the tasteful and intelligent to join their company. In Dublin everything was captivating, and nothing offensive. The theatre, the ball-room, and all the warmth of Irish hospitality combined to allure; and when they again visited England the Stapletons belonged to another sphere than ours. Of Mira and Bithia my father had thought so favourably that without scruple he would have received them into the Church; but they came back with other views, had "freed themselves from educational prejudices," and soon indicated to their anxious mother, that the step so worldly wise, had but commenced a course of trial which terminated only with the life of each.

There are, it is true, few things in the treatment of a family requiring more of that wisdom which cometh from above, than the decision continually to be made between exposure and exclusiveness. To act out either principle fully would be almost equally injurious. God has placed us in a world requiring the discharge of active duties amid its innumerable temptations, and if we cannot defend our children from all, the best we can do is to arm them with principles for the unavoidable encounter—perhaps padding the shield on the inside with *habits*. We cannot watch over them till all dangers are past, but a steady eye upon the *chief* good will steer us safely through many.

Do you remember the enquiry made of good old Thomas Scott on his death-bed? In his own large family he had been greatly favoured, and they, having now children of their own to rear, asked their dying father whether he could name any special course or principle to which this success could be attributed? He replied, with the humility of an aged Christian, that he was sensible of many defects and errors, but that one thing he had aimed at, and to that only could he refer the blessing that had distinguished his labours,—his uniform endeavour, both for his children and himself to “seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” So much had everything else been regarded as subordinate, that the Rev. John Scott, his eldest son, and biographer adds, that he believes, “not one among them would have ventured to inform his father that he was about to marry a rich wife!” How strangely diverse from the ruling principle now, even among those who profess to be not of this world!

Having named Thomas Scott I cannot resist the pleasure of expressing the veneration and love with which I regard him. What a beautifully honest man! Truth and conscience everywhere, the pole-star and the helm! There is to my mind in his writings an even-handedness which guides safely among the practical difficulties of theology. Read his volume of “Theological Essays,” and you will be fenced in from error, not by dogmatism, but by the wisdom, judgment, christian experience, extensive knowledge of the best kind, and fearless integrity of one of the best of men. From my heart I admire him, and from my head, such as it is, not the less. He was a speckled bird, however, among the Churchmen of his times.

Till near the close of this year, though both destined for the arts, Jane and I had, as has been said, spent only alternate weeks in the work-room; but an engagement made by my father to supply monthly portraits to the Theological Magazine induced him to withdraw us both from the family, and now to the end of our residence in Colchester we continued fully employed in engraving, with exception of one day each, in a fortnight, for our own needlework, which was certainly most sedulously worked to that purpose. Indeed, without a careful economy of time, we could not have accomplished all that we contrived to accomplish during our little leisure; a leisure which we thoroughly enjoyed, for none but the fully occupied can appreciate the delight of suspended, or rather, I should say, of varied labour. It is toil that creates holidays; there is no royal road—yes, that is *the* royal road—to them. Life cannot be made up of recreations, they must be garden spots in well farmed land.

A name of enduring interest to me occurs first in the autumn of this year, that of Dr Mackintosh, the husband, as he now became, of our friend Miss Hills. Just sixty years ago he was introduced to us as the elegant and accomplished young physician, warm from the literary circles of Edinburgh. Forty-seven years afterwards, and after twenty years of discontinued intercourse, I was delighted by a renewed correspondence unexpectedly commenced by his wife. How little can we surmise among associates of early life who are to survive! who to wear well through all its trials and dangers—who to return to us after many days! In Dr and Mrs Mackintosh I regained truly valuable Christian friends. It

was delightful to witness in her letters the ardour and vivacity of her youthful character, the firmness of the fine handwriting, the same graphic archness of description, a freshness of recollection, and a tenacity of friendship rarely preserved amidst the infirmities of years.

About this time we were introduced to a new and different family circle from which it was our own fault if we did not derive much benefit as well as pleasure. I think, indeed, that to this day I can trace some degree of moral improvement in my own character to intercourse with these excellent friends. Mr Holman, of Sudbury, was a venerable Christian man of the older school; he was the principal of a long-established firm, manufacturers of a fabric not, I believe, now in use, a thin white glazed woollen stuff used only for *shrouds*. It was then required by Act of Parliament, as part of the protectionist system of the day, and to encourage the wool trade, that everyone should be buried in wool.\* The manufacture, therefore, was considerable; and in Mr Holman's factory not the material only, but the shrouds also were made. I vividly remember, on a dark winter's evening, returning from a visit to Rodbridge Hall, the hospitable residence of an uncle of our friends, and, stopping at a lone house between Melford and Sudbury, in which, under the care of some female relatives of Mr Holman, the shroud making was carried on. We were ushered into a large and lofty room, surrounded by something like dressers or counters, on which, at full length, were laid out the shrouds in all

\* "Odius! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke,"  
Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke.

POPE, *Ethic Epistles*.

their grim neatness of plaitings, stomachers, ruffles, and gimping, while others hung above on the walls. It was about as much as nerves could endure by candle-light. But here were residing three solitary sisters, apparently unconscious of any speciality in their employment.

Of one of them, dying a few years after, I may relate a striking incident. They were all pious women, but one had fallen into a state of religious despondency, from which nothing availed to relieve her, and, to the distress of her family, she gradually declined to the grave under its influence. Dying, she made no sign, till at the last moment she suddenly exclaimed, "Glory! oh, this *is* glory!" and immediately expired, permitted, it seemed, in kindness to her sorrowing family, to antedate, but for an instant, Heaven itself. May it prove an encouragement to some suffering in a like darkness to hope on, "faint yet pursuing," till through Him in whom in life they have trusted, they are in death made more than conquerors.

There was a very pleasant circle at Sudbury, sufficiently intelligent to be interesting, and quite good enough to be very useful to us. Well do I remember the kind grave suavity of Mr Holman's manner, and the impressions made by his mild gentlemanly reproofs, when we chanced to take what he thought a little licence in speaking of our neighbours, which certainly sometimes we did. I think that almost my first real sensitiveness to this sin of the tongue was produced under the light of his mild eye, and under contrast with the kindness of his amiable family. Most of them have been long in the grave, and in thus reverting to circle after circle I am ready to exclaim,—“I only am left alone to tell thee.”



Whether or not to continue thus minutely to notice names and circumstances year after year, I cannot satisfactorily determine, but there were occurrences in 1801 which demand some speciality.

At this time a family was introduced to our intimacy that during the ten years following, were among our most familiar and agreeable associates. As they had always resided in Colchester, I do not know how it was that we came to know them then, or did not know them before. The house and household of Mr Strutt—or “Ben Strutt,” as he was regularly called in the town—were altogether unique. The house was rendered as antique in appearance as it could be. In the centre was what was used as a music hall, occupying two stories in height, and hung round with pieces of old armour, weapons, and similar curiosities. One of the upper chambers opened into this hall, not by windows, but literally,—the whole side being removed. It was defended only by a low balustrade, so that the daughter whose room it was, might, as she lay in bed, have found her dreams disturbed by the spectral appearances of shield, helmet, and breastplate gleaming under the moonlight falling on them from a skylight in the roof.

Mr Strutt himself it is not easy to describe. What might be his occupation, or by what means he indulged his varied, peculiar, and sometimes expensive tastes, I never knew. He was artist, musician, antiquary, poet, and author, an amateur in each. His fine grey head and dark penetrating eyes made his appearance singular and interesting, while a marked scowl and a taciturn austerity seemed intended to express a high disregard of society in

all its forms of external elegance and conventional politeness—intended, I fancy, to express all this, but, to my thinking, it did its business awkwardly.\*

He was, I fully believe, naturally not only polite, but kind, so that notwithstanding the severe exterior, we soon felt at home and comfortable in his unornamented parlour; amused by his eccentricities, and honoured, as we could not help feeling, by his terse original conversation. Indeed, I think I may say he seemed to take a sort of liking to us. Of his theological views there were various conjectures afloat. No one ever sounded his opinions, but he was regarded as a sceptic after some school of his own, especially as he never attended public worship anywhere. His wife had been long dead, but his mother, an aged woman, yet younger and more vitally alive than many in their prime, resided with him, and an unmarried sister kept his house. With the eldest son, a dry, stiff, pedantic oddity, inheriting his father's queerness, without either his taste or intellect, we were but little acquainted, since he was considerably the senior of the family. Four others, Caroline, Jacob, Rachel, and Sarah, completed the circle, and it was with Caroline and Jacob that we were chiefly intimate. She was a fine girl of about our own age, peculiar as they all were, and with much talent for both music and drawing; but beyond a sort of church-going religion, which she shared with her aunt, she was entirely

\* Crabbe Robinson in his diary describes Mr Strutt at some length, having been evidently impressed not only with his singularity but with his intellectual power and versatile talent. He quotes some of his shrewd but cynical sayings; among others,—“Young man, whatever you be through life, always be of the Act of Parliament faith.”—[ED.]

ignorant of what we understood as evangelical piety. It became the subject of much conversation and correspondence both with us and Anna Forbes, who had been paying us a visit ; but she resented the implication of being "a sinner," as a term that was unfit and untrue ; and it was impossible to say what impression was eventually made upon her mind. She died of consumption in 1805.

Jacob Strutt was an interesting, intelligent young man, with much that was chivalrous both in appearance and character. A little speech depicts him. We were returning late one night from his father's house, Jacob being our escort, when I chanced to drop a bracelet on the pavement. We looked for it in vain ; and, on giving up the search, he said, "a true knight would remain with his lance poised beside him till daylight to guard and recover the treasure." And well his dark scorn-speaking countenance would have befitted the knightly figure. He both drew and wrote well ; you will distinguish him as a contributor to the "Associate Minstrels" (presently to be mentioned), under the signature S.—a graceful specimen of his lighter style. . Being, however, a student of medicine at the time, he could not give full scope to his tastes, which inclined much more to art and literature than to science. He did not follow his profession, and I last heard of him vegetating among the ruins of Rome—himself too much a ruin. One can but sigh over a life that, with character formed, and energies controlled and exercised under Christian principles, might have shone, a light in the world. He married a lady of various literary ability, and competent to almost all sorts of work, includ-

ing the composition of sermons for languid divines. One of her works I have read with pleasure, "The Triumphs of Genius and Perseverance," an interesting collection of biographies exemplifying those qualities.

It was in the social hour after eight that, if ever, we enjoyed ourselves from home, and it was then that we frequently supped with the Strutts. The fare was singular, since one of his peculiarities was the prohibition of animal food to his family, though he admitted of exceptions in favour of his mother and his visitors; a lamentable crotchet to which I have always believed the lives of his two daughters, both dying of consumption, were in some degree sacrificed. It was a strange circle—Mr Strutt, the aged mother, the simple, kind hearted, nondescript maiden sister, little Sally, Rachel, a girl of such secluded temper and manners that we had scarcely speaking acquaintance with her, occasionally the queer Edward, or the graceful Jacob, but we were as much at home in it as if all had been young like ourselves.\*

About this date, the pressure on the arts continuing very heavy, and my father, in these fearfully difficult times, having a hard struggle to maintain his large family, it was suggested by a friend that I should accept a situation as governess in an intelligent Suffolk family. By most parents so circumstanced this would have been regarded as a desirable relief, but my kind father preferred for me the

\* Mr Strutt indulged in favourite cats. He was convinced upon one occasion that a fine "Tom" was suffering from toothache, and that the tooth should be extracted. But how "bell the cat?" His ingenuity was equal to the emergency; inserting pussy, claws and all, into a top-boot, leaving the head alone exposed, he was able to operate with safety and satisfaction to *himself*.—[ED.]

few grains I could pick up under his wing, so long at least as this was practicable, notwithstanding all its cares and privations. I can but regard this decision with thankfulness, both to my earthly and my heavenly Father, for notwithstanding all my home advantages, I was entirely unfit to undertake such a charge. It is probable that of some things I might know more than many, but I knew nothing *secundum artem*, having never been taught in schools; and though now nineteen, I was a mere child in judgment and experience. Indeed, I have often thought that, as a family, we were (I was going to say *are*) younger than our years. Even now, whether at sixty-six, as when I first began this, or at eighty, as I am now, the feeling of being a grown woman, to say nothing of an *old* woman, does not come naturally to me. I arrive at the conclusion rather by a process of reflection than as a *felt* fact. I believe, therefore, that I might have been subjected to disgrace and disappointment had the offer been accepted, and that I was kept in a path better suited to both my taste and ability.

. . . . .

There may be some who, like myself, have mournful reasons for remembering the fearfully hot and dry summer of 1801. During many sultry weeks the sun looked out of the clear blue sky as if he had no pity. The parched fields gaped with thirst; the streets, even of clean Colchester, became almost fetid from the want of rain, not a cloud of promise came, and fever broke out with us, as in most parts of the kingdom. In common with our neighbours we dreaded the prevalent infection, and at

last our dear little brother Decimus was attacked by the disease. Not one of us was allowed even to see him during the few days of his illness ; my mother nursed him alone, but in a week he died, having reached his sixth year. He was a quiet little fellow, and I cannot even now think of him without affectionate pain. Dear tranquil child, farewell to thee once more ! We all followed him to the grave, and our grief was very real. Sympathy goes to the heart at such times. A soldier, standing in an inn yard that we had to pass, was heard to say softly, "poor things," as we moved along. It touched us then, and wrote itself, as you see, on my memory.

We had been prohibited from taking even a last look before the coffin was closed, but a friend, more kind than wise, "just took us in to see," and the consequence was, that Martin and Jefferys were immediately seized with the disease. It proved, however, in their case, much less virulent, and they recovered favourably. Yet I cannot describe the nervous apprehension with which we were all affected ; we lived in hourly terror, Jane and I especially ; at length our fears subsided, the house was thoroughly cleansed, and we began to suppose ourselves free from danger. But on a fine still Saturday evening, just before we left the work-room, I felt a slight sting in my throat—the fever had commenced, and it proceeded rapidly. By the Tuesday night following, the degree of heat I experienced seemed more like that of heated metal, than of human flesh. My parents, brothers, and sisters, assembled in my father's study to pray for my life, and their prayers were heard. My only nurses were my dear, weary mother, and a tender-hearted servant, who had been already ex-

posed to infection. She was but a good-natured, round-faced country girl, but I shall always gratefully remember her unselfish kindness and devotion. I wish her as kind a hand to smooth her own sick pillow—if pillow she still needs!

Long has been the interval since I wrote last, partly because it is difficult for me to command seclusion and leisure, and partly because a more serious point was approaching in my history than any I have previously had to touch. A quiet Sabbath evening inclines me to proceed.

Great as had been my anxiety when danger was only in sight, I do not recollect anything of the kind during my illness. Though I had no such assured hope of safety as could render the prospect of death other than alarming, the absorbing effect of disease, as I suppose, kept me tranquil. Perhaps such tranquillity may often be mistaken for the token of a "happy death." In extremity of pain or weakness the mind loses its sensitiveness to anything beside, and, except in special cases, becomes almost incapable of deep emotion. The sufferer appears, as it is said, "quite resigned," and so the weight of eternal issues is thrown upon the peradventure "that all is right," or the conviction that, if not, it is too late,—what must be, must be now!

In a short time I was restored to my usual health, and my dear father watched for "fruit." What were the indications from which he judged favourably of my Christian character I cannot say, but he did not lose the opportunity, on my recovery, of urging the necessity of decision, and before the end of the year I allowed myself to be

proposed to the Church ; how suitably God only knows, the day shall declare it. Oh that I may find mercy of the Lord in that day!\* I was never confident, never satisfied, and there are some, of whose profession at the time I thought ill, whose Christianity has proved of better stamina than mine. They have survived to evidence growth, and reality, and leave me, I am constrained to fear, still a dark inconsistent wanderer, vainly attempting to lay hold on the *hope* set before me in the gospel. "Other refuge have I none," yet I fail of *peace*, "peace in believing," that blessed possession which the world can neither give nor take away.

"Oh, decide the doubtful case,  
Thou who art Thy people's sun,  
Shine upon the work of grace,  
If it be indeed begun."

I have just alluded to my own life-long failure in reaching peace and joy. Yet there was a period, long after the date of my admission to the church, when I did enjoy what seemed a well-founded hope, and I will ante-date my history by nearly forty years to narrate the circumstances under which it occurred. Those many years had passed over me with various alternations of comfort and discomfort, hope and fear, when in the summer of 1838 I was called to make a long sojourn at the sea, on a solitary coast. Our first Sabbath on the way thither was spent in a family where I should not have looked for re-

\* "Joining the Church" is with the Independents a serious and individual profession of faith in Christ, differing in this respect from the somewhat analogous form of Confirmation in the Church of England. —[ED.]



ligious improvement ; but I was there singularly affected. It was an ordinance Sabbath, and in my usual state of feeling, a doleful sense of need and misery, I joined the communion, of the small church there. During the administration, the yearning of my heart for salvation expressed itself in a whispered, "Oh that I could!" no sooner uttered than a response seemed to say, "And what hinders? If you are willing, is God unwilling?" I was dumb. I could give no reply ; and went from the chapel with a new feeling of hope. At the house I met with a book I should not have expected to find there—Newton's "Cardiphonia." I read it eagerly, and felt its suitability to my condition.

Few spots in England could have appeared less favourable for spiritual improvement than the little sea-bathing place we were going to. At the parish church there was service only once on the Sunday, and I think only once a fortnight, and the sermon was an essay without an evangelical word. On the Sunday evenings, in the kitchen of a small shopkeeper, the humble teaching of a local brother among the Methodists was the only other opportunity ; but it was gospel, and I enjoyed it. I had brought with me from home a volume of Scott's "Essays," and these formed my Sunday readings, and well I remember the delight, admiration, and gratitude with which, upon one occasion, while reading the essay on Justification, I perceived, as by a new revelation, the glorious wisdom, freeness, and sufficiency of the plan by which a helpless sinner may be saved ! I rose from my seat, being alone, read the words aloud, and thanked God for them. From that time, and

till long after, I felt a degree of peace and happiness which was new to me. But it faded.

And here I pause. Is there no balm in Gilead, no physician there? Why, then, is not my heart healed of its malady? Is not the same God rich in mercy to all who call upon him? Truly my sins have separated between me and my God; that I can see, that I can understand; but then is it not said, "Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though red like crimson, they shall be as wool?" "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely?" Oh, Thou who art exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to *give* repentance and remission of sins, bestow upon me, I beseech Thee, these princely gifts, and strengthen the weak hand of my faith to take the living draught that I thirst no more!\*

Among the improving influences by which, from my youth up, I have been surrounded,—some certainly at the time less agreeable than others, but for which I am constrained to feel not the less thankful,—I may mention a visit, paid soon after my recovery from the scarlet fever,

\* There is reason to believe that this prayer was answered, and that at eventide it was again light with this conscientious, self-distrusting, and deeply humble spirit. Those who witnessed her constant cheerfulness, and youthful enjoyment of simple pleasures, little suspected this anxiety of soul, especially as she was always reserved in conversation upon personal experience. It is undeniable that some of the most eminent saints have passed through similar spiritual trials, notably Madame Guyon, who for a series of years endured, what she calls, her "state of probation and desolation." But it is happily exceptional in the records of Christian life.—[ED.]

to a good minister at Dedham. He was, I believe, the senior minister of the county, a plain, excellent, straightforward man, commonly spoken of as "Father Crathern." Happening to see me when yet scarcely recovered, he kindly invited me for a few days to his house for change of air. But my tongue had not yet learned aright the lesson of Christian kindness, and I ventured at Father Crathern's fireside to deal with some of my neighbours not exactly as I would have been dealt with. Of all places that was not the spot where it was prudent to indulge in this kind of sport, nor do I know any spot in which it would be desirable. Though in most cases a simple amusement, there are few faults into which it is easier to fall,—few of which it may be more difficult to see the unkindness, and the sin,—few, therefore, against which it behoves us to be more prayerfully on our guard. Sitting, as we brothers and sisters did, day after day, and year after year, side by side at the same employment, it was an easy amusement to divert ourselves at the expense of others, not in malice, but in thoughtlessness, and indulging that taste for the humorous, of which we all partook less or more. On these occasions when, perhaps, a running fire had been kept up for some time, my father would lift up his head from the desk at which he stood, look over his spectacles, and administer a short, grave, or kind, interjunctory rebuke, which might silence, more easily than cure us.

It requires a deeper sense than we readily acquire of the sin and unkindness of the habit, to root it out of the heart, and rid it from the lips; but it may be to some extent removed by the plain dealing of those whom we

cannot help respecting, and whose good opinion we should be ashamed and grieved to forfeit. Such on me were the effects of Mr Holman's remarks, and the graver reproofs of Mr Crathern. They gave me at least a sensitiveness to the offence, which I think has not left me. To the memory of these two excellent men, I desire to express a genuine gratitude, and perhaps I might suggest their example as a stimulus to others to do likewise; scattering thus upon the waters, and after how many days may not Christian counsel in its living fruit return to them? It is now more than half a century since the kind and wise words were dropped into my ear—and my heart.

My sister Jane and I were indulged in holiday visits to our now many friends in London, but we could be seldom spared together. Our grandfather and grandmother Taylor now resided at Edmonton, in comfortable independence. My uncle Charles, the eldest of their sons, and known since as the "learned Editor of Calmet," lived in Hatton Garden.\* I wish I could paint for you his tall figure, slightly bending, or appearing to do so, from the habit of

\* The "Artist Scholar," as his nephew, Isaac Taylor has called him, in a paper in *Good Words* (1864), was well acquainted with art, having early studied from the Duke of Richmond's collection of marbles, and in Paris, which he visited in his twenty-first year (1777), the French at that time being reckoned to excel in engraving. He wrote thence letters to the *British Mirror*, and engraved some works, but his abler brother in this line, Isaac, speaks of him as "having artistical feeling, but no delicacy of tool." He afterwards edited and published several art works, among them, the "Artist's Repository," in five volumes, and the "Oval Plates to Shakespeare." He was burnt out of his house in Dyers' Buildings by the fire at Langdale's Distillery, at the Gordon riots. He afterwards became librarian to the London Library, the books being in his own house in Hatton Garden. At seventeen

constantly walking with his left arm under his coat behind, his full grey hair turned loosely back, a plain, shrewdly good-natured countenance, with always a welcome, a queer speech or a pun, on his lips. His wife was a kind, precise gentlewoman of the olden school. She was of Welsh extraction, with a small fortune of her own, and had been brought up in the Tower of London, of which place her uncle and guardian was chaplain, and she retained a sort of antique air, contracted, one might suppose, within its walls. They had one son and two daughters.

My Uncle's study! Oh such a medley of books, papers, desks and dust! Whether visitors were ever admitted I cannot say, I believe not. I only occasionally peeped in myself, but I am pretty sure never the housemaid and broom. The house was frequented by many literary persons, but there seemed to be no society, or circle of friends. The son, my cousin Charles, was not much less a character than his father, of which I may give this proof. He had become the active superintendent of a Sunday school on Saffron Hill, in which he was greatly interested. "Cousin," said he, upon one of my visits to London, "I

he saw on the top row of his father's books, Calmet's "Dictionnaire Historique et Critique de la Bible," and "began to talk about it, how he admired it, and how he should like to republish it." This was the great work of his life; he was translator, commentator, and illustrator, but never acknowledged it, always speaking of the editor as a third person. It has been well termed "a stupendous monument of literary industry." His memory was admirable; whatever he had once read, he never lost. "I have heard him" (writes his brother) "repeat the circumstances of a naval engagement, read in the papers years before, with all the commanders' names, number of guns, &c." The above particulars I have chiefly taken from notes on the family history by my grandfather.—[E.D.]

will take you to see the school, and you shall point out to me the Minerva of it." My sagacity was not sorely tried, one of the girls, she might be twelve or thirteen, could not be mistaken. She had a fine superior handsome countenance, full of intelligence, with dark hair and eyes; she well deserved the distinction, and soon after he placed her at a boarding-school, preparatory to a future closer connection; unfortunately, a short time previous to their marriage, she fell down and broke her nose, effecting a considerable change for the worse in her appearance; he was not one to recede, however, on that account, and she lived many years a valuable wife.

Another family circle opened to us at this time in London, with which we have been ever since closely connected. It resulted from a circumstance entirely accidental. My sister was taken by a friend to hear some popular preacher of the day, and in a full place was shown into a seat next to one in which was a gentleman known to her companion. This was Mr Cecil, nephew to the Rev. R. Cecil of St John's, Bedford Row. He had a heart always open to the young, and manners peculiarly endearing to them; and taking a fancy to Jane, she soon became his guest, as he also was soon ours, and after that I his, in every future visit to London. There was no family, in which we were thenceforward more at home, or enjoyed ourselves with greater zest. Our friends, the Forbeses and Conders, were already intimate there, with many other young people of about our own standing, so that there could not be a pleasanter rendezvous. Accidental we call such meetings; but how can I doubt the prescience and ordination of a particular providence in them? I do not

mean that God steps out of his way, or alters an original design in favour of some individual, but that in the great chain of providence not a link is missing or fractured; there are no small things, except as the acorn is smaller than the oak; all are important, the one as the other, in the great economy.

About this time Jane and I began the arduous experiment of making our own dresses. Limited as our time for needlework was, this was no easy matter. It would be difficult, indeed, to say which was the scarcest article with us, money, time, or skill, but we managed as well as we could amongst them, and cut and contrived till a dress came out of it. It has always been a pleasure to me to contrive, so as "to make things do," and I am not sure but that more is really enjoyed by those who, like us at that time, lived in the constant exercise of contrivance, than by those who have only to ask and have. A carelessness is generated by the consciousness of unlimited supply—from the knowledge that "Papa will pay," or later in life from the dangerous postponement to the "Christmas bill." With the habit so early commenced of husbanding every minute of time, it has never been a recreation with me to sit doing nothing, and unless disabled by illness, I cannot learn it now. My mother used to say, "your work is worth little if it is not worth candlelight," and, therefore, that which is called "Blind man's holiday" is no holiday to me.

And with all our close work we had, as has been seen, our holidays; exciting visits to London, and others to Suffolk, little less delightful, and perhaps more salutary. And there were home holidays enjoyed after a different fashion, but with nearly as warm a zest. These were of

two sorts: the "Parnassian Evening," as we ventured to call it for Winter; and the Gipsy Ramble in Summer. Domestic anniversaries were especially distinguished. For the winter celebration we surrounded the large dining table after tea—my father with his pencil, my mother with a book of some special interest, selected for the occasion, sitting at the head; and each of us, brothers and sisters, with drawing and needlework, as the case might be. Something inexpensive, but a little out of the common way, was provided for supper. Much, very much, did we enjoy these healthful home festivities.\*

In summer there were several birthdays among us to afford happy excursions, generally ourselves only, but occasionally we assembled as many as twenty or thirty among our friends; took store for a pic-nic dinner under a hedge, in a green nook of the high woods, or on a country common, and finished with a refreshing tea at some roadside inn—the "White Hart" at East Bergholt, or a sequestered inn at Heckford Bridge; whither we rambled on the day Isaac came of age, our dear friend Luck Conder being at the time our guest. The day was passed as happily, perhaps, as if a host of tenants had been regaled in front of the ancestral Hall! There are not many conditions of life in which the *affections*, and the *country*, may not provide a sufficient feast for a red-letter day. Let those who, searching for pleasure, cannot find *happiness* make the experiment.

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\* "The superstitions of the heart also were respected among us."

ISAAC TAYLOR.



[ED.—It was amongst the lively circle at Colchester, who no doubt were sometimes amused with the dulness of their neighbours that Jane Taylor one day produced the following “Jeu d’ esprit.” After all, it would seem that the visit of the muses to the bucolic old town was not quite without result.]

“ It happened one day—but ’tis not ascertained  
 At what time—that the ‘ Nine ’ of low spirits complained,  
 And to cheer their depression concerted a plan  
 Awhile to sojourn in the dwellings of man.  
 The groves of Parnassus, they said, were retired,  
 That Muses themselves recreation required,  
 And, therefore, the scheme they determined to follow,  
 Without even asking the leave of Apollo.  
 Their escort was Pegasus, ever intent  
 To conduct his fair friends wheresoever they went.

“ The place they believed would enliven them best,  
 Was a snug little isle that lay far to the west ;  
 So thither with speed they directed their course,  
 Their guide, as aforesaid, the classical horse.

“ Their mode of conveyance is hard to discover,  
 Suffice it to say, it was something or other.  
 Perhaps through the ocean Old Neptune might send them,  
 In some worn-out car he might offer to lend them ;  
 Or, with their winged friend, through the air they might sail ;  
 Or climb o’er a rainbow ; or traverse a gale.  
 Perhaps by some magical spell they were hurled ;  
 Or they *might* travel post, like the rest of the world.  
 ’Tis certain, however, they were at no loss,  
 Although for nine people there was but one horse,  
 For he, more obliging than hunter or hack,  
 Might take three or four at a time on his back,  
 And when he had landed them safely at Dover,  
 Return to Parnassus to bring the rest over.

“ But whether they travelled by sea, or came by land,  
’Tis certain they all arrived safe in our island,  
And scarcely a town from the east to the west  
But was honoured by having a Muse for a guest.  
All paid them great homage ; some came to adore them,  
Pale poets by hundreds fell prostrate before them,  
And they, in return for this politic praise,  
Bestowed in profusion their laurels and bays,  
A large stock of which they invented a plan to  
Transport to this isle in a spacious portmanteau.

“ In the course of this tour they arrived at a place  
Whose name I conceal from a public disgrace ;  
Yet own, wishing not other towns to disparage,  
’Twas on the high road between London and Harwich.

“ So here they arrived, little doubting of meeting,  
Like everywhere else, with a sociable greeting,  
And being fatigued with the way they had been,  
Were looking about them in search of an inn.

“ But how the fair group were abashed and affrighted  
To see the surprise their appearance excited !  
The gentlemen, staring through opera glasses,  
Declared they were old-fashioned odd-looking lasses ;  
The ladies assented, just deigning to cast  
Some looks of surprise and contempt as they passed,  
And hoped to such comical creatures as they  
Their gentlemen friends would have nothing to say.  
And the gentlemen vow’d, as they stifled their laughter,  
They were the last girls they should ever go after.

“ Poor Pegasus, too ! sadly treated was he,  
Some outlandish beast they supposed he must be.  
All said his appearance was truly absurd ;  
Some thought him a horse ; others called him a bird ;  
The gentlemen jockeys declared ’twould be shocking  
To ride him without at least nicking and docking ;

And every man said, as they passed by his door,  
They had never beheld such odd people before ;  
And indeed, if they might be allowed to speak plain,  
They never desired to see such again.

“ By this time the party had reached an hotel,  
But began to complain that they did not feel well,  
They scarcely could breathe, and felt strangely oppressed,  
And Pegasus, too, was as bad as the rest.  
So all of them ended their complaints by insisting  
That this was an air they could never exist in.  
They wished themselves fifty miles out of the way ;  
Then, ladies, said Pegasus, why do we stay ?  
And, being quite willing to take his advice, ‘  
They packed up their all, and were gone in a trice,  
Lamenting the place they should ever explore,  
And vowing they never would visit it more.  
And all who of this famous town may have heard  
Well know that they never have broken their word !”

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# DOMESTIC RECOLLECTIONS.

## CHAPTER V.

### *COLCHESTER AND ONGAR.*

I.

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## CHAPTER V.

COLCHESTER AND ONGAR.

1802-12.

“ We said to Time, 'twas long ago,  
‘ Old man, thy daughters bless ;’  
He did not say exactly—‘ No,’  
Nor yet exactly—‘ Yes.’

“ He smiled, 'tis said to be his way  
When children thus request ;  
He then no promise breaks, and they,  
Believe as suits them best.” ANN GILBERT.

“ Fraught with invective they ne'er go  
To folks at Paternoster Row.” GOLDSMITH.

I HAVE already adverted to the origin of our connection with Darton and Harvey, maintained for a few years under assumed signatures. But at length, observing that they were constantly publishing small books with plates, I ventured from my concealment, and informed them that, if they had engraving to dispose of, we could undertake a portion. With this suggestion they immediately complied, and it was not long before they made a proposition themselves. I insert a copy of the letter from our worthy friend Darton, which resulted in that occupation of our pens which for many years formed the delightful, as well

as profitable employment of our limited leisure, and which placed Jane especially upon a track which through life she never abandoned, much to the benefit, I may say, of successive generations of the young. The admirable volumes of Q. Q. sufficiently attest this remark. The letter of Darton, addressed to my father, was as follows:—

LONDON, 1st 6 mo. 1803.

ISAAC TAYLOR.

Respected Friend,

We have received some pieces of poetry from some branches of thy family for the Minor's Pocket Book, and we beg that the enclosed trifles may be divided among such as are most likely to be pleased with them. My principal reason for writing now, is to request that when any of their harps be tuned, and their muse in good humour, if they could give me some specimens of easy Poetry for young children, I would endeavour to make a suitable return in cash, or in books. If something in the way of moral songs (though not songs), or short tales turned into verse, or,—but I need not dictate. What would be most likely to please little minds must be well known to every one of those who have written such pieces as we have already seen from thy family. Such pieces as are short, for little children would be preferred.

For self and partner, very respectfully,

DARTON AND HARVEY.

The "pieces" referred to were by Jane and me,—her's a poetical solution of the Enigmas and Charades of the

year, prettily written in the character of a little Beggar with wares to sell, beginning—

“ I’m a poor little beggar, my mammy is dead,”

and mine, entitled the “ Crippled Child’s ” Complaint—

“ Kind Christians have pity, I’m helpless and lame,”

which was suggested by the suffering and lameness of my brother Jefferys.

I well remember the arrival of this letter, and can see now the flocking to papa’s high desk to read, enter fully into, comprehend, and calculate results. Various were our speculations as to what might be implied in the sentence, “ a suitable return in cash or in books.” “ Books good, but cash better,” we thought. One remark made by my father I remember also,—“ I do not want my girls to be authors.” In that wish he was not entirely gratified, and I conclude that, before the death of his daughter Jane, he had retracted it. Little at the time, too, could it have crossed his mind that before many years had elapsed, his wife would become the author of numerous books as “ Mrs Taylor of Ongar.”

In the previous year I had sent up contributions under the signature of “ Maria,” which were thus noticed. “ We are delighted with the steady and valuable correspondence of ‘ Maria,’ under whatever name she pleases to appear, and hope the time will come when we may be amused with her productions on a more useful and extended scale.” Nor can I forbear inserting a further extract. Along with my own “ solution ” at this time, I had sent up



one by my brother Isaac, then only thirteen years old, under the signature of "Imus;" and it is interesting to perceive the sagacity with which its early promise was acknowledged in the following:—"We have been much divided in our opinion respecting the adjudication of the second best answer, for the competition has been very equal. However, we are not ashamed to announce that if the general solution signed 'Imus,' be the production of a boy thirteen years old, as it is professed to be, we should not hesitate a moment to adjudge him a prize for so wonderful a production. There are such a clearness of thought, and conciseness of diction in the piece, that we are led to suppose it the composition of a person far more advanced in years (though the handwriting does not belie the assertion). However, if Maria (for we discover a family connection) will avouch the truth of this, we are ready to bestow on him an additional prize, in consideration of his uncommon genius."

This was the first appearance of the author of the "Natural History of Enthusiasm" in print, and the first award of literary fame, afterwards so justly earned. The "solution" which gave this happy augury was the following—the words in italics represent the solution of the enigmas and charades of the preceding year, all of which had to be unravelled and included.

#### CONSUMPTION.

With languid *ears*, and *lifeless* eyes,  
 In *chair* of pain he panting lies,  
 With fruitless medicine he's plied,  
 And every art in vain is tried ;

E'en *Matlock's* beauties, *Downham's* air,  
Can only strengthen sad despair :  
*Rosemary's* juice, in water pure,  
Serves but to make his death more sure :  
The thickened soup in *saucepan* made,  
Untouched before him now is laid,  
And *garden, sonnet, nightingale,*  
Unheard, unseen, no more regale !  
The flower that seemed so bright in bloom,  
Droops now in *nightshade's* deadly gloom.  
Like some wet *firework's* transient blaze,  
Burns only out one half his days,  
Death's *mandate* clips the *string*, and he  
Obtains the awful passage *key* :  
With *earnest* hope his soul ascends,  
And all his pain in glory ends.—IMUS.

It could have been scarcely a year or two later, that his own health began to fail, and he would frequently stand during the greater part of a winter's evening leaning his head against the mantelpiece in the parlour, where only my mother was at work. We did not understand the meaning of it, but many years afterwards, when his literary career had fully developed itself, I ventured to ask him. "Do you remember that habit, and what was the reason of it?" "Yes, Ann," he replied; "I was in fact meditating on the evils of society, and wondering whether *I* could do anything to mitigate them." Cogitations not shared by many at a similar age, but in his case a pledge nobly redeemed in the works—"Enthusiasm," "Fanaticism," "Spiritual Despotism," and "Ancient Christianity," which occupied his riper years.

It was now, in complying with Darton's welcome re-

quest, that our evenings became truly valuable to us. And the employment was so much to our taste, as well as advantageous for our limited funds, that it was the pleasure of the day to look forward to it, and to provide ourselves with some thoughts suitable for the simple treatment required. Happy she who could first lay claim to anything that admitted of consecutive versification! This look-out for ideas was one difficult part of our task; another, the simplification of language to suit our expected young readers. Much easier should we have found it to cater for such as ourselves. This probably most who have made the attempt will understand.

However, we contrived to send up material for the first volume of "Original Poems for Infant minds."\* Exactly when it appeared I do not remember, but it must have been early, as a second was ordered in November 1804. The first word that reached us respecting its success was from our friend, Mr T. Conder in Bucklersbury—"Much pleased with Original Poems, have sold forty already." For this volume the immediate payment was £5, but another £5 was afterwards added. The money was welcome; but more welcome still were expressions of pleasure like the above. Having written to order, we had no control over the getting out of the volumes, and should have been better pleased if contributions from other hands had been omitted. Several of these were signed "Adelaide,"

\* Their brother Isaac records that the rough copies of "these world-wide compositions were first written on the margins of those engraved plans of fortified towns," which, as explained in a former note, their father had constructed to convey a notion of military engineering to his children. The poems were quickly reprinted in America, and afterwards translated into the German, Dutch, and Russian languages.—[ED.]

whom we understood afterwards to have been a Miss O'Keefe, a lady whose father had written for the stage. After the publication of these two volumes we were allowed to stand alone. I think I am correct in saying that for the second volume of "Original Poems" we received £15; and for the "Rhymes for the Nursery," still more simple in style, £20; so that we felt our purses comfortably filling, and from this time for several years were never without commissions of some sort. Among them were the "Limed twigs to catch young birds;" "City scenes;" "Rural scenes;" "Bible stories," large and small; a Child's Book, which we translated from the French; a revision of "A Mother's Fables," much altered, and, I must say, improved; and many others. Besides formal remittances, our friends, of 55 Gracechurch Street, sent us occasional presents of fish, fruit, and other acceptable "oddments;" and to the last day I have been in town I could not pass No. 55 without a look of grateful remembrance towards both God and man; and a renewed recognition of that providential guidance, by which life is often insensibly turned into new, pleasant or useful channels.

Among the "jobs" entrusted to us was the revision and improvement of a queer book—"The World turned Topsy-turvey." This was sent to us by the then large publisher, Sir Richard Philips, who paid us 24 guineas for the operation; we added several new pieces, and certainly mended the old ones. It was, I think, about the spring of 1808 that the "Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast," a *jeu d'esprit* by Roscoe of Liverpool made its appearance. It became so popular as to produce numerous imitations, much below the original, and my ambition being stirred,

I entered the field, pen in hand, with the "Wedding among the Flowers." The season and opportunity were especially favourable from two circumstances: one, that Jane at the time was on a visit to London, and I was left alone without companionship; and the other, that it was the half-yearly recess which we used to denominate the *Seven o'clockings*. To explain: The regular hour to leave the workroom, summer and winter, was eight, but twice in the year, for about a fortnight each time, we could see without lighting up till seven, and broke up then: (we had each two candles in a low candlestick made for the purpose). Great was the boon of the additional evening hour, and it was of this that I availed myself, completing the little poem in the evenings of a happy fortnight. Our good friend, Darton, rewarded the pleasant labour—pleasant enough without reward—with the munificent gift, as I thought it, of twelve guineas. I may remark that, for none of our productions did we ever stipulate a price, but left it to our publishers. We have reason to believe that for many years they enjoyed an ample return for their liberality.

It has often surprised me, how successful were these early efforts, but we had the advantage of being almost first in the field. Dr. Aikin, Mrs Barbauld, and others, had written well for children, but mostly in prose; since the days of Dr. Watts there had scarcely been, I will not say a Poet, but a Rhymster on the ground, and therefore the road was open to a humble popularity. It has long been a legend in our family, and I have lately had it confirmed as true, that one of our great grandmothers was, when a child, taken on the knee of Dr. Watts and presented with a copy of his "Divine Songs for Children." I

should be not a little pleased to possess that small volume, but I cannot ascertain its whereabouts.

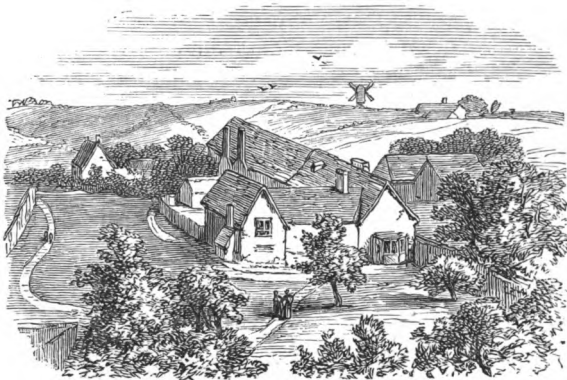
After referring to the pecuniary advantage resulting to us from this employment of our pens, together with the deep satisfaction of receiving frequent praise, I feel bound to add that when thus fairly launched, we were sensible of an earnest desire to be as useful as we could. At first no suspicion of the extent to which we might become so entered our minds. We kept the little one for whom we were writing, so far in view as to write honestly for its benefit, but it was an object that had to grow with the consciousness that the benefit was felt, and widening. I have heard Jane say, when sitting down to our new evening's business,—“I try to conjure some child into my presence, address her suitably, as well as I am able, and when I begin to flag, I say to her, ‘There love, now you may go.’”

In following our humble literary course I have made a leap forward of some years. The close of 1803 produced a temporary change in the home-circle of no small interest. England was beginning to look thoughtful at the name of Bonaparte. Especially towards the eastern coast, the suspicion of invasion was spreading alarm, and once or twice I believe beacons were actually fired to announce it. We had a large number of troops at Colchester, and it was afterwards surmised that the officers favoured the reports of a descent of French troops on that part of the Essex coast, in order to lessen the rate of lodgings. A panic, sudden and general, certainly occurred. Those of the inhabitants who could pay for immediate flight made off in every direction. But we

were not of that fortunate number. To transport a large part of the family, with goods and chattels at all equal to the necessity, required no small amount of cash in hand, a position in which we rarely found ourselves. I was myself absent in London, so that I report only from hearsay. Conveyance of some kind had to be devised, and that without delay, so it was resolved to make use of the heavy stage waggon—there were no coaches on the road at all—which traversed the eighteen miles between Colchester and Lavenham, where, happily, my father's house was then untenanted. My sister Jane and brother Isaac took charge of Jefferys and Jemima, (my father and mother, with Martin, remaining at home) and all were stuffed in along with soldiers' wives, their children, and what not of furniture and goods, for a slow journey, that did not come to its end till ten o'clock at night, when the groaning vehicle slid down Water Street, and discharged our portion of its worn and weary passengers into the warm welcome and kind comfort of the Lungleys, whose hospitality always kept an open door for our visits.

The next concern was to fit up the vacant house with the few articles of furniture that had travelled with them. The pleasant sitting-room, looking into the garden, was provided with a suitable table for engraving at ; two bedrooms were put into decent trim ; and taking the duties most suited to their several ability, Jane and Isaac, with little run-about helps in Jefferys and Jemima, contrived to do the needful as master, mistress, and servant, in the humble household—contriving, indeed, that things should look so pleasant and feel so comfortable as to become, in

double-quick time, a very cheerful home. Besides the Lungleys, various branches of the Meeking family, of old and hospitable memory, remained ; and a Mr Thomas Hickman, a cousin of our friend, had succeeded him in the pastorate. Nor were new friends wanting ; so that this Lavenham episode, extending from October 1803 to February 1804, was enjoyed by all of us ; my father, mother, Martin, and I making visits, or interchanges, to our great mutual satisfaction. It was with regret as well as pleasure that, on the 18th of February—this time, be it observed, in a post-chaise—our party returned, and we were once more united as a family at Colchester. Well do I remember the joy of the evening.



[ED.—The letters of her mother to Ann in London give a lively picture of the panic, and show how precarious were the sources of public information. She writes, October 11, to her “sweet girl,”—

“ . . . On Friday last the principal inhabitants of Colchester waited on General Craig, the commander here, and received



from him the most solemn and decisive warning of our danger, and of the absolute necessity of the female part of the population, with their children, and what effects they could convey, leaving the town with all speed; and poor Mr W. has been over in great alarm, having just opened by mistake a letter intended for a young lady here, from her brother, an officer, entreating her to leave the town instantly, for that the attack might be expected any hour. Heath is commanded to bake twenty-five thousand loaves, of six pound each, every fourth day; soldiery keep pouring in daily; the cavalry horses have not had their saddles off for several nights; the butter market is being walled round; and General Craig is up early and late, indefatigable in his preparations. . . .

“And now you will not be surprised to hear that we are all in the utmost distress and consternation. Every face gathers blackness, and our knees smite together. . . . The Rounds are all going to Bath. Lawyer Daniel is packing up all his writings in sacks, and, with his family, will send them to Halstead. The East Hill people are flying thicker and faster. . . . And now, in this conjuncture, what is your advice to us? Shall we tarry or flee? and, if the latter, pray whither? Do give us your advice by return of post. You know it is not uncommon to ask advice, and then take our own; nor am I sure that to do it *after* we have taken our own is without precedent. Know, then, that this morning our dear Jane, Isaac, Jeff, and Jemima, with a considerable portion of our property, set off in Filcham's waggon for Lavenham. Oh! could you have seen us yesterday; the confusion we were in from the top of the house to the bottom, and our feelings so harrowed that we were actually ready to fight one another! I was up last night till midnight, packing, etc., and this morning such a parting! Oh, how poor Jane did cry! They are now, poor hearts, on the road, wedged in with chairs

tables, beds, soldiers' wives, etc., etc. May the God of providence watch over them, and bring them safe to their journey's end! . . .

“And now, lest you should think we have taken a needless step, know that before we took it, we all united round the throne of grace together, to beg direction, and since then your father's mind has been made up. I confess I rather hung back, but he says he knows the worst of this step, but he does not know the worst that might happen should our fears be realised. . . . I am not a little alarmed at hearing, that should the French land, London will be fortified and close shut up, none coming out or going in! Pray, run no hazard, but fly if there is the least danger.”

*Oct. 15.* “There is a Mr Candler, who has just arrived from France, where he passed for an American. He says that the preparations are immense. He was ten days in passing the artillery! He is not very sanguine as to our resisting their landing; but, perhaps, he is no real judge, and is only intimidated by appearances. They said it would be six weeks before they were ready, and it will be a month next Sunday since they told him so. He says the French people are much against the invasion, but the soldiery are clamorous for it, and threaten high that they will neither give nor receive quarter! But let not him that putteth on his armour boast, as he that taketh it off!” . . .

“Just received letters from Lavenham. Such a journey! Eleven hours and a-half! Twenty passengers, mostly soldiers' wives, and every one with a child! No air in the waggon, and our family mounted up at the very back, and the very top, on our great red chest, which was piled on the other goods. But what they endured from stink and oaths was nothing to what they suffered when night came on; the horses so tired they could hardly proceed, and the waggons frightened, expecting the waggon to break down!” . . .

Several letters to and from Lavenham at this exciting time are given in the life of Jane Taylor. Their mother describes to her children the rigours of the fast-day—"no cloth laid; half a round of toast at breakfast and no dinner! She dwells, too, upon 'the wonderful sermon' of her husband, of which she had chosen the text—David's words to Goliath of Gath. "Goliath, he said, had three significations, Revolution, Captivity, and Passing over. People came round him afterwards begging to have it printed." There was plain speaking in those plain days, for he failed not to set forth, "in most affectionate terms," to the volunteers present in their uniforms, that many might probably "wallow in their blood."

The Editor is tempted to introduce a further extract or two from a letter of this year, addressed by the mother of the family, then on a visit to London, to her loved ones in Colchester. She is so frequently alluded to in this narrative, as suffering and anxious, that her racy humour and energetic character might be unsuspected by the reader. The little dramatic scene it includes, is, to those who knew them, amusingly characteristic of each member of the family. Various domestic directions end with—

"I hope you take care of Dickey and y<sup>e</sup> trees, mind I can tell whether they have had justice done them by their looks. I am not sure if those two beautiful geraniums will do well where they are, if they look less healthy than they did, by all means remove them to their old situation in y<sup>e</sup> best parlour window, telling the new maid to mind she don't break them when she shuts the windows; and pray forsake not the poor rose-tree in y<sup>e</sup> pot in y<sup>e</sup> garden; if it is too much trouble there, have it in among y<sup>e</sup> rest. And pray tell me how you individually are in

health, is your father *really* better—the old man of whom ye speak? Tell no lies. And ye dear Jemima, how does she do? and how does she look? and where does she go? and what does she say? And poor Jeff? And dear Jane, that will have no holiday this summer, an't she dull? As for Nancy, I neither love nor pity her, only I should like to hear she is well. And the boys! oh, how I long for them here, I would most willingly surrender my excursions to them, it would be high sport. For my part it is too much for me. Sorry am I to say my nervous symptoms increase. I know it is a great deal in ye imagination; but when I lie down in bed, I often think I shall not see ye morning, and when I go out alone, tho' I do not much fear a lyon in ye way, I often fear I shall be slain in ye streets. I have the constant fear of palsy, apoplexy, inflammation, mortification, and twenty other fears, all of which my better judgment tells me are groundless.

“And now what *shall* I do to fill up my paper! I can say I have just been called down to see Mr Cecil, and every little helps; but as there is no particular news, I am still far behind. I've a great mind to try my skill in ye drama way. A writer must be a great fool indeed that cannot find an equal one for a reader; and so—

*Scene—Angel Lane.*

<i>Dramatis</i> <i>Personæ,</i>	{	Mr Isaac Taylor, sen.	Miss Ann Taylor.
		Mr Isaac Taylor, jun.	Miss Jane Taylor.
		Mr Martin Taylor.	

Children, Servant, and Porter.

A ring at ye door—*Servant enters.*

*Servant.* There's a man with two arm chairs.

*All.* Two arm chairs!!!

L.

M

*Servant.* Yes sir ; all done up in hay.

*Mr Taylor.* They can't be for us.

*All (tumbling over one another).* Let us see.

*Ann.* They are for Taylor the dyer.

*Jane.* But here is y<sup>e</sup> "Rev."

*Isaac.* Oh, pay for 'em ! pay for 'em ! I daresay mamma has sent them from London.

*Martin.* Yes, yes, that's likely. I know mamma better than that. You don't catch her at those tricks ; besides, they are all gilt and japanned !

*Father.* Do hold your tongue, boy, and somebody pay for 'em. Who can lend me a shilling ?

*All.* I've got none.

*Father.* Can you change me a —— ? Call again. Well, they are rare *easy* chairs, however, come they from whom they may. They are such a support to one's back when one's tired.

*Jane.* But if they should not be for us after all, we should look rare foolish.

*Father.* Ah, well, let's *enjoy* them while we have 'em, and not trouble ourselves who may sit in them to-morrow.

*Isaac.* Where will you set them, pa ?

*Father.* Why, I don't know ; let them stand in the best parlour for y<sup>e</sup> present, to be safe from mischief, and mamma shall settle it when she comes home.

*Jane.* Now, I'll lay anything I can tell where they came from. You know Fowler's a chair-maker, and he's very good natured, and perhaps—— [Curtain drops.]

#### A SHORT EPILOGUE.

Wist ye not that such an one as *I*  
Can certainly divine ! \*

\* The chairs were a present from Mr Cecil, the mother only being in the secret.—[ED.]

*Monday.*—Saw Mr Clayton preach yesterday morning ; *Mem.*—No sounding board. *Heard* Mr Bennett at Mr Brooksbanks' in afternoon ; *Mem.*—A sounding board.]

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The beloved circle in which we had lived during a few years of early youth at Colchester was beginning to thin in 1804 ; one and another passed away, till scarcely any of those in whom we felt an affectionate interest were left. On the 16th of April there died of decline, in Dublin, Bithia Stapleton, for a time my intensely attached friend. She burnt out prematurely, and we learnt nothing of her last days. Many letters had passed between us on the subject of her changing views, and I would fain regard it as the lingering of a latent faith, that in one of her last to me she said, "Do you think I can be saved by Christ without believing on Him?" Sad to lie down and die on such a precipice! On the 19th of January, in the following year, Mira, the elder sister, died at Exeter, whither she had removed for change of air, and where she was most kindly nursed by an amiable and intelligent Unitarian family. She was only twenty-six, a lovely girl, and of no common intellect. A single sentence only reached us from her dying words, indicating conflicting thoughts, "Lord save me *in thine own way.*"

Letitia died on the 12th of December 1806. She was on her way to Exeter with her mother, but had been compelled to remain at the inn at Basingstoke, where she passed ten weeks of severe pain, bodily and mental. The change in her religious sentiments had led her to request

her mother not to speak upon the subject of religion at all, but before the close of this trying period she had the consolation of witnessing a happy return "to a good hope through grace," in her daughter, who died in humble but entire reliance upon Christ. A singularly interesting account of her was drawn up by the Rev. Mr Jefferson of Basingstoke, and published as a tract. In the September previous to Letitia's death it was decided that Eliza, suffering, though less obviously, from the same disease, should remove to Dublin, to find a home—too soon a grave—where Bithia only two years previously had found hers. Her mother, being unable to leave Letitia, I was requested to take charge of Eliza as far as Birmingham, and as her illness did not then appear so fatal as it proved to be, the prospect of the journey was not unpleasant. Our first night was spent at the house of our invaluable friend, Mr Cecil. The second at Oxford; whence we travelled the next day by post-chaise to Birmingham, where she was met by another friend. After reaching Dublin she lingered only till the 23d of December, surviving her sister Letitia by less than a fortnight. But, deceived, as I have said, by the little appearance of so speedy a result, our journey had been cheerful rather than mournful, and many many times have I reproached myself for allowing this last opportunity to escape without one salutary word. A word spoken in season, how good it might have been! But, as far as I was concerned, the season was not improved, and the omission lies upon my conscience to this day. I am not without other regrets of the kind. How very difficult is it—so, at least, I have found it—to speak with faithfulness as well as tenderness to the incipient

invalid? How seldom do we, in view of a near eternity, suggest the right thought, or, honestly though not harshly, urge impending danger? It was under a pressing sense of the difficulty of *speaking* that I afterwards wrote the small volume addressed to a "Convalescent." Would that it may whisper what I have wanted courage to speak! Letitia wrote to her sister from her deathbed, but it did not reach her in time. When Mrs Hutton, the friend at whose house Eliza died, afterwards read the letter, she said to Mrs Stapleton, "Those were exactly Eliza's feelings; she lamented that her mind had been so vain and trifling, and was continually calling upon me to read to her the promises of mercy and grace."

It was about two years after consigning the last of her four lovely daughters to the grave, that Mrs Stapleton died also—solitary, at Bristol, whither she had retired. And besides this entire family, we lost at Colchester, within nearly the same period, four other friends, with whom we had been intimate for several years, and whose names have appeared on these pages—Caroline and Rachel Strutt, Mary and Betsy Keep, the latter a beautiful girl recently married; paying one of her wedding visits on a wintry night she took down a heavy cloth coat that had long hung in the hall out of use, to defend herself from the weather; it was damp, and feeling the chill, she sportively exclaimed, "there, I have caught my death," and so it proved.

In this mournful way it was, that the path was clearing around us for those associates who have gone down with me far into the vale of life, and with some of whom I am still in affectionate correspondence. So three succes-



sive circles surrounded me—those of Lavenham, of Colchester, and of London! It is true I have since been favoured with valuable friendships, but the friends of advancing life cannot remember what I remember, and what a uniting charm, a natural magic, there is in that!

Colchester, it may be remembered, was the residence of Joanna Baillie and her sister, but they had left the town, where they had lived in much seclusion, before we went to it, and there were few, if any, within our reach to whom we could look with that idol worship, with which, as girls, pen in hand, we were wont to regard a “live author.” It was not till 1807 that I paid a visit to London, which, through the kindness of various friends, gratified my intense, but humble, yearnings to see “Poetry” in the shape of man or woman. On this occasion I was introduced to both Dr. Aikin and Mrs Barbauld. A call I was privileged to make at Newington upon the latter, I cannot forget, nor the strange feeling of unearthly expectancy with which, in a small parlour, I waited her appearance. At length the door opened,—for she did not float in on a cloud or a zephyr,—and a small plain, lively, elderly lady made her appearance; but it was Mrs Barbauld, and that was enough! During the same visit I was introduced to a literary nucleus of a different but interesting description, consisting of Daniel Parken, then editor of the “Eclectic Review;” Theophilus Williams, who succeeded him; and Ignatius Montgomery, a relative of the Poet. Of James Montgomery himself, Kirke White, and others, we, from time to time, heard a good deal from our now intimate friend Josiah Conder, whose correspondence, through the “monthly parcel,” was made intensely interesting to us by

the literary intelligence it conveyed. I was captivated by art in my visit of 1800, but I was now wedded to literature, so far as literature would condescend to the alliance, and a turn was given, or rather confirmed, which influenced my course for several succeeding years.

I have mentioned that my father never omitted an opportunity of giving us scientific advantages beyond his own ability, so that whenever a lecturer of any note made his appearance we were sure to be among his auditors. From a course of chemical lectures delivered at the Moot Hall, my brothers, and especially Martin, became enamoured of the science, and by rising at four o'clock were able to conduct various experiments in the kitchen (early rising was a gift in the family) before it was required for domestic purposes. I suppose this got known about; and upon one occasion an unlucky lecturer appeared at our door with a request, which I will leave the following little note from my brother Isaac to me, the earliest remnant of a lifelong correspondence, to explain—

“You must excuse Martin's not coming. Just after you went there came a great rap—Jefferys went to the door. ‘Have you got a brother that's a philosopher?’ ‘I don't know, Sir. I'll call my brother.’ I went down—‘Sir, are you a philosopher?’ ‘I'm not so happy as to understand you, Sir; I can't say I am?’ ‘Well, Sir, but do you know anything about making gases?’ ‘Oh, Mr Drummond, I suppose?’ ‘Yes; my lecture begins in half-an-hour, and all my Oxygen is gone up the chimney. Can you make me any in time?’ Martin came down; he engaged his services, and we have been hard at work ever since. Martin is

now gone up with five bottles of gas in the capacity of foreman to the lecturer. Therefore you see he cannot come.\*

I. T., jun.

On the 17th of October 1807, my grandfather, Isaac Taylor, died, at the age of seventy-seven. He had been of some note not only in art but in politics, for he had taken an active part in Wilkes's election, and had lost considerably more than £1000 in doing so. He was also for many years almost alone as an architectural publisher and bookseller, and acquired a comfortable independency upon which he retired to Edmonton, where, in the crowded burial ground, "Isaac Taylor, gent," may be seen upon his tombstone. The larger share of his property went to his eldest son Charles, but my father, along with three others, came in for a portion which was sufficient to add very materially to our comfort, and was the commencing step towards a much better state of things than we had known since the sudden decline at Lavenham.

1808 was marked by the serious illness of my brother Isaac, and by the addition to our home circle of the daughter of our friends the Lungleys for the completion of her education; and in this year, too, my father found a purchaser, though at considerable loss, for his house in Lavenham. As to 1809, would that I could well recall the events of that year! The almost daily memoranda contained in my pocket-books from 1797 to the present time, have only this interruption; the one for 1809 has

\* One evening Colchester was alarmed by a violent explosion in the "Kings Meadows." It was not generally known, but certain of these young experimenters were the cause of it.—[ED.]

been singularly mislaid. It may, or may not, be at the time, felt of any importance to make these daily entries, but in the course of years it is so interesting to retrace them, sometimes so salutary, though often so mournful, that I would recommend the practice to every one, for whom memory may possess any charm. Do not grudge the few minutes of time which you thus expend in order to preserve and enrich its stores.

In this recommendation I do not include what is technically called a diary of religious experience. To *me* it appears impossible that this should be honestly done. Much that generally enters into it should pass under the eye of God alone, and to the writer and the reader is almost equally injurious. If deeply self-abasing, it may pass for humility with one, for hypocrisy with another; or may encourage a pleasant self-complacency in some who compare themselves with it; while, on the other hand, if it describe a state of high religious enjoyment, it may have a slide down into Pharisaism on one side, or it may be too much like writing your own name in the book of Life! But the great evil is its almost certain publicity. How many such effusions, written in all sincerity and supposed secrecy, have been desecrated by unfitting readers, and for a little good, have done a full counterbalance of mischief!

It is, I conclude, to the loss of the pocket-book for 1809 that I must attribute the absence of memoranda respecting a volume which, under the title of "The Associate Minstrels," appeared early in 1810. However sacred may be the inner flame of Poetry—sacred to the few—yet sooner or later the vulgar public is sure to be admitted to gaze upon it. So at least it was with us.

Josiah Conder had been our guest. He had relatives at Nayland, six miles from Colchester, who always opened a most hospitable home to us, and many were the excursions in which we availed ourselves of their kindly welcome. It was during one of those walks with him to Nayland on a beautiful summer evening, that the idea and the plan of the "Associate Minstrels" were elicited. Josiah was to be editor and publisher. It was to be inscribed to Montgomery. My brother Isaac was to furnish a design for the title page, and so, including a few pieces from the elder Mr Conder, from the lady afterwards Mrs Josiah Conder, from my father, and Jacob Strutt, we contrived a volume—Jane, Josiah, and I—which did pass into a second edition!

In turning over some old papers of this period I have been pleased to find several forgotten letters, in which pleasant, and even honourable mention is made, both of the "Associate Minstrels," and of the humbler volumes for children. All these distant critics were personally strangers to Jane and me, and therefore their opinions were the more gratifying. Among them are Walter Scott, Southey, Miss Edgeworth, Hayley, and others less known to fame. The two former spoke of their own children as already familiar with the smaller volumes. Pleased and thankful were we then, surprised, and as thankful am I now, at the success and encouragement thus afforded. Mrs Smith, a sister of H. Kirke White, dates from Nottingham, and says—"Should you at any time visit our neighbourhood, it would be a high satisfaction to show you under our humble roof every attention in our power." *Nottingham!* Why did not the very word thrill through

me? How little could I foresee its ultimate bearing upon my life! All that I then knew about it was, that it was "down in the shires," the usual term in Colchester for the midland counties.

One event of deep and tender interest to us occurred in 1809, the first breach in our home circle, by the permanent removal of one of its members, my dear brother Martin. He could draw prettily, but he was not fitted to become a successful engraver, and a place was found for him in one of the large publishing houses in Paternoster Row. The feelings of a young man just liberated from home into the excitements and large interests of London, are neither expected nor wished to wear the hue of melancholy which falls on the circle he has left. He did, however, feel his solitude, by day in one of those immense warehouses, and at night not a smile to cheer him in his lodging; and many years afterwards, a touching proof was given of the tenacity of his affections when the house of business he then occupied being burnt down, his first care was to save his little girl, his favourite cat, and the box containing the letters from his family! The following year it appeared desirable that dear Isaac also should set foot in the open world, and there cater for himself. He had some ability as an engraver, more as a designer, and, under his father, had acquired some skill in painting miniatures; with these he was to win his way. It was an anxious launch for both brothers, and the hearts at home were feeling it such, more, perhaps, than they did themselves. On the 2d of January 1810 dear Isaac left us, and by monthly parcel on the 1st of May, the first copies of the "Associate Minstrels" were received.

But with 1810 commenced a series of changes, dark, many of them at first, but fraught with mercy when developed and understood. My father had now spent sixteen anxious and laborious years as a minister at Colchester; there were tendencies in the congregation in opposite directions on doctrinal matters, which had never been worked off; and various circumstances inclined him to terminate his engagement. This at length he did, and on the 21st of June his resignation was announced.\* The move was one leaving no visible outlet, and till the following year it remained uncertain whither it might lead. Our valued friend, the Rev. John Saville, occupied the pulpit at the "Round Meeting," and thither as a family we shortly removed, my father being often engaged in supplying

\* A letter from Mr Taylor to a friend illustrates the nature of the evil he had to contend with, a leaven of Antinomianism which seems to have troubled several of the small Essex churches at that time, and which could not brook his earnest exhortations to personal holiness, nor the strict church discipline he enforced. . . . "You shall judge for yourself as to their sentiments and conduct. One of them, when speaking of low frames and worldliness of mind, instead of being humbled and ashamed, took his comfort thus:—'If God don't choose to give me grace for better living, how can I help it?' They commonly held that a believer ought not to pray for the pardon of sins, because they are already pardoned; and when reminded of the practice of the apostles, had the insolence to reply that if the apostles did not understand their own doctrines better, that was no rule for us! Now, as they held also, that it was of no use for a sinner to pray at all, because unable to any spiritual exertion, they shut out prayer for pardon entirely."

In another letter he defends his large understanding of the gospel.

"An attempt has been made to narrow the term 'gospel' to a few peculiar points. But the Scriptures are everywhere against it. Christ went forth preaching the gospel of the kingdom, but neither did his Sermon on the Mount, nor in general his other discourses, refer to these peculiar points, though now and then he enlightened his friends, or astounded his adversaries,

distant churches. We continued to engrave as well as to write, but for some time were a greatly disjointed family.

We did not, however, discontinue what we could retain of domestic festivals, with their commemorative rambles, if the season permitted; and even concocted a plan for constructing a small cottage among the woods, to be ultimately tenanted by our bachelor brothers, and called the "Old Boys' Cot," while another already existing nearer Colchester, by the rural beauty of which we had long been captivated, was appropriated to Jane and me as "The Old Girls." How different was it all to be! And then there came the last happy Christmas meeting in the home of our youth, and long unbroken companionship. Isaac and Martin came from London, the latter by the mail in the middle of the night; we three, Jane, Isaac, and I, remain-

by deeper doctrines, and foundation truths, relating to the system of saving grace. Nay, Paul was not a gospel preacher if this false principle is to be a rule. . . . The 'gospel' is a large word. It is a glorious system of doctrines, and precepts, and threatenings, and promises. The term 'gospel' is applied to all these. I am as much preaching the gospel when I am exhorting to holiness, as when pointing to the blood of Jesus; as surely so when handling a duty, as when exhibiting the promise of the Spirit to fulfil it. If their rule were a sound one, it would shut out from pulpit exercises the greatest part of the Bible. Many important stories are suited to our edification in the historical parts, but they do not involve the points which some think should always appear. The treasure of pious experience in the Psalms will be shut out, as only a few of them are prophetic of Christ. How small a portion of the four Gospels refer to these specific truths! Nay, three quarters of every Epistle must be neglected. Far be it from me to slight the Word of God in this manner. There are also many things relating to Providence, to the Word, to affliction, to the world to come, which would not satisfy such people. Nay, many points of the saint's deepest experience will be destitute of this main material, if in so narrow a form the 'Gospel' is to be regarded."—[ED.]



ed up to await the tap at the back door, suitable caution having been sent to prevent our father and mother, persuaded reluctantly to go to bed, from being disturbed by a thoughtless thunder at the front. You will guess how we listened, and greeted the quiet tap with the prompt and warm welcome of love and gladness. Ah, you all know that the long interval from 1810 to 1860 has deadened neither my ear nor my heart for the sound of the Christmas wheels! On the following night, Christmas though it was, Martin returned by mail again to the paper walls of his London prison. So brief were the holidays of those days!

We were now regularly placing small sums at interest; but it was not till we began to publish for ourselves that we felt the solid advantage that literature might bring to us. The "Hymns for Infant Minds" were the first venture we thus made. In the first year of their publication we realized £150. But an unlooked-for disappointment awaited us in the failure of our publisher, an old friend, who was, I daresay, as sorry for us as we were for him. All our little savings were now floated off to meet expenses, and we had to make a fresh start. Valuable as money had always been to us, and still was, we yet could not feel the loss, as it was supposed among our friends that we must—almost ought to have done. The pleasures of writing, and the credit we were gaining by it, so overbalanced the simple money misfortune that we bore it with admired equanimity. Before the 1st of January 1811 the third edition of Hymns for Infant Minds had made their appearance, and we enjoyed the entire profit.

The confinement inseparable from years of engraving

had long appeared to our friends too much to continue ; though, indeed, I did not feel it. But the suggestion was perpetually made to us, "Do take pupils ; you know your father's methods, you have now a name yourselves, and we feel sure you would succeed." Such was the advice continually given, and in time it worked its way, though never into my affections. But it mingled with the prospect now opening to us of remove and change, and tinged everything with the feeling of an uncertain future. The lines in my album, a "Farewell to Sudbury," a place connected hitherto with only youthful holiday feelings, were commemorative of a last visit there. Life henceforth was to be neither youthful nor holiday, or so we felt it, and the lines are naturally embued with melancholy. Happily the course suggested was not pursued, but the prospect seemed to have been set before us for the purpose of detaching us from the groove in which, for twelve or fourteen years, we had run, and placing us in positions which, without a loosening like this, we should never have ventured on.

Friends from London and elsewhere, to whom the "High Woods," the "Springs," and even the "shabby old work-room" were almost as interesting as to ourselves, now came to pay final visits : while Jane and I went, as we felt for the last time, to every memorable spot within reach, sending loving looks in every direction. Colchester was very dear to us, though even now nearly every one we had really loved there had passed away. Colchester to me is dear still ; I cannot see the name in a newspaper without a thrill of personal interest, as if it was something that belonged to me.

In the summer of 1810, Jane, when visiting London, had enjoyed a pic-nic excursion in Epping Forest, and observed on a sign post at one of the turnings, "To Ongar." It was the first time she had seen the name. She had presently occasion to recollect it; but little could she imagine how deeply it was involved with her future history! On a Sabbath in 1811, my father, not yet having any settled charge, preached for a brother minister at Brentwood, and on the day following walked the seven miles thence to Ongar. On coming to an angle in the road, from which the pretty little town is visible within the distance of a field or two, he rested against a gate to look at it, and said to himself, "Well, I could be content to live and die in that spot." And so it was to be, he lived and he died there; spending more than eighteen years as the assiduous and beloved pastor of its little church. On the 14th of July that year he received a call to the pastorate.

So the time for removing really came at last, and on the 31st of August 1811, we closed, as it proved, our many years of work-room work. The Castle House, a quaint and very pleasant country residence, was engaged for us at Ongar, whither my father repaired to receive the furniture, &c., and, when all was ready, to welcome us—my mother, self, Jane, Jefferys, and Jemima, to the new home. But, instead of detailing from memory the circumstances of this, to us memorable transit, I will here introduce portions of a letter written, at my first leisure, to Luck Conder.

*Castle House, Ongar, September 23, 1811.*—The mere

date of my letter, my very dear friend, might prove a text for many pages. Since September 23, 1810, what great changes have occurred to both of us! We spent that day, if you recollect, at Heckford Bridge (which we have not since seen), and on the following Sabbath my father took leave of his charge at Colchester. O what anxious heartaches it would have saved us, could we have glanced but one look at the date of this letter! We did not *know*, but, "fools and slow of heart," we might have "believed." When providences open and discover the kindness and care of God, surmounting our fears and anxieties, we are apt to fancy that we have faith, because we are constrained to acknowledge the wisdom and goodness which have conducted us. But a poor faith is that which must thrust its hand into the prints of the nails before it will believe; and blessed, indeed, are those who, "though they see not, yet believe." I do wonder at established Christians, those who can "read their title clear to mansions in the skies," when they are overwhelmed with temporal anxieties, and seem as careful, and sorrowing, and even despairing, as if they had to choose their own path, and be sun, and shield, and rock, and staff, and God, to themselves. . . . It is a humbling proof of the weakness of faith, even in the liveliest Christians, that they cannot *composedly* trust in God for so much as a crumb of bread. If he lay but a finger upon their earthly comforts, or hide their path for a few moments behind a sharp turning, they begin doubting and wailing, as if He were some God whose kindness they did not know, whose power they dared not trust; and the poor prayers by which they think they evince their faith, are little better than impa-

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tient sallies, half fear half anger. As to a cheerful dependence, and humble resignation, they seldom come till their petition is granted ; and then a great deal of gladness, and a little thankfulness, are too often mistaken for them . . .

On Monday evening, August 26, we all walked to the "Springs," to take leave of them, of the "Wild Mount," the "Church Lane," and every spot to which a single association was attached. We each brought home a spray of ivy, as a memorial of many of our happiest, gayest, or most agreeably melancholy hours—of sunsets, moon, and stars, such as (in spite of the philosophers) cannot be seen from Greenwich Observatory. On Saturday, August 31, Jane and I closed the labours of fourteen years in the work-room. It was a fine moonlight *Saturday evening*, and I have always felt something peculiarly sweet and penetrating in such a time ; but now a tide of recollections and anticipations rendered *this* overwhelmingly interesting, and as we rose from our long accustomed places for the *last time*, and remembered all that had been, now past for ever, and glanced at dear Mile End through the trees, and the twilight, we resigned ourselves to a flood of bitter tears. Jane and I then sallied out for a lonely moonlight ramble. As it was late we could not go far ; we only went to the bridge at the entrance of the meadows, and to a few familiar spots thereabouts, talking of Colchester, of Ongar, of all the dear friends who had walked with us here, and of the last moon we should see upon those woods, those meadows, and that stream ! We returned up North Hill through the town. It was all life and bustle ; the bright and busy shops on one side, and the broad light of the

moon on the other ; but we felt homeless strangers, and it seemed almost wrong for people to be so busy. On the Monday we all began the packing, and now collect all the ideas that make up confusion ! Think of huge packing cases, hampers, straw, ropes, nails, and shavings ; of dust and litter ; of piles of china and furniture in every corner of the house ; of knocking, hammering, calling, and scolding ; of a gradual diminution of the commonest necessities, and of the consequent shifts we had to make—an inverted extinguisher for candlestick, a basin or a teacup for a wine glass, one's lap for a dining table, the floor for a bedstead,—think of carpenters, brokers, and waggoners, and after all you will have but a faint idea of that memorable week !

On Sunday, our house being entirely dismantled, we were kindly entertained at Henry Thorn's, the whole day. Such a strange Sabbath I never passed ! I thought the first singing would have overset me entirely ; and when we left the Meeting in the afternoon (it was sacrament day) I could no longer refrain, but went home in such a general broken-heartedness that the smallest thing was too much for me.

On Monday was the final packing, and as if we had not enough to do, an express came from H. Thorn, about three, that the Prince Regent was expected to pass through the town every moment, and that we must all go up immediately to see him. So all hands struck, and throwing on our habits we sallied forth, like most loyal and loving subjects, to catch a glimpse of him, hoping, as the poet observes, "if we could not see the king, at least to see his coach." And this our loyal hope was exactly

gratified, for, after waiting two hours, watching every undulation of the crowd, the royal carriage at length appeared, and we could just discern three plainly drest gentlemen in it as it passed, and then went home again! You did not expect that, even in such a general rummage, we should light upon the Prince Regent? But if I follow him further, I shall find myself at Aldborough instead of Ongar.

Well, then, on Tuesday morning, at seven o'clock, came the waggon, which we continued packing till two. And I wish you could have seen us, and it, as it went nodding and waving from our door! We were all at the upper windows, and all our neighbours were in the street, looking alternately at us and at it, as it groaned up the lane; for, indeed, it was packed to such an unusual height that it attracted general attention and apprehension. And during all this time how little we felt as we expected to feel! we were too busy; but, indeed, does one feel in any situation, however interesting, as one should have expected? Feeling has past and future, but seldom a present tense. She loves to ramble with Memory, or to sport with Hope, but has comparatively little to do with the most important Now. (N.B. a touch of the sublime!)

. . . That night, after assembling at Mr Mansfield's\* to say good-bye to a number of our friends, who kissed and cried over us, we dispersed to our several quarters. Jane and I, out of a number of beds that were offered us, pleased ourselves by spending our last night at Mr Strutt's,

\* The same friend at whose house they had been entertained on their first arrival at Colchester sixteen years before.

where we could feel and do just as we liked, and be sure of kindness and sympathy. We had sometime before admired a new room which Mr Strutt had opened at the top of the house, and he had kindly exerted himself to erect and furnish its gothic bed that we might be the first to sleep in it. In the morning we awoke in lithe, though fluttered spirits; and after breakfast, in their pleasant kitchen, with "Michael," and "Blue-eye," and "White Lady," and half-a-dozen more purring about us, we took leave of a house where we have enjoyed many pleasant hours, and once more assembled at our own as the final rendezvous. We walked round the garden, stroked poor Tom (left by agreement with the new tenant), looked once more into every room and closet, said good-bye to Mile-end from the workroom window, and at half-past eleven, September 11, 1811, saw the door close for the last time, and drove slowly up Angel Lane, leaving a circle of kind neighbours to watch us out of sight. I will not tell you how we looked first on this side, then on that, then through the window behind, that we might lose nothing it was possible to see—suffice it to say we were *leaving Colchester*: you will imagine all the rest! . . . As soon as we had passed Lexden, we left off looking, and arranged ourselves as comfortably as we could, but five of us, besides Nutty and her kitten (who was named "Pack" by way of memorial), and the fowls, ham, fruit, &c.—the kind offerings of several friends,—made a tolerable chaise full.

And, now, follow us, dear Luck, till we turn into the *Ongar* Road at Chelmsford. It was a fine afternoon; quite new country opening upon us at every step, and expectation, which had begun to doze, was all alive again.



Father had directed us how to descry the white steeple of Ongar, and the Castle house and trees, about three miles before we reached it, and this gave us most interesting employment, till, at length, we all exclaimed, "There it is!" The road then turned off, and we saw it no more till—O that pleasant moment!—after driving about half-way through the town we turned up the lane and round a sharp corner, and the three peaks and the castle trees appeared in view. We drove up the long chase-way, the grass plot was strewed with packages, the hall door open, our good deacon and Rebecca at the chaise to receive us, but no father! We were both surprised and alarmed. He had gone to wait our passing at the house of a friend from which he could reach ours as soon as we by a shorter path; but, wonderful to relate, though *he* saw the chaise, and we saw *him* standing at the door, he neither knew us, nor we him! At length, a young man, who had seen us in the lane, told him that his chaise had passed some time. Fortunately, we had waited outside the doors, and would not enter till he arrived to conduct us.

And now, how I wish I could show, instead of describe it to you! but, alas! Ongar and Barnstaple! Well, then, I must e'en tell you of the pleasant places in which our lines are fallen. The house was built upon the site of the ancient castle, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, who once honoured it with a visit. The hall-door, studded with clump-headed nails an inch in diameter, measures 6 feet, by 4 feet 7. The front is covered with a vine; before it is a flower garden; on the right, as pretty a village church among the trees as you ever saw; and close on the left the castle trees rising upon

a high mount, with a moat of deep water encircling it. From every window in front we command a rich and beautiful valley, and behind see the town just peeping through a line of elms on a terrace beside an outer moat. Immediately adjacent is a farm-yard, and we have not only the usual live stock of such a scene, but a fine pair of swans, three cygnets, moorfowl, and solan geese upon the moat; rabbits running wild upon the mount; a rookery, wood doves, and, we are told, nightingales in the castle trees. Now, you may fancy, perhaps, that with all this appropriate scenery the house must be haunted, or, at least, hauntable; that there are nooks and vaults, and niches at every turn; and that sitting, as I now do, a broad moon shining in at my window, and the village clock striking eleven, the next thing must be a tall gliding figure patting down the stairs which wind from my room door, within the northern turret. But I assure you we are the picture of cheerfulness and comfort. The rooms are light and pleasant, not in the least ghostly, and fitted up with every modern convenience. We have a hall, two parlours, kitchen, store-room, &c., on the ground floor; three chambers above; and a good workroom, study, two bed-chambers, and a light closet on the attic floor. We had to *saw* the ivy from the back parlour window before we could see it, but some still remains to fringe the mullions; we have beautiful walks in every direction; and we have placed our garden seat at the end of a retired field, surrounded by the moats and the terrace elms immediately behind the house.

Just as we sat down to breakfast the first Sunday, who should appear at the garden gate but dear Martin, who came in his uncle's chaise, and returned the next morn-

ing. He writes—"Since I took my farewell of your fairy land, I have not passed a waking hour without presenting my mind among you. It is the object to which my leisure moments, and lazy thoughts are always directed—it is my *Miss Ongar*."

On Sabbath evening, September 22, my father publicly accepted their invitation at a full vestry of apparently kind and worthy people; and with mother and me was received into Church relation. It was a truly interesting and pleasing season. The Meeting-house is very small, but extremely neat and pleasant, and as far as we know the congregation, they are a friendly and pious though plain people, not but that we have some dashing silk pelisses and feathers on a fine afternoon. Tuesday, October the 29th, is to be the public "setting apart."

The important change had now been effected. At last we had done with things behind, but the future was still looming on us from an unexplored distance. We had given up engraving, so far as it implied daily employment, though it was arranged that if occasionally my father required assistance, I should render it when at home. If we were to devote ourselves to education, important preparations were requisite, and for this purpose we accepted an invitation from our kind and valuable friends the Conders, then living at Clapton. Alas! how little we knew our many deficiencies; yet that I did know something of them my many misgivings and continued reluctance testified. Jane had no fuller confidence in her own sufficiency, but she saw some pleasant results in the

change, and perhaps might fancy that I should stand foremost and prove a sort of shield.

It was, however, a serious thing to resolve on, and to arrange for the unavoidable expenditure, especially since our own resources had just suffered such an unexpected loss. It would be necessary to apply for assistance somewhere, and such a prospect did not lighten the burden already on my heart. I am thankful that no one came forward to volunteer that assistance. I will not enter into detail, but, after much anxious thought, and applying to our dear parents for their final sanction, the project was abandoned. The entire history of this transition period of our lives is to me a beautiful explanatory comment on the ways and the goodness of Providence. The suggestion so long urged upon us, the difficulties afterwards thrown in our path, resulted in leaving us at liberty to pursue other and much more congenial occupations. It would not be easy to express the relief we experienced in turning away from an undertaking so perilous, and retreating to hide ourselves behind the *paper* screen which seemed so clearly granted to us.

We had a few light-hearted visits to pay in London before returning to the dear and pleasant home in the Castle House at Ongar; but on the 18th of February 1812 we entered it now as we hoped to remain, and I cannot describe the feelings with which we did so. The pretty flower garden and grass plot in front had been put into the nicest order, snow-drops were just appearing, and if any one knew how to make an arrival look pleasant it was my dear father and mother. My own room was one I had requested on the attic floor, commanding a

beautiful country view, and having the advantage of a closet where I could sit and write. This was to be my "sanctum;" here a new life was to begin, and the employment more delightful to me than any other, was henceforth to be mine without let or hindrance. But a new turn was just now given to it.

Before we left Colchester, Mrs More's popular tale of "Cœlebs in search of a Wife" was the book of the day, and in the literary correspondence kept up between Josiah Conder and me, I freely gave my thoughts upon it in a long letter sent by parcel. He was intimate with Daniel Parken, the talented editor of the "Eclectic Review," then in much note amongst us, and it was enquired whether I would undertake an article.\* It had not been customary in that work to review fictions, but it was proposed to diverge a little from this rule, and a tale by Mrs West, entitled "Self Control," was suggested to me for a beginning. With anxiety, excitement, and delight, I undertook it. After writing every morning till about weary, I used to take the MS. to a clump of trees a little in the valley as seen from my window, and, sitting beneath them, read it aloud, for until able to judge from the ear I could never form an opinion of what I had written. It appeared in the "Eclectic" for June, and, being favourably received, I was forthwith continually employed. The next review was of Miss Edgeworth's

\* The Review was supported at that time by several able writers, amongst whom may be named Robert Hall, John Foster, and Olinthus Gregory. It was in its pages that the merits of Washington Irving were first recognised in England through an article upon "Geoffrey Crayon," contributed by Isaac Taylor, jun.

Tales, I forget which series, sent up in August of the same year.

A visit about this time from Josiah Conder and James Montgomery gave great pleasure to us. Few and far between had been our glimpses into literary society, and in Montgomery, from first admiring his poetry in the "Athenæum," we had felt the most lively interest—yes, and notwithstanding the remark of a young lady belonging to our higher circle in Colchester, who, hearing from me that he was printer at Sheffield, exclaimed, "La! how terrible." It was scarcely worth while to remember it for half a century, but how can we get rid of anything that chooses to stay? On the afternoon of their visit, our walk with the two poets across the meadows, and up the winding lane to Stondon Church was indeed delightful; and yet the only shred of conversation that clings to my memory was the simple remark of Montgomery, when I mistook distant thunder for artillery (that of Woolwich sometimes shook our windows), "Yes, the artillery of Heaven." What whimsical tricks does memory play with us! Sometimes it hangs up a piece of nonsense where we cannot help seeing it, and at others obliterates words to be set in silver!

But shadows were rising over our pleasant home and pleasant plans. Isaac and Martin were both in London. The former, occupied in various artistic work, had just now an engagement of some length for a set of anatomical drawings in the dissecting room. Under London atmosphere, and not the best of it, and pursuing his profession without stint of time or labour, his health gave way, and he came down to Ongar to recruit. We

were all eye and ear, and there were in his constant cough and other symptoms, what my dear sensitive mother regarded as unquestionable omens of decline. We had seen so much of it! Happily the Isaac Taylor who has lived so long in the public eye was not to fulfil these anxious auguries. During the previous summer he had been invited to Devonshire to take several miniatures amongst our friends who had removed thither, and their connections, and he had, in consequence, become acquainted with many families there. As soon, therefore, as a change to the milder climate was recommended, it was obvious that he need not, in undertaking it, abandon his profession; and as Jane and I could carry our pens with us as easily as he his pencil, it was determined that we should both accompany him. But my dear mother! Her eldest son, whose conduct and character had never given her a pang, was to leave his father's house, as she fully believed, never to return,—to be nursed far away from her hourly watchfulness, and to lie in a distant grave! Those only who knew my mother, could know what all this meant to her.

Our anxious journey commenced, as far as London, on Monday, September 28th, 1812, and at a quarter past two on Wednesday, the 30th, we set out by one of the "long stages," from the Castle and Falcon, Aldersgate Street, under promise of reaching Ilfracombe on the Saturday afternoon following. What a banishment it seemed! What a tedious journey! I remember the forlorn feelings with which, a party of nineteen altogether, we paced down one of the long Devon hills, for everybody had left the coach in order to relieve the descent; strangers indeed we felt,

almost three hundred miles from the "Castle House" and its dear inmates. We got a few hours' rest on Thursday night at Taunton, setting off at five o'clock on Friday morning, for a twelve hours' journey to Barnstaple. Here a welcome tea at the inn, and a call from a gentleman already known to my brother, the Rev. Mr Gardiner, concluded the weary day. On Saturday, after breakfasting with him, we started in a postchaise for our final destination, and final it seemed likely to be, for on some of the round knolls of the road, we seemed to be driving down straight into the sea. At length, under the brow of the precipitous hill, the roofs of the houses became visible. Yet we did not reach it without risk; at a narrow part of the road, a wheel came off, but the narrowness served us in stead, and we only fell against the bank. Our adroit postilion, accustomed perhaps, to such accidents, contrived to refix the wheel, and we descended to Ilfracombe in safety.

Isaac's friend, Mr Gunn, had engaged apartments for us on the quay, a first floor; two windows in front looked over the basin, so full of shipping that, on the further side of the room, nothing but masts were visible. There, in employment, in recreation, in society quite to our taste, and altogether interesting, we spent the entire winter.

1866.\*—Long intervals have occurred in my successive memoranda, and now, late in the day as it is, I cannot expect to complete this Memorial. Indeed, it was never

\* The year of her death, in the eighty-fifth of her age.



my intention to do so. From the period of my marriage, dear children, in 1813, you are almost as well acquainted with the important steps in my history as I am myself, and as to minuter details, it might be scarcely so well to speak of them as of the bygone tints of a finished century.

MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER VI.

*LITERARY CHARACTER.*

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## CHAPTER VI.

### LITERARY CHARACTER.

“Genius played  
With the inoffensive sword of native wit.”

WORDSWORTH.

THE Autobiography which has hitherto left to the editor but the easy task of selection and condensation, closes abruptly. It now remains to supply from correspondence, and some other sources, the records of a life extending over more than half-a-century beyond the period reached in the preceding pages.

But at this halting place, and when the brief literary career of Ann Taylor was drawing to a close, a few remarks may be offered upon its character, especially as some of her poems have more than once been the subject of criticism.

As she has herself intimated, her share in the early series of poems for children has scarcely been recognised, in consequence of Jane Taylor continuing to write and concentrating public attention upon herself, after her sister had resigned the pen. Yet, it is remarkable that, almost without exception, the most popular pieces in the joint works, were by the elder sister. This may be accounted for from the circumstance that, generally speaking, Ann Taylor dealt with the facts of life, and Jane with those of nature,

and the former was, consequently, more dramatic in style, and more given to depict motive and character. Of many that have become "Household Words," two little poems—"My Mother," and "Twinkle, twinkle, little Star," are perhaps, more frequently quoted than any; the first, a lyric of life, was by Ann, the second, of nature, by Jane; and they illustrate this difference between the sisters.

The elder was eminently practical, and always entered with keen relish into the social circle and the business of life. A walk through a crowded market place, such as that of Nottingham, so familiar in after years, was to her refreshing and inspiring, as a poem to be given in its place will show; while the "Song of the tea-kettle" exhibits her delight in progress and invention. Her first venture in print, she tells us, was an Election song; it may quite be doubted whether it could ever have been Jane's; the sensitive and shy disposition of the latter (though she could sparkle on occasion) disqualified her for society, and nature with its peace, its pathos, and its infinite suggestiveness, was her chosen refuge. Ann was fond of nature, but it was chiefly in relation to domestic incidents—she dwelt upon the cottage, the stile, the footpath, the garden and domestic animals—while Jane looked upon the larger landscapes, and her mind floated into dreamy reveries over the expanse of sea and sky, partaking more of the contemplative, and curiously inquiring character of her brother Isaac.

Yet, in some instances, the elder sister showed a sympathy with nature, and a delicate touch in adapting its lessons, quite equal to the younger. Two or three verses in the Nursery Rhyme—"A Pretty Thing" may

take rank with any of the kind in poetic beauty and simple diction—

When the sun is gone, I rise  
*In the very silent skies;*  
And a cloud or two doth skim,  
Round about my silver rim.  
All the little stars do seem  
Hidden by my brighter beam;  
And among them I do ride  
Like a queen in all her pride.  
Then the reaper goes along,  
Singing forth a merry song;  
While I light the shaking leaves,  
And the yellow harvest sheaves.

Or, again, on the Michaelmas Daisy—

I am very pale and dim,  
With my faint and bluish rim;  
Standing on my narrow stalk,  
By the litter'd gravel walk,  
And the wither'd leaves, aloft,  
Fall upon me very oft.

But I show my lonely head,  
When the other flowers are dead,  
And you're even glad to spy  
Such a homely thing as I;  
For I seem to smile and say—  
“Summer is not quite away.”

And as a fair pendant to the “Twinkling Star” of Jane, take the following by Ann—

I saw the glorious sun arise,  
From yonder mountain grey;

And as he travelled through the skies,  
 The darkness went away ;  
 And all around me was so bright,  
 I wished it would be always light.

But when his shining course was done,  
 The gentle moon drew nigh,  
 And stars came twinkling, one by one,  
 Upon the shady sky :—  
 Who made the sun to shine so far,  
 The moon, and every twinkling star? \*

These instances may suffice to show that the writer was possessed of a true poetic gift in the observation of nature ; and they illustrate, too, that rare quality, simplicity, which, while a necessary condition for success in the task attempted, has been seldom reached. In these poems it is attained without feebleness, or baldness of diction, and the result, in some instances, falls little short of the sublime, as in the picture of the moon, rising—

“ In the very silent skies.”

while, again, in the simple plaint of the “ Michaelmas Daisy ” there is a touching pathos—

“ And the wither’d leaves, aloft,  
 Fall upon me very oft.”

But, as has been said, the popularity of Ann Taylor’s

\* Perhaps these lines, learnt in childhood, suggested to Heber the motive of his noble hymn,—

I praised the sun, whose chariot rolled  
 On wheels of amber and of gold ;  
 I praised the moon, whose softer eye  
 Gleamed sweetly through the summer sky—&c.

poems in the collection—one test of which is the frequency with which they have been set to music—must be attributed less to their poetical merits, or pellucid diction, for in these her sister equalled, if not excelled her, than to their concernment chiefly with home life, and their lively dialogue. It is she who takes for her subject the

. . . . Pretty cow that made  
Pleasant milk to soak my bread.

though she does not forget the more poetic aspect of the affair—

Where the purple violet grows,  
Where the bubbling water flows,  
Where the grass is fresh and fine,  
Pretty cow go there and dine.

Animals are almost always introduced in this practical relation with the young folks, and with the constant eye to rousing a kindly sympathy for them, as in the “Last Dying Speech of Poor Puss,” “The True History of a Poor Little Mouse,” “The Epitaph upon a Poor Donkey,” and others,—all from the pen of Ann. The poem which an eminent writer has styled “the finest lyric of the kind in the English language,” “My Mother,” has been already referred to as a specimen of this domestic tendency; but what is more perfectly a song of the nursery than—

Dance, little baby, dance up high,  
Never mind, baby—mother is by;  
Crow and caper, caper and crow,  
There, little baby, there you go;



Up to the ceiling, down to the ground,  
 Backwards and forwards, round and round ;  
 Then dance, little baby, and mother shall sing,  
 With the merry gay coral, ding, ding-a-ding ! ding.

Or this, of graver tone—

Come, love, sit upon my knee,  
 And give me kisses one, two, three,  
 And tell me whether you love me—  
 My baby !

Of the same realistic class are “Meddlesome Matty,” “I do not like to go to Bed ;” and of another sort, but vividly dramatic, the “Little Ann and her Mother,” describing an actual incident in the childhood of the writer’s mother, and which has raised a curious interest in “Cavendish Square” in many a young breast. To Ann also was due that touching picture of great significance at the time when the “slave” was still a doleful fact,—

Ah ! the poor little blackamore, see there he goes,  
 And the blood gushes out from his half-frozen toes,  
 And his legs are so thin you may almost see the bones,  
 As he goes shiver, shiver, all along on the stones.

Miss Yonge, in her papers upon Children’s Literature of the last century (in which she attributes, as usual, the sole authorship to Jane), speaks of “the astonishing simplicity without puerility, the pathos, and arch drollery of the secular poems.” This arch drollery was certainly a characteristic of Jane Taylor, yet the instances adduced by Miss Yonge are all from the contributions of Ann. Among them is the story of the “Notorious Glutton,”

which readers who have forgotten their early lore may not be sorry to see again. It illustrates the vein of sarcastic fun in which the writer excelled, and belongs also to a class of subjects which have been since objected to.

A duck, who had got such a habit of stuffing,  
That all the day long she was panting and puffing,  
And by every creature that did her great crop see,  
Was thought to be galloping fast for a dropsy ;

One day, after eating a plentiful dinner,  
With full twice as much as there should have been in her,  
While up to her forehead still greedily roking,  
Was greatly alarmed by the symptoms of choking.

Now there was an old fellow much famed for discerning,  
(A drake, who had taken a liking for learning),  
And high in repute with his feathery friends,  
Was called Dr Drake : for this doctor she sends.

In a hole of the dunghill was Dr Drake's shop,  
Where he kept a few simples for curing the crop,  
Small pebbles, and two or three different gravels,  
With certain famed plants he had found on his travels.

So, taking a handful of suitable things,  
And brushing his topple and pluming his wings,  
And putting his feathers in apple-pie order,  
He went to prescribe for the lady's disorder.

" Dear Sir," said the Duck, with a delicate quack,  
Just turning a little way round on her back,  
And leaning her head on a stone in the yard,  
" My case, Dr Drake, is exceedingly hard ! "

" I feel so distended with wind, and opprest,  
So squeamish and faint, such a load on my chest ;

And, day after day, I assure you it *is* hard  
To suffer with patience these pains in my gizzard."

"Give me leave," said the doctor, with medical look,  
As her cold flabby paw in his fingers he took ;  
"By the feel of your pulse, your complaint, I've been thinking,  
Must surely be owing to eating and drinking."

"Oh ! no, Sir, believe me," the lady replied,  
(Alarmed for her stomach as well as her pride),  
"I'm sure it arises from nothing I eat,  
But I rather suspect I got wet in my feet.

I've only been raking a bit in the gutter,  
Where the cook had been pouring some cold melted butter,  
And a slice of green cabbage, and scraps of cold meat :  
Just a trifle or two, that I thought I could eat."

The doctor was just to his business proceeding,  
By gentle emetics,—a blister, and bleeding,  
When all of a sudden, she rolled on her side,  
Gave a terrible quack, and a struggle, and died !

Her remains were interred in a neighbouring swamp,  
By her friends with a great deal of funeral pomp ;  
But I've heard this inscription her tombstone was put on,  
"Here lies Mrs Duck, the notorious glutton ;"  
And all the young ducklings are brought by their friends,  
There to learn the disgrace in which gluttony ends.

Better still, perhaps, for its terse simplicity, is the story  
of the little fish that would not do as it was bid.

"Dear mother," said a little fish,  
"Pray, is not that a fly ?  
I'm very hungry, and I wish  
You'd let me go and try."

“ Sweet Innocent,” the mother cried,  
And started from her nook,  
“ That horrid fly is made to hide  
The sharpness of the hook !”

Now, as I've heard, this little trout  
Was young and foolish too,  
And so he thought he'd venture out,  
To see if it were true.

And round about the hook he played,  
With many a longing look,  
And—“ Dear me,” to himself he said,  
“ I'm sure that's not a *hook*.”

“ I can but give a little pluck :  
Let's see, and so I will.”  
So on he went, and lo ! it stuck  
Quite through his little gill !

And as he faint and fainter grew,  
With hollow voice he cried,  
“ Dear mother, had I minded you,  
I need not now have died !”

The reader will remember Goldsmith's brilliant repartee to Dr Johnson :—“ The skill,” said he, “ consists in making little fishes talk like little fishes.” Whereupon, observing Johnson shaking his sides with laughter, he smartly added, “ Why, Dr Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think, for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like WHALES.—(*Boswell's Life*, Ap. 27, 1793).

The tragic element in the “ Original Poems,” instances of which occur in those above quoted, has of late been strongly objected to. An American writer, who exclaims against

the horrors of "Little Red Riding Hood," and especially the dreadful scene between the wolf and the grandmother, as "enough to make a child's flesh creep with terror," holds Ann and Jane Taylor to be the "chief sinners in that respect." And a much higher authority, Sara Coleridge, speaking of Mary Howitt's charming poems for children, while ranking them below the "Original Poems" in simplicity, thinks them thus far preferable, "that they represent scarcely anything but what is bright and joyous." Children, she adds, "should dwell apart from the hard and ugly realities of life as long as possible. The 'Original Poems' give too many revolting pictures of mental depravity, bodily torture, and of adult sorrow; and I think the sentiments—the tirades, for instance, against hunting, fishing, shooting, are morbid, and partially false."

Now, surely the experience of most people will incline them to think that children get little harm from such dramatic representations, whether in the grotesque of the older legend, or in the homely treatment of the newer poem. If a giant cuts somebody's head off, the spectacle is only realised as a striking and effective denouement; and the man without his head is regarded as something funny rather than horrible. Childhood is by its nature and unacquaintance with suffering, sheltered from horror. Death itself is more curious than dreadful. The child's mind demands strong lines and colours in the picture presented to it, while its moral sense is not satisfied short of the extremest sentence of the law. For them retribution needs to be absolutely decisive and emphatic; and Ann and Jane Taylor, so far as they depicted such retributions

(for to their associate in this first work, Miss O'Keefe, most of them are due), simply acted from an intuitive perception of child-nature. Really, according to these critics, Punch and Judy should never be permitted to come near a nursery window !

But is it true that "nothing but what is bright and joyous" should be presented to children? They do not actually live in a fairy world; they are not really little angels. It is part of their education for the world as it is, that spectacles of all sorts should pass before their eyes, and that thus, while to a great extent shielded by their imaginative natures and light-heartedness, from what is hard, and ugly, and sorrowful, they should be gradually prepared for dealing with such things, when the inevitable time comes. And is it not well that sympathies should be early awakened? Is a "sad story" never to be told to a child? Is not the word, "poor man" natural and sweet from its lips? Should the hard necessities of poverty be hidden from it, and not rather used to awaken the compassion which every little heart is ready to bestow? Was it not better that the "ugly" little blackamoor should be used to draw forth pity, instead of being allowed to generate dislike because he was ugly and black? And who can say how far this little rill of pity went, in swelling the great flood of philanthropy which long afterwards swept away slavery altogether? The mother of Ann and Jane was always very careful to prevent her children from showing or feeling dislike towards any bodily infirmity, and her influence upon the young authors of the Poems may no doubt be traced in many of the subjects chosen; where, if those miseries were vividly painted, it was that

the drama of life should really move the heart, and be used for instruction, and warning, as well as for the delight of story. There is danger lest in the modern ideas to which Mrs Coleridge has given expression, children should be brought up in a sort of fool's paradise, out of which they have to be rudely thrust at last into a very different scene.\*

A letter of Mrs Gilbert to her brother Isaac, some thirty years after the poems were written, and when they were under revision, bears upon another part of this question :—

“ Respecting the objectionable words specified in your letter, I have had some thought, both before and since, and feel a little at a loss how to proceed. It appears to me that, so long as scolding, fighting, pouting, quarrelling, and sulking occur in the best nurseries, more or less, (require testimonials from your nurse-maid that they never occur in yours)—that is, so long as infant human nature exhibits itself in this way, and requires correction, it is necessary to advert to the *things*, and to call them by some name understood by the parties. I would not willingly employ an offensive or inelegant word, in preference to one which expressed the same idea in a nicer manner, but in the cases above, I scarcely know what to substitute that would not lessen the applicability to the conscience, or appear to soften down the offence. . . . In the ‘Notorious Glutton,’ and perhaps in ‘Meddlesome Matty,’ the subject in both cases is inelegant, and the former might have been expunged. I considered it, but as it has obtained a degree of favour as it is, and could not be altered altogether, I decided to let it stand.”

\* John Stuart Mill remarks that the new system of education seems to be, “training up a race of men who will be incapable of doing anything which is disagreeable to them.”

That this admirable piece of "arch drollery" should have so narrowly escaped suppression under her brother's influence, is remarkable. The alterations in several instances were unfortunate, they were many years later still, pointed out in an article in the *Spectator*, and attributed to the blundering of some incompetent editor. The author of them, who had herself then forgotten the circumstances of the revision, quite agreed with the critic, and was confounded to discover how, and when, they had been made.

Sara Coleridge's remarks upon "the tirades against hunting, fishing, and shooting" are scarcely justified by the poems themselves. What they say can hardly be termed "tirades;" and the sentiments were in accordance with much accredited literature of that day.\* In this case the aim was evidently to check that propensity to cruelty to animals, so common in children simply through want of thought, by an *argumentum ad puerum*; and the application of the rule, "Do unto others, as ye would they should do unto you." In this way not only might much unnecessary suffering be saved to animals, but a commencement might be made of that moral discipline in the careless little ones, which is the deepest need of every soul.

This brings us to the poems by the two sisters, which have a distinctly religious purpose—the "Hymns for Infant Minds," "Sunday School Hymns," &c. Miss Yonge, while

\* "Sandford and Merton," and Mrs Trimmer's "History of the Robins," dedicated to the Princess Sophia, are full of the same feeling, and were in the highest repute.



naming Jane Taylor (?) as one of three who alone have been successful hymn writers for children, yet considers her hymns inferior to the secular poems. In this opinion we do not concur. In these hymns, as in the other poems, it is Ann Taylor whose contributions have secured the widest popularity, and the simplicity without puerility, and pathos without sentimentality, which distinguish the secular, seem to us to belong, in a still higher degree, to the sacred poetry. So to treat the great topics of religion must also be a more difficult task.

The estimate of two such men as the late Dr Arnold and Archbishop Whately, may be adduced in support of this opinion. The former, in one of his sermons at Rugby, says,—“The knowledge and love of Christ can nowhere be more readily gained by young children, than from the hymns of this most admirable woman.” And the latter, in his “*Essays on Christian-Faith*,” remarks :—“A well-known little book, entitled ‘*Hymns for Infant Minds*,’ contains, Nos. 14, 15, a better practical description of Christian humility, and its opposite, than I ever met with in so small a compass. Though very intelligible and touching to a mere child, a man of the most mature understanding, if not quite destitute of the virtue in question, may be the wiser and better for it.” The poems here referred to are those entitled “*How to Find Out Pride*,” and “*How to Cure Pride*,” and were written by Ann Taylor. They exhibit a close analysis of motive, which was common to both Ann and Jane; but which the former expressed with more homely force. The first of these poems, after setting forth a searching catechism, ends with,—

Put all these questions to your heart,  
And make it act an honest part ;  
And, when they've each been fairly tried,  
I think you'll own that you have pride.

Some one will suit you, as you go,  
And force your heart to tell you so :  
But if they all should be denied,  
Then you're too proud to own your pride.

The second, after enumerating various means for the cure of pride, closes with,—

And, when all other means are tried,  
Be humble, that you've so much pride.

It was Ann, too, who wrote—

Great God, and wilt thou condescend  
To be my Father and my friend ?  
I a poor child, and Thou so high,  
The Lord of earth, and air, and sky ?

Art Thou my Father ? Canst Thou bear  
To hear my poor imperfect prayer ?  
Or wilt Thou listen to the praise  
That such a little one can raise ?

Art Thou my Father ? Let me be  
A meek, obedient child to Thee ;  
And try, in word, and deed, and thought,  
To serve and please Thee as I ought.

Art Thou my Father ? I'll depend  
Upon the care of such a friend ;  
And only wish to do and be,  
Whatever seemeth good to Thee.

Art Thou my Father? Then at last,  
 When all my days on earth are past,  
 Send down and take me in thy love,  
 To be thy better child above.

It may not be too much to say that the manner of the Divine Teacher has been seldom more nearly approached. Such might have been the little child whom "he set in the midst." In such words might the most mature Christian address his Father in heaven.

The hymn beginning—

Jesus who lived above the sky,  
 Came down to be a man and die,  
 And in the Bible we may see  
 How very good he used to be.—

has been found, in dealing with the poor, one of the best, because one of the most simple expositions of the gospel mystery. Another of the same kind is a sermon in itself—

Lo, at noon 'tis sudden night!  
 Darkness covers all the sky!  
 Rocks are rending at the sight!—  
 Children, can you tell me why?  
 What can all these wonders be?—  
 Jesus dies at Calvary!

The moral impressiveness of the following, may be acknowledged by others than children. It is mentioned in one of her letters as receiving the highest praise from Montgomery.

Among the deepest shades of night,  
 Can there be one who sees my way?  
 Yes; God is like a shining light,  
 That turns the darkness into day.

When every eye around me sleeps,  
May I not sin without control?  
No ; for a constant watch he keeps  
On every thought of every soul.

One of the less known poems was added at a later period.

A captain forth to battle went,  
With soldiers brave and trim ;  
The captain by a king was sent,  
To take a town for him.

It returned to the writer in bread of consolation after many days. In her old age she learnt that one who, still young, had distinguished himself before the deadly earth-mounds of Sebastopol, and so won his captain's commission, was greeted by his little sister on his return home with this hymn, learnt for the occasion, and deftly repeated. He listened how one had been,—

Taught by his mother to repeat  
What Solomon had said,  
That he who ruleth well his heart,  
And keeps his temper down,  
Is greater,—acts a wiser part,  
Than he who takes a town.

and how thereafter—

From day to day, from year to year,  
He kept the watchful strife,  
Till passion seemed to disappear  
From that young Christian life :  
In love he passed his pleasant days,  
And dying, won a crown !—  
The crown of life !—O better praise  
Than theirs who took the town !

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He listened, and the words sank into his heart. Not long after, from the midst of barrack life, he wrote that he had not forgotten the little hymn, and asked to have it sent to him. Within a month or two, fever carried him away, when the words that seemed to have awakened spiritual life in his soul, became messengers of peace to his sorrowing parents.

With all the cheerfulness of Ann Taylor's nature, there was associated a strong vein of melancholy, which led her too often into the neighbourhood of death and the grave. The fearfulness of that under-world, the loss from the living circle, the awful problem of the future, haunted her imagination; while the belief that such inevitable facts in human destiny should not be hidden from the thoughts of children, but that they should early learn the lessons they are intended to teach, induced her, perhaps more often than her sister, and more often than was healthy, to turn her pen in that direction. It was she who wrote,—

Yes, it must moulder in the grave,  
This moving heart, this breathing breast,  
And flowers shall grow, and grass shall wave,  
Where these cold limbs are laid to rest;

and so it was, that when she addressed her youngest sister on her birthday she fell into this solemn strain,—

He knows the point, the very spot,  
Where each of us shall fall,  
And whose shall be the earliest lot,  
And whose the last of all.

Dear cherished child! if *you* should have  
To travel far alone,  
And weep by turns at many a grave,  
Before you reach your own ;

May He who bade you weep, be nigh  
To wipe away your tears,  
And point you to a world on high,  
Beyond these mournful years !

Yet, if it be His holy will,  
I pray that hand in hand,  
We all may travel many a hill  
Of this the pilgrim's land :

With Zion's shining gate in view  
Through every danger rise,  
And form a family anew,  
Unbroken, in the skies.

The thought of a family broken, and perhaps for ever, was one of the tortures of her heart, and this prayer that hers and all dear to her should meet "unbroken in the skies" was the oftenest upon her lips.

Her nature was compounded of great tenderness, a strenuously realizing imagination, and profound convictions, and these when carried to excess may have unduly coloured her view of things. They compelled her to dwell occasionally on subjects still darker than the grave. She believed in sin, she believed in the future punishment of sin, and she could not hide her belief away in the presence of little ones, in whom she saw the germs of evil, and whose steps might be turning towards the broad road that leads to death. Yet neither she nor her sister ever brought the doom of the wicked into prominence.

The references to it are infrequent. It is never elaborated as a picture. No line by either sister deals with the subject as Dr Watts, their venerated predecessor, ventured to do.

Some sixty years after the publication of the poems, a writer in the "Athenæum" (understood to be Professor de Morgan), ignorant that the author still survived, wrote as follows :—

"One of the most beautiful lyrics in the English language, or in any other language, is spoiled by the introduction of what was not uncommon in the little songs formerly written for children, a bit of religion, no matter what, thrust in, no matter how, something *good* as a piece of form and propriety. After that description of a mother's care and kindness which, as written for a child, is absolutely unequalled, the song ends with the reason why the child is never to despise its mother, and that reason is the fear of *God's vengeance*. . . .

"The last verse would suit admirably if those which precede had described indifferent or harsh treatment, for the fifth commandment makes no distinction of mothers, which is all that could be said about the duty of attention to a bad one. But, placed as they are, these lines spoil the whole, and are perhaps the reason why the poem is by no means so common among the children of this day, as it deserves to be. We propose that it should be remitted to the Laureate in the name of all the children of England to supply a closing verse which shall give a motive drawn from the verses which precede, and in accordance with the one immediately preceding. It will not be easy, even for

Mr Tennyson, to satisfy reasonable expectation, but we hope he will try."

The verse animadverted upon is as follows :—

For God, who lives above the skies,  
Would look with vengeance in his eyes,  
If ever I should dare despise  
My Mother.

The succeeding number of the "Athenæum" contained this reply :—

"Allow me to thank your correspondent for both his praise and blame. I am grateful for one, and confess to the other, in his notice of a little poem, 'My Mother,' of which I was the author, it may be something more than sixty years ago. I see now so much as he does, *though not in all its implications*, that should another edition pass through the press I will take care that the offending verse shall be omitted; or, as I may hope (without troubling the Laureate) replaced. I have regarded our good old theologian, Dr Watts, as nearly our only predecessor in verses for children, and his name, a name I revere, I may perhaps plead in part, though not so far as to accept now what did not strike me as objectionable then. There has been an illustrated edition of our "Original poems" recently published. I am sorry to see it retained there, but, as the still living author, I have sufficient right to expunge it. Possibly you may have heard the names of Ann and Jane Taylor, of whom I am the *Ann*, and remain yours, &c."



She sent the following alteration of the verse :—

For could our Father in the skies  
 Look down with pleased or loving eyes,  
 If ever I could dare despise  
 My Mother.

A correspondent of "Notes and Queries," July 14, 1866, again took up the subject, and, after criticising both the critic and the author, objected to the emendation of the latter. "There is still the abrupt and unnatural transition from the extreme of fondness to its very opposite, and the fear of our Heavenly Father is still put forward as the only motive to the exclusion of his love. . . ."

Two verses were suggested by this writer, to whom the author, within six months of her death, rejoined.

"Again I have to thank, and in part agree with, my critics, confessing that at my age it is a favour to have any critic at all! With some of their views I may not fully agree, but in the concluding verses just received, I concur so nearly, that were they simply *my own* I might be glad to employ them. Yet I would rather be *honestly* myself, than *cleverly* any one else. Excuse me, therefore, for retaining what I have already sent, should another edition allow it.

"Young as I was when the original verse was written, I did not see, as I do now, its incongruity in tone with those preceding it. Still, I believe that all moral evil is sin; that all sin incurs the divine displeasure; but '*vengeance*' is a word I would not now employ."

To this curious little discussion, so long after the publi-

cation of the poem, in which several besides those quoted took part, the present editor would add what he believes to have been the true explanation of the objectionable phrase. In the earlier editions, "*anger*," not vengeance, was the word employed, the expression was intensified at a later period ; but it had a purely biographical, and not a theological, reference. At page 61, allusion is made to a painful piece of far back family history, the ill treatment of her great-grandfather on the mother's side, by a son who had been the spoiled pet of his parents. Her mother, when a child, had been a witness of this conduct. Perhaps her passionate affection for the grandfather, whose house at Kensington had been the happy refuge of her earliest years, may have coloured her recollections; but as she used to tell of her secretly taking the old man's head upon her bosom, and feeding him with soft biscuits, while the tears rolled silently down his cheeks, and he indicated in dumb show what he suffered; the indignation she expressed was deep. In the "Reciprocal Duties of Parents and Children," Mrs Taylor told the story under feigned names ; and her daughter Ann repeated it in one of the "Nursery Rhymes," beginning—

" I'll tell you a story, come sit on my knee,  
" A true and a pitiful one it shall be,  
" About an old man, and a poor man was he."

To the end of her life she could never refer to it without tears, and it is not surprising that, with this story in mind, the possibility of filial ingratitude should occur to her when writing the poem in question, and that she should denounce upon it the severest judgment of heaven!

nor that she should even intensify the expression, when it came before her for revision. The knowledge of an actual fact hid from her the incongruity, both as a matter of art and morals, of such an idea with the rest of the poem ; and when it eventually became the subject of criticism, the author, at the age of eighty-four, had forgotten the natural history of the verse, the introduction of which she evidently had difficulty in explaining. Any way it would be quite contrary to her nature to insert "a bit of religion no matter what, thrust in no matter how—something good as a piece of form and propriety."

One other modern criticism may be noticed, again referring to one of Ann Taylor's hymns :—

" I thank the goodness and the grace,  
That on my birth have smiled,  
And made me in these Christian days,  
A happy English child."

This has been found fault with, by an eminent preacher, as a piece of pharisaism resembling the " I thank thee, I am not as other men," of the parable. It surely hardly needs to be pointed out that thankfulness for all the blessings of this life, and sometimes for special ones, forms part of every public prayer ; and is totally different from an expression of thankfulness for the possession of moral excellence, in which the Pharisee's proud heart indulged. The concluding verse shows that the moral intended is the responsibility of privilege,—

My God, I thank Thee, who has planned  
A better lot for me,  
And placed me in this happy land,  
Where I may hear of Thee.

It is remarkable that even this simple hymn should have been honoured as an instrument for good far beyond its intention. She was told long afterwards, that a very gay, thoughtless family ascribed to it their conversion to spiritual religion.

That so many years after these little poems had been given to the world they should receive the commendations of such men as Arnold and Whately, is higher testimony to their enduring merit, than any contemporary judgments ; but it may be interesting to quote a few passages from letters received at the time from some whose names are still of note in literature.

Sir Walter Scott, writing to Josiah Conder, says, " My young people are busy with the ' Rhymes for the Nursery,' and it is perhaps the highest proof of their being admirably adapted for their benevolent purpose, that the little students have most of them by heart already."

Southey, writing to the same, on receipt of the volume entitled " Associate Minstrels," makes some general remarks, which may be worth transcribing :—

" There was a time when poets of this country, like those of every other country, trod one after another in the same sheep-tracks of imbecility. We have got out of this,—yet not so much in reality as in appearance ; for the modern art of imitation consists in borrowing or stealing from many, instead of honestly copying one. The first thing I look for in a volume of verses is to see whether the author be

a mocking bird, or if he has a note of his own. You certainly have; it is a sweet one, and I have little doubt that it may be made a powerful one, if you choose to cultivate its powers. . . . The title of your book, though you have abundant precedents for it, offends against my sense of costume. We injure and impoverish our language when we reduce a word which has a peculiar meaning of its own to be a mere synonym. I perceive as much impropriety in using 'Minstrel' for Poet, as there is in applying the terms of chivalry to modern warfare."

"The 'Original Poems' of your friends and associates have long been in my children's library, and equally favourites with them and with me. There is a cast of feeling in them which made me suppose the authors to be Quakers, a society with which I am almost, yet not wholly in communion. Whoever these ladies are, they have well and wisely employed their talents, and I am glad to have this opportunity of conveying my thanks to them through you, for the good which they are doing, and will long continue to do."

Miss Edgeworth, acknowledging some communication from Ann Taylor, says:—"Whenever I have an opportunity of adding to 'Parents' Assistant,' or to 'Early Lessons,' I will avail myself of your suggestions, and endeavour, as you judiciously recommend, to ridicule the garrulity, without checking the open-heartedness of childhood. My 'Little Rosamond,' who perhaps has not the honour of being known to you, is sufficiently garrulous, but she is rather what the French call '*une petite Raisonneuse*' than what you call a 'chatterbox.' Miss Larolles,

in 'Cecilia,' is a perfect picture of a chatterbox *arrived at years of discretion*. I wish I could draw Miss Larolles in her childhood."

"In a book called 'Original Poems for Children,' there is a pretty little poem, 'The Chatterbox,' which one of my little sisters, on hearing your letter, recollected. It is signed Ann T——. Perhaps, madam, it may be written by you; and it will give you pleasure to hear that it is a favourite with four good talkers of nine, six, five, and four years old."

Coming to works of more pretension than the Poems for Children, we may note that the "Associate Minstrels" contained eleven poems by Ann Taylor. Montgomery writes of it—"A—— is to my mind the Queen of the Assembly. She is a poet of a high order, the first, unquestionably, among those who write for children, and not the last, by hundreds, of those who write for men. The 'Maniac's Song' has not only the melancholy of madness, but the inspiration of poetry; also the simile, p. 97, is wonderfully fine, and perfectly original. The two stanzas that contain it are as lovely as the stars they celebrate."

The simile referred to is from one of the longest poems in the volume, entitled, "Remonstrance," and deals with the question, now much more loudly propounded, the true relations between man and woman. Enlarging upon a motto taken from Hannah More—"Women in their course of action describe a smaller circle than men, but the perfection of a circle consists not in its dimensions, but in its correctness," she says—

Thus Venus round a narrow sphere  
 Conducts her silver car,  
 Nor aims, nor seems to interfere  
 With Jove's imperial star.

Athwart the dark and deepening gloom  
 Their blending rays unite,  
 And with commingled beams illumine  
 The drear expanse of night.

It was not till mid-life that she composed hymns to any extent, for congregational use, and then perhaps not very successfully. They will be referred to at the period to which they belong, but it was at the age of eighteen only, that she wrote a hymn in three parts, which has been included in some collections. It begins—

Thou who didst for Peter's faith  
 Kindly condescend to pray.

With the removal to Ongar, Ann Taylor's pen took a new direction, in which it seemed likely to achieve considerable success. Her first article for the "Eclectic Review" led the way for others, of which one upon Hannah More's "Christian Morals" attracted much attention. That accomplished authoress was then at the zenith of her fame, and, quite unused to so fearless and caustic a style of criticism, upon discovery of the writer, expressed her displeasure in a manner unworthy of her genius. Isaac Taylor always held that his sister's chief talent lay in this branch of literature, and Montgomery once referred to her as a rare instance of one whose prose style was perspicuous and beautiful, without, as far as

he knew, having had the assistance of a classical education. Some quotations from her reviews may be given, not only as illustrating the character of her prose, but as expressing opinions which she held strongly through life—the result of a homely realism, which cut through the outward seeming of things. Mrs More's work is thus criticised :—

. . . “Various detached thoughts, in Mrs More's usual style of thinking and writing, are thrown into chapters—some more, and some less connected with their immediate neighbours—and look like the gleanings of a portfolio, which are too good to be thrown away, and too desultory to be well arranged. In many places the subjects are too much generalised to admit of that correct touch, in which the observation and skill of Mrs More are displayed to advantage. The reflections are just, and precisely such as most reflecting people have made already—such as many reflecting people could write, and, perhaps, not sufficiently unlike what has been written. Peculiarities of style, which, while they were new and infrequent, might strike as beauties, adding point, force, or richness, are here so numerous and unrestricted, that the ear anticipates and is fatigued with their recurrence. If we may venture on such an allusion, Mrs More, after lighting her candle, puts it under a bushel—and, not seldom, by unmeaning tautology, under half-a-dozen bushels successively, for many of her illustrations are so nearly synonymous that they rather exercise the reader in discovering, or inventing, distinctions, than assist him in attaining a complete idea. This, instead of indicating



mental exuberance, is usually the resort of conscious failure, labouring to express what it cannot condense ; or of indecisive judgment, which is unable to select."

"Genius feels and decides with prompt correctness, places its idea in the most striking attitude, in the broad daylight of expression, and presents to a glance—

‘ The fairest, loftiest countenance of things.’

Industry walks carefully round its subject, holding a light, now on this side, now on that, in every direction, till, notwithstanding the general obscurity, every part has been successively discerned. This fatiguing endeavour is perceived, upon many occasions, in the style of Mrs More. We should call it, if allowed the expression, ‘ much ado about ’—*something*."

More important, and strongly marked by the writer's opinions, is the following :—

. . . "She frequently writes as if the two classes which divide society—‘ the children of the kingdom,’ and ‘ the men of this world ’—were amalgamated in a third—natives of some country midway of those distant regions—Christians who are not *Christian*. We admit that there are many who present such an appearance to the eye of man—many whom charity would fain regard as brethren, although they do not ‘ come out ’ and ‘ separate ’ with such entire consistency as to render their character indubitable. But this uncertainty exists, not in the subject, but in the observer, to whom the heart is inscrutable ; and while it suspends his judgment, it must not confuse

his language. Amidst endless diversities of situation, temper, and knowledge, every individual is, or is not, a *Christian*; and he that is not must not be flattered with the name." . . . .

"Upon what ground, therefore, does Mrs More bestow the name of *Christians* upon such as are destitute, according to her own account, of the 'vital spirit of Christianity?' 'The good sort of people' she is exhibiting are well described as 'contractors for heaven, who bring their merit as their purchase-money, who intend to be saved at their own expense,' and 'do not always take care to be provided with a very exorbitant sum, though they expect so large a return in exchange for it.' . . . .

"These characters, who have descended without interruption from a numerous family in the days of our Saviour, are here so accurately delineated—the very cut of the phylactery is so well observed—that we should reckon it one of the most useful parts of the present work, were it not for the strange concession which is made to them in the same breath. Is it credible that persons so described should be complimented by Mrs More with the title of 'unconfirmed *Christians*,' and often with that of 'Christians,' without any qualifying epithet? That such Christians are called Christians by the world, we do not deny; but it seems to us that for that very reason Mrs More ought not to call them so. In what respect does the title belong to them? In what respect can it belong to them, if they are distinct from the character? We have heard of young, of unlearned, of weak, and even of inconsistent Christians—persons who have much to learn and to mourn, and long

to struggle—but they are not such as could be characterized by the foregoing marks. . . .

“In some writers we should either attribute this negligent bestowment of the Christian name to a dubious view of the subject, or consider it as a cowardly compliment to polite readers. In Mrs More we can do neither. We regard it as an unhappy relic of the language which becomes popular wherever religion is established and national. In the eye of a national religion birth and baptism confer Christianity. The ‘Young Christian’ is an expression not uncommon among ‘good sort of people,’ as soon as the baptismal office has done its wonder. Upon the uninformed, upon the majority, we may therefore conclude, in every nation thus situated, the effect of such a superstition is a complete mistake as to the grounds of safety; . . . Even among the more enlightened, we perceive the evil effect of such a system in the instance before us. It is a compliment so universal, under an established Christianity, to be called a Christian; it is reckoned so barbarous, so uncharitable, so heathenish a thing, to deny the title to any but the unbaptised; that even Mrs More adopts the popular phraseology, and upon persons addressed by the Saviour as ‘Pharisees, hypocrites,’ (and whom it is evident she views in the same light) bestows the distinguishing name of his true disciples.”

The following remarks have received striking illustration in our own day when the extreme Ritualist and the extreme Rationalist are found joining in the same form of words.

“And here, without wishing to detract one particle from the excellence of the liturgy, we must be allowed to express our surprise at seeing so weak a plea, as that it ‘secures from the fluctuations of human opinion,’ advanced in its behalf by writers, who, if they had thought, must have seen its fallacy; who ought not to have written without thinking; and who if they had thought, and did see its fallacy, should have been ashamed of employing it. It is not only bad as a principle, but erroneous as a fact. Human opinion continues, and it will continue to fluctuate, notwithstanding. Mrs More frankly acknowledges the ‘incurable diversity’ of it; and she must know that people, as well as ministers, are liable to ‘degenerate.’ We are astonished, therefore, to hear her plead for uniformity of language, while she allows that uniformity of sentiment is unattainable. This surely, could be no other than ‘bodily exercise which profiteth little;’ and it converts the forms of the Church into worse than mockery, to exact them from men, by whom their doctrines, Scriptural as they may be, are not embraced. ‘All things may be pure, but they are evil to that man who eateth with offence.’ To persevere in a form which the mind rejects, is only adding hypocrisy to unbelief; and if in the sight of God hypocrisy were *not* an abominable thing, yet, what is gained by compelling an infidel, whether a systematic, or a thoughtless one, to say ‘I believe?’”

A review of Miss Edgeworth's *Tales* was one of those contributed by Ann Taylor to the “*Eclectic* ;” the last of them, soon after she became Mrs Gilbert, had for its subject, Miss Hamilton's ‘*Popular Essays*.’ From this, a last

quotation may be allowed, from its bearing upon a question still under discussion—the true sphere of women.

“ But we feel inclined to explain and to qualify, before we proceed, an epithet which has just escaped us. It is that of *inferior* duties, for we doubt whether in such a connection, it ought to be employed. It appears, indeed, that to the term *duty*, the qualifications, great, and small, can never with strict propriety be applied. The *due* occupation of the passing hour is the uniform demand which the Giver of that hour makes upon the receiver of it, and in his sight, the nature of that occupation neither elevates nor degrades the servant to whom it is given. To all within the sound of his word, the injunction is addressed, ‘ Be ye holy; for I am holy!’ but to none, not to the most intelligent of his creatures, does he say, ‘ Be ye great, for I am great.’ In the scale of intellect, we take the place assigned to us by presiding Wisdom, and are only enjoined to improve the few, or the many talents, without repining, and without sloth. In the scale of morality we are, if the expression may be allowed, to find our own place, and never to rest satisfied with an inferior station. The woman, therefore, who feels herself confined, by the appointments of Providence, to a narrow mental range, and who is permitted to expatiate in those humble regions only, which comprise, perhaps, little more than the nursery and the kitchen, has no need to be ashamed of the rank she holds, or to repine at the limits by which her walk in life is circumscribed. She is an agent in the hand of God, and should be estimated, not according to the place she occupies, but the skill and industry with which her particular part is

performed. In the sight of God, the moral appears to be far more valuable than the intellectual principle. It is that mode of approach by which finite beings are encouraged to advance towards infinite perfection. Amazing intellect cannot elevate a Satan; and, though gifted only with the humblest portion of mind, a Christian is not degraded. He rises, in the dignity of the moral principle, into esteem and consideration even with the Most High.

. . . It appears, therefore, to be a false view of things—a view taken not in the light of Scripture, but by the flashing of human pride, that regards the performance of any duty as degrading, or even as inferior. Ascertain only that it is duty, and it is *that* the right discharge of which God will honour. The Christian woman who can reflect upon a laborious life of domestic duty, looks back upon a scene of true virtue; and if, in order to perform the whole of her allotted task, she was obliged to repress a taste for pursuits more intellectual, the character of magnanimity is inscribed upon her conduct, however retired, or in human estimation insignificant, may have been the daily exercises to which she was appointed.”

The last paragraph may fitly close our consideration of that portion of the life we are delineating, which was devoted to art and literature. After her marriage, Ann Gilbert gave herself with all the sedulousness of her nature to the occupations of that more contracted sphere, in which she yet recognised a true moral greatness; striving therein, as far as in her lay, to live a life of “duty, praise and prayer.”



MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER VII.

*ILFRACOMBE AND ONGAR.*



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## CHAPTER VII.

ILFRACOMBE AND ONGAR.

1812-1813.

. . . . — “How wilt thy virginhood  
Conclude itself in marriage fittingly?”

R. BROWNING.

“So this match was concluded, and in process of time they were  
married, but more of this hereafter.”

BUNYAN.

ONGAR, a name very dear to my mother's heart, had in reality little to do with her life, except through the repeated and happy visits she paid there, so long as her father and mother lived. These, however, were among the brightest gifts of the years, while the impression of the first arrival, and the first summer spent in the picturesque “Castle House,” never wore off, and Ongar always was to her the chosen home of rural happiness. The old house has since then been much altered; the two turrets, in one of which was her writing closet, have been pulled down, and the whole has been re-fronted. Yet some vestiges of its former condition remain, as in the staples for the chains that supported the drawbridge over the moat, for the house was originally the gateway to the castle yard, enlarged into a mansion about the Elizabethan era. “The Mount,” upon which stood the

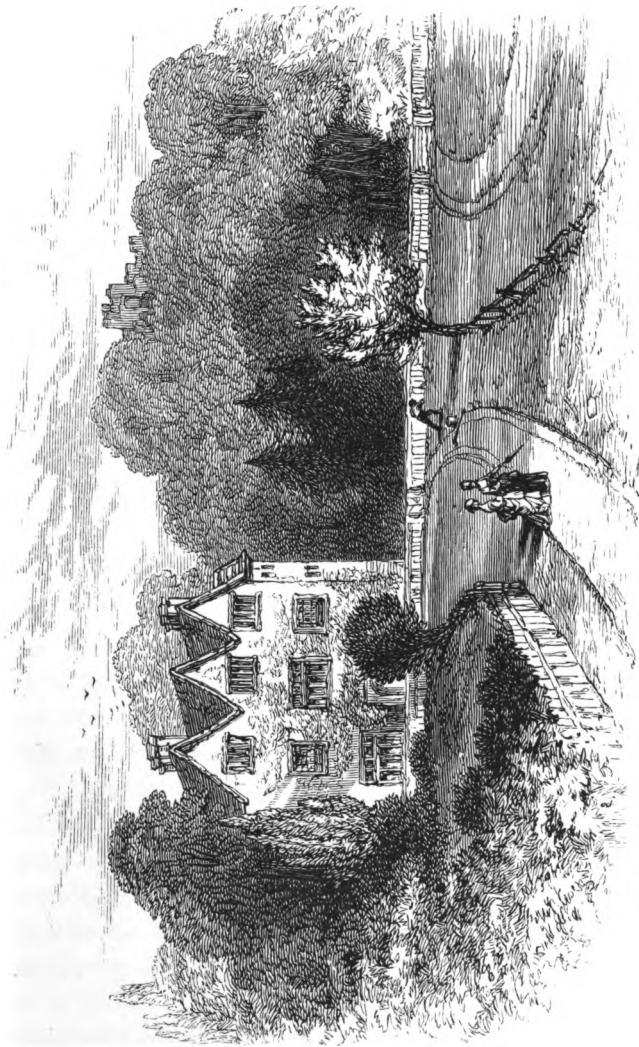
ancient keep, and "the moats" are still there. The widest and deepest of the latter was once at least navigated by Martin, Jefferys, and Jane, in a brewing tub, when they unluckily lost one of the fire shovels, used for oars.

Ongar itself,\* a straggling, red-roofed little town of a single street, has not sustained much alteration or enlargement; but the changes have all tended to diminish its picturesqueness. The most notable disfigurement has been the cutting down of the tall poplars and other trees around the churchyard, and the gradual obliteration of the ancient lines of foss and earthwork covered with trees and bushes, surrounding the town on three sides, that marked its early adoption as a place of strength.

The country round would now hardly answer to the loving eulogies of the Autobiographist. Like most English landscapes, it has been smoothed and pared away till its peculiar charm is almost gone. What with the removal of timber, and of thatched cottages, the enclosure of the commons, the disappearance of the elm-shaded strips of green along the roads, the straightening of hedges, the pulling down, or renewal in bald ugly style, of the farm houses that formerly boasted grey carved porches and columned chimneys,—the character of the scenery has grievously deteriorated, in any but the farmer's point of view. My own recollections of it are not inconsistent with my mother's description.

It was, however, at Ilfracombe, far away from this loved

\* Spelt in Doomsday Book, Angra. From the castle, once a place of considerable note, it appears sometimes as "Ongar de Castrum."



THE CASTLE HOUSE, ONGAR.

*From a Drawing by Jane Taylor.*



spot, that the Autobiography left us. The charm of its romantic scenery, and that of other parts of Devon and Somerset, seems to have been more appreciated by her brother and sister than by herself, who, ever a home bird, enjoyed especially the more simple features of a home landscape. It was the dear friends she found or made in Devonshire that gave warmth to her recollections. Her bosom friend, Anna Forbes, now Mrs Laurie, lived at Budleigh Salterton; Luck Conder, as Mrs Whitty, at Axminster; the Gunns, and others, were now for the first time amongst her intimates.

A happy six months was spent at Ilfracombe, then a very retired village. The winter storms thundered at their back door, and sometimes "tons of water broke against the chamber window." But they clambered over the rocks, and explored the dales in almost all weathers, and within doors "a jewel of a landlady," and "our Peggy, the civilest, obligingest, curtseyingest little Devonshire maid that can be," made them very comfortable at a fire-side cheerful enough from their own resources, but which choice friends contributed to enliven.

It was not all holiday, however, Jane, indeed, seems to have spent her time more in gathering impressions for after use than in actual work; but Ann and Isaac were fully occupied. Ann was chiefly engaged upon reviews for the "Eclectic," stimulated by finding that an article by Dr Olinthus Gregory had been displaced to make room for one of hers upon Miss Edgeworth. It was here she wrote that pungent review of Hannah More's "Christian Morals," from which some quotations have been given. Isaac, besides some miniature painting, was busy

with his designs for *Boydell's Bible*, the striking originality of which drew the admiration of Haydon, and of late years have been referred to by Gilchrist and Rosetti as resembling those of Blake in conceptive power. But his versatile genius was not confined to art. An invention for engraving by mechanism was shaping itself in his mind, and here subjected to tentative experiments; while at the same time his thoughts were pursuing the problems of early Church History, to which the accidental purchase of a Latin Father had given the impulse. It was a singular illustration of this versatility also, that he should have been offered the appointment of draughtsman to Mr Salt's expedition to Abyssinia, and solicited to become the pastor of the small Dissenting Church at Ilfracombe.\*

That small community had been accustomed to the ministrations of a very able man—Mr Gunn, afterwards of Christchurch, Hampshire, and noted for organising there the largest and most successful Sunday school then in the kingdom. He had just introduced the use of Ann and Jane's Hymns in his school at Ilfracombe, and with him the three visitors in the small house on the Quay formed the closest intimacy. Ann's diary shows that scarcely an evening passed that he did not take a seat at their tea table. All three wrote, and Isaac subsequently published, the highest encomiums upon the charm of his manner, and the power of his mind. Ann writes to her mother,—

\* The whole party had made themselves so useful and so beloved that when they left they were presented with an address, expressive of the affection, the gratitude, and good wishes of the members.

“ Mr Gunn, the noble Highlander ” (he was from Caithness), “ adds greatly to the pleasure we here enjoy. He spends his evenings with us more frequently than not, and by the animation, the philosophical cast, and perspicuous style of his conversation, renders our fireside most delightful. His person, air, and manners are those of a military man of rank ; but the graceful ease and candid frankness of his conversation remove any embarrassment in his company, although Jane and I had mutually determined to say nothing in his presence but ‘ Yes, if you please, sir,’ or ‘ No, thank you, sir.’ Father will be pleased to hear he is making us Dissenters to the backbone.”

To this, a very permanent result with the two sisters, the injudicious denunciations of a Cambridge dignitary, whose sister occasionally attended upon Mr Gunn’s ministry on week days may have contributed. Ann writes again,—

“ Miss W——’s brother, in writing of Mr Gunn, always calls him ‘ the man.’ I only wish he could once see and converse with him, and he would perceive how emphatically he is ‘ the man,’—in person, in manner, in character, and in principles.”

With this opinion of him, it is not surprising to find that the sisters and their brother were his hearers three times every Sunday, and that their attendance at the lecture on Wednesday, and the prayer-meeting on Friday evening, was unailing. They had, however, been brought up in the strict observance of “ ordinances.”

But the chief event of the winter at Ilfracombe, was the arrival of a visitor on a peculiar errand. A minister, for a short time resident in Essex, but now associated with Dr



Williams as classical tutor in Rotherham Theological College, had been so impressed with Ann Taylor's writings, and had heard from those acquainted with her so much eulogium upon her personal merits, that he took the singular step, without having seen her, of writing to inquire, whether "any peremptory reasons existed which might lead him to conclude that a journey, undertaken with the purpose of soliciting her heart and hand, could not possibly be successful."

"To this extraordinary letter," as she terms it, in writing to her mother, she returned a brief and most distant answer, but was somewhat conciliated by the reply, and especially as inquiries instituted by her father brought forth the warm praises of many friends. It was speedily intimated that the writer was coming to Ilfracombe, and Ann's letters to her one confidante, her mother, are full of the oddity and embarrassment of the situation.

"I can scarcely believe that such a negotiation is actually on foot, and yet that I have not the slightest idea of the party! Whatever his present feelings may be, and I believe them to be sincere,—however permanent might be the affection he entertains for an unknown character, in case he were never personally introduced, that affection will scarcely come into service when the ideal object is displaced by the real. He will feel like a man whose love has slipped through a trap door. Yet I think it proper to allow an interview, because it is the only way to effect a speedy cure,—if cure is to be effected."

At the same time she combated the hot objections of one of her brothers, and thinks she detects in the letters—and it was a wonderfully true prevision—"an elevation,

but simplicity of nature ; that kind of manliness which results from integrity of principle, and singleness of design. . . . As to M——, I cannot but recollect that tastes differ, and that even a quick sight may sometimes be too quick to be true.” \*

The unknown suitor first visited Ongar, and the impression produced upon so keen and severe a judge of character as the mother, fully supports that which the daughter had gathered from his letters. It is evident that he took the further journey with the good wishes of both parents, and a letter from her mother is clearly intended to prepare the way to her daughter's heart.

“We had had the sweeps, and were in the back parlour, which was also in the usual litter preceding Christmas. Your father was out, and we, in great *deshabille*, had just sat down to tea, when Jemima exclaimed with a look of dismay, ‘there's a *fourble* knock at the door!’ Immediately I decamped into the store-room, and was speedily followed by a ludicrous procession. . . . However, I determined to carry it off with address, so having slipt upstairs, and hastily adjusted myself, I returned and I believe received him with tolerable ease. I just said slightly that we had had the sweeps, &c., but I soon perceived he was

\* The circumstances recall the manner in which Colonel Hutchinson's affections were attracted towards the unseen lady who afterwards became his wife. In her own charming narrative, Lucy Hutchinson tells how “he grew to love to hear mention of her,” and “began to wonder at himself that his heart, which had ever entertained so much indifference for the most excellent of womankind, should have such strong impulses towards a stranger he never saw. And certainly it was of the Lord (though he perceived it not), who had ordained him, through so many providences, to be yoked with her in whom he found so much satisfaction.”—“*Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*,” p. 57.

not the man to be impressed with unfavourable ideas from such trifling circumstances. He was one of the favoured few with whom I could immediately assimilate, and could freely converse. We presently commenced an animated conversation, chiefly on literary subjects,—Montgomery, ‘Edinburgh Review,’ &c., &c., but I could see he was constantly verging towards the main subject, which at length we entered upon very fully and frankly. I blamed him for the step he had taken, and asked how it was that he did not first try to get an introduction to you?” . . . (After explanations) “He said he had acted in the most direct opposition to his own theory. I replied he had to mine; and that I had known many who, though appearing unexceptionable in the eyes of the world, had *to me* some trait that would have been an insuperable bar to such a union. He replied that what I saw was, though I might not then be aware of it, a certain indication of some defect of mind, and that he was convinced, from long acquaintance with yours, there could be nothing of the kind in you.” . . .

“But as to the *man* it would be vain and fruitless for me to say—‘like or dislike him.’ Your own observations, your own eyes, your own heart, must be your directors. But I may say, *I like him*, and that he grows upon me most rapidly. I soon discovered a vivacity, a gracefulness, and even a fascination in his manner, which I thought might in due time render him acceptable. Poor fellow! There was no place inside, and he had to travel on the roof this bitter weather, and was so absorbed in love and learning, that he had left behind his warm travelling cap, and, but for your father, would have gone away again without his overalls!”

“Your father says, that had he been so fortunate as to have been one of the workroom loungers at Colchester, he is the very man soon to have become a high favourite. Now, my dear Ann, I have but one request to make, which, after all, I daresay

is needless. It is not that you would marry, or even like him ; but simply that, after having travelled so far on your account, you should show every hospitality, and he will the more deserve it if you reject him."

Her father adds his word also—

"I met him once at an association of ministers, and was so struck by his countenance as to inquire who he was, for his look was penetrating and superior. I received for answer that it was Gilbert of Southend, a deep thinker, very clever, and not at all suited to such a place. The next thing I heard of him was his being appointed assistant tutor at Rotherham."

On the 31st of December 1812, she describes the result of this singular visit.

"The first time he introduced the subject, which was the first morning, I declined entering upon it entirely, as a total stranger. The second, I settled preliminaries ; that is, explained to him that he must consider himself as under no kind of engagement to proceed a single step, but that all he now said or did must be without any reference to the past. And certainly my suspicions in this respect appear to have been groundless ; he does not seem to have made the transfer with so much difficulty as I expected. In the course of his subsequent communications, I have had the opportunity of observing the complete furniture of his mind. He is both intellectual and cultivated, and in conversations with Isaac and Mr Gunn, discovered himself to be competent both as a philosopher and a scholar. In freer conversation he appeared an agreeable, intelligent companion, and really enlivened our fireside. But all the while I quite forgot his errand,

and only felt towards him as to any agreeable visitor. Even his affection, which is much more than it is probable I should ever excite in any other instance, made less impression upon me than I could have believed possible ; and to my own surprise inspired neither like nor dislike, for either of which I should have been almost equally thankful."

A letter to Mrs Laurie explains a little later the position of affairs :—

"Lest you should first hear a piece of my private history by means of public report, which a friend should never do, I have determined to communicate it myself. Yet as I am informed, to my surprise and regret, that some busy newsmongers have already put it in circulation, I may perhaps conclude that you know to what I refer,—proposals which have lately been made to me by a gentleman of whom, till the moment in which they were made, I scarcely knew the name—I need not conceal it—the Rev. Joseph Gilbert, classical tutor at Rotherham College, a widower of thirty-three, without family, and recommended in such terms as left nothing but the question of individual taste to be decided. . . . That he has strong feelings I have sufficient evidence, but, notwithstanding all (so wayward and uncontrollable is the heart), I have felt it utterly impossible to give him the answer he desires. I sustained the attack upon my affections with a degree of insensibility such as I should not have given myself credit for before ; but, in consequence of the warmth of his attachment, and the wishes of my family, I have consented to postpone a determination, absolutely final, till the summer, when he will visit Essex. . . . You are therefore authorised and requested, my dear Anna, to inform the world that it is mistaken about 'Miss Taylor's being going to be married,' for that it is no

such thing. This is necessary, you will see, or else it may have to conclude in process of time that something has happened 'to break it off,' an observation I do not covet to have made upon me."

The enjoyment of Ilfracombe was evidently somewhat disturbed by this state of things, and a correspondence to which she had reluctantly consented she felt to be "the most embarrassing part of the business." The death in March of his revered friend and colleague, Dr Williams, whose mind, those who knew him and his works, regarded as of the highest order, occasioned such acute grief to Mr Gilbert that her sympathies could not fail to be touched; while the unanimous petition of the students that he should succeed the Doctor as Principal and Theological Tutor, was strong proof of the estimation in which he was held. She writes again to her friend:—

"I do not like making courtship a defensive war, or treating one whom you are shortly to promise to love, honour, and obey, as if he possessed none of your love, and were unworthy of your honour and obedience. It is, indeed, so easy for the sins of love to be visited by the vengeance of marriage that I should always tremble to lay up for myself such a retribution. As far as possible I would wave punctilios that have no foundation in natural feeling and delicacy, and would endeavour in a word to show (were I, I mean, in the circumstances which it is possible I never may be), that I respected both him and myself.

"You, my dear Anna, have your hands and your heart full, but of this I am persuaded, that it is more for our happiness to have them full of anything, even of toil and sorrow, than to have them empty."

I.

R

Perhaps at that moment Mr Gunn was too much of an ideal hero to admit easily of a competitor. This admired friend, whose settlement at Ilfracombe had been somewhat accidental, removed to another charge on account of his wife's health, shortly before the Taylor party left it. The following portions of a letter home contain a vivid portrait of a remarkable man, and describe the close of their Ilfracombe visit:—

April 13, 1813.—“Mr Gunn sends word that he would rather be preaching to his sailors at Ilfracombe, than to all the grandees of Bishops Hull. You never saw such a scene of desolation as his going occasioned! There were huge sailors so overwhelmed with crying, that they could not sit upright in the pews. One says, ‘I quite unmanned myself.’ Another, ‘I love him like an only sister.’” One of the young women said, ‘I have seen very few gentlemen myself, but I daresay the Miss Taylors have seen a great many, and I will ask them whether they ever saw any one like him?’ We said no, indeed, we never did. You are perfectly right in supposing that he has natural gifts enabling him to command. His beauty, his gracefulness, his unfailing, never slumbering politeness, his independence of character, and of circumstances, compel obedience from every eye and every heart. You would be surprised to see how entirely his *politeness* is his weapon of defence against the low and ill-mannered. It preserves in all circumstances the attraction of repulsion. He repeats a saying of Dr Bogue, when one of his students complained that some low hearers had treated him disrespectfully,—‘Indeed! that is your own fault; why do you not fight them with your hat?’ Yet, with all this command, this independence, and depth of observation that looks fathomless,—with a dark view of human nature, and systematic study of character, motive,

and conduct, Mr Gunn is a very child in simplicity, always cheerful, often gay and sportive. He is, in a word, such an one as we never saw before, and do not expect ever to meet again.

“They are learning here that they must not rest in means, nor in men ; that they must not mistake the delight of hearing Mr Gunn for the pleasures of religion. On Saturday arrived Mr Davies, his probationary successor ; but what shall he do who cometh after the king ? Poor man ! we so well understand his feelings, his anxieties, and hopes, that we sincerely sympathise with him under his disadvantages. He is a little, mean, plain, meek-looking Welshman, with his hair combed *good* on his forehead, coarse, light worsted stockings, and the Welsh pronunciation almost to spluttering. He preaches right down gospel, though not in a way I should ever expect to be strikingly useful ; and I believe is thoroughly worthy and well-meaning. He has a wife and six children, and seems to feel—exactly as we know how. We had him to tea on Saturday.

“ I believe our departure is now fixed for Tuesday, the 27th. O dear ! O dear ! We propose to reach Linton that day, and continue till Thursday morning, exploring its beauties, at the pretty little inn on the mountain top. If we have fine weather I hope we shall enjoy ourselves ; but dear Ilfracombe ! it will cost us a good deal to bid it good-bye, though the animating spirit is gone already. We shall send the large box home by waggon. It seems but yesterday that I saw it on a fine autumn morning trundling down the chase-way from the Castle-house, and now it is trundling back again ! So life goes on !

“ How we should enjoy introducing Mr Gunn to Mr W——, and giving him his cue ! It would be a fine sight—the Royal Tiger and the King of the Crocodiles ! Mr Gunn insists much upon a minister being a gentleman, as a means of usefulness. Sometime ago he gave six months’ education to a young shoemaker preparatory to his going to the Hoxton College. And



then, he said, 'you might have seen us marching backwards and forwards in my study, handing the chairs from one side to the other, and opening the door and entering forty times in a morning, in order to give him a little ease and propriety.' Yet there was never anyone less finikin, or a ladies' man. A few years back Ilfracombe was so retired a place, and a carriage such a rarity, that when Sir Bouchier Wray was known to be driving in, half the town used to go three or four miles on the road to meet him ;—' Ah Sir !' said an old woman to Mr Gunn when he went, ' I am sure if you ever come here again you will be like Sir Bouchier's coach.' You would have smiled to hear an old man, the pew opener, talk to him,—' Yes, your Reverend ; no, your Reverend.' ”

An ordinary mortal (who, however, by his friends was considered by no means ordinary even in gifts of person) would plainly be at much disadvantage beside this paragon. A change of venue would give him a better chance. They left Ilfracombe, April 27, 1813, and spending a day or two at Linton, went on by Minehead to Taunton, posting for the most part, except where, from the steepness of the hills, their luggage was put in panniers, and they climbed on foot. At Taunton a day was spent with the Gunns; then by way of Chard they reached the Whittys at Axminster. Budleigh Salterton, where, at " Eden Cottage," Mrs Laurie was living, was their next resting-place; and the Golding's (Eliza Forbes) at Bridport their last. From Axminster, Ann writes to her father that the abundance of literary work before her when she gets home, " renders the thought of the Castle-house, and my own room, and dear little study, delightful, without requiring any foreign aid to make it interesting; indeed, there seems so

much 'fash' in any arrangement which may interrupt these quiet regular home occupations, that I look at it (if ever I do look that way) rather with regret than anything else. But I do not forecast in general."

Time passed away among these dear friends, for long distances and slow coaches implied long visits in those days; and it was the 20th of July before they took the Cornish mail for London. On the 23d, after ten months' absence, they were once more under their father's roof at Ongar.

There, on the 2d of August, Mr Gilbert arrived for the momentous final answer that had been promised him; and three weeks afterwards an entry in her pocket-book records it,—“walked in the afternoon, *oui*.” It was a “yes” in which all her family and friends rejoiced, and which brought to herself nearly forty years of happy married life. Lest her long hesitation should suggest that the cause of it lay in the suitor, it may be well to add to her mother's opinion of him the testimony of Isaac Taylor, published long afterwards:—“A man of the warmest benevolence, of extraordinary intelligence, extensive acquirements, excellent judgment in common affairs, and withal, of deep and elevated piety.”

To Mrs Laurie, she writes in the autumn—

“I am learning with tolerable facility to believe what you told me when you said, ‘Oh, this delightful, mutual love.’ The day is fast approaching which is to rend me from home and parents, and everything I have loved hitherto, but it is only to unite me to a heart that I love, and a mind that I venerate.”

To Mrs Whitty—

“I have not leisure now to say much of the progressive

alteration of my feelings, from the indifference which you witnessed at Axminster, to the happy glow of confident affection. I can only say that I begin to understand that sunshine of the heart of which you have told me, and a little to excuse Rebekah for consenting to accompany a stranger to a distant land. The distance is indeed the only circumstance of alloy, and it renders the separation from home exceedingly painful. Rotherham is four days' post from Ongar."

Two extracts from the correspondence with her future husband are subjoined:—

(Nov. 12, 1813.)— . . . "The anxiety you express as to your ability to render me happy is little more than a transcript of my own feelings. The fear of disappointing you has ever hung heavily upon my mind. . . . I hope I stand where the providence of God has placed me; and I wish to cast the burden of these anxieties upon that arm which has conducted me. You know too well the defection of the human heart to rest your hopes of domestic happiness upon the expansion of its meagre virtues. It is only as I may hope for assistance from above, that I can entertain the thought of taking the precious happiness of another into my unworthy care. The prayer of my inmost heart for this assistance is the only light that shines upon my fears. I cannot make you happy, but God can; and may I indulge the hope that He will employ me as the means of blessing you? You know my fears as to my filial interest in His favour. These are at the foundation of every other anxiety, and chill the confidence with which otherwise I should seek His aid, and anticipate His benediction. Could I feel myself a child of God, I would shrink from no inferior relation. I could do all things through Christ strengthening me. But I seem to be cast upon my own weakness, and then do not be surprised if I

tremble. Upon these subjects I confide in you to feel and speak as a Christian minister, and then you will not compliment. Indeed, if you knew how painful to me is the sound of commendation which I do not deserve, you would not distress me with it. It falls upon me like the bitterest reproach."

(Nov. 25, 1813.)—"I feel this evening as if I could not enter upon the principal subject of your letter; but I cannot help saying that while the ingenuity with which you administered reproof made me smile, the confidence with which you ventured to console me, made me tremble. I *will* give weight to your persuasions, but to your assurances I dare not. It is not, indeed, that I wait for the whisper of God in my heart. I could almost say that I would be content never to hear the consolations of His voice, if I could but distinguish the operations of His hand. It is to consistent regulation, internal and external, that I look as an evidence of the presence, aid, and favour of God; and it is the want of this which overwhelms me with doubts, which, as you justly observe, weaken the moral power, and depress my comfort. Sometimes I suspect that I do not cast myself upon the Saviour with sufficient confidence, but then I am afraid of becoming easy, and attaining cheerfulness under imperfections (if they deserve so tender a name), which at present bar my approach to Him. *Progress* seems to me indispensable as an evidence of being led by the Spirit of God. I need no assurance of the certainty of the promises. I know that a good work begun shall be carried on; but this is no consolation till I feel that it *is* begun.

"Perhaps you will attribute all this to humility; it is the construction which indulgent friends are too apt to put upon the mere decisions of a well-educated conscience, but I dare not ascribe them to such a principle. It is possible, I fear, to have dark views of ourselves without humility. Among many

anxieties which have harrassed me in giving myself to you, I assure you the fear of being an unchristian companion, a hindrance to you in your journey heavenward, has not been the least ; but I hope you will take me by the hand, and lead me to Him in whom your own confidence is placed, from whom your supreme happiness is derived. Should I feel myself travelling thus by your side, I would not be solicitous for inferior sources of enjoyment ; it will be sufficient, whatever may be the path, if we enter Heaven together.”

The wedding was fixed for the 24th of December ; but, in the meantime, threatening symptoms had again compelled her brother Isaac to proceed to Ilfracombe, and he was accompanied by his sister Jane, a separation very painful under the circumstances. It was then the fashion for ladies to travel in a riding-habit ; a friend had undertaken to purchase the cloth for that required by the bride at a wholesale warehouse in London, and she was not a little gratified to learn, that when the proprietor heard for whom the purchase was intended, though he only knew Ann Taylor from her works, he begged her acceptance of the four guineas worth of cloth as a token of respect.

She signed herself “ Ann Taylor ” for the last time on the morning of her marriage.

*December 24, 1813.*—“ Dear Jane and Isaac,—It is just eight o'clock, and we are about to assemble for family worship ; before I go down, I devote a minute to the recollection of you, my dear brother and sister. Forgive every instance in which I have been other than a sister should be, and if ‘ hand in hand ’\* we travel

\* The expression “ hand in hand,” had a double reference,—first, to a picture painted by their father of the two girls at the ages of nine and eight, standing together in the garden at Lavenham ; and next, to a poem suggested

on no longer, believe me, dear Jane and Isaac, your most affectionate sister,  
ANN TAYLOR."

Although the church was close by, they went in two chaises to it, down the old chase-way, and all the party accompanied the married pair the first stage on their way to Cambridge ; but from a long letter to Mrs Laurie, we may give this close of the Ongar life, and the beginning of that at Rotherham :—

"The next morning, between twelve and one, we reached the by the picture, which Ann had addressed to her sister in 1806, commencing with the following stanzas ;—

Spring, summer, autumn wind their dance,  
Old winter hobbles near,  
And verging round the blue expanse  
Declining suns appear ;  
The seasons vary,—but we stand  
Dear girl, as ever, hand in hand.

The violet blossoms but to fade,  
The virgin green of spring  
Soon deadens to a deeper shade,  
The birds forget to sing ;  
All nature varies,—all but we,  
And here, still hand in hand we be.

And hand in hand we travel on,  
The lovely change to trace ;  
To mark when one sweet flower is gone,  
Another fill its place ;  
And with a rapt delight pursue  
Each simple line that nature drew.

The two heads engraved for this work are taken from the picture.—[ED.]

sacred banks of the Cam, and being Christmas-day, had the advantage of hearing the fine service in King's College Chapel by 'taper's light.' On the Sabbath we heard three different preachers. On Monday, we saw as much as we could, set off at twelve, and reached Ongar again to tea. . . . On Friday afternoon, it being a beautiful day, we all took a farewell walk on one of our favourite roads,—where we all went the day before Jane and Isaac left us, and where we had often conversed, both of Ilfracombe and Rotherham. The next morning, Saturday, January 1, 1814, at a quarter after ten, I took leave of my dear family. It was a bright winter's day, and I shall not soon forget the dearest group in all the world to me, left at the garden gate to watch the chaise out of sight! I had a last look as we ascended the hill. It was one of those bitter pains which we sometimes have to pay for pleasures of an earthly kind.\* . . .

“On Monday evening I waited at a friend's warehouse in Coleman Street, to be taken up by the Leeds mail. The horn blew, and at a quarter to eight I was seated with my husband and off for Yorkshire. It was moonlight, and the frost so hard that the roads were excellent. At Kettering we breakfasted, dined at Nottingham at four, and entered Sheffield at ten; where the approach, as far as I could see, gave all the indications of a flourishing metropolis. We had tea, refitted a little, and at eleven took chaise for Rotherham. It was an interesting time

\* Her mother describes the parting to the brother and sister at Ilfracombe. “The grand, the harrowing scene is over, and we have parted with our dear Ann! The separation was so agonizing to me that the poor man was viewed rather as a depredator than as the kind guardian to whom I was going to commit my child. When she was seated in the chaise, her eye roved from window to window of the house, and rested with unspeakable expression on that of her own room. As it drove along the chase-way she stood up, and we saw her dear hand waving to us till she disappeared.”

and scene, and I could have felt much if I had given way to it. As soon as we left Sheffield, two great furnaces appeared before us, which were, Mr Gilbert said, in a line with our house, about a mile beyond. These lighted us all the way, blazing like volcanoes, or streaming like the northern aurora along the sky. The country rose into fine hills on each side, and after a short drive the old spire of Rotherham appeared under the moonlight. We wound through the town, which is of some extent, and entered Masbro.\* A great many thoughts and feelings crowded upon me as we stopped at length at my own door. Salome came out to receive us. We entered our house at ten minutes before twelve, it is a very pretty one, and in everything comfortable, though small."

The young lady here mentioned was the niece of Mr Gilbert's first wife, and who, having lost her parents, resided with him. She was just eighteen, lively, spirited, sarcastic, and the new wife felt some anxiety as to their future relations.

A long farewell letter from her mother had been put into her hands on leaving home, which may be given nearly entire. It may well conclude that portion of her life, which was more or less an education under her parents' eyes.

"MY DEAR CHILD,—The time is now probably at hand when you and I must separate, and the nearer its approach, y<sup>e</sup> more precious every remaining moment becomes. My feelings would be soothed by spending the residue of it in your society ; but as that cannot be the case, I frequently indulge them by retracing y<sup>e</sup> years that are past. Happy days, to us, were those of your

\* A suburb of Rotherham, in which the College was situated.



infancy! 'Nancy and Jenny' beguiled many a heavy hour, and cheered our spirits under many a severe trial. It was to the promotion of their ultimate happiness that y<sup>e</sup> chief of our youthful exertions were directed. In schemes to this end a great proportion of our retired hours were spent. If those schemes were not always wisely laid, our own disadvantages must plead our excuse, for we had little to assist us but a very small stock of experience, and a great deal of affection. . . .

"Now you are about to enter a state which must determine the future happiness of your life; and I feel urged to avail myself of the relation in which I stand, to suggest a few hints, which, by a wise application of them, may prove of more intrinsic value than a marriage portion, which, alas! we have not to give.

"That the man on whom you are going to bestow yourself possesses all y<sup>e</sup> amiable qualities which his friends have ascribed to him, I readily believe; but I will never believe that he is perfect; in whatever respect he is otherwise, must be deeply interesting to the being who is to become a part of himself, nor ought it to be deemed an unnecessary anticipation of evil so to expect some imperfections, as to be in a degree prepared to meet them.

"Those little eccentricities which mark families are rarely visible to the parties themselves. This may account for their proving so obstinate and incurable in many, who possess good sense sufficient to put much more formidable enemies than these to flight. Such family traits are often so undefinable that no title or name can be applied to them but that of the family to which they belong. Accordingly when we say *Watkinsonish* or *Taylorish*, we are in general sufficiently understood. Now, from the little I have observed of Mr Gilbert (and I have made the most of my opportunities), I should imagine that his disposition would not at all assimilate with some peculiarities of the sort to which I have

alluded. That he is of a frank and open temper little doubt can be entertained, and, if a man of strong and ardent feelings, he will naturally demand much sympathy; and here, my dear Ann, I think that you are sometimes under a mistake when you maintain that it does no good to talk about certain evils. To those who are in y<sup>e</sup> habit of talking about them, assuredly it does do good. It is true that every day brings its troubles, but an indulgent providence does not every day exercise us with what may be termed calamities. It is but seldom, therefore, that y<sup>e</sup> sympathy which is such an embellishment to human nature, and which is as essential to y<sup>e</sup> Christian as the gentleman, could be brought into action, were it not called upon by those petty ills which annoy us every hour, and which, if they do annoy, establish our claim upon those around us for an attention proportioned, not, perhaps, to the circumstances, but to y<sup>e</sup> pain which they excite. There are few who are disposed to brood over their ills in silence. *I should say it does no good so to do.* The opposite conduct is a principle so engrafted in human nature that philosophy in vain endeavours to extinguish it, and Christianity does not attempt it. The crew of a sinking ship could do *no good* by all their clamours and vociferation, and they might just as well sit quiet in the cabin and ride composedly to y<sup>e</sup> bottom. Yet such circumstances, I presume, would put even the self-command of the Watsons to flight. When complaint is extorted, from the scratch of a pin to y<sup>e</sup> wound of a broadsword, it is in y<sup>e</sup> power of sympathy to mitigate y<sup>e</sup> one and make us forget the other.

“I will add another caution, which it would be well if every couple would take into consideration. I refer to that spirit of *disputation* which, for aught I see, pervades almost every family. It is a matter of no moment what weapon they choose whereby to put to flight their domestic peace. They will maintain endless arguments about a pin or a straw, till they have rendered

those desperate for whom they would sacrifice their lives. My dear girl, remember your mother's parting injunction,—*Beware of the first dispute.*

“ I will now give you my thoughts upon a subject, which perhaps there would have been no occasion for, might we have had the ordering of your lot—I allude to Salome. It has contributed to enhance Mr Gilbert's character in my estimation that he has manifested such an affection for y<sup>e</sup> memory of his deceased wife. His fatherly care and protection to her niece is the result of this. If he should find you co-operate with him in his benevolent intentions towards her, I should anticipate a very happy result to yourself. Yet, with y<sup>e</sup> best intentions on all sides, we see daily at what minute apertures discord will enter. . . . In the present instance I cannot think of better counsel than that you determine Salome shall love you. . . . It is probable that, since the death of her aunt, some power must have been vested in her hands; let not the transfer be abrupt, but gradual, and, as much as possible, imperceptible. Let her rather perceive than feel that you are come to supersede her. Make her rather approve than submit to it. All this I say, my dear Ann, that altercation and disputation may not mar y<sup>e</sup> happiness of your fireside. Could I know that it did, it would almost annihilate y<sup>e</sup> felicity of my own. . . . Yet, while I am so anxious for you, let me say that, as an orphan, I cannot help a certain interest in her. Those who, like her, by repeated deaths, are transferred from one to another, and find themselves in the wide world obliged to strangers for protection, I have frequently contemplated with a good deal of compassion. As I have mentioned your predecessor, I would just suggest to you that if he is disposed to speak of her, you will avoid appearing as though y<sup>e</sup> subject were either unpleasant or uninteresting to you, but rather appear willing to allow her a corner in his

heart to cherish her beloved memory. But your knowledge of human nature will dictate this.

“ This epistle is y<sup>e</sup> result of my anxiety, and a duty which my conscience would not suffer me to dispense with. What benefit you may derive from it I know not ; I only know how highly prized, how very salutary such a proof of ‘ maternal solicitude ’ would have been to me. Oh, at what price would I not have purchased some sage admonitions to guide my steps when first I commenced my perilous journey through life with your father ? For want of such aid, I have groped my way as I could. No wonder if in my thorny path I have stumbled, and thereby interrupted those who have happened to stand near me. Could you know the torture which a daily contemplation of my own imperfect character occasions me, you would be disposed to believe that I had done all I could.

“ My dear, dear child ! ‘ my first-born, and y<sup>e</sup> beginning of my strength ! ’ may I not add, ‘ y<sup>e</sup> excellence of dignity, and y<sup>e</sup> excellence of power ! ’ Never, my beloved Ann, have I willingly inflicted one pang on you. Whatever you may have occasionally suffered from y<sup>e</sup> imperfection of my temper, has invariably recoiled on myself, and inflicted a yet deeper wound. And, now that we are about to part, can I utter a word that is not fraught with maternal affection ? Three times have I penned this epistle, so careful have I been not to utter a word inadvertently, and three times have I sprinkled the paper with my tears.

“ Finally, my dear child, farewell. ‘ Be perfect, be of *one mind*, and the God of peace shall be with you.’ To Him you were dedicated in baptism. To Him I make a fresh surrender of you, now you are about to leave y<sup>e</sup> paternal roof. You will find an altar already raised to His praise under that you are going to ; there you will often be joined in spirit by your

“ Affectionate Mother,

“ Dec. 12th, 1813.”

“ ANN TAYLOR.”



MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER VIII.

*ROTHERHAM.*

I.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

ROTHERHAM.

1814-1815.

“ And life’s uncertain scope  
In pleasant haze before them lay,  
A land of Love and Hope.”

ANN GILBERT.

———“ a babe, by intercourse of touch,  
I held mute dialogues with my mother’s heart.”

WORDSWORTH.

THE life at Rotherham was novel in all respects. It was Yorkshire all over in warmth of welcome, and warmth of fires, the banked-up mass of which mitigated within doors the rigour of that noted winter of frost and snow. Mr Gilbert had not succeeded Dr. Williams in his chair. He remained the Classical professor, and worked in cordial relations with Dr. Bennett who was appointed to the theological department, and Principal of the college. The Essex lady, whose pen had preceded her, was eagerly awaited by the students who, it was reported, filled all available windows on the night of her arrival, and accustomed to the larger Yorkshire type, exclaimed to one another, “how little she is!” The next morning a hearty greeting from them lay on the breakfast table.



At six every morning, except Monday, Mr Gilbert met his students in the library of the college, and some who have become eminent in after life, among them one who for many years filled a chair at the London University, have spoken of those early prelections—the blazing fire, the surrounding tomes, the enthusiasm of their tutor, to whom Greek was ever a passion—as delightful memories. At eight he returned to breakfast, and was with his classes again from half-past nine till one. After dinner, at two, the rest of the day was given to literary work, of which he had much in hand, and in which his wife rendered willing aid. In these months, however, she had plenty of occupation of the same kind. “I am now getting on,” she says, “with Miss Hamilton’s ‘Popular Essays,’ though I cannot apply as I used to do, and I have in the house for reviewing, Miss Edgeworth’s ‘Patronage,’—and two or three other things.”

Yet, characteristically, it was the special duties of her new position that began to absorb her attention. In letters to her mother she enters into details of household economy, requesting advice from that first-rate authority upon “ironing and ‘getting up,’ the composition of those mince-pies with which you have sometimes contrived to finish a piece of boiling beef; and the history and mystery of your delicate little bread puddings for the sick.” But to both literary and household duties the interruptions were frequent. The abundant hospitality accorded to her and her husband on all sides, including stately dinners among the Iron Magnates, in a style to which the modest circles, in which Ann Taylor had previously visited were unaccustomed, occupied evening after evening. Her husband, too, held at this

time a pastorate at Sheffield, going thither generally on Saturday afternoon, and remaining till Monday evening. At first she often accompanied him, and as spring came on they not seldom walked together on a Sunday morning, and before breakfast, the six miles between the towns, by what were then pleasant fields and woods. This seems to have been at her own suggestion, and however delightful in the peace and freshness of the hour, must have been no slight tax upon the strength of both husband and wife.

At Sheffield, another and a large circle of friends surrounded them, amongst whom Montgomery, the poet of her young enthusiasm, gave her the warmest welcome. Upon an early Sunday, they stayed at his house, when she "witnessed the phenomenon of a poet smoking two pipes after supper." With the strong affection that distinguished the members of the now widely separated Taylor family, they had agreed, on the night of every full moon at nine o'clock, weather permitting, to look at it alone, and meet in thought. To Ann, the first occasion was on the night of their visit to Montgomery's, when she says she was "permitted to retire behind the curtain to think her own thoughts, but could do nothing else, since the moon was invisible."

With his usual thoroughness her Father had provided his children with a list of the full-moon nights for the year, and, contriving time for everything, had accompanied it with an ode to the moon, thirty-two stanzas long, and consecrating the appointed hour. Opening with—

"Empress of the noon of night,  
Pour thine urn of silver light;"—

it contains several fine lines, and closes with the solemn yet happy thought, as he surveys the band of loving ones—

——— “Who first dies  
Is first to live!” ——

How faithfully he kept the tryst himself, is shown by one of his letters from the “Moated Grange” at Ongar:—

“*Castle House.*—It is nine o’clock, the full moon shines delightfully into my study, and the duty (for so we have agreed, and therefore it is a duty)—the pleasing duty calls me to think of my absent children; not that there would be any danger of my forgetting them, but I love to look at the bright moon, and to recollect what dear eyes are looking at the same object, what precious bosoms are beating, at thoughts of their father, their mother, their home!”

From the same strong family feeling, each of the absent ones had to furnish the circle at Ongar with the most exact particulars of their different homes, even to plans of rooms, and gardens; and in a letter to her father, Ann gives these with such detail that everybody’s accustomed chair is indicated, as well as the colours and pattern of carpet and wall. There is promise, too, of a sketch from the window, when the snow is gone.

“It has been extraordinarily cold even for Yorkshire,” she adds, “and the snow which set in the day after we arrived renders many roads impassable, yet our house is so substantial, and our fires so excellent, that I never remember to have suffered so little winter cold in my life. I scarcely know what it is even to feel chilly, though our situation is high, solitary, and exposed directly to the east. No one here thinks of putting on

a *shovel* of coals ; some thrice a day the bell is rung, and in comes Mary with a full scuttle, hearth-broom, dust-pan, and duster ; the mass of cinders is removed, the entire contents of the scuttle discharged, the hearth swept up, fire-irons dusted, and the duster run over all the furniture ; by this means we preserve a fine Arabian temperature, and, as Mr Hunt observed,\* ‘have all that fun for ninepence !’”

The fires outside struck her still more. To Jane she writes :—

“Three times I have been with Mr Gilbert to Sheffield ; the first time struck me exceedingly ; it was dark when we arrived, and we had to climb a very high hill about a mile beyond the town. It was moonlight, and the sky shone with polar brightness ; the ground was covered with snow, and behind the hill we were ascending were three tremendous furnaces, which waved an irregular light over our heads, like the *aurora borealis*. Indeed, I cannot describe the wonderful effect of these furnaces in every direction. There is one about a mile from us, which clearly illuminates our garden, and, seen through the intervening trees, presents the finest sight imaginable.”

As Mrs Gilbert’s family were well aware of her anxiety to establish happy relations with her husband’s niece, her letters soon make reference to this young lady :—

“Salome must certainly have exerted herself beyond what most girls of her age would have been equal to, to get everything into perfect order. She must have worked both hard and cleverly. She is altogether an interesting character, and often amuses and delights me with her gay simplicity. She is nearly eighteen, pretty, and genteel in ideas and dress, though in the

\*The “Orator Hunt” of that day.

latter entirely unornamented. She has an unceasing propensity to laugh heartily, possessing a keen taste for the ridiculous, tempered with a good notion of propriety in conduct and manners. Her vivacity is equally simple, and arch, if you can understand that ; and her spirits are entirely uncontrolled by sorrow or contradiction. She does not recollect ever being punished or checked in any way ; so that she is strongly disposed to do nothing that she does not like ; it happens fortunately that in general she does like what is proper. I might call her a little artful, but then it is only from her own frank relations of the tricks she has played, and the scrapes she has got out of, that I should say so. She is no bad housekeeper, and not a little observant ; so that it is not so easy to try experiments in that line as it would be without her. But with all her gaiety she is quite respectful and obliging, and an enthusiast in poetry, of which she can repeat volumes, all well selected, for her taste is good as her feelings are quick. I often look at her with interest and admiration for the simple youthful happiness which she displays ; not that she is in the slightest degree childish in her manners."

Later she has learnt a little more, and writes—

"She is full of human nature, speaking her mind without reserve on all occasions, and often makes remarks both close and curious. She is quite indifferent to the opinion of people in general, whose faults and follies she is by no means dull in discovering, or scrupulous in exposing ; and her indifference will make her enemies among those she does not care for."

It will not be surprising that the two thus brought into close relation, soon conquered, each the other, with the true conquest of affection. Several years afterwards,

their mutual position was in a singular manner rendered especially difficult ; but the wisdom and love of both surmounted the difficulty. Salome, however, will frequently cross the path of this narrative, and we need not anticipate.

*March 28, 1814.*—“ My dear Jane and Isaac,—I have been taking such a pleasant walk on this fine spring day, that my spirits seem in right cheerful mood for writing to you ; and yet, sit down as I will, when I begin to read your letters, and address you in reply, I involuntarily fall into the pensive, and could with little difficulty commence with tears ! When I am reminded of times that have been, and are not ; of successive periods over and gone ; of a compact domestic circle finally broken and scattered ; and of the progress which all this implies towards the dissolution of every earthly tie, I cannot repress the feeling which succeeds, and do not wonder that you fancy a strain of melancholy in my letters. Yet believe me, it is only when thus reminded of distant things, that my mind assumes this colour. At other times I am happy ; and even this should not be considered a defect of happiness, it only casts upon it a twilight shade.

“ You wish for amore exact description of my mode of life. At present I am hardly settled enough to tell you, but after breakfast I generally spend a quarter of an hour in my own room, safe and sound, over the cookery book, which is my guardian angel, oracle, and bosom friend. The first week I came I experienced a real sick qualm by a present of a wild duck, before the cookery-book had arrived ! Mary had never dressed one, and I was looked to for the entire orders. All that I could remember was put into requisition, and I did right in all respects,—did not stuff it, did not cook the giblets, did truss it right,—did rejoice when it was all over ! I was told, too, that

when the students came to tea there must be a plum-cake—cookery-book a month on the road! was obliged to postpone the visit till it arrived,—managed extremely well when it did. Professedly Yorkshire customs, I do not mind learning; and Mary has so provincial a pronunciation, that it often gives me time to frame an answer to a question for which I was not entirely prepared. Altogether I manage very tolerably, and what with my ‘bosom friend,’ some recollection, and a spice of ingenuity, can give my directions I assure you in good style. Whenever I can,—but there is always ‘some bed or some border to mend, or something to tie or to stick,’—I endeavour to get to writing about eleven, and write during the morning, more or less, as I am able.”

But of her writing she was very jealous. She says in another letter—

“I am persuaded that many here are expecting to find me a dawdle. Mr G. says that people have been continually fishing for information on this head, ‘Is Mrs Gilbert always writing?’ I wish, therefore, to be as cautious as I can. Mr G. is very desirous that ‘Mrs Gilbert’ should be as well known as ‘Miss Taylor;’ but he has invested me with other characters, and he does not feel, perhaps, that to be well known at the expense of these, would be disgrace, rather than fame. I hope, by prudence and activity, to be able in time to unite the different occupations and characters, so as not greatly to injure any, but if one must suffer, it should certainly be the literary.”

During the spring, the family at Ongar were obliged to leave the Castle House, which, painful enough, would have been more so had they not succeeded in obtaining a large old house in the neighbourhood, about a mile from

Ongar, suiting their tastes nearly as well ; especially as it owned a larger garden, which, under her father's skilful eye and hand, soon became a charming spot, with shrubbery walks, and terrace paths, and rustic seats, and flint-paved grottoes. Of the house itself more anon. In June, the remove having been completed, and Mr Gilbert obliged to go upon an ordination tour into Cumberland and elsewhere, his delighted wife was indulged with a visit to the new home.

On Monday afternoon, June 13, 1814, at half-past three, her husband put her into the "Highflyer," Edinbro' coach, at Retford. Giving him an account of her journey she says,—

"Your fears for my safety were quite groundless, and those for my comfort were nearly so. It is true that the German passenger did not turn out to be Count Altenberg, the English one Colonel Hungerford,\* nor the Scotchman a Wallace ; but, to the best of their ability, they all behaved very well, or intended to do so. I confess that the German smoked his cigar during the fine warm night, and, when by far too weary to prefer conversation, the Scotchman tormented me with incessant enquiries, as minute as they would have been impertinent if he had not put them, as I really believe he did, in simplicity, and without any idea of giving offence. As there was no appearance of intentional rudeness, I put up with it pretty well, though, 'of course, it was the first time I had ever travelled by the stage.' At Newark a very pleasant young woman got in, and we were great comforts to each other. She was very pretty, had never been in London before, and wishing to surprise her friends, had not informed them of her coming—as foolish a thing, methinks, as

\* Characters in Miss Edgeworth's tale, "Patronage."



could have been done. So I saw her safe to their house—a service which I rendered most cheerfully, and she most gratefully received. During the night I had, as the Scotchman told me, a long and comfortable ‘snoozing;’ but Tuesday was so intensely hot that it required positive effort to keep myself tranquil. If I had once begun to fidget, I should soon have been reduced either to a calx or a gas. . . .

“Friday evening I spent at Miss —, and slept there. I think Miss C— *is* like me, as I have been told; and I soon recollected what Salome once said of her inexhaustible ‘unsqueeze-in-betweenable conversational talents.’ Saturday was devoted to the only business which is just now carried on in London,—attendance upon the noble and lovely strangers from the Continent; and verily they are so noble and so lovely that it is no wonder all London is sadly bad about them. On Friday I was shopping in Ludgate Hill when I quite unexpectedly saw the Emperor\* in an open barouche, and a single glance did for me. His face seems to beam with the happiness of an empire. Believe all the papers tell you of him and his lovely sister, the Duchess of Oldenburgh, for they cannot exaggerate. She is twenty-eight and he thirty-seven. On Saturday he was to dine with the Prince Regent, the Royal Dukes, and ‘all the rest of the gentlemen,’ at Guildhall; and the same preparations were made as for a coronation procession. The whole line of streets was gravelled, and filled with company. One thousand sat down to table, and four or five thousand ladies in full dress were there as spectators. I, and a houseful besides, were at 18 St Paul’s Churchyard, which commands a noble sweep of the line. Many rooms on the route were let for forty or fifty guineas; houses, leads, and ledges were all crowded, and

\* The Emperor Alexander of Russia, at the time of the visit of the Allied Sovereigns to England.

I only wished for you to partake the general delight. A beautiful sight it was. The Prince Regent, with whom the King of Prussia rode, was received with cheers and *hisses* as he passed, an insufferable mortification, surely, before his royal friends, and in his own capital!

“On Monday, uncle offered Martin to take me to a grand review in Hyde Park before their majesties, and, not liking to refuse, I accepted it. It was a fine sight, and Martin was very good in keeping me out of danger; but the crowd was immense, and once an unexpected movement of a corps of flying artillery compelled us to a rather rapid retreat across the enemy’s line. We did, in fact, run for it as fast as we could, along with a great deal of good company. I reached Holborn at two, where was your welcome letter, and, by expert generalship among hackney coachmen and porters, contrived to collect my baggage, and reach Aldgate at three, where my place was taken for Ongar, but as the Proclamation of Peace was taking place in the City at the time, I thought I should never get through, the press of carriages was so great.

“Near Ongar, at the turn of the Ingestone road, Jefferys was waiting for me, and I got out of the coach. Father met me on the way, and mother and Jemima were planted at their pleasant window to watch my approach. The house, newly whitewashed, looked exceedingly pretty among the trees, covered with vine, which clings round the porch, and surrounded by a large country garden, laid out, by father’s unconquerable contrivance, in the prettiest rural style. There is an arched gateway of yew over the wicket entrance, a fine row of poplars on one side, and fruit and flowers in abundance. On the ground floor are a large parlour and a very comfortable library, also a commodious ‘work-room,’ and what father calls his cabinet, containing prints, pictures, and everything of the kind; kitchen, dairy, store-room, and out-places of all sorts. Above, are mother’s room, large,

and very pleasant, opening into a little study, which is her delight, over the porch, furnished with all the family pictures; the spare room, a nice green country room, with Jemima's closet adjoining; Jefferys' very quaint, and several others that could be fitted up if necessary."

An extract or two from succeeding letters during this happy visit depict the daughter and the wife:—

"*Ongar, June 29, 1814.*—Again, my dear husband, you have been better than my hopes. You know that I do calculate well, and I knew it was *possible* for me to hear on Tuesday, but situated as you were I would not expect you to write so soon. Yet, it is certain that I cast many an inquisitive look from the breakfast-table this morning for the return of our little post woman across the field; but it was with a feeling much more like a wish than a hope; and even when a letter was announced for *me*, I would not believe it was from Rotherham. My love, it is very kind of you thus to remember me, pressed as you are by business, but believe me the effort is appreciated. I feel the value and enjoy to the utmost the pleasure of it. I want to know every particular of your movements. If, on Saturday evening, you should be walking to Sheffield remember the full moon will have a message for you; and if you are in some northern mail contrive to sit next her, that at nine o'clock she may drop the wonted whisper, and make sign of love in the name of one upon whom she will be gazing beyond many a blue hill. Your absence is, I was going to say, the only drawback upon the happiness of my visit to a happy home, but I must not forget the exiles of Cornwall, and you would not wish me to forget them. . . .

"I am witnessing the weather-beaten happiness of my dear father and mother. 'They clamb the hill thegither; and

mony a canty day, love, have had wi' ane anither.' Now, 'though they totter down, love, still hand in hand they go'—and derive an endearing satisfaction from the remembrance of the toil and the struggles of early years. Providence has abundantly smiled upon them. It has continued them to each other in the enjoyment of constantly increasing affection; and it is delightful (especially to one who is entering the same path with a companion as dear and estimable) to witness the sun of happy love that lights their declining years. They wander together about the new house and garden, and fancy themselves in Eden."

*July 11, 1814.*— . . . "Have you seen the 'Eclectic?' The new editor, if I may judge from certain minute alterations, is less a wit than a scholar. This perhaps, it will be thought is just what an editor should be; but one does not like to see point beaten flat, and sentences weakened down to rule, till they are ready to die. I have not much to complain of, yet it is not gratifying to see, if it is but a single word displaced for a worse. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the wording of yours to discern the variations, if any are made. It appears to me an excellent article. I have read it attentively as a whole, and like it exceedingly.\* There is a short review of Horsley's Speeches in Parliament, which also pleases me very much; it is Foster's, and is written with all the force of his vigorous pen. The character starts to the eye as he proceeds, and there is that kind of fine, bold expression in his language which makes one feel as if breathing mountain air—'not like the balmy south upon a bank of violets'—but clear, healthful, and invigorating. It is very short, but to me delightful. Mrs Hinton, who has just left us, says that his mind is in a state of much and increasing per-

\* Her own article was a review of Miss Hamilton's "Popular Essays;" the subject of her husband's, "Faber on the Holy Spirit." He, like Foster, greatly admired Bp. Horsley.

plexity. Persons oppressed with theological difficulties, frequently apply to a mind of such depth and compass for assistance ; but return more confused than they went, and are rather distressed by his eccentricities both of thought and conduct, than enlightened by his wisdom. Are we to receive another lesson, that God seeth not as man seeth, but chooses the weak to confound the wise, and pours contempt upon that which we are apt to worship ?”

Of this first of many happy visits to Ongar she wrote to her parents—

“It was a six weeks of uninterrupted enjoyment ; and for the tenderness, the trouble, and solicitude which made it so, my heart and my tears thank you—they are the first I have shed, but sitting down to write has opened the flood-gates.”

At this time her mother had unexpectedly become an author, whose works were not only frequently issuing from the press, but running into several editions. Of “*Maternal Solicitude*” alone, four editions were sold almost immediately. Mother and daughter correspond, therefore, as well upon literary as domestic matters, though the latter far predominate. Ann writes :—

“I truly rejoice in what you are doing, and hope, my dear mother, that you will go on with ardour while the sun shines. I would wait just long enough to enjoy the interval as relaxation, but no longer. Your next plan (‘*Correspondence between a Mother and Daughter at School*’) is so good, and Jane’s name will be so advantageous an addition, that you have no need to wait for the public opinion upon this ; even if it should prove unfavourable, it ought not to be discouraging. Set to work, therefore, immediately, with expectation and spirit. But do not

suppose that I augur ill of this. It must not be wondered at, or even regretted, if a work is not equally acceptable to all. It is designed for a certain class principally, and it is no fault if to that class it is in some degree confined. I should like to see the preface, for if something of this kind could be just neatly indicated, it would be an advantage, but it should be delicately done—short, neat, terse, explanatory; such as I could not write, or exactly imagine, but only wish for. As to its implying the author to be a Dissenter, I should not care for that in the least. A writer in very few instances can, or should, so completely conceal himself as to have his sentiments entirely unknown—I mean, if the subject upon which he writes relates in any degree to sentiment. There is a sense in which he should be content to say, ‘if it is not liked, it may be lumped,’ though if this manner be adopted too indiscriminately, instead of lumping *it*, the public may lump *him*, which is quite another thing.”

This preface received its final shape from her ready pen.

“I shall be glad (she writes), my dear mother, if this meets with your approbation, and can only say that at any time to render you this or any kind of assistance in my power, is a real pleasure which much more than pays for its board.”

After a visit to Ongar in the summer, she writes, Sept. 15th, to her “dear family,” as her letters home are almost always addressed—

“I do not wish anything fit only for my private eye to be in the next letter, as I may not be in a situation, perhaps, to read it myself, but do not write under restraint on this account; Mr G—— is no critic. I have given peremptory orders for your hearing immediately and honestly whatever may be the news. I need not say I hope it will be good, but I wish I could think

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of you without pain supposing it should be otherwise ; do not, my dear family, be over anxious. I shall think of you on the 27th, and hope the weather will be favourable. I had a fine coze with you last full moon, it was a beautiful evening, and being the first time since I left Ongar, I allowed myself an extra pocket handkerchief. The next will be, I hope, the last till I can hold up the baby to look at it too. What do people think of my portrait ? and does it hang up yet ? and where ? \* Oh, I wish I could take a peep at the pretty study ! I often think of it, and of every cranny in the house. It *is* pretty. My dear father and mother, and Jefferys, and Jemima, most affectionately farewell ; perhaps I may not write again till you and I have new honours ; but till then, believe me with affection and gratitude, your child and sister—ANN GILBERT.”

A little more than a week from the event she sends her final corrections for the preface of her mother’s forthcoming work, and in reference to an evening which her mother proposed to devote to special prayer in her behalf, she says,

“ I have strong confidence in the prayer of faith, but in asking for temporal mercies, we have no absolute promise, and can only ask with submission. The possibility of danger just stands between me and the thought of the future, but I do not look at it.”

Thus bravely, but not blindly, she prepared for her trial, and on the 7th of October became the joyful mother of her first-born son. Her husband, sending the happy news to Jane at Marazion, says—

“ She has presented me with a boy, and the little rascal soon

\* Drawn by her brother Isaac during her visit to Ongar.

let us know that he had arrived amongst us, for as usual, he came crying into the world. They really say he is a very fine boy, and notwithstanding I am aware that it is a common compliment of nurses, I am much inclined to believe it. He certainly does look engaging, as he lies in the arms of his mother, and reflects back from his lively happy countenance the beams of her eyes, all glistening with joy. She says it is as she had been told, a heaven upon earth to find herself safe in bed, and a baby on the pillow."

In a week, that the sight of her own handwriting might give assurance of safety, she was writing to both Ongar and Marazion, and telling her sister,

"I cannot describe to you the flood of tenderness which the dear little boy has opened in my heart, but surely of the pleasures attending this time of peril the one-half was not told me. As we both for the first time looked at the child together, every one left the room, aware that they were happy moments, and for about a minute my husband returned our joint and fervent thanks to the kind Hand which had dealt with us in peculiar favour. Nothing delights me more than to witness the spring of fatherly affection, and the solicitude which it occasions. He has discovered that it is a good thing and a pleasant, for a man to be a father. Dear Jane and Isaac what cause have we for gratitude! You cannot think how much I have enjoyed the happy result on your account, and for dear Ongar."

It was, indeed, a flood of tenderness opened in her heart, a motherly tenderness that never ceased to flow, and that swept away for many years all desire and opportunity for literary work. To remonstrances about the idleness of her pen she replied, "never mind, the dear little child is



worth volumes of fame." As her letters are full of this one topic, the reader must pardon its constant recurrence in the few extracts which depict her life at this time.

"On Friday evening last I thought of you, my dear mother, and perhaps you might think of me. It was that day of trial, of which I have heard you speak, when nurse was to go. She had been indefatigable in cleaning up for a day or two, and when Friday night came, she kept pottering about as if she could hardly find in her heart to leave me ; at last, however, after doing and saying everything she could think of, she bade me good-bye. I went to my window and watched her lantern down the garden, and then burst into tears. On Saturday I dressed my dear little boy for the first time, and a fine thing I found it for opening the pores ; better than wine-why or treacle posset, or anything of the kind ; for he is a most naughty and riotous fellow at being washed, and used to put even nurse into a fume. I wish you could have heard her talk to him ; it amused me many an hour in bed, for she speaks the broadest Yorkshire I have heard, except from a coal miner. 'Wale, wale, ma little lud, whad'ye mack sic a din, an croy soa? O, for shaam! I mun whip ye, happen ye wornt loyke that. Coom, coom, I mun hap ye oop, an lig ye int bed for a soop a bottle. Hoosh, hoosh, thenna, an dunna croye soa ma little piggin, an dunna foight soa, an tear ya screed.'"

Two months afterwards anxious tidings reached her from Ongar.

"*Dec. 5.*—My dear mother.—This morning came the news of my dear father's illness. I had greatly enjoyed the account of your present ease and comfort, and rejoiced, when feeling myself busy, with the idea of your being at rest after the heat and burden of the day ; but, at this distance, we know not when it is safe to

rejoice ; while I was thinking this my dear father was laid upon a sick bed ! It is the Lord, and our only repose is in a confiding submission to His will. I am satisfied that you have told me the worst, and will continue to do so ; do not spare the expression of your feelings, and the moment you have a wish intimate it. Do not spare advice, and pray do not spare assistance ; your health and strength must not be expended, and as to other expense, neither your mind nor my dear father's will be disturbed on that account ; you have had experience enough of the kindness of Providence in far greater exigencies. Your manna has always been to be gathered afresh every morning, but there has been no day in which it has not fallen. Tell me if you wish it, and I will come. I am much better able to stir than Jane, for I could send my little boy to the nurse, and feel confident of his safety."

"*Dec.* 15.—I had waited with some anxiety for your letter, for though I depended upon you that while you were silent my dear father was not materially worse, yet I was sure he was not much better, or you would have had both time and spirits to tell me so. I feel, indeed, that were you to write every day I could never know how he *is*, but only how he *was*, and this is the great trial of being at such a distance. The mind is left to any surmises it may choose to indulge. . . . The dear little boy thrives finely. He seems sometimes as if he would laugh loud, he smiles so beautifully, and I cannot describe the delight those pretty looks give me. I am ready to think he takes more notice than ever a child did before, and I forgive his father for laying down his learned Greek author upon the table to chirrup to him. The indications of intelligence interest him very much, and awaken all those feelings which, from long disuse, it was at first difficult to bring into play. Miss Hamilton says it is seldom that an infant interests a father greatly, till it gives signs of intelligence."

“*Jan. 20, 1815.*—Your last letter was welcome news, and I hope I was not mistaken in following my dear father down stairs on the Sabbath. I guessed that he would come down a little before dinner, and sit in one of his great old arm-chairs by the fire, well blanketed on the side next the door; and I fancied how cheerful and happy you would all look when he was once more seated amongst you. . . . It has struck us all that as soon as the weather is a little more favourable, and it would be safe for him to travel, it would be just the thing for him to come to Rotherham. Now, my dear father and mother, do think seriously of it, . . . and I need not say with what delight I should receive you, and present my dear little boy to his and my parents. Mother’s dreams shall then be proved libellous, and scandalous defamation, for certainly he could not be accused by his worst enemy of being as ‘broad as he is long,’ he is a slender delicate child; I often think we shall not rear him. He is a pretty, pretty, olive bud, and should he be taken would leave a sweet and long fragrance. . . . Lydia says we ‘mun baptise him, and then he will be better happen.’”

“*Feb. 1815.*— . . . The dear child looks a poor pale little thing in the afternoons, but in the morning he looks by no means ill, nay, even well. Though small, his limbs are firm, and he is strong and active; apparently all mind, just cased in delicate flesh to keep it from sailing away. I only wish I were a less interested observer, and then I should be able to tell whether he really is the most enquiring and intelligent baby that ever was; but to me he seems like a very sensible foreigner, whose only disadvantage is that he does not understand, or rather cannot speak the English tongue. And certainly everybody says— ‘Well, to be sure! well, to be sure! what notice the child takes!’ On Thursday, the 9th, we had him baptised. The dear child was extraordinarily good, though laughing at every word Mr Ben-

nett said. He is a great laugher. Christiana, my little nurse-girl, commonly called Amy, really believes that he understood what Mr Bennett was saying, and said 'aye, aye,' to all his remarks—(but then he ought not to have laughed)."

"*Feb.* 1815.—Dear Jane and Isaac. . . . I had, indeed, no previous idea of either the pains or pleasures of having an infant. The pleasures are inexpressibly great. They seem to have given me a new sense of which infants are the objects, for I love all I see, and feel the liveliest interest in them. And all this is necessary to compensate for a degree of fatigue such as no one can imagine without trying. Often at tea I can scarcely lift the teapot, my arms ache so with several hours nursing. In the afternoon, when he is fretful, my little nurse-girl is not competent to manage him, and I dare not suffer him to be nursed badly. Mr G——, indeed, is an excellent nurse, often succeeding when we fail, and willing to assist at any time, but he is so pressed with business that I don't like to let him. Salome often relieves me for a time, but she sustains none of the burden. When he is cross, and requires all the strength of arm and voice, with the assistance of poker and tongs, and every sonorous moveable on the premises, it is I who am always leader of the band—singer and dancing-master in general. . . . As to 'Miss Edgeworth,' I feel in despair, for I cannot seclude myself, and nurse up my mind as I have always found necessary to composition. I devoted two or three days to it last week, but always before I could get into it, was called off to the child."

"Mr G—— is very desirous that we should produce a volume of hymns for Sunday Schools, adapted to singing, and containing 150 or 200, which with our names would render it superior to any other. He says, that if you, and I, and he, and Isaac, were to write equal parts, it might soon be done (he can write a very pretty simple hymn upon occasion, you are to understand). What

do you say to it after the child is weaned and runs alone? Dear Jane, I do from my heart congratulate you on having accomplished your work. From the ease of your style I have no doubt it will require very little correction. What is its name?\* With regard to the subjunctive, the rules are so many and delicate that it is no great disgrace occasionally to fail; but there are many cases in which it ought not to be employed when at first sight you would suppose it ought. . . . But you have Murray and *gumption*, and Isaac. I do not recollect the instances in Mother to which you refer."

"*March 14.*—In compliance with the wishes of my friends I have consented to wean the dear child. At five yesterday morning we both, I mean he and I, had a cry about it, but upon the whole he does very well. I hope it will be a less trial to him than to me. . . . There is one of the students very ill, and in his countenance so like Isaac, that I can hardly bear to look at him. I almost fancy it is he; and yet, there is a touch of absurdity in some parts of his face that prevents my saying much about it to others. But you cannot think how like he is!"

"*April 18.*—The dear child is much better in going to strangers than he was, and you would have been pleased to see him last Saturday when there was a large dinner party here; he passed from one gentleman to another like a shuttlecock, and quite as quiet. Mr Montgomery was of the party, and after most had taken him, I went and requested that he would consecrate the child to Poetry by just taking him in his arms; but he shrunk terrified from the touch of a baby as a totally ignorant bachelor, and Mr George Bennett ran in and out with the child, pursuing him through the whole party, to the great amusement

\* It was the tale eventually published under the title of "Display," and which went through three editions in six months.

of us all, Montgomery scampering round the room as if from a spectre. O, I do want you to see him, and I do wish it were practicable to take him to Ongar! But I am afraid that, much as I know you would enjoy gathering every spray of the family into one nosegay, you would find it too cumbersome for your bough-pot. Do not let feeling overcome your sober judgment, but tell me exactly what you think. I hope dear Jane and Isaac would decide upon coming too, and that we should once more enjoy the happiness of seeing our circle complete.

“I have seen lately two of our manufactories at Rotherham, which pleased me exceedingly. One was the great iron foundry belonging to the Walkers, and they were casting pieces for the New Strand Bridge. It was a most magnificent sight. The sheets of iron are twenty-four feet long, six wide, and two thick. The glowing metal issued at the same instant from three burning fiery furnaces, and travelling through numerous channels in the floor, covered the mould in the space of a minute, and nothing could be more beautiful. One of these sheets is cast every day. The whole is to cost three hundred thousand pounds, and it will take three years.”

“*May 18, 1815.*—You would have enjoyed a scene we witnessed last Monday. The Sunday schools of Sheffield, containing six thousand children and thirteen hundred teachers, assembled in an open space in the outskirts of the town, where they formed into a hollow square, sang the “Old Hundredth,” and then marched in procession through the principal streets to a very large chapel, where a sermon was preached to them. Our hymns were sung, and the first, which was the first in the ‘*Infant minds,*’\* had a beautiful effect from so many little English voices. Large hustings were erected round the pulpit, where the principal ladies and gentlemen of the town were placed,

\* “I thank the goodness and the grace.”

and in front a gentleman beat time with one of our books. Montgomery told the committee in choosing the hymns that the middle one—'Among the deepest shades of night'—was the finest hymn of the sort in the English language. The last in the volume concluded.\* Mr Gilbert enjoys such incidents."

"*June 20, 1815.*— . . . You see I have no room for anything but just business, nor time either, for my journey makes me very busy. I hope, my dear family, that nothing will happen to prevent or embitter it, for I long for it indescribably, and can hardly bear to realise your nursing the dear child. I am such a poor judge myself, and am so strongly disposed to think highly of him, that I feel 'I must to the wise man go, to learn whether he's a witch or no,' and quite long for your unprejudiced opinion of his beauty, sweetness, sprightliness, talents, and acquirements! I hope dear father will furnish himself with a bib and apron, for I can promise him as much nursing as ever he likes. The child is so exceedingly fond of male nurses that though he goes very reluctantly to strange ladies, he will dance and caper to go even from me to a gentleman—man or boy, known or unknown, clean or dirty, squire or sweep—and he cannot even hear his father's voice without crying to go to him. I am almost afraid you will find the novel sound of a young child troublesome; and though I know you agree with certain excellent writers that they should not scramble on sofas, break crockery, and pull work-baskets to pieces, yet I assure you we can hardly help thinking it exceedingly interesting when he breaks a plate, pulls over the tea cups, and drags the green cloth, with everything upon it, off the table."

\* "Come let us now forget our mirth."—The two first named hymns were her own.

MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER IX.

*ROTHERHAM.*



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## CHAPTER IX.

ROTHERHAM.

1815-1817.

——— “ arch looks and laughing eyes ;  
And feats of cunning ; and the pretty round  
Of trespasses, affected to provoke  
Mock chastisement and partnership in play.”

WORDSWORTH.

ON the 4th of July, Mrs Gilbert, with her husband and child, set off, by way of Doncaster, for London. Stopping a day at Huntingdon and another in London, they reached the “ Peaked Farm,” at Ongar, on the 7th, when she placed her grandchild in her parents’ arms. If the far off brother and sister, to whom at Marazion, it took thirteen days to send a parcel by waggon, could have joined the circle, the happiness would have been complete. As it was, the group that strolled along the lanes and field-paths in the evening was sufficiently happy. During the latter part of the stay her husband left to visit relations in Hampshire, and the absence gave occasion for a few letters, from which some extracts follow.

“ Very often since I married I have thought of an expression, which I never entirely understood before, ‘ Thy desire shall be unto thy husband.’ It is so expressive of that waiting, and

watching and solicitous dependence for happiness which a wife must feel towards one who is appointed to rule both over and in her. In him, most emphatically, her desires centre. The whole fabric of her happiness is at his disposal, and a breath from him can either confirm or shatter it. She cannot enjoy an independent pleasure, for the very thought of its independence prevents it being pleasure. The curse in this instance, as in that bestowed upon her guilty associate, 'in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread,' is indeed turned into a blessing, for it imparts a certain refinement and tenderness to her enjoyments, which they could not have possessed, if they had not descended to her from a hand she loves."

Her husband had sent her some verses written in memory of his first wife, to which, in her next letter, she refers:—

"There is something most touchingly, solemnly beautiful in the lines, and never need you fear, my love, your 'Anna should complain' of the pure flame of such a friendship. No—

'They are holy tears we shed  
Upon the bosom of the dead.'

"and it always affords me a melancholy pleasure to hear you referring with tenderness to past times. The only painful feeling occasioned by it, is the fear that I should deserve a lower place in your affection and esteem.

'Then let the tears of mournful love descend,  
I, too, would claim them—were I such a friend.  
I, too, my love, if parted from thy side,  
Would claim an hour to lighter thoughts denied.  
Oft as December led his revels by,  
Would ask the tribute of one faithful sigh,  
And watch with fond inquiry to perceive,  
If still thou couldst remember *Christmas eve*?'"

Returning to Masbro', she resumed her ordinary busy and happy life there. The removal to a new and more commodious house, then in pretty fields, now in the midst of smoke and cinders, was accomplished just before Christmas.

“*October 15, 1815.*—To Mrs Laurie,—Do you never, in the midst of present joys and duties, revert to those ancient times? I do; and with all its smoke, and dust, and disorder, and confinement, that old workroom supplies one of the most agreeable and tender of the recollections of my youth. Many a day of happiness was passed there, many an interesting face was familiar there, and among them some who shall be known no more for ever. How little did you think of Reading?—or I of Rotherham?—or dear Jane of Cornwall, then? I had a map of England pinned up against the screen at my left hand, and often in idle moments read the uninteresting names, but never felt one prescient thrill as these important letters caught my eye; perhaps there are still some spots which are to become equally interesting! how glad I am we do not know them!”

The 23d of September was her sister Jane's birthday.

“On the 23d four important domestic occurrences took place in our family, exclusive of the interest which has long attached to that day. We lighted our first fire in the parlour, added a pretty puss to our establishment, dear little J—— left off his caps, and for the first time took six or eight steps alone, for which feat you cannot think how heartily I admired, praised, and kissed him. Ever since he has fairly run alone without assistance, and is as busy a little body as ever you saw, and as pretty a one. Besides all this he has the following accomplishments: he says what the cow says, and what the sheep says,—nay, a few days since, he heard a donkey bray, very loud and

long : he listened attentively, and the next morning in bed began a very good imitation of his own accord, from which time he has continued to bray to the admiration of enraptured auditors, whenever required. Besides these versatile accomplishments, his friend Lucy Bennett has taught him to make a very funny face, and though, as in duty bound, I never encourage this, yet, between friends, it really is very funny, and even when in consequence of the same tuition, he spit at Mrs —— and Mrs —— (two great ladies in the neighbourhood), I could not help thinking it very entertaining, though certainly ‘terrible awful, and horrible shocking.’ Pray how long should elder wine continue to hiss, supposing you give it no extraordinary provocation? My mind is almost hurt at the continued insolence of mine, and I am determined not to give it a drop of brandy till it has done.”

. . . . .

To her sister she writes, Nov. 14—

“I have lately sent to the ‘Eclectic’ a short review of the life of Mrs Newell, an American Missionary. I wish you could see the work, it interested me exceedingly. The time for ‘Patronage’ is gone by, but I have partly engaged to review a new volume of ‘Pious Women,’ and to say a few words on the ‘Legend of Stutchbury,’ a little tract, but I do not know when it can be, and every hour I devote in this way now, is almost against my conscience, as I have not the time to spare. My mind is never in that composed careful state which I have always found necessary for writing ; my ear is waking perpetually to the voice or cry of the dear child, and continually I am obliged to break off at a moment’s notice to attend to him. What I write now, therefore, is to please Mr G——, who likes to see and hear of me in that character, so that sometimes, dear Jane, I feel almost pained at your progress, because I know he always wishes

that I could do the same ; but mind you never say the less about yourself on this account ; I could not forgive you if you withheld a single word."

Jane Taylor was at this date preparing for the press her volume of "Essays in Rhyme," the point and beauty of which were much appreciated in their day ; and might have secured a more permanent place in literature had the author lived to become more generally known. Some of the poems were from time to time forwarded in MS. to her sister, who in reply, along with warm admiration, sent a good deal of verbal criticism ; the result of her husband's refined taste, of Salome's keen perception, of Montgomery's experienced ear, and not least, of her own intuitive judgment.

The "World in the house," and the "World in the heart," and a poem entitled the "Pair," were among the first submitted to this coterie of critics ; upon the former she says—

"I think you lose a good opportunity in not describing the wife, whose rotund self-indulgence forms almost a distinct species, and might be well introduced. It is quite different from the father and daughters, it is a more sensual lazy worldliness than either.\*

"The apostrophe—'Hence let us rise'—is so elevated and

\* Her brother Isaac Taylor once remarked in reference to the comparative piety of the two sexes, that nothing was more rare than a conversion to God of women who had reached maturity without that great change ; whereas, with men, thoughtfulness and consequent piety were frequently of late growth. If in early years the feminine affections had not been drawn heavenwards, he considered the case all but hopeless, and that the supposed preponderance of piety among women was therefore doubtful.

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beautiful, that however just and expressive, I would omit the two concluding lines; they reduce the feeling too suddenly—a feeling which is too poetical to be sacrificed even to the point and contrast those two lines afford.\*

“ . . . But I shall not leave room for Montgomery’s remarks.  
‘Pilgrims sojourning,’ why this accent?

‘In all they do, and say, and look, and wear  
Aping the rank they were not born to *bear*,’

put *share*. This I don’t agree with, but he hates alliteration. He thought that ‘bairns’ means boys, and therefore objects to it, but I do not think so, I like it. ‘Nay, say they’—Cacophony.

“He made no comments on the last poem ‘The Pair,’ but particularly admired the sunrise at the conclusion; also——

‘France rages now, and Spain, and now the Turk  
Now victory sounds, but there he sits at work!’

which he thought more striking than a man’s sailing round the world and returning to ——

——‘Find him on the same square foot of floor  
On which he left him twenty years before.’

“I confess, for my own part, I thought it savoured a little of

‘——— St Serle,  
The uncle of the banished Earl.’ †

\* The passage referred to was the following—

Regions of intellect, serenely fair,  
Hence let us rise, and breathe your purer air.  
There shine the stars! one intellectual glance  
At that bright host,—on yon sublime expanse,  
Might prove a cure;—‘Well,’ say they, ‘let them shine,  
With all our hearts,—but let us dress and dine.’

The suggestion of the elder sister was not, it seems, adopted by the younger.

† Lady of the Lake, Cant. v., 19.

“Mr Gilbert and Salome made a huge outcry at the rhyming of ‘*fire with Messiah*,’ and say it must be altered. This is one of our most inveterate southernisms, and I cannot yet tutor my ear to be affronted at it, but I have endured so much the trial of ‘cruel mockings’ on account of it, that I beg you will extricate yourself at any rate.”

Inheriting so much of her mother’s painful sensibility, a “removal” under any circumstances was no small thing; and she describes to her sister how, on the evening of Dec. 21, after tea at a neighbour’s—

“We all took a most melancholy turn over the dear old house, Salome and I crying bitterly; we then locked the doors and padded through the snow to our new habitation, crying all the way we went; but my sorrow was turned into joy when the door opened, and we were shown into the pleasant parlour, with a cheerful fire, and put nicely to rights.”

It was only just in time, for on the 3rd of January her second child, a daughter, was born. “I wish, she writes to her mother, you could see and kiss the dear little ‘Anne Taylor,’ who is come to supply the place of one you lost.”

To her friend Mrs Whitty she writes—

“*Jan.* 1816.—This day three weeks we slept in our new habitation for the first time, and a most agreeable and comfortable one it is. I have, in particular, a very nice store-room fitted up under my own direction. The view in front is extremely pleasant over gardens and meadows, with the river winding through them to a distant wood. We have a lease for fourteen years, but I do not like to look through that long period. O, the mournful changes, my dear Luck, which it is likely to produce



in the beloved circles in which we are centred.\* Ah! here is not our rest! We must not fancy for a moment that we have found one. We may have a long lease of the house, but it has not a moment's lease of us. Should our lives be spared, my dear J—— will then be just deciding his views for life—O, what will they be? May that God who has given us children, and some sense of the value of the trust, give us also wisdom to bring them up for Him, and to pursue that most difficult path—the path of unwavering, consistent, universal discipline—never relaxing, never turning aside. . . . Do not fail to remember us to our interesting friend Mr Gunn. What a pretty little bit of our history, framed and glazed, was the year we spent at Ilfracombe! It seems scarcely like a reality, so different was it from anything that went before, or that has followed after it. Mr G—— and I, often say how much we should like to visit Ilfracombe together, and endeavour to retrace those strange ominous days; but while Ongar is Ongar, I feel as if every other spot in England were under an interdict, for when I have time to go anywhere I cannot think of going elsewhere. I have, however, a very dim prospect of seeing dear Ongar at present; two children, and one so young, prevent my thinking of it this summer, for I feel more every day, how desirable it is that mothers should be keepers at home.”

On the 20th of March, his birthday, her husband, on coming in from his early morning duties at the college, was received by his little boy with the following lines:—

Papa, papa, your little boy  
Is come to-day to wish you joy,  
And waits to give a pretty kiss  
For little Joe and little “sis.”

\* During that period her father, mother, and her sister Jane, were all removed to another world.

There's nothing yet that he can do  
To give you joy, but calling " Poo,"  
Or hushing " sis," or saying " pray,"  
Or telling what the donkeys say.

Or he can shut the parlour door,  
Or pick up letters from the floor,  
Or stroke poor puss and give her toast,  
Or walk with letters to the post.

But by and bye, when he shall grow  
A great good clever boy you know,  
He hopes that he and little " sis "   
Will give you greater joy than this.

Yes, and a joyful day 'twill be  
To see them what we hope to see,  
And feel our sorrows, pains, and cares,  
Sustained by tenderness of theirs.

But if God should not please to spare  
These pretty buds that look so fair,  
But rend them early from the bough  
That yields them sap and shelter now,

E'en then, though all bereaved and torn,  
We hand in hand should live to mourn,  
Still might we keep that land in view  
Where blighted buds are raised anew.

" You enquire," she says to her mother enclosing these verses, " if he does not begin to talk, and here I feel a little at a loss, for Mr G—— fell upon a passage in Quintillian the other day, which says that early speaking is not an indication of genius, so that we are rather uncertain whether to boast of him as remarkably forward, or

remarkably backward. I will therefore give you his vocabulary, and leave you to judge." . . .

For the wedding day of her father and mother she writes :—

“*April 12, 1816.*—I wrote so lately that you will probably wonder at hearing from me now, unless you happen to recollect that Thursday (the day on which I hope this will reach you) is the 18th of April. I feel a pleasure in joining, as far as I am able, in the festivities, or at least in the feelings of these red-letter days, and contributing my mite towards the satisfaction they inspire. Very little is now in my power; many, many opportunities in which I might have contributed to the happiness of my dear parents have passed away, misimproved; and all I can now do is to beg they will forgive the times which will occur to their remembrance, when I have given them pain, and ill requited their care. I am now often reminded by my own feelings, hopes, and fears, of what theirs have been; and very frequently, when looking forward on my children, look back upon myself. I rejoice, my dear parents, that as years pass on you are losing most of the toils of a family, and enjoying many of its comforts, in the increasing sense which all your children entertain of their obligations to your anxiety, your unremitting labour, your much enduring affection.

“This time five and thirty years many were wishing you joy, and notwithstanding all your trials I do think their prayers have been heard. Whenever I read my dear father’s touching addresses to my dear mother on these occasions, I cannot but say, ‘Yes, they have been happy indeed. . . . . In laying out our little garden here I am trying to make one corner like that which held the white seat at Colchester. A man who came to work at it said he was sure he had seen me

before, and recollected at last that it was at Colchester, where he used to garden for Mr Patmore, twelve years ago!"

Giving up the prospect of a visit to Ongar this year, she began early to entertain the idea of seeing her brother and sister at Rotherham in the summer. She thought of it with unbounded delight, and several letters are filled with suggestions and plans for the long journey from Cornwall to Yorkshire. She urges that "travelling is now cheaper than it has been for a long time, or than it is likely to continue to be, for if the farmers rise, corn and horses must rise too." The project ripened. Land routes and sea routes were discussed—the choice lying chiefly between sea to Milford Haven, and thence by coaches, *via* Liverpool and Manchester,—or by the coaches through Bristol and Birmingham. It is curious to read, that "between Liverpool and Manchester, the fares are extremely low, as there is much opposition; but great attention is paid by the magistrates of those two towns, to prevent racing, so that it is safe travelling notwithstanding."

The Birmingham route was preferred, and at length, on the evening of the 29th of June, at twenty minutes after ten, the brother and sister arrived in a post-chaise from Sheffield. They had not met since the autumn of 1813, when Isaac and Jane left Ongar for Ilfracombe. A very busy six weeks succeeded. Isaac had, as yet, made no sign in the literary world; but Jane Taylor's reputation, as a writer, was considerable, especially from the recent publication of "Essays in Rhyme," and in the large circle that surrounded her sister in Yorkshire, and where the hearty admiration of Montgomery was well-known, she was naturally much sought after.

Rather chary of speech, she was not easily drawn out in conversation. "What do you consider the principal defect in the Quaker system," was rather formally demanded of her, in a large company, at Sheffield. "Expecting women to speak in public, sir," was the prompt reply. But she was fluent with the pen, and had occasion to use it. In her poem, entitled—"Poetry and Reality," were these lines;—

" Indeed, the Gospel would have been his scoff  
If man's devices had not set it off;  
For that which turns poor nonconformists sick  
Touches poetic feeling to the quick." —

And on her present visit to the neighbourhood, the following comment appeared in the *Sheffield Iris*;—

" If trappings to religion nought impart,  
They're not the things that most defile the heart ;  
In Jewish temple, where they stood so thick,  
The Saviour taught, and never once was ' sick.' "

These outward things can ne'er defile with sin,  
The temple of the spirit is within,  
If that be simple, pure, and cleans'd by grace,  
We then may *worship* God in *any place*.' "

Her rejoinder came with the next number :

The fact is granted, courteous friend,  
Nor did my playful verse intend  
The inference to bear ;  
That proud St Peter's painted dome,  
Nor like devices nearer home,  
Could stain a sinner's prayer.

That Jesus ne'er that building scorned  
With goodly stones and gifts adorned  
Is true,—it was divine.  
That "worldly sanctuary" stood—  
Its gold, its brass, its costly wood—  
As God's, not man's, design.

But Jesus came to make it void,  
And now, demolished and destroyed  
The splendid forms decay ;  
Then why revive, and why allow,  
Those "carnal ordinances" now  
Which He has done away ?

And why appeal to ages gone—  
To Moses and to Solomon  
If Christian rules would do ?  
One deems all other reasons spent,  
When such a shadowy argument  
Is borrowed from the Jew.

A succession of visits in the neighbourhood of Sheffield and Rotherham, and excursions to the beautiful scenery of that part of Yorkshire, filled up the time, till, all too soon—one August morning, they drove away from the door, to return, after three years absence, to their father's house at Ongar.\*

\* Writing of this visit in the Memoirs of his sister, many years afterwards, Isaac Taylor remarked of the dissenting congregations he then became acquainted with—"There was intelligence—there were habits of reading—there was the listening to noted preachers—Robert Hall, the prince of them, which altogether raised some of these societies to a level, as to thought, taste, and knowledge, which no other religious communions of the time had reached."

Writing to Jane afterwards her sister says :—

“ I shall not forget watching the coach up the hill towards Doncaster. I plunged deep into business as soon as I got home, and could not indulge myself till Friday evening, when, the wash being done, Mr Gilbert and I walked exactly the same walk we took the last evening, and then he let me have my cry out, and say just what I pleased, which was a great pleasure. You cannot think how much he felt the loss when you went ; he often complained that even his study seemed dull to him. But I enjoyed more than I can describe your account of your arrival at Ongar. I only wished to have known the exact time. I always want those little points of circumstance which may enable me to realise with all possible precision. I so enjoy your enjoyment of the sweet spot of which I have said so often—‘ Oh, it is delightful ! ’ for now I can believe in your entire sympathy when I say again—‘ Isn’t it ? ’

“ Dear father and mother ! it is a constant satisfaction to think of them in such a retirement, so exactly all they wish and want. I hope mother will not quite give up writing to me while you are there. What I should like would be foolscap sheets jointly filled, and then I should hear what each thought of the other. Little J. puts his finger to his nose when I ask what uncle used to do when J. was naughty. He still points to Salome’s room when I enquire where aunt was, and to the study window when asked where uncle got in when J. bolted the door.”

In October of this year she relates to her family an excursion very interesting to her. It may be remembered (see p. 12) that her grandmother, Mrs Martin, came from York, leaving it, a girl of eighteen, alone on the top of the coach for London.

“ *October 8, 1816.*—I have had two extremely pleasant holidays lately, in one of which I thought of dear mother incessantly. Mr Gilbert was called to preach at York, and by invitation I accompanied him. We went on Saturday, returned on Tuesday, and saw as much as possible in the time. It is a most interesting city, and the remembrance of our poor grandmother rendered it all the more so to me. Almost every old-fashioned house I saw, I thought, ‘perhaps she was born there;’ and I looked with peculiar interest at such parts of the buildings as had evidently undergone no repair, thinking ‘she has certainly looked at this.’ Our quarters were within a few doors of Micklegate Bar, the great southern gate of the city, through which she must have passed on her road to London; and when at seven o’clock on a fine morning we set off to return on the top of the coach, I thought very much of her solitary journey, and of the way in which Providence protected and directed her till she became two bands. Almost every old tree we passed I thought, ‘seventy years ago she saw this, perhaps, and saw it flourishing in its prime.’ We went all over the Minster, which exceeds everything of the kind I ever saw. It is undergoing complete repair, and from one of the external ornaments, almost effaced by time, which was taken down, I severed a fragment of decaying stone, and have this morning made it up into a small parcel for you; when it arrives, therefore, pray do not expect anything important, for it contains nothing but the aforesaid stone for mother.

“As we were returning, the coachman said, ‘You don’t know who it is on the coach with you. Jack Ketch of London! He went down to Carlisle to hang a few, a week ago, and is now going back again.’ We looked at him with terrible curiosity, and surely a viler face was never worn right-side-out—a cool, merry demon! At York Castle the curiosities were:—‘Here is the pickaxe with which such a one murdered a woman and two



girls ; this is the penknife with which so-and-so cut the throat of her baby ; this is the great club,' &c.—instruments the most varied and horrible, with which, during a number of years, most of the great murders in the county have been committed.”

The other holiday was at Stockport in Cheshire.

“The country is beautiful, and the friends I visited most hospitable, but the grand inducement was to hear Angell James preach the annual sermon for the Stockport Sunday schools. Three thousand children are there educated in the most noble building for the purpose. The room for preaching is only a part of it, and on this occasion the congregation assembled was nearly six thousand, the orchestra containing six or seven hundred more ; there was a noble organ, a full band of instruments, together with Braham and other London singers. The collection was nearly four hundred pounds, and the sermon the most wonderful piece of eloquence I ever heard. Oh, how I wished for you all !”

By the end of the year, when scarcely a twelvemonth of “the fourteen years’ lease” had expired, all the dreams of prolonged residence in the pretty house were disturbed, and a time of distressing perplexity ensued. Mr Gilbert’s health had begun to suffer under the combined strain of his college duties and those of his ministry at Sheffield ; and just when this anxiety arose, he received from two churches of some importance, one at Worcester and the other at Hull, almost simultaneous invitations to their pastorates. The following extracts explain the difficulties of decision under these circumstances. After describing the nature of the work at Hull, where it was proposed

that he should have the assistance of an excellent young friend, who had been one of his own students, she says :—

“All this took place last week ; the present week has involved us in still greater anxiety. On Thursday we received a letter from Mr. J. Angell James, engaged, he said, as special pleader in behalf of Worcester, ‘the church there being determined to think of no other man upon earth till the last hope of having Mr Gilbert was extinguished.’ And the same afternoon arrived two gentlemen, deputed by the Church to deliver their unanimous call, and to press it with all possible earnestness. They stayed with us till last night, urging their cause with great solicitude. You cannot think how distressed we feel. My husband said he was in danger of bursting into tears all day, he felt so much harassed, and the affection he bears to Sheffield is so great.”

To her husband, absent at Hull, she writes about this time :—

“God, I think, seems to be trying the purity of our motives. It is easy to speak, and even to feel, as if we were willing to follow the guidance of Providence, when each alternative is agreeable and profitable ; the only way to be sure of a disinterested acquiescence is that which it appears probable will be proposed to us. It seems not unlikely that a station of usefulness may be opened to you under some secular disadvantages. I dread nothing so much as uncertainty. Indeed, I dread nothing but this. . . . I do not entirely rely upon your own account of your services, but whether they were vigorous or otherwise, we must regard it as one among the number of things which are to decide for or against ; and though I could not but wish you, my love, an abundant

enjoyment of Divine support, and great acceptableness wherever you preach, yet I desire to feel a moderated anxiety, and hope you can do the same: whatever strength is necessary for you I know you will have."

In this perplexity they requested Mr James to leave the bar of the advocate, and take his seat as a judge in the matter, when, after expressing his personal loss in the rejection of Worcester, he gave a decided opinion in favour of Hull, "which presents a situation of first-rate importance in the church of God."

Writing to her father, she says:—

"With regard to leaving Rotherham, comfortable as we are, most surely we should not have sought a removal; but now that the occasion offers, and so pressingly, it becomes necessary to consider the situation in all its bearings. Mr Gilbert's strength cannot be said to fail yet, though his exhaustion after his mornings at the college is frequently very great, and his long walks to Sheffield in wind, and rain, and dirt are often very trying; while, if he goes by coach, he must really rise earlier, and has some distance to walk to meet it. It is such an expenditure of strength as he could not stand for any number of years. But, besides this, he feels it very desirable now to spend his Sabbaths at home. You cannot think how desolate I feel it for him to be always out on that day. He will soon have children to whom the eye and instruction of a father will be necessary, and I shrink from the prospect of bearing the weight alone. We are now become a family, and I do not like our long Sabbath evenings without something more of family worship than my just reading a prayer! This is a trial I have long felt, and never see a father taking his station on a Sabbath evening in his family without poignant regrets. Again, he is desirous of exchanging a life of

cold classical study, which is extremely unfavourable to the growth of personal piety, for the edifying duties of a pastor, which are perhaps, of all others, conducive to its prosperity and increase. . . .

“Consider these things, my dear parents. Do not, I beseech you, suppose we are anxious to go; on the contrary, we are torn and worn by cutting regrets. Yesterday we received a letter signed by all the students. They say: ‘We may call another “tutor,” and as a tutor may value him, though surely not so highly as yourself, but where shall we find the friend? Permit us, then, with one pen and one heart to entreat that you will relinquish your design, so that we may be able still to associate with the college as one of its valuable distinctions, the name of “Gilbert.”’ . . .

“I have sometimes wondered if we are about to remove, that we were permitted to come and fit up this house as we have done; but one advantage has accrued from it, which, in case of removing into the midst of a large congregation, would be worth to me all it has cost. At the other house I had no poor neighbours, here I am placed near a great many, and have been called to visit the sick among them very frequently. This I have found a great benefit; it has even taught me to pray with them when necessary, and I cannot express how much service that is to me.”

“*Rotherham, Jan. 20, 1817.*— . . . When I wrote last, Mr Gilbert had just written to Hull, objecting to their exclusion of female votes. The next day, being Sunday, we both went to Sheffield, and there met with so many expressions of sorrow, that our hearts sank within us, and we felt almost overwhelmed with grief and uncertainty. After the evening service, being much depressed, we retired together, and poured out our hearts in prayer that such direction might be afforded as would render the path clear, whether pleasant or

otherwise. I hope we sincerely laid aside every wish but for determinate guidance, and endeavoured to divest ourselves of every personal feeling in submission to the will of God. At our return home we found a letter from Hull awaiting us. It said, 'I am just returned from the fullest church-meeting I ever attended ; your excellent letter was read, and no sooner was the question put, than the whole church, male and female, arose and held up the right hand ; the spirit of love and peace seemed eminently to be with us.' A few days afterwards came the official reply signed by the whole church."

And so, presently, the die was cast, and notwithstanding the most generous offers on the part of his people at Sheffield, and of the students,—indeed for the very sake of both students and people, Mr Gilbert was compelled to accept the call that had been addressed to him. What this implied to the sensitive heart of his wife can well be understood. "We hardly know how to bear it," she says, "and yet you will easily perceive that with such proposals Mr Gilbert could not have complied ; he would have felt doing but half his duty."

The indulgence of feeling, however, was soon checked. The children were seized with scarlet fever ; and presently the whole household, husband, niece, and a young man recently received into the family to complete his education, all, excepting herself and servant, were prostrated, and passed through more or less dangerous crises. The energy of her character, and the innate strength of her constitution, were severely tested during these trying weeks, but at the end she was able to write—

"I feel it an unspeakable and undeserved mercy to be resuming

our former comfort with no breach in our circle. . . . By-the-bye, when you send, we should be very thankful for a few odd proofs, for J. has no greater delight than to look at 'pickeys,' and the cuts in 'City Scenes' are almost threadbare. I regret the many 'pretty pickeys' I have burnt, and should be very glad of any you can scrape together, especially of small subjects he can understand. He can tell already that Balaam beat the poor donkey; that Samson carried the great doors; that poor little Moses cried in the basket; and that little Samuel went to chapel to hear Eli preach, and was very good,—only from looking over our little Bible during his illness."\*

March 20, 1817.—To her sister—

. . . "Almost every letter you send, dear Jane, I cannot help saying what different lives we lead! There are some things I regret, but I feel daily that mine is the lot for me, and yours for you, and we must take them as they are. If your fame, and leisure for the improvement of your mind, could be combined with the comfort and pleasures of a larger domestic circle; and if, with a husband and children, I could share a glimmer of your fame, and a portion of your reading, we should both perhaps be happier than it is the usual lot of life to be, and at least happier than it seems good for us to be. Mr Gilbert expresses his conviction that such a course of reading as you have lately indulged in must injure the mind for exertion of its own. He says he feels it impossible to be at once a reading and a writing man; and that had he read less, he should have written with much greater facility. He does not mean to condemn so much reading as is necessary to furnish the mind,

\* Baskets full of proofs might be collected from the "workroom." The small book referred to was a little square volume of Bible illustrations and letterpress, the joint work of father and daughters.

but only to say that habitual reading places the mind in such a different state from that required for writing, that it must recover from one before it will feel at ease in the other. Do not therefore feel discouraged, dear Jane, at the natural effect of your late pursuits, and suppose a decay of power, but wait patiently and cheerfully, and you will gradually recover tone."

In a letter home, dated April 17, 1817, there is a glimpse of the severe distress prevailing,—the collapse after the great war which made peace for a time more trying—

"The distress at Sheffield is very great; the poor live upon little else than oatmeal, but if the cheapest, it seems the most nourishing of food, for it is observed that the children look wealthier than usual. Everybody is turning away servants workmen, and clerks; that last resort, a 'clerk's place,' is hardly to be obtained by any interest, however great, and the cases of distress we hear of continually, are heartrending. We have a pleasing young couple close by who have wrung our hearts by their sufferings, which, till just now, were quite unsuspected. They have lived well; the wife a delicate little creature only twenty, just confined with her second child; and about six weeks ago, before he had communicated his distress to Mr Bennett, they were literally starving; had sent out their last penny the night before to buy a candle, thinking it would betray their condition to their landlady if they sat in the dark. They used to have the cloth laid as if to dine, but have nothing! You cannot think the pleasure with which I packed a basket for her of such things as I had in the house which I thought would be most needed, and go fastest during her lying-in. I can think of but one little hamper which I ever filled with so much pleasure, and that was the one we sent to dear Martin in London when he came of age.

“Have you seen a little threepenny book by Mr Harris of Cambridge, called ‘Conversations on Prayer,’ intended to render it a ‘reasonable service’ for young children? I think it comes nearer to a perfect book for children than I ever saw. It is completely childlike, without being childish—a distinction most difficult to preserve.”

In April she paid a visit with her husband to Hull, and describes it to her parents.

“You will believe that I felt no little interest in taking the first view of Hull, of our new home, and of the chapel where Mr Gilbert is to enter upon so large a sphere of labour, as well as in the introduction to strange faces which have taken place during the week; and I believe I may say that in all, my expectations have been more than fulfilled. Hull is a fine, open, lively town, with the constant interest of a seaport, without being close and disagreeable as many are; and even the country, though not to compare with our beautiful Rotherham, is in many respects better than I had expected. In a house we have been peculiarly favoured. It stands in a small, genteel row at the extremity of the town, so that we can walk either by the Humber, or in the country, without taking a step through the town. Exactly opposite to our windows is an enclosure, as in the squares of London, with a grass plot, gravel walk, and plantation, the use of which we can have, and the view behind is extremely pleasant over a number of gardens to the Humber, a fine river three or four miles broad, with vessels constantly passing, and the coast of Lincolnshire rising beyond. . . . The chapel is a large, good building, which now lets eleven hundred sittings, and has not a single seat to dispose of, so that they are obliged to refuse several applications. It is beautiful to see merchants and men of business, young and old, leaving



their counting-houses at all hours, if any plan is to be considered for doing good; and such a throng of respectable or venerable heads as is seen following their minister to the vestry is most encouraging."

In prospect of the approaching trial which leaving Rotherham would prove, she writes—

"Tell Jane I do not intend to take her advice; I am not subject to dangerous excesses of such feelings, and I like, therefore to enjoy them to the full, especially as at these times there is always sober business enough to do and arrange, and a sufficiency of common-place about chairs and china, and bread and beer, and cheese, and string, and straw, to reduce the fine edge of romantic suffering to a very enduring degree of bluntness. The very simple but supposable circumstance of being qualmy in a coach is quite antidote sufficient for enervating grief. The few parting looks I may be able to take without interruption, I shall not, I think, be afraid to indulge."

On the evening of Thursday, July 3, these "parting looks" were taken,—“It was, I assure you, a bitter ride down Masbro, and, till we lost sight of our dear pleasant house, which we could see for a mile on the Sheffield road.” They went to friends at Sheffield, and spent two days in farewells to the large circle there. On the Sunday they “had a sharp trial under the last sermon at Nether Chapel, the place as full as it could hold, aisles and all.” On the Monday they posted forty miles to Booth Ferry, where, “at ‘the commodious and solitary inn,’ they spent the night.”

“It was an evening always memorable to him (her husband).

After tea, he went out alone, taking his path down a secluded country road, and there he received, as from the hand of his Master, the charge, the true bishopric of souls, about to welcome him as their guide, or to be allured to the fold by his ministry. His spirit bowed, almost bent beneath the pressure, but he went to the Strong for strength. He knew in whose service he was engaged, whose command it was, as he fully believed, he had obeyed, and then and there consecrated his life, as by sacramental engagement, to the solemn work."

The following day they reached the hospitable roof of a friend at Hull, close by their new residence. The goods had arrived by water, unpacking began, and the true daughter of her father writes home,—

"I enjoy exceedingly every step we make towards order once more. It will be a nice house when it is done, lightsome, agreeable, convenient. I shall only want some of you here to give me the complete enjoyment of it. It is in *Nile* Street; you could not have made a more unfortunate mistake than to suppose it *Hill* Street, there is not a hill to be seen for love or money."

END OF VOL. I.

*Turnbull & Spears, Printers, Edinburgh.*



*affectionately yours,  
Ann Gilbert*

At the Age of 73.

FROM A PAINTING BY HER SON  
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My friend,

Ann Gillman

353c,

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY

AND OTHER MEMORIALS OF

MRS GILBERT, (*FORMERLY ANN TAYLOR*).

WITH PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

EDITED BY JOSIAH GILBERT.

AUTHOR OF "CADORE; OR, TITIAN'S COUNTRY," ETC., AND JOINT-AUTHOR  
OF "THE DOLOMITE MOUNTAINS."

Volume II.

"Life, I repeat, is energy of Love,  
Divine or human; exercised in pain,  
In strife, and tribulation, and ordained  
If so approved and sanctified, to pass  
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy."

WORDSWORTH.

HENRY S. KING & Co.,  
65 CORNHILL, AND 12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1874.

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# MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

## CHAPTER I.

### *HULL.*

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## CHAPTER I.

HULL.

1817-1820.

“But little know they of the toils of thought,  
Heart, head, and conscience, to the labour brought;  
The search for truth in Scripture’s deepest mine;  
The snare resisted, not to teach, but shine.”

ANN GILBERT.

“Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships.”  
TENNYSON.

“EIGHT happy and successful, though truly laborious years” were, as Mrs Gilbert wrote long afterwards, spent by her husband in Hull, as pastor of the large congregation at Fish Street Chapel. During those years six more children were added to the household; and she herself was not less active and laborious in her sphere, and certainly not less happy, than her husband. But in dealing with this, as with other busy periods of her life, it will be necessary to compress the narrative much more than hitherto.

Three weeks after they had entered their new home, her third child, a son, was born.

“He wants nothing but a name,” she writes, “which we are quite at a loss about. I should like to call him ‘Isaac,’ but Mr

Gilbert does not like it, and nobody thinks it pretty. Indeed, I cannot deny there is nothing but association in its favour."

Her husband's lively niece Salome was at this time absent for a few months, and an allusion to this in a letter home reveals that with all her interest in the orphan girl, she had proved some check to the happy freedom of domestic intercourse, as the addition of a third in the home of any newly married couple was likely to be.

"The last three months, I believe, we have had more confidential conversation than for three years before; and this is about the only cause of regret to me that Salome is with us. It is almost impossible for three to converse so freely as two, even if all were equally intimate; but I am so persuaded that it is duty to keep her here, and when I look at my own dear children, I feel too so deeply how strong are the claims of an orphan, that if holding up my finger in the dark would remove her, I would not do it. It is a little crook in a happy lot, and I dare not ask to have everything my own way."

This "little crook" did not last long. Richard Cecil, a son of her old friend, and a student at Rotherham College, had now confided to Mr Gilbert his attachment to Salome. Some delay to make up her own mind was all that remained, "and," said his wife, "if I am anything of a conjuror, I can prognosticate the event." Perhaps this prognostication did not require a conjuror. It was soon a settled thing, as we find by the following reference:—

"Salome does not allow that she shall marry for many a year, but if he should be settled soon, I conclude it would not be long, and I cannot help smiling at the little domestic observations

which she, unlike her wont, now occasionally makes—of course, quite in a casual way—such as, ‘dear, how was this made?’ or, ‘Was that rabbit’s head quite right?’ But the smile is quite in my sleeve. Oh, it is a real blessing to have had a little practice in the minutiae of housekeeping before one is called to perform in the eye of the world, and what is worse, of his wife. When I see the splendid dinners which all the merchants give here, I wonder what I should have done had I settled at —, and in a situation where I must have given, as well as received; for verily in this instance, it is not more blessed to give than to receive.”

The “crook” was succeeded by a real anxiety. Allusions presently occur to indications in her sister’s health, which after some years ended in her death, the first sorrow of the kind since childhood, that entered this loving family circle. The trial to such a nature was poignant, yet she says—

“I cannot but admire the goodness of God in the many mitigating circumstances with which this affliction is accompanied. How merciful it is that she had not to brood over it during her retirement in Cornwall; that Isaac does not now need her attention; that she is able to feel so much pecuniary ease without continued writing; and that her own mind should have been so previously strengthened and girded for the trial.”

In bearing this trouble, too, the elder sister, however prone to dwell in imagination upon dark possibilities, was helped by a characteristic energy of practical hopefulness. She was unwearied in suggesting and investigating all remedies that came to her knowledge, and always sanguine about them. And, then, there was ever the bright domestic duty at hand.

“ This is the first evening for weeks I have been able to sit down alone and at home, and now I am enjoying myself. The house is got nicely in order at last ; I have just finished a three weeks’ wash, and I am every moment expecting Mr Gilbert from Leeds. I have a comfortable parlour, with a neat, brisk fire to greet him, and in the kitchen a little chicken roasting for his supper, added to which all the three children are quiet and in bed.”

It may have been observed that, in all her references to her husband, he is termed “Mr Gilbert” or “Mr G.” This formal style, which continued almost to the last, was, it need hardly be said, no indication of coldness, but took its rise from early shyness at any exhibition of affection before Salome’s sarcastic glances ; a proof that the constraint of which she speaks existed in no small degree. The deep and tender devotion of her heart was poured forth whenever it was confided to the pen. His absences, on ministerial duties among the Yorkshire churches, were now very frequent. During one of them she writes :—

“ If we look round at other families, we may easily persuade ourselves that ours are light afflictions, dealt out with a sparing and tender hand. If we may be still indulged in this respect, I shall enjoy the thought of your finding a little more rest at home than for a long time you could have had there. There is no thought more delightful to me than that of making your fireside both rest and recreation. It grieves me to think that, with family cares, you should ever find it otherwise, but sometimes you know I am lawfully too tired for the latter. Ah ! if I could but plead that at others, I was lawfully too cross for the former, I should have less reason to say, forgive me ! . . . I have attended to your study plants with a direct and affectionate



reference to their owner,—also with no disrespectful feeling towards themselves.”

In the midst of incessant occupation, her pen, if used at all, was devoted to thoroughly homely matters of correspondence, but the receipt of a poetic effusion of her husband's and a breath of country air at the little village of Welton, where she had taken lodgings for her children, seem to have revived the old inspiration. She writes,—

“*January 19, 1818.*—Why describe the loveliness of one still the idol of your fancy, but whose slightest outline I dare not appropriate? Was it to make me jealous? If I can help it, it shall only make me emulous. But, however, if you had any ill design, I have meditated a sort of revenge in sending you, on the following page, the praises of *my* first love,—of one who still holds a wide empire in my heart. On receiving your beautiful, inappropriate verses, I longed very much for leisure to reply in kind; but when yesterday, in my solitary ride from Welton, the spirit came over me, it did not flow in that direction. I found my mind carried out towards another object, so I did not check its flight, but gave myself up without reserve to the passing impression. If you *can*, love it for my sake, as I must endeavour to gaze on the beauties of your mistress for yours; and if I can grow more like the charming original I will. But remember there will always be a painful difference between the seen and the unseen. The visible Helen, I will venture to say, was not so enchanting as the invisible personification which poetry has given to her loveliness. The ‘seen,’ in this case, is mere mortal clay, drest in a cap and gown; and though I am not intimating that, if you did not see me, and did but know it, I am a Helen, or even a distant relation of that lady, yet I would meet the dis-

appointment half way, and assist you to remember that material substance cannot—do what it will, or be what it may—possess the poetic attraction of ethereal essence.

“ O beautiful nature, how lovely thou art  
 In thy bonnet of blue and thy mantle of green !  
 Love, early and pure, it was thine to impart,  
 My bosom's soft soother, my fancy's fair queen !  
 Does life seem a labour, perchance for a while,  
 Its promisè a cheat, by no pleasure repaid ?  
 One glance of thine eye, and one glimpse of thy smile,  
 Rekindle its brightness, thou beautiful maid !\*  
 . . . . .

“ But now for news from that homely scene, where your muse takes her rest with resigned cheerfulness—that good red brick messuage known by the name of No. 8, Nile Street, Hull. . . . The house is now perfect neatness and order ; silence and solitude reign throughout (all the children away in the country), interrupted only by the occasional singing of the mangle, or the swing of the oven door ; if you would but add the postman's ring, it would be all the music I wish for.”

In November 1817, came the shock of the Princess Charlotte's death.

“ O,” she says to her sister, “ this mournful mourning ! Before I begin with anything else, I cannot help expressing my interest and grief in the event which has clothed us all in the garments of genuine sorrow. Night and day it has scarcely been out of my thoughts, so deeply melancholy is every view we can take of it ; and I confess, though I feel for the public, it is the private part of the story that affects me most. I

\* I have inserted one stanza only of a rather long poem.

realise every aggravating particular till I can hardly bear to think of it. How it enhances the mercies of our own firesides! I look at dear little H—— now as a double favour.”

The general grief on the day of the funeral called forth a sermon from every pulpit, that by Robert Hall achieving a wide celebrity. Mr Gilbert chose for his text Jer. xxii. 29, “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!”

“Read it,” she says, in writing home, “but be sure you do not look at the following verse! (‘Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days,’ &c.) It was deeply affecting; the place crowded, the pulpit hung with black, and every eye in tears. O it was most mournful, in the quiet moonlight of that melancholy night, to hear the dumb peals from the churches, chiming till past twelve; and to think that the same sad music was sweeping over the whole land from north to south. We went in the evening to one of the churches, and during the performance on a fine organ of the ‘Dead March in Saul,’ I gave myself up to the full power of imagination, and I saw the scene then passing in the Chapel Royal like reality.”

A lively interest in public events always distinguished her; and she warmly embraced the cause of “the Queen,” which became so curiously mixed up with political feeling. At a later period, when “the Manchester Massacre,” a charge of Yeomanry upon the people, was in all mouths, she writes,—

“We were at a large party last week, and got so deep into Manchester politics that we were obliged to conclude with a chorus of ‘God save the King’ called for by the Low party. What do you think of the signs of the times? Mr Gilbert can hardly rest in his bed for interest and anxiety. He is afraid

there are fetters forging for his children. I heard there a neat characteristic story of Mr Parsons of Leeds.\* He was at a dinner where a very high Tory gave 'Church and King,' supposing Mr Parsons would not drink it. Mr P. drank it, however, very cheerfully; but when his turn came proposed the 'Queen and the Dissenters.' Did you see a reply of Hunt's as he passed in procession through Manchester?—you know, perhaps, that he is separated from his wife—a man as he passed called out—'Hunt, who sent away his wife?'—'The Prince Regent,' my man, 'but hush, we don't talk about that, you know.'"

With the first Spring time in Hull came longings that the dear ones at Ongar might see something of her new home,—nay, if possible, the father and mother, who had never taken so long a journey in their lives, and to whom there was now the special obstacle opposed, of that six miles of water between Barton and Hull, to be traversed only in a precarious sailing boat, for, as yet, no paddle-wheel beat the surface of the Humber. So early as January 1818 she introduces the subject—

"I make one enquiry with all imaginable earnestness. Is it possible that my dear father and mother could visit Hull this year? The journey from London to Barton is about from evening to evening, fare £2 16s. ; and if you were to see the Barton packets coming in every day, as we do, you would begin to think the danger small. There has never been one lost since the days of Andrew Marvell, whose father perished in a very stormy passage ; but when the weather is so rough as to be dangerous, they do not sail. The coach passengers always rest at Barton the night, and cross in the morning. When the wind is favourable the passage is made in half-an-hour, and the vessel,

\* Father of Rev. James Parsons of York.

though called a boat, is a sloop with mast and deck. Now do, my dear parents, try and think that you will come in the course of the summer."

The same letter notices her father's recently published, and perhaps in its day, best known work, "Self-Cultivation."

"It appeared to us to make a great improvement in style about the middle of the third chapter, and several parts, especially some chaste but striking figures, we have marked with pencil notes of admiration:—that of the 'echoes among the mountains' is extremely beautiful.\* But I do not mention the figures because we think them the best parts either, the whole stream of thought is excellent, and as far as books,—poor quiet books, are ever likely really to improve that stubborn material human nature, I should say that it must be useful."

Of course, her mother, timid with all her courage, was quick enough to see her advantage in the Andrew Marvell accident. "I foresaw," says her daughter, "your ill use of Andrew Marvell, and therefore added what you seem to have overlooked, that when it is so rough as to be dangerous, the boats do not sail." The pleasant thought was not to be fulfilled that year, but in its stead there came the happy prospect of a visit to that dear Ongar, to think only of which, in its rural peace, was she said, "a

\* "The culprit finds that blasting rumour has been before him and prepared the suspicious or malignant to do him injury long after he had supposed scandal herself was tired with the monotonous repetition. He will meet the report again and again, as the lingering echoes among the mountains return, after long intervals of gloomy silence."

constant rest to her spirit." Yet there was always now a secret anxiety.

"It grieves me," she says, in writing to her sister, "that you should be obliged to carry daily in your mind even a 'bearable anxiety,' but in this world we shall have tribulation, and it were vain, and perhaps foolish, to wish to evade the universal sentence, either in our own persons, or in those that are dear to us; and soon, even at the longest, the trials we have passed through will appear indeed unworthy to be remembered, but for the peaceable fruit they shall have produced. Oh, woe to those who suffer under barren sorrows!—who get no nearer heaven by the rendings and wounds that detach them from earth."

*April 17, 1818.*—"Here I am in the study. It is a beautiful afternoon, the wind is blowing the Humber into foam; a number of little vessels are labouring down the stream; the pretty gardens all round us are just coming into bud, and the only green field we can see is looking like spring on a holiday. Oh, how I wish, not that you were just coming over, as I often do, but that you had just got safely in, and were admiring the beautiful prospect now before me! But alas! alas! when and where are we to meet again? If it were possible for father, mother, and Jemima!—but I am afraid you will think me teasing. . . ."

The visit of her parents was not yet to be, but the happy day came instead, when she and her husband and child set off for Ongar. It is amusing to contrast the journey with one by the Great Northern Express of these days: how, leaving Hull at four in the afternoon, on May 4, they supped at Lincoln, breakfasted at Peterboro, dined at Baldock, and got into London at half-past ten at night!

A few days later they went down to Ongar, and thence she and her husband, and her sister Jane made a delightful four days' excursion to Colchester, driving all the way, and sleeping on the road, both going and returning. It was the first visit to those loved scenes,—The High woods, Mile End, Lexden springs, the Balcerne hill—since the whole family drove away from Colchester nearly seven years before.

At Ongar, in the old house a mile away in the fields, her diary and letters show how happily and characteristically the days passed,—the walks and talks in the well known lanes and meadows, and teas on the grass plot, or in the vine-covered porch; the visits of her brothers Isaac and Martin, coming down to supper on Saturday night, and off on the Monday morning; even her uncle Charles, the “learned” editor, who always treated her father as decidedly the younger brother, driving down in a post-chaise one Sunday. She records her father's preachings in the neighbouring hamlets; her mother's birthday (sixty-one), with its little festival; the family work going on;—“mother with a tale completely written, the production of three weeks' mental fever; father just in receipt of £70 for another book.” And then, after five weeks' stay, the sorrowful departure, though with the happiness of taking her youngest sister, Jemima, back with her to Hull. An extract or two from letters to her husband, who had returned to Hull before her, may be permitted.

“*Ongar, June 12, 1818.*— . . . When will you remember that in order to enjoy a complete sympathy with those I love I like to know the exact times at which anything interesting befalls them? On Wednesday evening, when I believed you would be

leaving London, I thought of you incessantly, and spoke the same full often enough ; we were drinking tea under the pear tree on the front grass plot, and should have enjoyed ourselves completely, but for the oft-repeated wish that you were with us, and for the recollection that instead of enjoying that Italian sky and balmy air, and beautiful country, you were sitting to be tarred and feathered with heat and dust on a stage coach. On Sunday we expect Martin, and then, if all should be well, we shall once more assemble an entire family at our father's table, and with one pretty sample of a third generation ; how I wish that you and the two dear children at home could complete the circle ! but let us hope we all may meet one day in a higher house and a fuller company ! . . . Dear little J. is much engaged in watching the gardener, and the carpenter, and the bricklayer who has been paving the Hermitage in the shrubbery ; and "Master Wood," who has been clearing out the pond ; and the sheep-shearers, who have been busy in the farm-yard. I hope he will return to Hull rich in health and knowledge. I am also quite well myself, only half baked and half broiled with incessant sunshine ; but I have had two falls, one down the stony declivity towards the pump in the kitchen, and the other down stairs with Jane's beautiful desk in my hand, which fell on its face, and bears my signature at every corner, which I am very sorry for. I am quite unhurt, except a few picturesque bruises. Isaac came on Tuesday, and has begun my portrait. Your likeness I think perfect of the kind, but you know it is the wrong side, and has the wrong expression. It is like you when you wish to be pleasant, but wish still more that you need not be.

. . . The thought of Nile Street and the spring-tide of comforts I have there, is so sweet, that sometimes I feel in a strait betwixt two ; yet the thought of leaving this dear peaceful, beautiful spot, with all its living interests, is almost more than I dare



indulge,—how impossible it will be to take one more look when I have once turned the corner of the road ! But then Hull and all that is dear to me there, will rise like a sun over the distance.”

She returned home on the 27th of June in a brisk gale, which she inadvertently admitted laid the vessel “gun-wale to.” The young Jemima was a bright addition to the household. “Ah,” said one of their Hull friends, “I have seen your sister, I have seen the lady that is famous ;” “Yes,” she replied, “and now, Sir, you see the lady that is not famous.”

Her husband’s health gave way under his laborious duties, and the unhealthy atmosphere of Hull. Her children (she had eight of them about her before she left Nile Street) and her servants, were continually suffering from illness ; visitors were incessantly coming and going, and if any of them were needy or troubled, their stay was only the more prolonged in the hospitable home. In the societies and charities of a large town she took her part ; but a brave spirit and unflagging energy bore her through it all ; only when anxiety for dear ones touched her, then for the moment, as she expressed it, she “became weak as water,” till faith and hope, those “angel helpers,” came to her aid.

Her long letters to her family, or to her husband, during the absences which his impaired health now made necessary, are little else than domestic journals, enlivened with little gems of tenderness, or here and there sparkles of fun. A bundle of them in 1818 is chiefly concerned with negotiations for a new arrangement with the publishers of the various works in which herself and her sister were

jointly interested. Some difficulty was experienced in obtaining terms, which, under the large sale and increasing popularity of the poems, were considered "just," but that they should be *just* was her only wish. Characteristically she observes,—

"In order to maintain firm ground, we must ourselves feel convinced that it is reasonable. . . . Martin deems it wise to come forward with 'large and bold demands,' but to our feelings the path of wisdom, to say nothing of honesty, seems to be somewhat diverse from this. We feel, or fancy, that we can never make a stand to a bold demand till we have ascertained, as well as we can, that it is a just one;—that to use decided language when our own minds hesitate, would be both wrong and foolish; and that the sinking below an extravagant demand (which if it were extravagant must be done), would place us in a more humble situation than the most scrupulous care betrayed to them, lest in the first instance we should ask too much."

Her sister Jemima left Hull for the long journey home on the 30th of March 1819, threatening "to cry all the way to Lincoln, six and thirty miles." Writing to her afterwards, she says,—

"On Friday, while some people were drinking tea with us, I indulged myself with a few minutes' coze with my eyes shut, in order to realise your arrival at Ongar,—hoping to join your circle as well as a separate spirit can. Is father at work on Boydell yet? How we admire Isaac's article on Madame de Stael! he has a magical use of words that gives the beauty and expressiveness of a new language."

But this year was made a very happy one by its fulfilling the great wish of her heart, a visit from her father and

mother. Her father, who had suffered latterly from repeated attacks of illness, had been recommended to try sea air and bathing, and the opportunity was taken for the whole family to remove to Hornsea. She herself, too, was very unwell, and though suffering plainly from exhaustion, had, according to the practice of the day, been frequently cupped till the symptoms became alarming. On the 11th of August, avoiding the possible fate of Andrew Marvell by travelling through Doncaster, her father and mother reached Hull. They had timed their journey so as to meet Robert Hall there, and to hear him preach on the Sunday at Fish Street. On the 17th, her brother Isaac's birthday, they all removed to Hornsea, a little fishing village, then so out of the way that letters arrived only three times a week by carrier.

Her mother's penetrating eye and practical good sense soon led her to distrust the effect of the cupping treatment, and low diet, upon so delicate and emaciated a frame. In a shrewd and racy letter home, which gives a glimpse of the life at Hornsea, she says,—

“I remain nearly as sceptical as ever respecting Ann's disorder, notwithstanding y<sup>e</sup> long list of symptoms with which you were entertained in y<sup>e</sup> last letter. And I am sure, though I cannot get her to own it yet, that her looks are improved here, and her spirits are better. We all enjoy ourselves very much. You may think of us from ten to one every day walking or riding; and again in afternoon or evening, when the tide is up. I ride on a donkey almost every day, and am become so good a *horse-woman* as to keep my seat when the animal is sinking in the sand, struggling, and kicking. We have, too, a donkey-cart, which carries the whole party, your father excepted. This all

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adds to the expense, and extorts from me many a sigh and groan, and I fear when the fun is over, like y<sup>e</sup> children, I shall cry for my money again : yet we are willing to avail ourselves of such an opportunity, and not to spoil a ship for a halfpenny-worth of tar. Plunging headlong, however, into the sea, does not well suit my nerves. ‘Take your time, ma’am,’ the women say, when I am clambering up the ladder from the waves, but you can guess how it is, I daresay, as well as if you saw me. Yet I had rather bathe in the sea ten times, than once seethe and roll about on the surface of a warm bath like a bottle ! We hope to hear from you now,—no, not every post, but every errand-cart. Let me hear how you all are in plain truth, and no lies. Also how the maid goes on, whether she is gone, or going, and what else is gone, stolen, or strayed.

“On Monday at Hull we are to drink tea at Mrs Carlill’s to meet Robert Hall and several more, but all this does not prevent my waking sorely ill this morning.”

After some stay in Hull, on leaving Hornsea, her father and mother returned home, taking with them their eldest grandchild, then nearly five years old,—an event to both families, since, with exception of one or two visits home, he remained at Ongar till the death of his grandfather, ten years later.

Her mother became very ill on the journey.

“Little did I think,” writes the daughter, “how you, my dear mother, were suffering ! How often, during that day, did I wish I could see you for one five minutes ; and how distressed I should have been if I had ! O, I can hardly believe that the pleasure I have been anticipating and feasting on in many a pleasant reverie, for almost these six years, is gone !—gone so swiftly ! How often I think of that dark and dreary morning

when I stood crying at the corner of the market place, watching till the coach turned down Silver Street, and the rattle of the wheels died away! I shall never forget it,—nor that pleasant evening when I first caught a glance of the ‘Rodney’ and dear mother’s bonnet, as it drove down the market. These, with the stopping of the chaise at Masbro’, with dear Jane and Isaac, are seasons written on my heart.

“If it were possible you could be here when we are quiet, or rather, if we could possibly be quiet when you are here, how glad I should be! I reproach myself now for many things, but I try to put the thought aside. I think I may safely say, that since we have been in Hull, no minister has preached at Fish Street of whom so much has been said by everybody, as of dear father. His praise is, at least, in all this church. I was much pleased to hear that when he rose to speak at the Tract Society, he was clapped up; this is a testimony to general estimation, very different from the rattle of a few sticks at a piece of wit, perhaps hardly worth saying. . . . I thought of you all, on Friday evening at six, very satisfactorily, but was sadly puzzled to decide on which side of the coach Isaac would stand, when he came to meet you at the corner, and whereabouts they would catch the first glimpse of J——.”

Of course the absence now of her eldest child drew forth, from time to time, many a tender thought and word.

“I perceived,” she says, “when last at Ongar, that without indulgence, he was yet sensibly injured by being the sole object of attention. This is almost unavoidable, but as far as it can be prevented, I rely upon your joint care. Bless his little heart! How I enjoy the thought of his many privileges and comforts, ghostly and bodily, especially his gardening. . . . Yet I regret very much that there is a portion of his life—a stage of

his growth, which I shall never remember ; my little boy of five years old, I shall never see, though I may find eventually a better one of six."

*Dec. 31, 1819.*—"As to dear mother's anxious feeling of responsibility, I wish I could remove it by assuring her how completely my own mind feels at ease respecting him. Not,—O do not suppose it, that I feel any confidence in having him spared to us. I feel rather as if all my comforts were exposed on the brink of a precipice, with a loose and crumbling soil. Disease and accident have keys for every door, and I feel no persuasion that our dear child will not meet with them, even at Ongar."

To Mrs Laurie, *Feb. 8, 1820*, she writes—

"Whether or not your hands are full, I assure you that mine are ; and this alone is the reason that the friends of my youth— they whose names are associated with most that is dear and interesting in that interesting period, are all as nearly forsaken as they can be, while my affections remain faithful to their trust. You ask many particulars relative to my present circumstances, and were I to enter into the detail of my days and weeks, and years, you would believe that my time for correspondence was very small—small enough, pretty nearly, to justify the long intervals I allow in it. . . . I could wish for a little more leisure, or more properly, for a little more time for necessary duty ; but far, far, do I prefer this constant pressure to the busy trifling of a life of leisure. I heard a married lady, described, the other day, by a morning caller, as being well, and well dressed, in a well-furnished room, at twelve in the day, sorting seals ! O, I felt the privilege of having more work than I can accomplish, compared with the inanity of such occupations ! Our dear children, of whom you inquire so kindly and specially, are all (as we

think) nice children. . . . Dear J—— is altogether a Gilbert ; A—— is a genuine Taylor—thought a beauty by some, and plain by others ; I take a middle opinion. H—— is a rough, fat, rosy, honest fellow, with as good-natured a face as ever smiled,—when he is not roaring under some affliction, that makes it look more like a door-knocker, or the lion-faced spout on a church steeple. ‘Edward Williams’\* improves upon all of us, in one respect, in having beautiful soft curling hair, which his mother turns round her fingers sometimes, with no little pleasure. I think he will be pensive ; he is a delicate, elegant, little creature, and wins upon papa amazingly. . . .

“With regard to their dress, it is as plain as can be for many reasons : first, we find it necessary to pursue a strict economy, and think it highly advantageous to them to be educated in similar habits. It always grieves me to see a child with the air of style and fashion about its dress ; it seems to be doing it the unkind office of just setting it in at the wide gate, to take its own course on the broad way ; besides, it seems to me to spoil the simplicity which should characterise childhood. Secondly, I cannot afford the time, either in work or washing, which would be necessary to keep them in the ‘mode,’ even if I were to set them in ; and thirdly, I am sure that a minister’s family rather loses than gains respect, by any assumption of style. You are not to suppose, however, that we distinguish ourselves by an affected and obvious plainness, that would, of itself, attract attention ; but I wish my own dress, and that of the children, to be such, that if anyone takes the trouble to cast an investigating look at it, it may be evidently plain, neat, and economical. One thing has long prevented them from looking ‘fashionable,’ however nicely they might be dressed ; I never would suffer the exhibition of their little shoulders, its look of

\* Lost by an early death.

Discomfortableness, and its direct tendency 'to inure a girl to future exposure, are quite sufficient objections."

Her sense of responsibility in the management of a family and her means of meeting it, are shown in the following extract.

"It is frightful to contemplate the long descent of evil and suffering, resulting from the mistakes, the prejudices, the ignorance, the ill tempers, the want of self-control, the indolence, or the unavoidable hurry of occupation of one individual mother; herself, perhaps, a half-educated girl, and yet entrusted with a freight of incalculable, of eternal value! To such an one, how needful is heart religion, a daily sense of dependence, and yet a cheerful courage, resulting from the assurance that all who lack wisdom, are invited to ask it of God. None can know till they make the experiment, how much of strength and direction for secular duty may be derived from this source. I am myself disposed to believe that nothing which it is right to do, and therefore to do *well*, is beneath the range, the warrant of prayer. The privilege may be abused by bringing the humbler necessities of life into *social* prayer, but, between ourselves and Him, to whom the final account must be rendered of work He has given us to do, nothing is mean that requires more wisdom than we have; and in the daily exercise of this emergent communion, 'whoso is wise, and will observe these things, shall see of the loving kindness of the Lord.'"

*February 17, 1820—To Ongar.*—"I suppose we have all been feeling pretty much alike about the good old King, but I confess that after the death of the Princess I am almost impenetrable. Nothing can be so touching as that, and it is too recent to be forgotten. I try to make the children remember the death of the King, because such an event often supplies a date to the



recollections of childhood ; but Anne, when I tell her King George is dead, always corrects me with 'George King'—it seems to her that I put the cart before the horse ! As we are glad, I suppose you will be glad, to hear that Miss Greaves has just purchased the house next door to us, and has decided upon giving up Greystones. Everybody is pleased to see her settle amongst us, and we are not sorry, I assure you."

The lady here alluded to was a friend at whose hospitable mansion, near Sheffield, they had frequently visited, and it was the value she set upon Mr Gilbert's preaching that induced her to remove to the very inferior situation at Hull. Eventually, by turning two houses into one, and purchasing adjoining gardens, she obtained a roomy and comfortable residence, the delights of which with boundless generosity she threw open to the family of the minister, for whom she had sacrificed so much. The faithful and solicitous friendship of this lady during many years, not only requires grateful acknowledgement, but was too important an element in the happiness of the household with whose fortunes we are concerned, not to receive a passing notice. When the garden ground was purchased, Mrs Gilbert turned her father's garden lore to account, and spent much time in laying it out for her friend ; and along those gravel walks the children romped and screamed many a day, always without rebuke from the gentle face that watched them from the window.

A sea-port town offered interests very different from those of the inland places to which the wife, at least, had only been accustomed. A branch of her husband's family had for several generations been connected with the Royal Navy. One member of it, accompanying Captain

Cook in his first voyage, gave his name to an island in the Pacific ; another, at the time a midshipman on board, but who afterwards became post captain in the service, was present at Captain Cook's death, and brought home his watch, which, bequeathed to him by the great navigator's widow, remains still as an heirloom. These associations gave Mr Gilbert great interest in the sea, and he himself was always a favourite with sailors. He was concerned in the establishment of a floating chapel at Hull, and once a year the departure of the Greenland whaling fleet gave occasion to a striking service, when Fish Street Chapel was crowded with sailors, and a special sermon was addressed to them. During their absence in the frozen seas, prayer-meetings were held on their behalf at some private houses, at which the minister and his wife were always present ; and from the study window, which then commanded a view of the Humber, the returning ice-battered vessels were eagerly watched for. Many of them belonged to friends deeply interested in the results, and news of the number of fish and tons of oil, of this and the other well-known ship in the offing, was brought to the door by hasty footsteps. With yet deeper interest the distant rigging would be searched by the telescope to see whether a coffin suspended from the yard-arm announced a death on board during the voyage. Too often it was so, and the minister departed on a heart-rending errand to some mournful household. For a ship to be reported "clean" might be almost ruin to the owners, and once a famous "captain," whose success was all but unvaried, arrived insane in his cabin from an unusually disappointing season.

Most people of any means in Hull had shares in, if they

did not own, a Greenland ship; and Mr Gilbert at one time held a small share, so that for some years his wife's letters to Ongar contain unwonted references to news from the ice, and especially to the fortunes of the *Perseverance*, sometimes fairly successful, more frequently not, and one unlucky year all but "clean"—a result traced eventually to the circumstance of the "captain" having been drunk most of the voyage. A burden was lifted off the heart of the wife when the share, involving so much uncertainty and anxiety, was sold; and the good folks at Ongar seem never to have considered a "share in a venture" quite a right thing to be concerned in.

The Lincolnshire coast lies opposite Hull, and in May 1820, Mrs Gilbert for the first time made the acquaintance of her husband's Lincolnshire relatives, spending a fortnight among the hospitable farm-houses sprinkled through the Wolds, and with the novel experience of riding on a pillion behind him.

Heavy anxiety rested over the latter part of the year from the dangerous illness of her father. To her mother she writes:—

"I fear that this long and anxious trial will prove very unfavourable both to you and to Isaac. I pray, my dear mother, that you may all be supported, and that as your day your strength may be also. We have the best of all consolations in the full persuasion that even at what we should call the worst, dear father has nothing to fear. The day which should grow darker and darker to us would grow brighter and brighter to him. Dear father is a happy man, whatever may now be before him, and whether you look backward or forward. I greatly enjoy to review his life from his youth up; with all its difficulties, it has

been a cheerful ascending path. He has tasted all the best streams of earthly happiness, and enjoyed them all, and there is yet the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, of which he shall one day drink and thirst no more."

When it was possible to remove him, Isaac and Jane accompanied their father to Margate.

"How well," she says, "we can now see it to be that Jane and Isaac did not come into Yorkshire early in the summer, as we wished to contrive! Oh, upon how many things as life proceeds, do we look back and say they were well, though perhaps at first they appeared much otherwise! This day nine years we arrived at the Castle House, Ongar, and how well that has been! Do you remember what a beautiful evening it was?"

When a slow recovery led to thoughts of return, the anxious daughter at Hull writes:—"Of course, you will not venture home by steam-packet, except in calm weather. They are perhaps less manageable even than sailing vessels, when the weather is so rough as to leave one wheel out of the water"—a singular apprehension, but no doubt expressing the nautical opinion of Hull at that time.

MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER II.

*HULL.*

**CONTENTS OF CHAPTER II.**

**The "Peaked Farm" and its Inmates—Letters to her Husband, Father, and Sister—Cleethorpes—Death of Jane Taylor—Letter of Consolation to her Mother—Perplexity at Home—Departure from Hull.**

## CHAPTER II.

HULL.

1820-1825.

“ Across its antique portico  
Tall poplar-trees their shadows throw.”

LONGFELLOW.

“ This river has been a terror to many ; yea, the thoughts of it also  
have often frightened me ; but now, methinks, I stand easy.”

BUNYAN.

MY mother treasured to the end of her life a thick volume, the gift of a friend at Hull. It was then the days of albums, and this was one ; but it was rescued from the common fate of such by the use she made of it as a family record. She immediately appealed to the circle at Ongar for a worthy commencement, soliciting a contribution both in pen and pencil from each. A single withered oak leaf with an acorn, in water-colours, its rich yet pathetic tints of decay exquisitely rendered, was one of two drawings by her sister's hand. It was accompanied by the following sadly significant lines,—

“ A faded leaf ! and need the hand that drew  
Say why from autumn's store it made this choice ?  
Stranger, the reason would not interest you,  
And friends, to you the emblem has a voice.

“ I might have plucked from rich October’s bower  
 A fairer thing to grace this chosen spot ;  
 A leaf still verdant, or a lingering flower,  
 I might have plucked them, but they pleased me not.

“ A flower, though drooping, far too gay were found,  
 A leaf still verdant ; Oh ! it would not do !  
 But autumn shed a golden shower around,  
 And gave me this, and this I give to you.

“ But should these tints—these rich autumnal dyes,  
 Appear too gay to suit the emblem well,  
 They are but dying tints, the verse replies,  
 A withered leaf, that faded ere it fell.” \*

Her brother Isaac, among other contributions, gave one in his favourite manner of firm yet fine outline, drawn with a camel-hair brush, representing a babe and a skull resting upon the surface of the round earth, while above, through a rent in the clouds, is seen the resurrection trumpet. Beneath is the legend,—Dust ! Dust !

Her father inserted a vigorous water-colour drawing of the “peaked farm,” his then residence, to match one in pencil, finished like an etching, of the Castle-House, by Jane. Her father’s sketch set his daughter Ann’s pen going, and upon the succeeding page she wrote,—

\* At sight of the beautiful drawing to which these lines refer, Montgomery pencilled under it the following impromptu,—

“ It faded ere it fell to earth,  
 But ’twas the weight of fruit  
 That brought it down ; to second birth  
 The acorn soon will shoot,  
 And ages shall rejoice to see  
 The glory of the future tree.”



" There's a spot far away, where the distance is blue,  
'Tis dear, 'tis delightful to me,  
The traveller that passes returns to the view,  
Half seen through the arched yew tree.

" There's a low white porch where the vine leaves cling,  
And chimnies where fleet swallows play,  
And there have they builded, in the merry time of spring,  
Through many a good king's day.

" The tall old elm, which the evening light  
Tips still, when the day is done,  
How long has it creaked in the drear winter's night,  
And waved in the summer's sun !

" And many are the feet which have danced in its shade,  
When the harvest moon beamed high,  
That now 'neath the churchyard trees are laid,  
And O, how still they lie !

" But yet sweet spring, with her stir of leaves,  
And her primrose breath moves on ;  
And the tame robin chirps from the vine-clad eaves,  
As in years that are past and gone."

The poem is too long to be quoted entire.

The "yew tree," the "vine-leaved porch," half the gabled peaks, one of the massive chimney stacks, the surrounding poplars, have all been improved away. The elm tree itself, last remnant of a rookery, has been lopped of its noble arms ; and the garden has gone to ruin.

But at the time of our narrative the old house and its inhabitants offered a remarkable spectacle—a literary and artistic workshop. A large, low, wainscotted parlour was the common room for the very lively meals and winter-

evening gatherings. At these the father sat in an arm-chair on one side the fire, the mother on the other, leaning with her hand behind her ear to catch the sounds ; Isaac, Jane, Jefferys, Jemima, completed the circle. Some one might then read the last composition amidst a running fire of comments,—sarcastic from the mother, genial from the father, acute from Jane, sedate, though not without humour, from Isaac, droll from Jefferys ; Jemima, the youngest of the circle, joining in occasionally with quiet little hits that left their mark. When Ann was of the party, pun and repartee abounded more than ever. The writer well remembers hearing his uncle Jefferys read the “Tolling Bell” one winter night, the wind roaring in the chimney, and wailing among the tall poplars outside, so that it became quite impossible to go to bed up the black oak creaking staircase, except well accompanied, and with a candle left in the room till sleep should come.

The father’s study, furnished with the best English literature, opened from an adjoining passage, and on the other side of the same passage, what was called the “brown room” was entered. This was used for engraving, and was redolent of oil and asphaltum, of aquafortis and copper-plates, but always warm and cosy, and even picturesque, for it was oak pannelled, and the wide mantle-piece displayed elaborate carving. Beyond this, a small room was fitted up as a cabinet for pictures, collected during the long art-life of the father, all of them good, and some carrying well-known names. Upstairs were roomy bedrooms ; that of the father and mother opened into a small chamber over the “vine-clad porch,” occupied as a study by the latter. Here were collected several family

treasures, in the shape of china, books, and miniatures, and here her writing-table stood. Jane's bedroom, smaller than the rest, looked out behind, over the green meadows, of the Roding Valley—but she has herself described the view. "Twilight already stealing over the landscape, shades yonder sloping corn field, whence the merry reapers have this day borne away the last sheaf. A party of gleaners have since gathered up the precious fragments. Now all are gone; the harvest moon is up; a low mist rising from the river floats in the valley. There is a gentle stirring amongst the leaves of the tall elm that shades our roof—all besides is still." \*

Isaac's study, for he was now residing at home, was a strange remote place, approached by dark and narrow stairs across the kitchen and a dreary lumber-room. Its one window, high up, opened under the spreading branches of the elm tree, and had scarcely any other prospect. This room was not unpleasantly perfumed with Indian ink, his designs for books being always executed in that delicate pigment. Miniatures were also frequently in hand, and shelves were beginning to be laden with vellum-bound editions of the Fathers; but literary work was always carefully hidden away under lock and key. The "sanctum" of Jefferys was still more out of the way. A range of attics at the top of the house was unused; the floors of some were understood to be dangerous, and one of the huge stacks of chimnies was always regarded with anxiety by the inmates in windy weather. One of these attics, looking towards the west, between the waving poplars, and very rarely intruded upon by any but the

\* Contributions of Q. Q., "The Moth."

owner, belonged to Jefferys, and contained, besides a few books, a turning lathe, and numerous odd bits of machinery ; for, like his brother Isaac, he possessed a strong mechanical genius, and here invented a machine for ruling such portions of engraving work as required straight and close lines, which at one time was of much pecuniary advantage to him. Here, too, "Harry's Holiday," and "Æsop in Rhyme," were written, with other popular works ; fragments of MSS. lay about carelessly enough.



Such was the dear old "rabbit-warren," as somebody called it, never long absent from my mother's thoughts in her distant home. When her husband once visited it without her, she writes to him :—

"I have, as you will believe, accompanied you in spirit along every foot of your road to Ongar—saw the laden coach climb the last woody hill, and heard its wheels grate upon the gravel, as it approached the well-known corner. There I saw Isaac's cheerful but sedate welcome, watched you, unseen, towards the white wicket, and saw the busy lights, thronging, with happy voices,

into the porch, as your steps were heard. This, and much more, I have enjoyed in a little private picture gallery, of which I only have the key. It is hung round with many pleasing portraits, and some tender landscapes."

"I need not tell you how my heart has bounded at your account of our dear promising child; but be very cautious to betray to him nothing but affection and kind approval. Never let him read *admiration* in the corner of your eye. Do not let him hear a single word of *his* repeated, or have the praise of man substituted in his heart for the pure love of things, good and beautiful. Oh that he may be preserved from that vile pollution—the thirst for admiration, as it differs from approbation."

In the summer of 1821, she was herself at Ongar. From a batch of letters to her husband, we make a few extracts—

"MY DEAR HUSBAND,—I cannot begin with an expression which means more to my own heart than this. It includes all that the world can do to make me happy, and it does make me happy indeed. If, by long experience, I had not learned to distrust myself, and to fear, from mischiefs no bigger than a midge's wing, I should look forward to our meeting again with unchastised delight. . . . I would rejoice to be your companion in the highest sense, and towards a still brighter happiness; but I fear that Hamilton gave me the key to many of my religious feelings in that word 'romance.' There is so much that is picturesque and poetic in the idea of travelling hand in hand to heaven, that it is hard to distinguish the false from the true. It is like church music, a dangerous test of devotion. One thing often affords me real consolation, and that is the belief expressed in your letter that it was Providence that united us. When I

reflect on your prayers for direction, and remember that *I* was the answer—brought, as it were, from the ends of the earth, and as unlikely, as bread and water by the ravens, I cannot but believe that it was so. I might, indeed, suppose that I was selected from the world as the most appropriate trial that could be devised for you ; but (not to mention that you tell me it is not so) I cannot but think you might have been made miserable, if need were, nearer home. It was sending you to a distant shop, indeed, if it was only to buy a rod.”

“ Perhaps we had both too much of poetry about us to be entrusted, at the outset, with the *romance of love*. I was not the vision of your early musings ; as if on purpose to destroy that illusion, I was even less so than I might have been, and what *I* could have felt of enthusiasm, was strangely checked as by a spell. I was in fetters, when it would have been lawful and delightful to unbend, and the streams of affection which had been wandering for years through fields and flowers, seemed unnaturally thwarted, instead of being suffered to expand in the sunbeams which then began first to play upon them. I have often pondered over these circumstances, and have fancied that I could perceive the wisdom and still more the justice of them. But whatever we have lost, it is matter of no small thankfulness that the loss came first, and the gain afterwards.”

“ I was much pleased, the other day, with three quaint verses I met with, by Dr Donne, addressed to his wife ; having nothing better to add, I transcribe them,—

“ If we be two, we are two so  
As stiff twin compasses are two,  
Thy soul—the fixed foot—makes no show  
To move, but doth if th’other do.

“ And tho’ it in the centre sit,  
Yet when the other far doth roam,

It leans and hearkens after it,  
And grows erect as that comes home.

“So shalt thou be to me, who must  
Like th’ other foot eccentric run,  
Thy firmness makes my circle just,  
And makes an end where I begun.”

“An old-fashioned writer, in whom I found it, says that ‘true conjugal love, on the part of the woman, is the love of her husband’s wisdom ; and true conjugal love, on the part of the man, is his love of her love of his wisdom !’ Take heed, therefore, that I have wherewithal for this most excellent sorte of affection.”

She fell in, at this time, with one of the Sunday school anniversaries—great occasions at Ongar, for there were then no other Sunday schools in the neighbourhood. The children arrived in tilted waggons and carts from outlying villages ; an excellent dinner was provided for them and the visitors, in a large barn, decorated with flowers and evergreens, and two of the most eminent ministers of the day preached the sermons. Upon one occasion, Edward Irving, in the zenith of his fame, gave a magnificent oration, two hours long, upon the somewhat unsuitable subject of the battle of Armageddon, the chapel windows being taken out to allow a crowd outside to participate in the service.

“I retire,” she writes, “from the pleasures of a very pleasant and busy day, to enjoy a sweeter hour of converse with you. Your welcome letter arrived just as we were beginning the bustle of our anniversary, which has gone off exceedingly well. Mr John Clayton preached in the morning, and Dr Ripon (a worthy

fatherly man) in the afternoon, for an hour and twenty minutes, from the gospel of St Parenthesis, a loose paraphrase of which he gave from the first to the fiftieth chapter inclusive! We had beautiful weather, and besides the children, dined a party of a hundred, in the greenly decorated barn."

On the 17th of August 1821, her brother Isaac's birthday (thirty-four), she records in her diary—"Martin left us at four in the afternoon," and adds at a later date, "father, mother, Ann, Jane, Isaac, Martin, Jefferys, and Jemima, *met for the last time in this world.*" On the 3d of September she and her sister Jane walked to the Castle House, returning, through the pleasant meadows which separated the two houses, to the "peaked farm." This was the last walk of the sisters together. The elder left next day for Hull.

In January 1822, writing for her father's birthday, she says—

"As to Ongar, and all that is dear to me in it, I do not know how to think, and, of course, not how to speak of it. It seems to me a sort of dream that you are going to leave the house, and how to think of you in the course of a few months I cannot tell. Yet Providence has always favoured your particular tastes, and allowed you something better than brick and mortar to look at, and I hope you may be equally favoured now. It will be in some respects no disadvantage to have both house and garden on a smaller scale, and if a little more air-tight within doors, so much the better also,—and then there are the chimnies! So that it may happen, as when you left the Castle, that you will not really regret the change, though the parting must be painful. Oh, that 'low white porch where the vine leaves cling'! I shall never forget it."

. . . . .



“ And so in an hour or two after you receive this, I, if I live, shall be between forty and fifty! Nothing but registers, and almanacks, and pocket-books, and the most authentic traditions, could induce me to believe it! I feel just as young, for anything I can perceive, as ever, only with this difference, that I think of myself twenty years ago as a more disagreeable and foolish personage than I was then aware of. But it seems to me as if Luck, and Susan, and Anna, and Josiah, and Isaac, and Martin, and Jane, and I, were a kind of intermediate order of beings, never intended to grow old like other people in consequence of living long, but only to grow wise, and useful, and sober *young people* still.”

The news about the house was too true. It was required by the landlord, and after much difficulty another was purchased in the outskirts of the town, with some pleasant views from the upper windows, but entirely unpicturesque in itself, and with a sadly small plot of garden attached. Mr Taylor built a study, and a cabinet for his pictures, adapted an outbuilding for his “brown room,” and did wonders with the garden. His cheerful spirit conquered everything, but his daughter Jane, declining in health, suffered keenly in the change. Her sister, with much the same practical view of things as her father, speedily conformed to circumstances.

“ I want (she writes) exceedingly a catalogue *raisonnée* of your rooms, closets, and conveniences, that I may be able to feel my way pretty well about your new habitation. I have solid satisfaction in thinking of you in it, and airy regrets when I think of the other,—of which, indeed, I do not much like to think.”

Her father sent her a drawing of the house, writing under it—

“ My house again, my love, I am removed  
 From scenes so rural, and so well beloved.  
 One more remove, and then !—Ah, could I give  
 A sketch of that where next I hope to live !  
 Beyond my powers to paint, or yours to see,  
 Yet may I say, come there, and visit me.”

Anxieties began to cloud the year of 1822. In the course of it her husband, whose failing health obliged him to spend much time away from Hull, sailed for Hamburg, to take part in an ordination there. A long and stormy passage home delayed his return till the hearts of the waiting ones were well-nigh sick.

“ I cannot tell you (she writes), how we, and our friends for us, have watched both winds and tides ; nor how many a dead flat of disappointment we have fallen into, when, after tracing vessel after vessel up the Humber, there was not at last the one we wanted. He was off a very dangerous shoal near the Elbe, during thirty-six hours of tremendous storm, and has scarcely been free from anxiety the whole time ; but between seven and eight this morning we had one messenger after another to say the vessel was coming up, and most thankful we feel that he is in perfect health and safety, and finds all well. A vessel that left Hamburg two days before is not in yet. Oh, the anxiety we should have endured if he had come by that, as he was recommended to do ! The voyage was rough, but I believe they were borne on the prayers of two large and affectionate congregations—one at Nottingham and one at Hull.\*

\* Mr Gilbert's colleague on this service was the Rev. Mr Alliott of Castle-gate Chapel, Nottingham.

But the permanent anxiety was now her sister Jane, whose malady took her to Margate for several months, and who was besides deeply troubled by the circumstances of an attachment, to which there seemed little prospect of a happy ending.

“What I fear to hope I dare to pray” (wrote the elder sister), and on another occasion—

“I had felt, dear Jane, almost disposed to write to you, but, on consideration, I preferred leaving the case to better wisdom than either yours or mine. My husband and I, therefore, met for the express purpose on Sabbath evening, of commending you once more to the kind and wise influences of a superintending Providence. We have in seasons of difficult and anxious decision sought and found direction thus, for which we have felt constantly grateful when the event appeared. Few promises are more special than those which undertake to direct those concerns which are humbly placed in His hands. Scripture and experience are alike encouraging—“Is any afflicted let him pray: does any lack wisdom let him ask of God;” “Cast thy burden on the Lord and He will sustain thee; He shall direct thy steps.” And there is one text still more express, but I cannot remember the exact words, but they are the words of God.”

The following year (1823) she wrote to her sister—

“We must not murmur. The scene through which you have been led has been so evidently providential, so, as we may say, almost singularly contrived to distress you, so knit together by *well ordered* accidents and coincidences, that we cannot but regard it as a special interference in the course of your spiritual discipline. Though we may look upon every affliction as designed for benefit, yet there are some (and this is one) in which

the shaft seems to be more than commonly pointed, and sent with direct almost articulate aim. It is the Lord's doing, and who can feel a doubt that the end will be, you shall come forth as gold? It is, I had almost said, the natural element of our mental constitution to live in spiritual darkness; not to breathe the free air, nor enjoy the clear shining of that *grace* which is in the gospel. But it is free grace nevertheless; free in the offer, free in the administration, over above, and notwithstanding all our iniquities. . . . Take the consolation, dear Jane, of this distinguishing feature of Christianity, and do not suffer the enemy of your peace to embue you with feelings (for I cannot in your case call them views) less evangelical. I could not and would not endeavour to rest your hope on any review of past usefulness, but when you spoke of a 'life misimproved,' I could not help thinking how few had been able to reach the extent to which you have served religion in your writings, every word of which has a direct Christian bearing, and that with an inviting sweetness and "naiveté," which will give them influence, and make impression, where many a sermon would have failed."

On the 30th of January this year, the family festival, she wrote of her father—

"He and I seem growing nearer and nearer each other every year, though with one and forty years over my head I cannot yet feel myself a middle-aged woman. I cannot believe that 'The Associate Minstrels' are all past the prime of life, not one of them young any longer! In a very few years, if they are spared, J. and A. will take the standing that we once held; may they be wiser and better, and therefore happier. I will not grudge them any improvement on the original pattern. On our wedding-day (Dec. 24) we had our Christmas dinner, and afterwards sat round a blazing Yule clog according to our ages; the

baby fastened in his chair by the parlour broom, and a vacant chair being placed by me for dear J—— at which a kiss was regularly left as it went round.”

The following quotation will explain how what was to her the happy event of that year came about :—

“It has been, I may say, for years our wish to see J—— once more among his brothers and sisters at our fireside, that his right to the situation may not be imperceptibly questioned ; that that principle which is truly second nature may not be wholly wanting to strengthen the domestic affections between us ; that he and we, in short, may *feel* as well as know our relationship. I have seen lovely children, who, from being long separated from their families in childhood, have never seemed to regain their full relationship, and have been treated more like children-in-law than anything else on their return. To prevent even the possibility of such feelings among *us*, we have, after long and frequent deliberation, and not without counting the cost, determined that once before his final return our dear boy should come and lay claim to his brothers and sisters, and take up the freedom of his father’s house.”

He was to meet them all, their friends the Cowies included, at the sea-side, and a small house was taken at Cleethorpes at the mouth of the Humber. It was then a sequestered village, separated from Grimsby by three miles of open common, that charming, but nearly extinct feature of English scenery.

“On Tuesday, June 17, we sailed, as proposed, at one, after such a bustle as you may conceive, if you sit down and shut your eyes, and think about it, but not else. We had a fine

passage of two hours and a-half—I terribly sick, Mrs Cowie more terribly frightened, and Ann, Jane, and Edward all ill together, so that I could not help laughing in spite of my own calamity. At Grimsby, having piled up two carts within half a foot of safety, we set off over a pleasant heath with our straggling regiment, and got into very cheerful lodgings to a hearty tea at six.”

Here, a week later,—

“From our upper windows, by help of a good telescope, we had the pleasure of seeing the Grimsby packets discharging their passengers, and at half-past nine Mr Gilbert and J—— made their appearance, J—— having run or danced all the way. Then came a day of complete riot; one and all the children seemed wild. To-day we are all a little soberer, but still enjoying ourselves quite sufficiently.”

July 17, they all returned to Hull, on a fine but blowing morning. “I thought if dear mother could have seen us in the boat which conveyed us to the vessel, dancing like a cork on the waves, she would have given all up for lost.”

The next night her husband was seized with pleurisy, and had a dangerous relapse a fortnight afterwards. As soon as he was able he was removed to Harrogate, and the family union so long looked forward to, was broken up. However anxious might be the wife at home, she always wrote trustfully and cheerfully:—“I am content to like disagreeable things if I can. It is the only way in my power of making them agreeable, and there are very few things that I have met with that have not something or other about them better than might have been.”

But the year closed peacefully. J——, now nine years old, returned to Ongar in November, encountering some peril from extraordinary floods, which carried away bridges, and filled roadside public-houses with the passengers, coachmen, and guards of the long north mails, detained till by aid of many men and horses they could be dragged through the wreck. At one point, in the night, the doors of the coach were set open to allow the free rushing of the water through, while with torches and shouting it was hauled over a water-course.

At the end of the year, his mother, as she often did at that season, reviewed the characters and progress of her children. Of one she says:—

“He is trying hard, as they have all done about his age, to establish the doctrine of Divine right. He is indeed quite a Stuart, but I hope to continue Mrs Cromwell notwithstanding. He has one naughty trick, most amusing to witness, most dangerous to indulge. When accused of a misdemeanour, though caught beyond all contradiction in the very fact, he exclaims, with vehement indignation, ‘I didn’t! I didn’t!’ I am sure he does not understand the grammatical meaning, but only perceives it to be an approved mode of justification when it can be maintained.”

1824 was the year that severed Ann and Jane for ever in this world, but, though very ill, there seems to have been little expectation that the life of the latter was so soon to close. Less than a month before (March 16), the elder sister, after urging, as so frequently during the last year or two the claims of some new remedy, turns to other subjects, and quotes from a letter recently received

from Montgomery, who had been soliciting contributions to the "Climbing Boys' Album," an attempt to interest the public in the miserable condition of the poor red-eyed little fellows.

"'When you write to Jane,' he says, 'pray say that I am yet alive at this date, and alive to all the kind remembrances of former years, when we occasionally met in company or in print. In the latter, I know not when I have seen her, and am sorry that she could not put her beautiful little spirit into three or four stanzas for our poor climbing lads, but I should have been more sorry if she had put that spirit on the poetical rack to please me at any expense of suffering.' 'Should this find her better, it is not yet too late.' Of my contribution he says (if I may be allowed to repeat it), that 'it is truth, nature, humanity, in the mother tongue of all three.' You will see it, if you wish, when the work appears, it being too long to transcribe—more than 150 lines written before night on the day of receiving his application, so my family has not to reproach me with wasting much time over it."

On the 28th of March she writes her last letter to Jane, telling her that as she was about to accompany her husband to Nottingham, where he was engaged to take part in the ordination of Richard Cecil, who, with his wife (Salome), was just settled there, they thought of extending their journey to Ongar:—

"I only wish, dear Jane, there were nothing to abate the pleasure of the visit. I will hope that you may have improved greatly by that time, but, after all, the peace of your mind is a mercy that ought to counterbalance in our feelings all the trial. 'To read your title clear' ought to enable you, and all of us, to



say, 'let cares like a wild deluge come.' You have indeed borne a heavy blast of affliction since we last met, but are they not light afflictions compared with the joy that shall be revealed? My dear Jane, may you be supported beyond yourself, your own hopes, your own expectations. It is our daily prayer."

On the 12th of April they left Hull, reached Newark at half-past six the next day, and on a beautiful evening (Tuesday the 13th), as she records in her diary, went over the fine castle ruin, all unknowing that an hour before at Ongar, the father, the mother, the brother, and the sister, had witnessed the last sigh of Jane Taylor. On the 14th, alarmed by the tenor of a letter from her brother Isaac which met her at Nottingham, she writes that if they can obtain places in any of the coaches, they hope to reach Ongar on Friday evening, adding, "Dear Jane, my tenderest love to you." This they did; passing through London, she learned from her brother Martin that she was too late, and at six that evening she and her husband joined the sorrowing circle in the house thus early consecrated by death. The day after the funeral she wrote the following letter to her eldest daughter:—

"My dear child.—As I wish you never to forget your dear aunt Jane, and as my best hope and prayer for you are that you may live and die as she did, I write this letter for you to keep. Often read it over, and think to yourself—'Well, the same God who made dear aunt Jane good and useful, will make me so too if I wish, and pray, and try for it.'

"I am now writing, my dear A—— in the room in which she died, and where I have been many times every day to look at her. She looked very pleasant, but so still and cold! They tell me that at first, just after she died, there was a beautiful

expression in her face, and about her mouth especially, like the smile that a person has when they feel inwardly very happy—more happy than they could tell you—and this was certainly the look which she gave just as her departing spirit caught sight, as I may say, of heaven. O, my dear child, what a feeling that must have been! Do not you think it worth while denying yourself, and resisting temptation for it? Your dear aunt had been able to sit down stairs every day till that on which she died. Uncle Isaac used to carry her up and down stairs in his arms, and you may be sure it is a great comfort to him, now his sister is gone, to remember how kind he was to her; always think of this, my love, when you are disposed to be unkind to your brothers and sisters, and say to yourself, ‘how should I like to think of this if they were dead?’ On Tuesday morning he lifted her out of bed to her easy chair, where she sat two or three hours and talked a little, as well as her weakness would let her, about dying. She said, ‘How good God is to me to let me die without pain!’ She repeated that beautiful verse—

Jesus, to thy dear faithful hand  
My naked soul I trust,  
And my flesh waits for thy command  
To drop into the dust.

This she said very strongly, and repeated, ‘My naked soul—my naked soul.’ About one or two o’clock she said she was very tired, and begged they would lay her down. She said, ‘Put me on a clean cap, and set the room to rights, for I am going.’ After this grandpapa asked her how she felt, she replied with a very firm voice, ‘Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.’ Most of the afternoon she lay quite still, breathing quick, and turning her eyes about as if reading. About a quarter of an hour before she died, uncle

Isaac asked her if she felt any pain, and she said, 'No, dear, only a little sleepy.' Those were the last words she said, and about five and twenty minutes before six, she gave one long sigh, and died.

"Oh, how happy I should be if I could know that you and I, my dear A., and your dear papa, and dear J. and H., and E. and J., and Chas. and C., would all die like her, beloved by all who knew us, and carried by angels, as we believe she was, directly to heaven! You see how kindly Jesus conducted her through that deep river which you know Bunyan says was so shallow sometimes that they passed almost dryshod. This was just the case with her. She had often been like 'Much-afraid,' but God was better to her than her fears, and made her death more like falling asleep than dying. Yesterday morning the coffin was brought down into uncle Isaac's study, and after breakfast we all went in to look at her for the last time. Oh, it was such a thought that her eyes would never open till the last trumpet should sound, and the grave should break open, to let her meet the Lord in the air! At twelve o'clock we began to move to the chapel, which is very near. First the coffin, then grandpapa and I, then uncle Isaac and aunt Jemima, then uncle Martin and uncle Jefferys, and then papa and J. She lies close by a tall poplar near the vestry door, and poor grandmamma was at one of the back windows here, and could see her let down into the grave. There is only a garden and one field between. Though we all grieve very much, yet we are all comforted and thankful to think of the goodness of God towards her. She was in her life kind, tender, active, generous, and always anxious to be useful to others. She was willing to deny herself of everything, and was never so happy as when she was doing a kindness to her brothers and sisters. Above all, she feared God from her youth, and did not leave that great work till she came

to die. May this be your case, my dear children, and then I shall be your happy, as well as your affectionate mother,

ANN GILBERT."

To her friend Mrs Whitty she writes:—

"You will believe that there is not one of us to whom it is a light trial. My father and mother are both deeply affected, and from what I know of the latter I fear the wound will never heal. Dear Isaac has lost his friend, his nurse, his most endeared associate, one with whom he took sweet counsel, and such a loss he feels it. His sweet assiduities during the whole course of her illness were all that affection could desire, and that strength could sustain. Dear Jemima feels most severely bereaved, for her only female companion is gone, one who was always awake to her interests, and active to promote all her pleasures. My heart fails me more than ever at the thought of parting, though I have one less to leave, but I cannot help feeling that sorrows have now begun. But as soon as I set my face fairly northward, I shall feel the glow of what I am going to. It is a mercy to have two such homes, but you see as the old divine says, "though these pleasures have crowns on their heads, they have stings in their tails."

After reaching home she wrote to her mother—

"Most thankful should I be if I knew the balm by which the sufferings of a 'deeply wounded and bleeding heart' might be soothed, and, indeed, there are so many sources of comfort in this cup of affliction that it seems easy and almost trite to point to them. Do, my dear mother, make the strongest daily effort to resist what is doubtless a temptation, too fitly addressed to your natural feeling, and bodily sensibility. O, how many parents would be ready to expend their remaining lives in thankfulness

for anything like the consolation in their losses, which you have in yours!

“For what purpose were you made a mother? not certainly to rear children who should live for ever in this world. What would you have asked, if, at the birth of dear Jane, you could have been offered any lot you might choose for her? Would you not have been ready to say, ‘O let her be but a Christian, and if I survive her let me feel an assured hope of her immortal happiness, and I am little anxious about the rest.’ But suppose, that having this granted, so much more had been freely added as has been bestowed on her. Suppose you had received the promise that she should be gifted with eminent talents, all of which should be devoted to eminent usefulness; and that after receiving favours from Providence such as is the lot of but here and there a distinguished mind, she should fall asleep in Jesus without one of those pangs, or those fears, that render death terrible; would not your heart have overflowed with gratitude? If the giving of the promise would have been esteemed so great a mercy, why should the fulfilment of it be felt so inconsolable a trial? . . . .”

The sorrow at Ongar led in a singular manner to an occasion for joy, in the engagement of Isaac Taylor to the young lady who afterwards became his wife. But her brother's usual reticence drew from his absent sister a characteristic request—

“I am sure I rejoice with those that do rejoice, and hope they are not few, but I sadly want information beyond the bare fact. My mind likes to walk in a defined path, with a close fence of particulars, as I suppose you know. Let anybody who feels disposed give me at least as many as may enable me to find my way without stumbling.”

It was from her husband, during a hasty visit to Ongar, that she learnt something of what she wanted, and especially of her brother's new home :—

*July 21, 1825.*—"A most pleasant ride brought me to Stanford Rivers; there I was arrested in my journey by Isaac, Jemima, and J—, and after looking round the delightful domain of your brother, came here by a pleasant footpath to sleep. Isaac is really situated just as I have always *thought* I should like to be: the house neat, commodious, comfortable, pleasantly surrounded with clean gravel walks, grass plots, roses, fruit—everything that is 'pleasant to the eye and good for food.' It is just what one would like to take a simple-hearted, tender, good tempered, cheerful, kind, contented young bride to. They are to be happy in less than a month."

1825 was one of the marked years of change in the life we are pursuing. The affection of his people had been shown in many ways to their minister, and among the means devised to restore his failing strength had been a journey of several weeks, with a friend, in a travelling carriage all across England, and into Devonshire, when, to the delight of his wife, he visited again Ilfracombe and Linton. He wrote from Dunster :—

"When you were here not even a gig was kept at this place, and now there are four pair of horses at the inn, all worked almost out of their life. Several carriages and four were here yesterday, and many have passed to-day, so that for want of horses we must stay the night. Yet we need not regret it, as we are just under the castle, and have the sweetest mixture of trees, broken hills, valleys, and water, that can be conceived. Yet I feel bereft of what my heart yearns after. I long almost to fainting to have you with me in these sweet places."

Now his frequent illnesses, traceable to the exhausting atmosphere, as well as the exhausting work of Hull, had suggested to all his friends the necessity of a removal, and in the beginning of this year, offers had been made to him, which occasioned much painful indecision. His wife, then visiting the loved scenes and loved friends of Sheffield and Rotherham, writes to him—

“You know that my faith in the bestowment of temporal blessings, even in answer to prayer, is not strong, because I see no promise on which, firmly, to found such a confidence; but there is one temporal mercy for which the promise is, I think, as direct as despondence itself would have framed it, and that is for *guidance*. Here, I think, we have firm footing, and have only to pray and wait, in a posture of spirit suitable to praying and waiting. ‘Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and He shall direct thy steps.’ He shall make darkness light before thee, and crooked things straight, &c., are but specimens of the encouragements we have, to seek direction in every important step, under the cheerful persuasion that we shall find it. And I think *we* can set to our seal that God is true. We have never been left to inextricable perplexities, but have always found that asking wisdom of God, we received, little by little, all that we needed. The next *step* has always been shone upon by the fiery pillar, and though we could not see the end, we came to it in safety. Do not suffer, my love, your spirit to go to and fro, as if to see through the crevices of the present scene into that which may be beyond, but stand still, rather, and see the salvation of God. It is inexpressible comfort to *me* to feel something of dependence on such promises, and it is, as you know, almost the only spot on which I can set my foot without trembling. I shall be thankful if my confidence should fill up the solitary gap in yours.”

A little later, she writes—

“I have never hitherto seen your spirit in deep waters, and I trust it will not be long before you feel dry land again ; but it is, as you know, what I have often feared. You appeared to me, both as a Christian and a minister, to have passed so easily through the scene of your trial, that I always fancied there might be sorrows to come. But you know that God is good, and that He will not lay upon *you* the punishment of *my* superstitions—the reward of that spirit of bondage under which I fear I live. His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. I know that you rest upon Him as the anchor of your soul. I know that your confidence, however waved in the storm, is firm in its grasp. I know that you lie at His feet, and look to Him alone, for help, happiness, and sufficiency. I only wish I could command my own spirit and yours, into a patient waiting for His appearance ; but the great difficulty is not only to hope, but to *quietly wait* for it.”

Mr Gilbert's “Life of Dr Williams” was published this year, and though twelve years after his decease, and dealing largely with the several abstruse controversies in which he had been engaged, proved a complete success, a large edition being sold off in a fortnight. To this work, strong in her desire to take intelligent interest in all that concerned her husband, his wife had given great attention, endeavouring thoroughly to master all its arguments, among which, however, she says, “the only point on which I remain unconvinced, is the subject of ‘*space* ;’ but you will admit that there is ample room for a difference of opinion there.” With its success, greatly unexpected by its author, she endeavours to cheer his despondency,



evidently much the result of physical depression, and playfully dismisses a suggestion of retirement to a Lincolnshire farm. "I presume that my opinion, respecting the farm, was not asked in earnest. I believe it would do you good ; but I think I should not make good butter, and you would not sell your corn to advantage, nor would you like the sort of 'gentlemen' of the farmers' markets ; besides you know you must preach."

Then, with reference to indications which seemed to point towards Nottingham, she writes,—

"I regard — as hectically sanguine, and should not be disposed to form an opinion without more inquiry, or cooler counsel. Nevertheless, I wish you to be and to feel like a cloud in the sky, that is to learn its destination from the winds of heaven, and then distil in fruitfulness on the appointed pasture."

Thus this "true yoke-fellow" did her part through the anxious months, when it was difficult to see the shining of the pillar even upon the next step to be taken. Yet, as she said afterwards, "the way was always so hedged in that but one step at a time seemed possible," and this consoled her, when the outflow of affection from the people of Hull at the bitter time of parting wrung her heart. When too late, propositions were made even to the extent of providing for her husband's absence from his charge for six months every year, if he might be retained for the other six months, which would have made it impossible to leave, if the decisive step had not been taken. At Nottingham, their young friend, Richard Cecil, had entered upon the task of raising a congregation in a large new chapel, but to the labour of which his health was not

equal. It had been proposed, therefore, and warmly urged, that Mr Gilbert should be associated with him in this undertaking, where the fine air and neighbourhood seemed to promise all he required in that respect.

And so it came to pass, that again last looks had to be taken of an endeared home ; last visits paid to endeared friends ; and on the 15th of November, all the furniture having been sent off by water, they drove out of dear Nile Street, with not a few recollections, and some tears, to be dispersed for a short time among hospitable homes. Stormy weather detained them, but at four o'clock, on a dark but calm morning, November 16, two coaches went round collecting children and servants for the packet to Gainsborough, at which place several friends met them with offers of service, and took care that the large party—eleven in all, and one a baby in arms,—should not stay the night at an inn. Here, midway between the old and the new scene—the new that was to be also the last—we leave them for awhile.

MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER III.

*NOTTINGHAM.*

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## CHAPTER III.

### NOTTINGHAM.

1825-1827.

“A castle like a rock upon a rock.

All hushed below the mellow moon.”

TENNYSON.

“He woos abettors to his creedless creed,  
Invokes the million, and with such defence  
Feels half secure against Omnipotence!”

ANN GILBERT.

IN the afternoon of November 16, 1825, the two post-chaises conveying the family, that had now become “two bands,” began to descend the long hill leading from Sherwood Forest into the town of Nottingham. From the summit it is seen, picturesquely disposed up and down hills of sandstone rock,—the venerable tower of St Mary’s occupying one commanding eminence, and the Castle a still prouder one, crested with trees, and rising above the sweet valley of the Trent in bold precipices, somewhat similar to those of Dumbarton.

The party had left Gainsbro’ at nine in the morning, and now, by beautiful moonlight, crossing the wide market-place, the largest in the kingdom, they began to ascend the Castle-hill, and passed through the fine old

gateway of the Commonwealth wars, up the winding drive, to the foot of the long flight of steps leading to the terrace in front of the Castle itself. Here, under an equestrian figure of the first Duke of Newcastle, the great doorway opened upon spacious halls, and tapestried corridors, whence heavy cedar doors gave entrance to several noble rooms.

The Castle, built in the massive Italian style of Inigo Jones, on the topmost platform of rock, is all a ruin now, the still blackened walls testifying to the fury of the mob in 1830. Of the glorious prospect that the broad-paved terrace surrounding the building once displayed—here of the green undulating park, there of the lovely stretches of meadow spreading from the foot of the castle rock to the silver Trent,—on this side the distant umbrage of Clifton Grove, on that, the masses of wood round Wollaton Hall (of which Queen Elizabeth said, that my Lord of Middleton should put it under a glass case), beyond, in the far distance, the ranges of Charnwood Forest and the remote towers of Belvoir,—of this, little now remains; the meadows are covered with factories and unwholesome streets of tenements; the park is built over with blocks of red and white houses in every variety of architecture; a coal mine disgorges itself at the edge of the Trent; the loveliness of the far distance is smirched, if not totally obscured, by heavy volumes of smoke from the factories below. Alas, for the once beautiful land of England, which must needs turn itself into a sooty workshop!

But so strange a transition from the modest dwelling in Nile Street, Hull, to this palatial residence in Nottingham, requires explanation. It is a simple one; the same

generous friend who, for their sakes, had removed to Hull, and throwing two houses into one, had constructed for herself a mansion in Nile Street, had gladly now taken the opportunity to transfer herself to Nottingham where some of her relatives resided ; and where, in one of the wings of the Castle, at that time let for private residences, a charming abode was offered her. She had preceded her friends, and since houses at Nottingham were then very difficult to procure, had, with the abundant and yet most delicate generosity that distinguished her, insisted upon receiving for a time the whole Gilbert family as her guests, —a stay which was eventually prolonged to several months.

Mrs Gilbert had paid a visit to Nottingham, to look about her, some months previously, and then it seemed probable that they might reside for a time in the other wing of the Castle. In a letter of that date, July 1, 1825, she says—

“The Castle is indeed a noble place, built on the ancient site of the Keep as a residence for the Duke of Newcastle, to whom it belongs. Mr R——, who does not require it this year, kindly offers us his entire half, if we cannot suit ourselves better. We could thus look about at our leisure, at least till spring, but I would much rather be in a house we could keep in. I should by no means fear cold, though the situation is as much elevated and exposed as you can imagine, for from the extreme thickness of the walls it is, even in the largest rooms, perfectly warm, and as free from damp as possible. But we should look funny with a spoonful of furniture, and a pocket-handkerchief of a carpet, in a room sixty feet long ; and sometimes on a winter's evening I might be a little poetical about the tapestry.”

After their removal in November, her first letter was to a dear friend—a “special crony,” as she called her, in Hull.

“Would that you, dear friend, were still within call of my marketing basket, but that not being the case we must make the best of pen and ink. It cannot, indeed, express to you with how tender a gratitude I shall remember our dear friends at Hull. You know how much I owe to your considerate and *gumptious* kindness. All indeed that friendship could do, was done to lighten our labours, and remove inconveniences. Accept, my dear friend, the best thanks of me and mine to you and yours; dispose them *secundum artem* among your rosy household, and assure them that if wishes and prayers in return could serve them, they should all grow up useful, honourable, and happy.—Amen and amen! . . .

“I for one can speak well of Gainsbro’ hospitality. Mr T— Mr K— Mr and Mrs C— were waiting at the boats when we arrived, and showed every kindness that houseless pilgrims need. The next day, another fine one, we set forward again, myself, two servants, and three babies wedged into one chaise, and Mr Gilbert with the cheerful and talkative residue in another. After a pleasant journey we were, as you may believe, most thankful to find ourselves, at a quarter before five, safe and sound at the great gates of the Castle lodge. It was something beautifully between moonlight and twilight, as they opened to receive us. The massive outline of the Castle stood finely relieved against the evening sky as we slowly ascended the steep on which it rests; and a fine moment it was for emotion if *now* could ever feel like *then*. I would give something to take such another journey with heart and hands sufficiently unencumbered to enter into all the interest and poetry of the occasion. But I was too busy with my babies to feel all that you and I can fancy about



such an arrival. Yet I was not insensible to the comfort, the mercy, the happiness, of finding our anxious journey safely over, and all that kindness could do or contrive, to give us at once the repose of *home*."

In this new scene the children revelled. From the mud shores of Hull to the summit of a lofty rock was change enough; still more from the common-places of a small street house, to the mysteries of this great building, where the flat leaden roof with its wonderful prospect was a sufficient playground; or where for wet weather the state bedroom of Queen Ann, empty but for the delightful addition of the railing that had once enclosed the bedstead, now lent itself to innumerable devices of childhood. Beneath, again, passages and chambers in the living rock were known to extend to unknown depths; and were sometimes with sufficient escort, and a plentiful supply of candles, partially explored. The cawing of the jack-daws outside among the trees; the strange recesses in the crags festooned with ivy; more than all, the curious stair-case winding round the face of the precipice, and that formerly used as a concealed passage way, bore the name of "Mortimer's hole," from a circumstance belonging to English history;—all this added to the delight; and an ineffaceable impression was made upon minds with hereditary tendencies to the romantic.

Yet it was characteristic of their mother that she gave herself here to no poetic reveries, or none that for an hour interfered with immediate duty. All the "castle building," of which, at Colchester, she used to complain, was long since dispersed to the winds, and the real castle conjured none of them back. With hands full of practical business, and heart full of practical kindness, and practical

religion, she spent her busy days; and the letters already quoted are the only ones that bear a trace of the poetical influences surrounding her.

After five months stay at the castle, the pleasure of which was greatly diminished by a remarkable amount of sickness in the family, they removed to a comfortable house, at that time on the outskirts of the town. Writing to Ongar, *May 9, 1826*, and dating from "my own pretty closet in my own pleasant house," she says—

"My design was to have written on the first or second evening of our residence here, but pots and pans, chairs and tables, to say nothing of socks and stockings, rose up in utter rebellion, and I was obliged to make a retreat as I could; so pray excuse all neglects both of you and of myself. As yet, with all my efforts, I have got but two closets to rights in the house, and sometimes I go into ill humour with despair, but I do not find that it materially assists me.

"On Monday we began carting our goods from the castle, and on Tuesday, just in the middle of it, a sagacious waggoner with a bouncing knock at our new door, presented your welcome parcel, the opening and reading of which pretty nearly carried away my intellects for that morning, for I sat myself down in the study and stopped not till I had done. Thank you, dear people, for it all; there was not a line uninteresting, nor a thread unserviceable. . . . I might give you a romantic idea of our situation by saying that we abut immediately on the southern border of Sherwood Forest, and stand exactly between 'Woodland Place' and the 'Lark Dales;' our position, however, is in a wide, dusty, irregular street of considerable traffic, which forms the northern boundary of the town; but there is nothing between us and very pleasant fields behind. The only thing I want is playground for the children, having no garden but a piece like Peter Hitch-

cock's\* in front, and a mere passage of a yard. But there is a stable in which the boys do their carpentry, and they have a much larger range within, than they ever had before.

“With respect to the Chapel we have entire cordiality between the ministers, and agreeable activity in the people. There is a sort of stirring which makes preaching more hopeful than in the dead pool of an old sleepy congregation,† and we hope there is the seed of prosperity sowing. I never attend in the evening, but prefer sowing on a smaller plot at home, where and when, I enjoy many a happy hopeful hour, which I would not give up for all the gas-lighted chapels and crowded congregations you could muster. *My* service usually concludes with such a throng of kisses that I am often obliged to take my clean frill out of *arms* way.”

She did not soon master the arrears caused by the long interruption to settled household work; her correspondence is much curtailed; this is the sort of life it describes—

“. . . The boys are at home for the holidays, my governess is out for a fortnight; nurse is disabled, and with the baby still in arms I have only been able to procure a little girl to help, who bends like an & when she nurses him. I might also mention that I have, by previous appointment, two dress-makers at work in one room, and a tailor making clothes for the boys in another, who are perpetually wanting thread, or tape, or trimmings, or orders, so that I am as much like a weaver's shuttle as anything—saving the regularity of its movements.

“Do not suppose,” she writes to her husband, during a short absence, “that I have a very merry life of it, if you should hear that I talk all day and sing all night,—and do not be afraid of

\* One of the quaint characters at Lavenham.

† The allusion was not to Hull.

having to share in my merriment on your return. I shall betake myself to another room till it is over."

But her boy at Ongar was never forgotten. His future destination became now, an increasing and anxious topic in her letters. At this time, his tastes seemed to incline towards sculpture, and an occasional bas-relief, in clay, was forwarded to his parents. Upon one such arrival, she writes—

"We have, this morning, received your parcel, the first appearance of which excited as much surprise, and as many ingenious guesses, and the disclosure, as much satisfaction and delight, as even dear J—— himself could have wished. My own secret conjecture, whilst unpacking it was, that it was a whole-length portrait of him; but I was, by no means, disappointed to find it the impress of his mind, rather than of his body. . . . . We should hardly be worth calling his father and mother, if we had not now, for some length of time, felt anxious respecting his present circumstances and future prospects, and considering the long separation from his natural home, we should most certainly, if only our own feelings had been concerned, have wished to have him amongst us once more; but the thought of dear mother always sent us to sea again, whenever we seemed to approach any certain shore. . . .

"Latin and Greek are so intimately connected with the arts, that, if only in that point of view, he ought to acquire a competent knowledge of both, and we hope that under a sense of this, which he is now old enough to understand and feel, he will set himself manfully to the foundation-drudgery. Nothing, under the circumstances, appears so important as a thorough grounding in Latin, which is, according to the learned, not the work of a day. . . . But to the end of our, and I think I may promise of

his life, the time, trouble, and affection expended by you, dear father, on his education, will be held in grateful and lively remembrance."

In further correspondence respecting an art education for her son, she wisely returns, again and again, to the importance of a classical training, in the first place.

"He *must* be a classic, let him be what he may, even if he means to be nothing more than his own father's son. What ultimately he is to be, we have yet to learn, but 'Mary ponders many things in her heart.' We leave him, at present, under the same care which his father and mother, and their father and mother, have found so wise and wonderful, strewing manna on many an unexpected path, and leading water from the rock, beside all their wanderings."

My mother used to say that she made a point of regretting nothing that was not anybody's fault, her own especially; and above all things, in the different crises of life, she desired her way to be so distinctly fenced in by providence, that it could not be mistaken, when, whatever the event, she accepted it cheerfully. "I would rather move between stone walls than break a road for myself over a heath," was her expression. In removing to Nottingham, she had felt, as she believed, the unmistakable guiding Hand; not, it should be observed, through any mental impression, such she would have distrusted, but through a series of circumstances which seemed, at the time, to leave no other course fairly open. Accordingly, she expressed her firm conviction that the change must be *for good*, and that here was her husband's appointed

sphere of labour. For good, it certainly was, but not of the kind or extent that the estimation to which he had risen, would seem to promise.

Overtures were now made to him, from time to time, by some of the most important of the provincial churches, such as those at Manchester and Liverpool, and from the reputation acquired by his life of Dr Williams, a leading position for its author might have been expected. But this, his settlement at Nottingham, was found, at last, to have effectually denied. He was never more to be the minister of a large and flourishing congregation. Yet, did this woman, of strong faith, ever doubt the guidance of that Hand which led her husband into a path which, in some of its aspects, seemed only to baffle and restrict the exercise of his powers? Certainly not. For one peculiar and interesting, though limited work, her husband was brought to Nottingham; she saw it, and was grateful for that one work, in a small corner of the vineyard.

Early in her letters, after reaching Nottingham, she remarks upon the strange difference between a crowded place like Fish Street, where a couple of hundred people, or more, would be waiting for sittings, and the, at present, thinly attended chapel in St James' Street.

“To us,” she says, “who have been accustomed to go with the *multitude* to keep holy day, and to join in the ‘great congregation’ . . . it is, at present, the day of small things, and though our friends are sanguine as to eventual increase, yet it is a thought from which I resolutely turn my mind, and say rather, when it presents itself, ‘get thee behind me.’ Should it be granted, I hope we should be thankful, but we followed, as we

trust, the dictate of Providence, irrespective of consequences ; and the posture now most suitable, seems to be to stand still, and see the ways of God. May it please Him to bless the change, and we shall be blessed."

These thin congregations did not last, but they were recruited in a singular manner. It began in this way—

"There have lately been," she writes, "impudent efforts made here to spread infidel opinions, and a shop has been opened for the sale of such works, where the woman who keeps it harangues to large and delighted auditories, and answers all theological doubts, to the great satisfaction of her hearers. In consequence of this, Mr Gilbert has been requested to preach a course of lectures on the 'Evidences of Christianity,' of which he has already given three ; and the attention excited is very great indeed. The chapel overflows ; people of all sorts, high and low, attend, and with a degree of interest as for life and death. Many avowed infidels come ; two have written letters in reply ; but some, we are told, profess to be staggered. I have broken through my rule of staying at home on Sunday evenings, and think myself justified in doing so from the importance of the object. I therefore take the four eldest children, and mean to attend the whole course."

Again, December 7, 1826—

"The lectures, which are not yet concluded, have been admirably attended throughout. They are seldom less than an hour and a half, and sometimes more, but they are heard with deathlike stillness, and are the subject of conversation in every party we enter. For many weeks now, not a word of objection has come from any one, and a very striking difference is observable in the manner in which the infidels attend. At first there

were nods, winks, grins, rustling, and whispering; and large knots of them held noisy confabs at coming out; but now each seems to hear for himself, and the same persons sit with perfect seriousness, and go out without speaking to their neighbours. We are assured also that several who have scoffed at the Bible for years are now reading it. One gentleman, who heard the first two or three lectures, comes over every Sabbath from Derby, where he now resides, till the course is concluded."

At a later date she writes—

"We heard last night a very encouraging instance of good effected by the lectures. About the second or third Sabbath from the commencement of them, a very notorious man, a public-house keeper, was spending the afternoon with six others in a garden near the town, and, sitting in a summer-house, was extolling Richard Carlile.\* A person in the next garden heard them, and called over the hedge—'Aye, aye; I could send you to a champion in Nottingham who would be more than a match for twenty Carliles.' 'Who's that?' was asked; and, telling them of Mr Gilbert, he advised them to hear the lectures. All but one agreed to do so, and the first mentioned went to another public-house, where a party of fourteen more were assembled, and tried to persuade them also, but only one consented. These seven, therefore, came that evening, and have done so ever since. They profess themselves beat out of their holds, and yesterday the public-house keeper sent to take a seat for himself and all his family. . . .

Yet the *good* people of Nottingham—the payers of mint and anise in *other* churches—shake their heads, think it a sad profanation of the Sabbath, say that these contemptible fellows are beneath a minister's notice, that they ought to be let alone,

\* A noted champion of Infidelity at the time, and a publisher of Infidel books.



&c., &c., and because it is the Sabbath day (or because the pit is not in their own field), would refuse to help out the poor sheep floundering in the mire at the bottom."

Circumstances presently to be mentioned led to the services being conducted, for a time, in the large room of the Exchange, but this not being sufficient to contain the crowds, a second room adjoining, was opened, which, with the lobbies, still did not suffice, and sometimes hundreds could not obtain admittance. In a chapel afterwards erected for him, he, in his wife's words, "conducted manfully that strange argument, sometimes required by the created to prove the existence of a Creator." Equal or greater numbers followed him here. He gave public notice that he would receive and discuss any objections that might be presented to him, and devoted three of the lectures to reading and replying to the letters received, while he opened his own house on Wednesday evenings for conversations. These were often of the greatest interest. On one occasion Richard Carlile came down from London, and with some of his friends presented himself at a Wednesday evening séance; "but in a discussion that followed, he went off into evasions that gave little hope of ingenuous impression, or indication of an honest search for truth." A public discussion was then proposed, and accepted by Mr Gilbert, but at the last moment permission to use the Exchange Room was revoked by the authorities, and no other could be obtained in time.

"You will have supposed," she writes, "that the business chiefly on our minds lately has been Mr Gilbert's encounter with Carlile. Innumerable misrepresentations have appeared, and it

is industriously stated that Mr G. never really intended to meet him, and wilfully slunk at the last. A triumphant article of this kind appeared last week in the Catholic Journal. A newspaper correspondence ensued, and for one of Mr Gilbert's letters, which Carlile chose to regard as a libel, he prosecuted the publishers."

After a long and anxious suspense the trial came on; the verdict, in Mr Gilbert's favour, threw the costs upon the plaintiff, who was imprisoned in default of payment till a sufficient sum was raised by Mr Gilbert and his friends to set him at liberty, a kindness which the unhappy man suitably acknowledged.

The two boys, Henry and Edward, were, at Nottingham sent to their first school. It was kept by a blind lady, whose mental history was remarkably affected by these lectures. Mrs Gilbert afterwards wrote this account of her :—

"She was a lady blind from her infancy, whose mental improvement had on that account been greatly neglected; nor was the education of the blind attended to in her youth as it has since been. But the vigour of her mind surmounted impediments, and she *would* be taught. She acquired a creditable acquaintance with arithmetic, grammar, geography, the Latin language—everything, in fact, required for teaching an elementary school, to which, during many years, numbers of respectable families sent their sons for early education.\* When Mr Gilbert came to Nottingham she had made some considerable acquaintance with the Greek language. She had been accustomed from her childhood to hear an evangelical ministry, but by degrees it lost hold upon her belief; she became an avowed deist, and abandoned public worship entirely. A member of Mr Gilbert's

\* An eminent clerical dignitary of the present day was one of her scholars.

church at Hull, who knew both her and her state of mind, wrote to request she would *once* hear the minister they had just parted with. Her aversion to appear again in a place of worship was extreme. For some time she could not overcome it; set out again and again for the chapel, and returned unable to enter it. At length, these lectures being announced, she resolved to hear the first, and though, with observable uneasiness, contrived to listen, and found, as she said afterwards, she could not help it. She heard the whole course, and obtained frequent interviews with the preacher (always willing to give a reason for the hope that was in him). In these she fought every inch of ground, yielding not a particle but on entire conviction. It was surely providential that just previously she had acquired sufficient acquaintance with the language to read the Greek Testament herself. Of course, when it is said she read, the meaning is it was read to her; youths who had been under her training were now employed in succession every spare hour of the day to do so, while with intense interest, her fingers meanwhile plying the knitting needles with lightning speed, she listened to the artificial narratives of the Gospels, or the clear explanations found in the Epistles. At length the light of Heaven penetrated where the light of day had been excluded. . . . She became one of the most devoted and consistent members of our Church, and continued such till her death, about five years before that of her pastor. It was to instances such as these that his mind often reverted when reflecting on his removal from Hull. Among many instances of individuals reclaimed or preserved by these lectures, the name of Miss Chambers may descend with his own, his 'joy and crown.'"

The source of the remarkable influence of Mr Gilbert over sceptical minds at this time may be traced in the following description of his preaching from the pen of

his brother-in-law, Isaac Taylor. After speaking of his "eminent faculty for clear, continuous, and sustained abstract thought," he says, "but, as a preacher and writer, Mr Gilbert earnestly desired to be *useful*. This desire manifestly was always paramount to the ambition to shine or to win popular applause. He scorned not to be intelligible to every one. He would leave nothing untried that might avail to bring him close home to the convictions of his hearers—educated and uneducated. Far from him was the arrogance that might make him content to be wondered at as a philosopher by a gaping crowd. He loved his hearers, he earnestly desired to promote their highest welfare, and he perfectly knew that, a very few excepted, those who fill pews on a Sunday are unapt to think, and are unable to think. So it was that when a great doctrinal subject stood out full in his view in its genuine proportions as a truth eternal, so it was that he wrestled and laboured like a very Titan—a most loving Titan—to bring it down to a level within range of a congregation. For this purpose how did he reiterate, how exhaust the stores of illustrative argument, how turn himself about in quest of the intelligible, so that by any means he might convince, and enlighten, and persuade his hearers."

Of these lectures, extending to two courses (the second, devoted to the atheistic argument), no trace in writing remains. My father, who had hitherto used but scanty notes for his sermons, now, and to the conclusion of his ministry, very seldom put pen to paper in preparation for the pulpit. Pacing a secluded field by the side of the Trent, not far from the soft shades of Clifton Grove, he

worked into his mind the order and shape of his thoughts, and when his well-known tramp was heard in his study, it was understood that the same process was being repeated there. In the case of these lectures he took care to prepare himself for meeting the precise objections in his hearers' minds, by purchasing and studying every infidel book or tract in circulation at the time, and a closet in his study was entirely filled with these.

But that no record exists of the lectures is probably of not much moment now, since the form of objection or difficulty is always changing. That which seemed so cogent and damaging, to one generation, has either been efficiently answered, or more commonly, from various concurrent influences, has lost its applicability. A new form of doubt, adapted to a new phase of philosophy, or new positions in science, takes its place, which again, whether at the time satisfactorily disposed of or not, is pretty sure to pass into limbo in its turn. Difficulties of one sort or another will no doubt always exist. It must always be possible to say of a revelation given through human agency, and material phenomena, that it is no Revelation at all. To the simple and unsophisticated the answer of the heart is a guide to its truth; to the wide-thoughted, and widely read, a large induction of facts, and a comprehensive survey of the great problem, will aid its acceptance; to all must come the grace of a pure desire to know and do the will of God.

The first course of lectures closed with one impressive discourse upon the single word "Peradventure,"—peradventure true!—how great then the responsibility of rejection! The remarkable result of the whole was that out of

the casual and incongruous collection of doubters of all shades that listened to him, he formed the small but interesting church to which the later years of his ministry were devoted.

This was the work for which he had been brought to Nottingham, at that time the headquarters of the infidelity prevalent among intelligent artizans, though not confined to them. He thus built up a body of believers from among those who previously had no knowledge of the character or functions of a Christian Church, a difficult task; and as these gradually passed away to the upper sanctuary, his work was done. An old man then, among a new generation, it was fit that other hands should minister to its needs; but when the aged pastor was borne to his last resting-place, a crowd of worn grey-haired men unexpectedly appeared at his grave to do honour to the memory of one whom they respected and loved, though they might not have followed his counsels.

Whenever Mrs Gilbert was interested in a public matter, she found moments, as only those find them whose moments are precious, to employ her pen in prose or verse, which frequently found a way into print. At the time when Carlile was in the town she wrote an address—whether printed or not is uncertain,—of which an extract or two will show the character. It was headed—

“TO THE INDUSTRIOUS WIVES AND MOTHERS OF NOTTINGHAM.”

“Dear Friends and Neighbours”—(after referring to the interest their husbands were taking in Carlile’s doctrines, she says)—“However, my business at present is not with the men, but with the women, the stay-at-home, hard-working women of this

large town ; and I believe that they will not object to a word of advice from a neighbour, who has a neighbourly heart, both towards them and their children. My own judgment indeed is that *you*, and the thoughts you have on the subject, are of more consequence now than many think for, and for this simple reason, that as are the *mothers*, so to a certainty almost, are the *children*.

A Christian Mother, . . . Christian Children.

An Infidel Mother, . . . Infidel Children.

I do not know how it may sound to you, but to me the words, '*infidel children*' seem too shocking almost to write. Can you look at the babes you have borne, and nourished many a weary day at your breast, and think it has all been for this? . . . . You may work hard, and fare hard, and lie hard, and sleep little, and have an aching head, and an aching back, and an aching arm ; but all put together, these are nothing to the aching *heart* that is to be, if you have infidel children."

Then, after a striking picture of girls growing up without religion, and of boys who, if taught that there is no hereafter, will try to take the shortest cut to everything their stormy passions are set upon, she exclaims—

"And so this is what it is all to come to ! . . . And you will not enjoy a spark of hope in all your miseries, for where should it come from? Not from this world, that is clear ; and as for the next, a cold grave, and a dark coffin, are all he can promise you,—to be born, and be busy, and wretched, and die ! To be born, and be busy, and wretched, and die ! This is all, it seems, that men and women are made for !

But a much more important effort resulted from the wife's intense sympathy with her husband's present

labours. She had been shocked with the sentiments with which the discussion made her acquainted, but she was no less shocked that in some cases legal measures had been resorted to against those who, whether honestly or not, held such opinions; and soon backs of letters and of washing bills became covered with lines of remonstrance, now against one, now the other error. As she went her errands in the town, she would turn up an entry, or sit down in a shop, to scribble down the fast-coming thoughts; and the darning needle at home had to yield from minute to minute to the pen. They first took shape in a poem entitled "The Prisoner Infidel," which was afterwards enlarged, but never published. Some thirty years later she wrote on the fly-leaf—

"At the time when these lines were written, I had come much in contact with the then popular, vulgar infidelity—the deism and atheism of workshops and alehouses; and the thoughts expressed, so haunted me, at home or abroad, in domestic duty, or the busy market-place; they were so incessant, that I could not help writing them down. I think nearly three thousand lines were thus forced into verse. It was as suggested by the outbreak of human law against the infidel,\* that I began with the title, "The Prisoner Infidel;" after several years, however, the wrong was redressed, and I attempted to suit them to Infidelity, or rather, the Atheist argument generally. I wish,

\* John Stuart Mill, in his autobiography, refers to this as attracting much attention at the time, and adds "that freedom of discussion, even in politics, much more in religion, was, at that time, far from being the conceded point which it, at least, seems to be now." The passage quoted from the poem shows that, on that point, my mother was as "advanced a thinker" as himself.



sometimes, that I had opportunity so to arrange the following papers as to fit them for publication."

From this considerable poem, I give a few opening portions—

. . . . .  
 But still, opinion is man's freehold ground,  
 Belief by chain of law was never bound ;  
 Conscience, who knows her master, cannot kneel  
 Or crawl a captive at Power's chariot wheel ;  
 Her day of reckoning cometh, but till then  
 Leave her, heaven-born, unmanacled of men.  
 The living soul could never yet be bent  
 To understand by Act of Parliament ;  
 The free immortal principle to yield  
 To priest or prince one inch of reason's field ;  
 The high prerogative may be abused,  
 But who is he by whom it is refused ?  
 No ! though she soil her glories in the dust  
 If she will have it so,—why so she must !

. . . . .  
 Nor let the Christian tremble for his cause  
 Thrown on its strength, unpropped by human laws ;  
 Were God left sole to plead his cause with us,  
 Giving to conscience fair-play, none had heard  
 Of half the taunts by infidels preferred  
 Against *Religion*, as they call the thing,  
 Miscalled—that gainful league of priest and king !

She imagines the various circumstances or lines of thought that had led to so unhappy a result ; and from this passes—the argument always addressed to the Atheist rather than the Infidel—to the suggestions of

Nature and Providence—the beauty and the bounty ; the instinct of aspiration ; the whispers of affection—

Did never love break in upon thy gloom,  
 Life's tender charities, a flowery bloom ?  
 Have they not sprung and flourished in thy way,  
 And been like milk and honey to thy day ?  
 And Who, affection's bland provision sent,  
 The bosom's thirst, and its sweet nutriment ?  
 Fitting with blest beneficence of plan  
 Man's bliss and duty to the need of man ?  
 Wherever want is found, to place supply,  
 An eye for light, and light to meet the eye,  
 A heart to love, and love the heart to bless,  
 An infant, and maternal tenderness ?

Thou sayest, " the Powers of Nature," name a word  
 Of sounds that ear of man hath never heard,  
 'Twill as good meaning to the soul advance  
 As this grand password of pure ignorance,  
 Which, given when Reason's rampart frowns in view,  
 Without a reason lets the Atheist thro'.

. . . . .

She appeals to the impossibility of proving a negative—

As when from starless midnight lightnings stray  
 And give to dreary wilds a moment's day,  
 And warn the traveller by the fitful spark,  
 Of dangers undetected in the dark,  
 Ne'er hast *thou* felt misgivings that have shown  
 Glimpses of possibilities unknown ?  
 Gulfs never sounded, rocks, and reefs, and shores,  
 Where never yet have plied thy venturous oars ?  
 If one such flash hath ever crossed thy mind  
 'Tis proof, that proof is yet a thing to find ;

For demonstration leaves no doubt behind,  
And short of demonstration, who would run  
Th' amazing hazard of a soul undone?  
Hast thou all deepness fathomed with thy line,  
Scaled every height with that keen eye of thine?  
Each mystery sounded, down to central night,—  
Mysteries of darkness—mysteries of light!  
Are there no fields of space, no holds of strength,  
As yet unmeasured by thy reason's length?  
And if there be,—how venture to deny  
But God that realm unknown, may occupy?  
That there his Being may in glory beam,  
Wide as heaven's ocean, not as here a stream!

She paints with vigorous strokes an Atheist-world, left without sense of God or of a future life, in which "peace and virtue find a common grave." But admits a few possible exceptions:—

A few calm souls, with honey in their blood,  
Who feel no swellings of the inward flood,  
Need not the check of holy fear to quell  
Waves which in them are imperturbable;  
Mild, gentle, reasonable, sober born,  
Without religion, they the folly scorn.

A few beside, of philosophic mould,  
Espy the peril, and wise parley hold;  
Convinced that Nature punishes excess  
By joys abridged, or fated wretchedness,  
They gather up the energy within,  
To ward the danger, not to check the sin;  
And nicely calculate, with scale and rule,  
Where, and how far, 'twere safe to play the fool.

II.

F

But, perhaps, the brightest and most ingenious portions of the poem are those in which the writer deals with the various theories of self-evolution. These, and some other passages, will be found in an Appendix. Enough has been given here to show that the mental power which, in the midst of the busiest and most homely occupations, could produce "three thousand lines" of similar quality, was sufficiently remarkable.

Since the poem was written, we have learnt, indeed, to recognise in the doctrine of evolution a possible mode of the Divine action. It is even suggested in the poem itself :—

" If no *design*, as million ages rolled,  
Watched the slow germ, and bade its powers unfold."

But the satire still applies to conceptions of spontaneous, mindless evolution ; and curiously, in one portion, it anticipates the most recent form of atheistic speculation,—

" Matter and motion, see you—that's the way."

The wit and point of the poem avail against any doctrine which ignores a divine intelligence and volition ; and its appeals to a moral order, and a beneficent purpose, must be always applicable.

MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER IV.

*NOTTINGHAM.*

CONTENTS OF CHAPTER IV.

The "Paul and Apollos" Spirit—Death of Her Son Edward—Isaac Taylor at Stanford Rivers—Servants, Bad and Good—Her Father at Nottingham—The "Natural History of Enthusiasm"—Death of Her Father—Death of Her Mother—Signs of the Times.

## CHAPTER IV.

NOTTINGHAM.

1827-1830.

“Perhaps the cup was broken here  
That heaven’s new wine might show more clear.”

E. B. BROWNING.

“There at the beacon Poplar’s root,  
Dear Ongar ! fell the mellowed fruit.  
My father and my mother there  
Rest in sure hope from earthly care.”

ANN GILBERT.

ON first introducing Salome, Mr Gilbert’s step-niece, to the reader, and describing the happy relations established between her and the new wife who had come to displace her, reference was made to a time of trial lying in far-off years, but through which the wisdom and affection of the two women safely guided them. That time had now come. Salome is the wife of Richard Cecil, who had received his former tutor as co-pastor over the church of which he was minister. Each of them had declared that with none other would he have consented to such an association ; but it was not destined to succeed. My mother, in the brief sketch she published of her husband’s life, thus describes the result :—

“When two ministers are associated over one church, it is

not always between themselves that inconveniences arise. Frequently, nevertheless, the Paul and Apollos spirit (that ancient troubler) is in some way manifested. Before very long it was apparent in our new position, and it may be sufficient to say that a separation was resolved upon."

This passage gives small hint of a long and painful difficulty. There was a singular contrast between the two ministers. In this case it was the older man who represented the larger, liberal views; while the younger, of more timid temperament, belonged to an earlier and more exclusive school. The latter was best fitted to preach to and edify a small body of devout believers; the former to attract and influence varied classes of minds, and especially those of sceptical tendency. It was a conflict between two distinct tendencies of thought, both in the congregation and in a larger sphere beyond; and the sensitive, punctilious honour of the two ministers only rendered the situation more painful.

Naturally, Mr Gilbert thought of retiring to some other field of labour, and again more than one such was offered to him; but the devotion of his friends,\* the belief that a separation must under any circumstances ensue, and, above all, the consciousness that a new and peculiar work was opening to his hands, which he dared not neglect for whatever of personal ease or advantage, bound him to the spot. During the progress of affairs the two wives had

\* Upon mentioning to his friends the applications he had received from important churches—"Sir," said one of them, "we would rather, if it were needful, alter the style of our living—live in smaller houses, and deny ourselves what we are accustomed to, than part with you."—FROM A LETTER BY MRS GILBERT.



long interviews, and wrote long letters, but the possible rent between them did not occur, and presently the two hearts drew to each other under still firmer bonds, as the husbands parted in peace and love.

There was noble self-denial in my mother's refusal to tell her own side of the story to her brother Isaac, anxious though she was for his approval, because she knew what weight Salome attached to his opinion, and that if adverse it would deeply distress her. In writing to her family the principal passage relating to the matter is the following :

“Our long and painful Church business has at length terminated. Mr Gilbert and his friends are withdrawing by mutual agreement, and if ground can be procured a new chapel is to be built for him. I have purposely refrained from giving you details of the affair. They are too complicated, and I never think a quarrel tells well, be as clever as you may in telling it. I can, however, honestly assure you, that with an eye not a little jealous of the sins of my own side, I am not conscious that any unkind, unjust, unwise, or hasty step has been taken by any of them, and I think there appears abundant encouragement for attempting a new interest, in the attraction which Mr Gilbert's style of preaching confessedly has to an order of hearers not otherwise met by any preacher in Nottingham. . . . It is the hope that the best good may eventually result from his continuance, which has influenced him to commit himself to the waves, rather than slink into a foreign port. But the end is yet to be seen, and we, I hope, are chiefly anxious to preserve a suitable feeling and spirit in an act, which in its natural tendency might produce much that is unsuitable. Pray for us.”

But in the midst of this outward anxiety a sorer trouble struck home, and this mother's heart was, for the first

time, pierced by that sword, the sharpness of which none but a mother's heart can know. Of the five boys, one only, Edward Williams, named after his father's venerated friend, seemed to promise the true scholarly mind, answering to his father's longing; while his quaint, thoughtful sweetness endeared him no less to his mother. He was not nine years old, but he already read his Greek Testament, and had made his mark both at school and at home. The stealthy footsteps of the coming sorrow are thus recorded in his mother's diary:—

*February 11, 1827.*—Sunday, “Dear Edward at home, poorly. . . . 15<sup>th</sup>, Dear Edward confined to bed. . . . 18<sup>th</sup> (The following Sunday), at home with dear Edward all day. 21<sup>st</sup> (Tuesday), our beloved child continued sleepless, but quiet, with more pain; gave him his last medicine a quarter before four. (Wednesday morning), slightly incoherent . . . gradual sinking till two. Mr G. and I alone with him. A pause—a sob—and the sweet child expired at ten minutes past two o'clock.”

Such is the short story of a grief so poignant, that for nearly forty years afterwards it was never referred to without tears. To her eldest and absent child she wrote at the time:—

“I should be grieved that such a stroke should pass off without making a deep and solemn impression on every one of us, especially on our dear surviving children. . . . Nothing is like a *sight* of death and the grave, to impress the familiar neglected lesson, that *we* must give an account of ourselves at the bar of God. We see how wholly unexpected such a summons may come, and then, if ever, we feel the importance of being also,

and always ready. Ah! if you had been awakened from your sleep to see your dear, tender brother die; if you had stood for hours at his bedside, unable to render the slightest assistance in that awful conflict, and uncertain whether the soothing words addressed to him could find their way to his departing spirit, I think your impressions of the awfulness of dying, would have been far deeper than they can be now; and you would feel that to be habitually prepared for such an hour, is greater happiness than anything or everything beside." . . .

"During his illness nothing could exceed his patience, submission, and clear collectedness. His memory was most distinct and accurate, and his fear of occasioning either expense or trouble very engaging. Once, after his medicine, he asked for a raisin, I said, 'Would you not like a fig, my love?' He replied, 'Which is the dearest?' On being told he need not regard that, he said, 'I *like* figs, but they are a halfpenny a piece.' Once, when offered some nauseous medicine, which he had taken till he could not endure it, he said, 'He could *not* take any more.' 'My dear child,' I said, 'it is the first time you have disobeyed me,' on which he drank it without a word. . . .

"On Tuesday morning your papa and I drest his coffin with snowdrops and evergreens, and at half-past two, with many kisses, and tears, we all took our last leave of him. Dear, dear child! His memory is like a sweet heavenly flower to us. We all sung round his coffin, 'Peace, 'tis the Lord Jehovah's hand,' and at three *he was taken away from his father's house*. Mr Cecil prayed over his grave, a deep one, in the solid rock, and there we left our dear, sweet, tender, beloved child."

It has been sufficiently obvious that with all her liveliness there was a vein of morbid anxiety in my mother's mind, and this, with respect to the eternal welfare of her children, naturally took the shape of an intense solicitude

even in their earliest years. It was brought out in all its strength, when this first child of hers was called away. In announcing his illness to Ongar she wrote—"I know you will pray for his life, but I earnestly request you to pray more for his salvation; this is what presses most upon me. He is certainly a hopeful one, but it is an anxious age." So she recalls every little indication, and there were many, of religious thoughtfulness. Distrusting always set forms and phrases, she had encouraged her children at an early age to use their own words in "saying their prayers," and she remarks that she "had always perceived in his, a nerve of thought and feeling very different from mere repetition, while, when he read hymns at family worship, which he did frequently, it was with a perfect and beautiful emphasis."\* Still she was not satisfied. When is passionate love satisfied of the security of its object? She wanted evidence of faith and holiness, the great tests she sought. The conditions of salvation,—perhaps to her earnest nature too limited in scope—became under this bereavement more stringent still, and it was long before the influence of her husband, and the arguments of Christian friends, restored her to a calmer view.

All this may by many be attributed solely to a narrow school of theology, but neither her father, nor her husband, were led by their creed to such results. And while it is easy to declaim against the narrowness,—easy to say that such views defame the divine character; should we not the rather admire and venerate those who humbly accept conclusions so terrible to them, simply on what they

\* The precocity he had shown no doubt increased her sense of his responsibility.

believe to be divine authority, and who say in effect—“Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee”? Faith such as this is great faith. If we have reached a larger understanding of the divine administration, yet, as every phase of truth has its dangers, we may suffer under a lack of that spiritual intensity and concern for the soul, which distinguished a past generation.

From her brother Isaac she received consolation in these weighty words,—

“My own views, my dear sister, of the nature and extent of the redemption effected by the Saviour of the world, would give me the strongest comfort in such a case as yours. You well know the intention of every obscurity that is thrown around either Providences or Doctrines—to force us to an uninquisitive repose in the *general* assurances of the Divine Word. In front of every *veil* is written: ‘HAVE FAITH IN GOD;’ and as we shall have need to keep our eyes upon that inscription when about ourselves to pass the curtain that hides from us the future life, so, for our comfort, we must continually regard it, when those dear to us pass from our sight.”

Her own thoughts presently took shape in the following lines:—

Say, conscience, where does mystery lie,  
 In comfort,—or calamity?  
 Most is it strange that pain and ill  
 Attend my earthly sojourn still?  
 That death my bosom's peace invades,  
 And spreads my day with evening shades?  
 Or, that one beam of joy should shine  
 To cheer a spirit stained as mine?  
 Oh, let me not, for aught of pain,

The goodness of my God arraign !  
 But wonder, as the grace I scan  
 That mingles mercy in the plan,  
 The bitter cup with sweet allays,  
 And sheds some light on darkest days ;  
 Or strangely, from the grief, distils  
 Balm for the spirit's deeper ills.

My heart, the rebel sigh suppress,  
 Breathe but in holy thankfulness ;  
 And ever, ever, let me see  
 In LOVE the only mystery !

In July of this year, 1827, Mrs Gilbert, with two of her boys, paid what was destined to be the last visit to her father and mother at Ongar. She spent a week in and about London on the way, and wrote to her husband—

“ Heard Mr Irving at his beautiful Gothic Chapel on Sunday evening. His text was the outpouring of the sixth vial, but whether his sermon was the cork or the bottle, no flesh could tell. It was solely an accumulation of all the prophetic intimations of the future destiny of Ephraim, concluding with something between a prayer for, and a curse upon, all neglecters of the prophetic Scriptures.”

A singular circumstance had given her brother Isaac a peculiar interest in the once great orator. His fame rose with a bound from the expressed admiration of Mackintosh, who, going to hear him one evening at Hatton Garden, was struck with the solemnity and grandeur of a prayer in which he committed a family recently deprived of their last remaining parent to “ the Fatherhood of God.”

The second daughter of that family became Isaac Taylor's wife, and it was through this connection that Irving preached one of his great sermons at Ongar on a Sunday School anniversary. Isaac Taylor was very skilful in tracing the profiles of his friends as thrown in shadow upon a wall, and on this occasion took a striking silhouette of Irving. The fine countenance was, as is well known, disfigured by a squint; walking through Ongar with Jane Taylor—"What is that?" he asked; observing the direction of the eye next to her, she demurely replied, "A wheelbarrow, Sir." Unfortunately the other eye was fixed upon a signboard above her head.

This time it was not only at the last hill hiding the view of Ongar that my mother's heart began to beat with happy expectation; for now, two miles earlier on the road, at Stanford Rivers, her brother Isaac and his charming young wife were at their garden gate to welcome her, and the coach, in the leisurely neighbourliness of those days pulled up for a few minutes to accommodate them. He had been married nearly two years, and was settled in the simple old house with its large garden, and no other view than of woods and fields, which has ever since been associated with his name. Here for forty years he accumulated his "Patristic"\* folios, and wrote the works which gave him his high place in literature. Here, to seek "the recluse of Stanford Rivers," came one and another of the band of thinkers he had gathered round him in England, Scotland, and America. His wife, of an ideal sweetness of form and character, he some years later depicted under the name of Aia, in the singular romance entitled "The Temple of

\* One of his coined words.

Melekartha," written as relaxation after the labours of a translation of Herodotus. The scenery taken from amidst the "Origines" of nations, was suggested by his recent occupation, and the story was made a vehicle for speculations, philosophical, religious, and political, some of which were expanded in his other writings. But there was one character studied from life, and it was hers who, on this July evening, stood with her husband to greet her new sister, the Ann of his old companionship. For all the years that followed, Stanford Rivers was another heart-centre to that sister's thoughts.

At Ongar, this once more, stood her father's genial portly figure, now touching his 70th year, his cheek ruddy with apple tints; no Jane was at his side, but Ann had once remarked "it is not my custom to bury living pleasures in the grave of dead ones," and so she wrote, "I, just now, feel myself as happy as the scene that surrounds me is beautiful—the little house in trim order, the evening exceedingly fine, and the green slopes and trees, seen from my bed-room window, looking quite lovely." From that chamber, she could see the venerable chimnies of the old "peaked farm," the "chase-way" to the Castle-house of earlier memory, and the white glimmer among the trees of Jane Taylor's tombstone.

In this visit, her facile pen was soon engaged in helping her remaining sister in the editorship of some small periodicals.

"I have often told you," she writes to her husband, "that nothing is so good for me as hard work without any relaxation, and the frequent headaches I have had since I left home, in spite of air, exercise, and idleness, seem to confirm the opinion. For



two or three days last week and this, I have sat pretty closely to writing, in order to spare Jemima's eyes, and I have not felt so well, or eaten with so good an appetite, since I came, as during this most *healthful exercise*. Should I stay another week, I shall hope to get almost fair to look upon, under a continuation of this regimen. Different people have different ways, haven't they?"

It is amusing, but very characteristic, to find her in the same letter, written while the new chapel was building at Nottingham, warning against the possible erection of an organ gallery—

"I am, you do not know *how* solicitous, that your prosperity should be *pure*, and of good report,—not attributable to the pomp that charms the eye, or '*pipes adorned with gold.*' How could we ever sing without a blush, those proud lines—'How decent and how wise'—if you betray your suspicion of the aid of God's blessing, by praying the good offices of an organ? Do not, pray do not *you*, be reduced to such '*beggarly elements.*'"

There was something of her father's puritan severity in this, but there was more of that intense yearning for reality, which, in other circumstance, might have made her a Santa Chiara. During many years of later life, she listened quietly enough to organ strains, and even said nothing at the introduction of chants. There might have been a sigh for the old ways, but everybody was against her, and in a strife of tongues, she always sheltered herself in silence.

But it is painful to notice what this brave and gifted nature suffered often in Nottingham, from bad servants. This plague of a town, where women are largely employed

in factories, was new to her. Writing home, she speaks of a fresh arrival, "who will be the ninth I have had, either as help or hindrance, within the last two months." Another time, she writes of literally "living in the streets, in despairing search after a decent servant ;" and again, "I look, as everybody says, very miserably ; and if there is any cause beyond natural wear and tear, it must be the perpetual worry of spirit in which my domestic department has kept me for the last year." To her "crony" at Hull, herself the mistress of a large household, she could confide these troubles.

"If my servants would but let me, I could now be almost a lady, but my cooking department has been filled in such a style lately, as never fell to my lot before ; bustle, confusion, irregular hours, dirt, disorder, crumbs, and cinders, have formed the olio of my domestic happiness for many weeks ; and I think the daily vexation has worn me thinner than a twelvemonth's nursing would have done. I have, however, some hope that my miseries are coming to a close, and begin to dream of comfort again. If it were not to *you*, I am sure I ought to apologise for all this detail, but we have had it out so often over our muffs, that I do not know why we should not, now and then, call up old times upon paper."

That mistresses of households, when they meet "over their muffs," or a cup of tea, should talk about "servants," provokes a frequent gibe ; but who can wonder when the happiness or misery of a household so much depends upon this particular branch of it ? That the true honourableness of faithful and efficient service is an idea fading from our civilisation, is a great reproach to it. Yet, it must be confessed, that all mistresses are not like the two excellent

specimens with whom—the mother and the daughter—this narrative has been concerned. Nor did the latter fail to secure, and perhaps oftener than some of her neighbours, good servants, and to keep them—sometimes for many years. She writes of a “brisk little cook, fighting the cobwebs as assiduously as ever.” And of another, from Derbyshire, “who is exhibiting, daily, so much good sense and good feeling, as fully compensates to me for the coarse simplicity and uncourtly freedom of the exterior.”

Having just quoted from her correspondence with this dear Hull friend, we may take another extract from a letter written after visiting her—

“And now, having just returned from dining out, I do not feel just as I would wish when I set about to remember Hull, and all the endearing associations connected with it ; but this is such a busy world, that I seem to be driven at a full trot upon those pleasant winding lanes of feeling and sentiment, along which, in days gone by, it would have been luxury to saunter. If a letter is to be written, I must write it when I *can*, not when I would—not to a nicety when the frame comes over me, but when, ‘humanly speaking,’ there are no stockings to mend, or closets to clean, or meat to buy, or maids to scold ; or worse still, when one is tired to death with doing all of them. I wish that when enjoying my lonely musings on the top of the coach, I could have fixed them in black and white. The thought of you all, and your unwearied kindness, came over me so sweetly and tenderly, that I longed to get home and tell you all about it ; and now you see I *am* at home, and, homelike, both sleepy and tired ! Tell Maria that whatever she may think of it, this is just like life, and for anything I know, ‘just like love too.’ Though, as I don’t wish to make myself disagreeable, you may,

if you please, keep that last clause behind the scenes, for the present. I had a pleasant journey home, and was left, as I like to be on such occasions, to spend the day with my own musings. For a short time, however, these were interrupted by a scene threatening an overturn, the coachman having accidentally lost the reins; very providentially an umbrella was at hand, with which he regained them, but we had made something like an *ampersand* on the road before he could manage it. He assured me that he was 'never noways alarmed,' but unless he had said so, I should certainly not have inferred it from his voice and manner."

In her home letter of Christmas greeting this year—  
Dec. 21, 1827—she writes—

"I cannot help observing, as I date my letter, that this day fifteen years, at this time, I was sitting in state at Mrs Blackmore's on the Quay, Ilfracombe, Devon, every moment expecting to see the Rev. Joseph Gilbert of Rotherham, Yorkshire, who nevertheless did not make his appearance till to-morrow morning; and now, who, what, and where am I? Oh, how many brighter prospects have been quenched and forgotten between that time and this! How many tales might be told of scenes that have opened and closed, and wholly passed away, all within that period! But I intended this for Christmas gratulation, and was only led into this strain by the date above. . . . Mr Gilbert is going to take a pupil, and we have had in consequence to paper and refurnish the room in which our Edward died, and to do away with every vestige of its late dear inhabitant. Everything will be perfectly different, and I am partly glad, though not without tender and mournful feelings, as I saw the old furniture moved out. I do not often mention the sweet child, but every day has to me some inscription sacred to

his memory, and the time approaches in which I shall live it all again. Last Christmas day our own seven, with Mr and Mrs Cecil and theirs, all surrounded a cheerful table at our own house. Oh, what clouds were brooding, to fall on both !”

The year 1828 was marked by the opening of the new chapel built for Mr Gilbert in Friar Lane, an event the more interesting to his wife because her father was prevailed upon to come and preach on the morning of the 17th of April, the first sermon within its walls. His text was significant—“He sprinkled with blood all the vessels of the ministry.” In the evening Dr Raffles preached from “I am the way,” so that the old and the new dispensations were appropriately represented. In writing to her mother, with the earnest petition that she would spare him for this undertaking she added—“tell my father, if he comes, that, concerning giving and receiving, they need not that he should preach unto them, for they have been ready a year ago.” She rejoiced, too, in the nature of the congregation, as “chiefly drawn from the highways and hedges, where no shepherd ever went before,” and as “having an unusual proportion of men, and of thinking men.” On the Sunday following, her father preached again—“None knoweth the Father but the Son,” &c., and in the evening Mr Gilbert took his place for the first time in his own pulpit, and well the text illustrated the mind of the speaker—despondent, yearning, lifting itself to God—“Son of Man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.”

Mr Taylor spent a fortnight at Nottingham, treated with much affectionate reverence wherever he went, and on the 1st of May this short entry in his daughter’s diary implies

a great deal—"Went with dear father to the coach at six in the morning." Yet she did not know that, as it drove away, she had seen him for the last time!

She always pitied the forlornness of strangers—lecturers, or other stray visitors in the town, who had only an inn to go to, and breakfasts, dinners, and beds, notwithstanding her full and busy house, were freely put at their disposal. Hospitality of this sort she never grudged, but did much object to the expenditure of time and money on "parties," to which sort of entertainment she could rarely be persuaded to consent. Among such visitors were the noted Phrenological lecturer, Dr Spurzheim and his wife, and the doctor repaid the kindness shown to them by carefully examining the heads of such of the children as were then at home. His opinions upon character, and suggestions for education and settlement in life, she always referred to as having been remarkably justified by the event, and especially his dictum respecting one of her sons—"Do not trouble this boy much with Latin and Greek, give him facts, give him facts!" Now, she wrote to her sister, "electricity, arithmetic, and chemistry," are the only pursuits he enjoys. This son she lived to see a vice-president of the Chemical Society, a fellow of the Royal Society, and of European reputation in his particular branch of science. Another stranger in the town, unknown to her except through his connection with an old Suffolk acquaintance, she nursed assiduously at his hotel where he was lying ill, till able to travel.

The year 1829 saw her, for almost the only time in her life, prostrate with a long and dangerous illness. She was taken with rheumatic fever on the 12th of March, and it

was two months before she could leave the house. In her first letter home she says :—

“Without one exception I feel that I may say—at least I hope I can—that the whole seven weeks has been but one course of mercy, for I would not have been without the suffering, especially this latter return of it. Excepting the scarlet fever, it is the first personal affliction I have known in seven-and-forty years, and while I feel thankful for such a favour, would not feel less thankful for favour in this less pleasing, but not I trust less salutary form of it.”

It was during her recovery that she found time to read one or two of her brother's recent works, then beginning to attract attention, and she expresses the great pleasure that the “Process of Historical Proof” had given her. The “Natural History of Enthusiasm” was published this year, and excited extraordinary interest, enhanced no doubt by the care with which the secret of its authorship was concealed. It had been its author's chief occupation after removing from his father's house at Ongar to Stanford Rivers, but the family at Ongar knew nothing of it. When, however, everybody was talking of the book, and quotations appeared in all periodicals, those who knew him intimately, soon fixed in their own minds upon the writer. Some months after publication, his father hearing that his son was in the house, entered with a review of the book in his hand, and pointing to an extract said—“Isaac, I think I know who wrote this.” To which the son replied, —“Well, sir,\* if I have not told you, you will believe I

\* The father and mother were always addressed by their sons as “sir” and “ma'am.”

thought there were good reasons for it." And the secret was long kept. Intended as the first volume of a series dealing with the manifold perversions of Christianity, this reticence might be advisable, but it was also like him. Two more volumes, "Fanaticism" and "Spiritual Despotism," followed ; but, as Sir James Stephen in his singular Essay upon the works of the author of the "Natural History of Enthusiasm" remarked, it was from that book that he derived his "literary peerage."

The following appeal from his sister, received probably a most cautious answer, if any at all :—"We are asked far and near, whether the 'Natural History of Enthusiasm' be not Isaac's? We have seen only extracts in reviews, which bear, we think, strong internal evidence. Mr — and — both sent to inquire of us, having immediately concluded that it was so. *We herewith require, therefore, an explicit reply.* We greatly admire all we have read, and I for one shall be much disappointed if it be not." Seven years later, when, after at first declining, he was induced to allow his name to be brought forward as a candidate for the chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh, it was necessary to make a formal avowal of authorship ; this was done through the late Mr Pickering of Chancery Lane, and was thus announced to his sister,—“Married on Friday last, at 57 Chancery Lane, by special license, Isaac Taylor, Esq., of Stanford Rivers, after a long courtship, to 'Natural History of Enthusiasm.' The lady is the eldest of a large family, and is understood, although she has a *title*, not to have brought a fortune.”

The great pile of letters addressed to “My Dear



Family," from which so much quotation has been made, comes, with this year, to an end. On December 12, 1829, she wrote a long letter, making arrangements for the return home of her eldest son. She knew the pain it gave to his grand-parents, to part with him; he had now lived for ten years under their roof, and she writes with tender, loving thankfulness for all their care, trying, especially, to soften the parting to her mother. But on the morning of that day, Saturday, at 9 o'clock, her father, after a brief struggle, had entered into rest—or rather into that wider and more blessed activity, for which his life-long industry of love had prepared him. He was a servant, called up higher. The news did not reach his daughter till the Tuesday following, in a short letter from her brother,—

"My dear Sister,—I have no means of preparing you to bear the great sorrow that has fallen suddenly upon us,—the best of fathers has left us! . . . . Would that you could witness the heaven of benignity visibly written upon the face of our departed father! The rare beauty of his character lingers on the cold remains. . . . Jefferys and Martin have come, and have mingled their tears on mother's hollow cheeks.—My dear sister, our weeping is great."

She sat down, and wrote in large broken characters, very unlike herself—

"My dear, dear, mother,—May God bless and sustain you. He is able—and no one else can. O, it is delightful to think of my dear father! not a thought we could wish otherwise. What a mercy! What a life! O that we may follow him! We shall come to you as soon as possible. My head is confused, and I cannot think. I have only this hour received the letter—O, to

be such a Christian ! Dear brother and sister, and dear mother, and dear child, yours—in grief and affection.—ANN GILBERT.”

The following are portions of a long letter, written to her children from Ongar—

“ . . . . . ‘ Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.’ Be ye followers of *them*; in some things you *must* be. You must, if spared, struggle as they did with the trials of life, and like them, you must, sooner or later, close the struggles and trials of life in the grave. But, O, the difference that may still subsist between you and them ! . . . . . I cannot foresee more than *this*, that what a man soweth, that shall he also reap. If all your efforts are made towards a harvest on *earth*, from earth only shall you reap. O, be wise, my dear children, and whatever others do, or whatever your own young hearts may incline *you* to do, ‘ be ye followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. . . . .’

“ The only thing we have to wish, that was not granted to us in your dear grandpapa’s death is, that he had been sufficiently aware of the nearness of the change to have spoken to those around him, in the immediate view of it. But it is evident that neither he, nor anyone, had any suspicion that it was at hand, even at the door, till voice had failed him. He had preached with great energy on the Sabbath, and though, at the ordinance, he almost took leave of his people, yet he was so habitually in the view of death, and so often referred to it, that it would scarcely be felt as remarkable. On Monday, he was re-elected treasurer, for the year ensuing, of the Book society, and it was observed how much of Christian cheerfulness, and of the truly pastoral character, sat upon him. On the Wednesday, your aunt went, as usual, to meet the working party ; but on her return, found him much distressed, and labouring for breath. She had,

as it were, taken leave of her happy home, when she went out that afternoon (though she little thought so), and was to see it as it had been no more. On Thursday, though very poorly, he wrote a reply to a very kind present he had received, the day before, from the young people of the place, a handsome black cloak, accompanied by this pretty note. "The cloke which Paul left at Troas, might possibly be the gift of several young persons who received the benefit of his instructions, looked up to him as a father, and esteemed him very highly in love, for his works' sake; however that might be, if Mr Taylor will kindly accept of the accompanying trifle, he will gratify similar individuals and similar feelings. He is requested not to regard the smallness of the value so much as the affection with which it is presented." He was just able to try it on on Wednesday evening, but was scarcely able to sustain the weight."

"On Friday night, when your uncle had seen him into bed, he said,—'These are serious times, Isaac, but I have had more enlargement in prayer to-night than I have had for some while.' . . . . (After describing the discovery, on Saturday morning, that he was sinking fast, the letter proceeds). "The last breath passed from him with his happy spirit, as near as they can remember, about 9 o'clock. He looked sweetly asleep—calm, benignant, peaceful, dignified, and they could hardly believe he would wake no more. Uncle Isaac arrived about ten minutes after.

"During that day, poor grandmamma could not cry, but seemed so stern and strange, that it frightened them. She kept saying, 'I am a widow—a widow, but not a weeping widow, oh no—no tears!' On Sabbath day, however, the sluices of sorrow burst, and she seemed as if she would die away. . . . .

"On the following Saturday, at twelve o'clock, the funeral took place; six ministers attended as pall-bearers. All of the congregation who could leave their homes, all the young people,

and the children of the Sunday schools, in black ribbons, followed. . . . He lies in a new, deep grave, by the side of aunt Jane. Aunt Isaac stayed with grandmamma, who *would* see the funeral leave the house, and watched it from what was aunt Jane's window, as far as she could see. They then waited to see it in the Meeting-yard, from the other side of the house, but the sun shone so brightly on the mist, that after an hour's waiting, all they could see—and grandmamma did not even see that—was, for one moment, the white edge of the pall, as it was drawn from the coffin."

His life had been passed in the sunshine of righteousness and happy usefulness, and the sun shone brightly on his burial, through the mist of the winter day. On the following Sunday, one of the oldest of the Essex ministers preached from the words, "An abundant entrance," and Mr Gilbert in the evening, from, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

On her last visit to Ongar during her father's lifetime, Mrs Gilbert wrote some lines upon "a country garden,"—such a garden as had been her father's life-long delight. The concluding portion of them, prophetic of the end, ran thus:—

Still happier he—the Christian—bent and hoar,  
The toil, the storm, of changeful labour o'er,  
When but one slope of life's long road remains,  
Its sorrows numbered, and despised its gains,  
Here, in some green seclusion to await  
His Master's summons to the crystal gate.

Sweet are his hours of morn,—bright hours of prayer,  
Springing to heaven on the healthful air;

Serene his hours of eve, when wakeful praise  
Gathers sweet scented flowers from past gone days ;  
Sweet on that day, the fairest of the seven,  
From these green shades to send his hopes to heaven.

And when the garden porch with roses gay,  
Ere long shall open for a mute array  
Of weeping mourners, and the path which bore  
His aged step, shall know that step no more,  
Still dear shall be this garden, when 'tis sighed,  
“ Here lived a Christian,—here a Christian died.”

But stroke was to follow stroke. Mrs Gilbert left Ongar on the 6th of January, her mother, she wrote, looking, as she parted from her, “a hundred years old with grief.” She took with her the son so long almost a stranger to his father’s home, and contemplating a removal to another house where she hoped to retain him for a time, wrote to the two dear ones left at Ongar—her mother and sister—of the arrangements she was making, “but,” she adds—

“ How long shall poor, weary worldly-mindedness keep fixing and re-fixing its hold upon the sands?—anchoring for rest on the shifting shallows! ‘Blest are the dead who die secure!’ Oh, it is peace and happiness to revert for a moment to the safety, the rest, the eternal security of our dear father. No doubt hangs on his memory. He worked the work of Him that sent him with eminent activity and success—made a *long day* of it, laboured to the last, and is safe for ever. His dear fragrant name is spoken only with affection and blessing. ‘Why should we mourn departing friends’ under circumstances of such unspeakable mercy! Dear mother, cannot you feel it so? ’Tis but a speck, and to us the days of mourning shall be ended.”

To that mother, whose days of mourning were days of anguish, they were indeed to be but as a speck. Five months after her husband's decease, she lay down beside him in the dust of death. Again the daughter took her sorrowful journey to Ongar, and on the 4th of June the family again assembled as before. Round the coffin they read the hymn quoted above, "Why do we mourn?"—while still they mourned. Again they listened to the funeral sermon, with a text as appropriate as the others—"I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness," and then, in the evening, the whole family gathered, "probably for the *last* time" (as, rendered sensitive by these repeated blows, the eldest of them now wrote in her diary), and read together their mother's powerful chapter in "Maternal Solitude," entitled, "Man goeth to his long home," where, with too vivid an imagination, she dwells upon the secrets of that prison-house, herself the prisoner!

With that death the household at Ongar was finally broken up. All the memorials of a family life, artistic and literary, of more than fifty years,—furniture of the first home at Islington, relics from Lavenham and Colchester, family portraits, drawings and paintings of home scenes and people, innumerable educational contrivances of the busy, benevolent father,—all were mournfully divided; while the daughter, left without a home, had to choose one either with her brother Isaac or her sister Ann. The latter could scarcely bear the strain of this wrench from Ongar, but she wrote many a tender line of sympathy and consolation to her whom, years before, she had addressed in the lines—

“ Dear cherished child, if you should have  
To travel far alone,  
And weep by turns at many a grave,  
Before you reach your own.”

For the mournful foreboding seemed likely to be fulfilled.

“ Our dear parents (she tells her) always spoke as they felt, that you were the soft and pleasant pillow of their old age. If your own sensitive memory can supply hints of regret, still, dear Jemima, you cannot evade the solid satisfaction of these reflections. And though I would with caution at all times indulge the sentiment of reward, yet how otherwise are we to read such expressions as, ‘ God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.’ In our domestic connections there is, I think, a peculiar agreement between our dealings with others, and the arrangements of Providence towards us ; so that with what measure we mete, it shall be meted to us again.”

A pretty attic at Stanford Rivers was fitted up as a temporary residence for this bereaved one, and her sister rejoices that it was so exactly the counterpart of “ dear Jane’s at Colchester.” A country attic, with sloping ceiling, small-paned dormer windows, near neighbourhood of birds and trees, and out-of-the-wayness from the bustle of the house, had always special charms for the members of this family ; and each could look back to the particular attic that, at some period of life, had been a much loved refuge.

But these heavy blows were not without their effect upon my mother’s susceptible mind. After her father’s death she wrote to her sister :—

“ I have lately felt disposed to an almost entire infidelity as to

the genuineness of personal religion, and often start with the suspicion that we are self-deceived almost universally. It may, or may not be a morbid view, but we cannot err in remembering that 'many of the first shall be last, and the last first.' My pen has carried me where I had no design of going, but the impression has been so strong on my mind for some time, that it is but the expression of prevailing thoughts. But the remembrance of dear father shines like a sun through the gloominess of such reflections, and renders the thought of him, whether in life or in death, a thought of peace, beauty, and happiness. One whom we loved is safe, whoever may miss the way. Thanks be to God who hath given him the victory, and who still offers it to us."

Again to her friend Mrs Cowie,—

"I have been led to believe that religion is a deeper, wider thing than ever before I had seen or felt it; and it makes me more suspicious of the germs and indications of it than once I should have been. . . . What a wonderful, precious thing is true piety! that seed which *shall* spring, that spark which *shall* flame, that strife which *shall* conquer, that light which *shall* arise, and grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day! . . . It will be a year to-morrow since I sat down to write to you in unconscious comfort, while my dear father was lying dead! O, it has been a painful year to me in many ways. Stroke upon stroke! and such a variety of confusing, distracting, uprooting, searching, bitter, and trying feelings, has borne down upon me, that my spirit has felt at times breaking, or rather crushing under the pressure. I have been led through a dark scene, into a darker, and the secret chambers of my own heart have been opened up to me. As yet the light does not shine, and I go mourning all the day because of the oppression of the enemy. Of this I am quite convinced, that happiness apart from holiness



is not to be found, and yet my soul lies cleaving to the dust ! I am hurried under a keen sense of the shortness of life, and when I see the shadows gathering as they now do around me, and evening coming on, I feel that the work of life is yet to do. O that the young could feel as we are compelled to feel, the fleetness, the value, the irrecallableness of time ! How actively would they set to the diligent improvement of it ! How thankful would they be to feel that the seal of years had not been set on the follies, failings, and sins of their character !—that to them it was still possible to offer to God the fragrance of a flower in the bud.”

These deep searchings of spirit, due to the rending of some of the dearest earthly ties, were also not unaffected by an impression very prevalent among Christian people at that time, that the great millennial advent was, in some shape, drawing near. The preaching of Edward Irving was an indication of this current of thought, while it mightily urged its flow ; and it influenced Isaac Taylor in writing his series of meditations, entitled, “Saturday Evening,” of which he says, “the author does not deny that, in his choice of a title, he had an allusion to the expectation now very generally entertained by Christians, that our own times are precursive of the era of Rest, which the Church has been taught to look for.” His sister could not but share in a feeling to which the calm spirit of her brother had yielded ; and it was in this strain, and before death had come to darken her soul with repeated strokes, that she wrote to one of her early friends—

“I hope that I feel something like an increasing desire to accomplish faithfully, as a hireling, my day. If we do not mistake the signs of the times, glorious days are approaching,

and, at least, by training our children to work in the vineyard, we may humbly aim to augment the vintage. I think the children of the Church should now be regarded as an especial charge. They are probably destined, either to urge on the victory of our Lord and of his Christ, or to perish beneath his chariot wheels; and a spirit of Christian enterprise, Christian heroism, should surely be kept in view, as the great end of their education. I am not saying, altogether, what I do; but what I wish, and pray to do, though from within and from without, many are the obstacles to such a course."

Now, with increased emphasis, she writes, "happy mothers, if *our* children are to take the right side in the great division, for which all the movements of the nations appear to prepare! My soul faints with longing to see proofs of decision."

The expectations of those days have passed away, or have taken a different shape. "The time was not yet," although strange fulfilments have been coming to pass under the eyes of those who were then but children. In 1830, the first note was, in reality, sounded of changes that have been hurrying on since, with ever-increasing rapidity; and those who have lived to see the extinction of the "crowned priest's" temporal power in the one hemisphere, and the abolition of slavery in the other, both amid seas of blood,—a siege of Paris, a siege of Rome; and now, the oldest institutions of society passing away, or brought forward for re-adjustment, may well feel that, whether or no the millennial *Rest* is near, they have witnessed much of that shaking and judgment, of which their fathers seem to have had prevision.

MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER V.

*NOTTINGHAM.*

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## CHAPTER V.

NOTTINGHAM.

1830-1840.

“ Thus, girded for the mortal strife,  
As Time’s rough path is trod,  
Walk, as, to everlasting life  
Our father walked, with God.”—

ANN GILBERT.

“ The bold teacher’s doctrine, sanctified  
By truth, shall spread.”—

WORDSWORTH.

THE year 1830, the dark year, which witnessed the final breaking up of the Ongar circle, and the extinction of the warm interests associated with her father’s house, while it was the ending amidst sorrow and tears of one large portion of my mother’s life, was also the beginning of another—a long and peaceful period of active happiness. The cares of a young family were now gradually ceasing, and though other cares were succeeding, much of daily pressure was removed, and a new set of interests beginning to surround her.

But the reader may perhaps have received from her correspondence an impression of disorder in that earlier household, which was very far from the case. With sometimes bad servants, a crowded nursery, and all

the extra occupations of a minister's wife, she may not have reached her ideal of a well-ordered house, but a letter written many years afterwards by a lady who lived under my mother's roof in charge of the education of her children, will show how much there was to admire and imitate, while its accurate appreciation of character makes it all the more valuable.

“ You ask me to call up some recollections of your dear mother, and to give you my impressions of her as I knew her then. How easy this would be if it depended simply upon memory! I can never forget the strong, clear, definite outlines of her character, nor the delicate beautiful touches that gave such an indescribable attraction to it. There was a firmness and straightforwardness in her gait that was essentially indicative of her moral strength; while a clear, distinct, sonorous utterance, impressed one with the order, perspicuity, and justice of her ideas. She was a lover of peace and order, and though I lived with her for several years, I never saw her temper ruffled, or heard her say a harsh or unreasonable word. Seldom a day passes now, though at this great distance of time, that I do not recall some feature of her domestic management, wondering often what was the secret of her uniform regularity and order in every department of her sphere of action. Indeed it seems to me, as I look back upon those years, that it was almost impossible for anyone in the house to swerve much from the line marked out for him or her. The kitchen, the nursery, the library, the school-room, all felt the gentle restraint of her never-varying propriety.

“ Mrs Gilbert was habitually an early riser. When I knew her she rose at six, and was accustomed to do an hour's needle-work before the rest of the family were out of bed. She was indefatigable with her needle, and her love for keeping things in repair must often have been at the great sacrifice of her love of

reading. Yet I have heard Mr Gilbert good-humouredly remark, 'Though Ann seldom indulges herself in looking into a book, I don't know how it is, she is always up to everything that is going on in the literary world.'

"Her discipline with her children was gentle, yet very firm; and her remonstrances had always a tone of earnest, tender entreaty, that it was difficult to resist, so that force or punishment was seldom resorted to. It was her custom to train the youngest child, at but a year old, to sit quite still on her knee during family worship, and to understand that the toy or biscuit, which might be in the hand, must be laid aside till the conclusion of the service; and this was universally done without a murmur on the part of the little one, from that same restraining influence which, as I before observed, was exercised over the whole house. Her manner was alike easy, affable, and kind to persons of every rank, and her sprightly repartees, interspersed through all her conversation, constantly took you by surprise, and elicited a laugh at the most unexpected moment, while she passed it by with scarce a smile. Her puns were inimitable, so natural, easy, and adroit, that you wondered they had not struck you before she uttered them.

"One of her greatest charms, was her charity, not speaking ill of any one, and always hearing, with regret, anything unfavourable against any person. She was a true friend, and a true woman, not lavish of endearments, but with a wealth of love in her heart, ever ready in the service of all with whom she had to do. Few women, with so elevated a poetic nature, have combined so much practical utilitarianism, and energetic self-abnegation; for a strong and healthy conscientiousness regulated every spring of her actions. I loved her dearly, admired and esteemed her profoundly, and cannot forget that the very last act of her life was one of sweet motherly kindness towards me and the little child that was accompanying me in my visit to Nottingham. She had

sent a message, begging me to come and spend a week with her, and to bring my little four-year-old Dagmar too, saying she would so much enjoy this renewal of our old friendship once more. How little did I expect, when I went in the morning, to answer this kind invitation, to find my dear old friend in a state of insensibility, from which she never woke again !”

The new decade, introduced by 1830, was marked by removal to a new residence in Nottingham. Miss Greaves's health could no longer sustain the exposed situation of the castle in winter, for all its thick walls, and she purchased two large houses in Castlegate, close to the tree-shaded little church of St Nicholas, upon whose tower, in the Parliamentary wars, some guns were mounted, it is said, wherewith to annoy the castle. The smaller of the two houses, abutting on the churchyard, she offered, at easy rent, to her pastor. So her friends again, as at Hull, dwelt beside her, losing only the advantage of many an early walk, to breakfast at the “Castle”—many a visit, days and weeks long, to the breezy rock. Once more, the subject of our story enjoyed the privilege of a garden, but it lay through the churchyard, a matter somewhat trying to her lively imagination. The proximity, indeed, was not only a sentimental grievance. As usual, with Nottingham houses, there was a rock-hewn cellar, and the particular trending of this had not been noticed till, upon occasion of a deep grave being excavated, in the churchyard, the workmen broke unexpectedly into it. A curious question was then started—“how deep did consecration go?” It was proposed, at first, to lay the corpse in the cellar as ecclesiastical property, but, on reference to the bishop, it



was decided to arch it over. Yet, it was never afterwards an agreeable consideration in fetching a bottle of wine, that a coffin was overhead!

To this new home, there came, towards the end of the year, many memorials of early life—"Ann's" portion of the Ongar relics. There were the parlour chairs with which her father fitted up his Islington lodgings on his marriage, half a century before; the tall alarum which, for nearly that period, had roused the busy household; the weather-glass, that those worthy hands had daily set. There was melancholy in these arrivals, but joy in receiving, some months afterwards, her sister Jemima, as a permanent resident. My mother's letters, at this time, tell with what zest she fitted up a room for her. Yet, this arrangement lasted but a year, when her marriage with T. Herbert, Esq., settled her in Nottingham Park, within ten minutes' walk of her elder sister. This most hospitable home, with all its new interests, was, during the remainder of my mother's life (more than thirty years), a constant solace to her cares, her almost daily resort in all weathers.

In the autumn of 1831, occurred the noted Reform riots at Nottingham. The angry excitement of the people on learning the rejection of the Reform Bill by the House of Lords, quickly showed itself in tumultuous assemblies in the market-place, and my father was asked to address them, with the hope of averting the apprehended storm. He spoke from a window, and with effect for the moment; but towards night, the evil element in the mob predominated, and, as darkness fell, the rush of thousands filled the streets leading to the castle, which, as the property of

the Duke of Newcastle, a tory of tories, was a tempting object for popular vengeance. The ancient lodge gates were broken in, the lofty terrace was speedily thronged, and to the watchers on the roof of the Castlegate House, well placed for commanding the scene, the dark mass of the great building was speedily lit up with lurid flashes. Lights gleamed from window after window, and presently, tongues of fire leaped out amidst shouts and yells, piercing the air, as the flames did the darkness. Then followed crash after crash, molten lead began to pour from the roof, and the odour of burning cedar-wood penetrated everywhere, lasting, indeed, many days. It was a grievous sight, and to the members of the Castlegate household, especially so, as the memories of happy times seemed departing in the smoke.

Some years afterwards, my mother wrote the following lines—

NOTTINGHAM CASTLE.

There on its solitary hill  
 The shattered castle lingers still,  
 As if to cast a sullen frown  
 On it's old enemy—the town,  
 And telling tales in riven walls,  
 And molten roof, and weedy halls,  
 Of lawless days that o'er it broke  
 And turned it's glory into smoke.  
 Well I recall the iron roar  
 That battered in the massy door,  
 And let the motley bandits through  
 Their deed of foolishness to do.

Yes, 'twas a stirring sorry sight,  
 That world of fire, that winter's night,

Spreading a red untimely day  
Over lone meadows far away,  
And startling from their fireside nooks  
With frightened, scarce believing looks,  
The rural homesteads, to behold  
"Yon" moving clouds of black and gold !  
Stirring, and sorry, to descry  
That crimson snow-storm in the sky,  
Cascades of lead that hotly fell  
Among the rioters pell-mell,  
And forms like demons from below,  
Darkly defined against the glow.

Yes, and one even yet deplores  
The fragrance of those cedar doors,  
Flinging along the distant street,  
Rare incense from the furnace heat !  
Pity, of course, such things should be,  
But if they must, 'twixt you and me,  
I'm glad that I was there to see.

Now sleeps the pile, a cumbrous mass,  
Fringed with a ten years' growth of grass,  
And waits, or braves, the tempest shock,  
To hurl it from its mother rock  
In graceless ruin,—yet the site  
Of noble deeds and patriot might !  
Scarce can I gird the slackened string  
Of names like Hutchinson to sing.  
O, there was warmth in virtue then,  
And truth was truth, and men were men !

Would that my pen with her's could vie,  
Who drew against the stormy sky,  
That peaceful outline, soft as free,  
Bland Christian warrior, of thee !

*Memorials of Mrs Gilbert.*

With what refined and wifely skill,  
 The gifted woman plied her quill !  
 Her pencil, how to nature true,  
 Giving that model man to view,  
 Such as—old rock and portal arch,—  
 Ye knew him, or on rest or march ;  
 Breathing at eve the cooling air,  
 His “ lady ” and his children there,  
 And from those ramparts raising high  
 Devote affection to the sky ;—  
 Or, when his bleeding land to save,  
 Compelled the brand of war to wave,  
 In panoply of truth attired,  
 With holy strength his arm was fired !  
 Yes, truth was truth, and men were men,  
 Thou hero of the castle then,  
 Though all thy graceless country gave  
 Were prison walls, and sea-washed grave !

I might—but can I drop the wing,  
 Old castle, of myself to sing ?  
 Of days erewhile gone by to me,  
 When there of friends and family  
 I numbered, kind and pleasant store ?  
 But no ! That circle meets no more !  
 Death, death with iron hand hath been,  
 Hath felled the sere, the firm, the green ;  
 The youngest,—oh, a mother’s pride !  
 The oldest,—yea, what throngs have died !  
 Died ! sunk away ! And there art thou,  
 Old castle, in thy dotage now,  
 Yet strong, perchance, till many a blast  
 Hath o’er the dusty dwellings passed,  
 Of all who see or sing thee still,  
 There on thy solitary hill !

Sons began to go out into the world. One, at least,

presently took up his residence in London, pursuing his studies in art, though in a different line from that practised by grandfather and great-grandfather. The anxiety of this mother, with her eye fixed upon eternal issues, may be understood,—

“You are now afloat,” she writes, “on the great sea, and we can do little to protect you from danger; but there is One who walks on the waves, and rides on the wings of the wind, and to Him we can, and do commend you. . . . Learn proportion—dear J., learn proportion. Never forget the difference between time and eternity. O, they are words absolutely threadbare, but only pause for a moment, and what wonderful, pregnant words they are!”

“Do not splice a feeble hope of heaven with all you can scrape of earthly good, and fancy that you can make a stable happiness between them. Your *happiness* must come from above and from within. Then all that is without and around will sweetly contribute to it, either in the way of gratitude or submission.”

She doubted whether her son attended a sufficiently intelligent ministry, and wrote:—

“It is a very evil habit to go professedly for instruction, without the expectation of being instructed. The Sabbath becomes, in such circumstances, a worse than useless form; the mind habituates itself to inattention, and it is much if the mould thus given to the thoughts is ever wholly recovered. . . . My heart aches over you all. When will one of you subscribe with his hand to the Lord? When, one of you decide openly and promptly, to take the side of right against wrong, happiness against misery, safety against peril, hope against despair—the side of your Maker

and Saviour against the seducer and destroyer of your soul? I think that no view is more impressive (if we could but bring ourselves to take it deliberately) than that of the present scene of things, as a field on which two armies are distinctly engaged,—God, the rightful sovereign, on the part of ultimate good; and Satan, a cruel usurper, with only evil for his end and his means. . . . Of your conduct, habits, industry, and temporal prospects we have no ground of complaint; but one thing have we desired of the Lord, and that will we seek after, that our children, no less than ourselves, should dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their life, to see the beauty of the Lord—the beauty of His nature, His goodness, His ways—to exhibit it in their own lives and character; and to increase the sum of moral beauty in the world.”

Later on, when this son was passing through the anxieties belonging to the early years of a profession, she warns against a habit of despondency in terms applicable to many others, and which show how really far removed she was from the morbid melancholy some of her writings might suggest:—

“I think dear J—— that you have a little—not a little—of *your* father and of *my* mother in you; and it is too soon to exhibit tendencies to depression which may become chronic miseries, not to be shaken off, if long indulged. I say indulged, because strange as it seems to *indulge* in unhappiness, it is still a folly to which we are all prone. Take advice from the Bible—‘There is nothing better for a man than that he enjoy—giving God thanks.’ It is a piece of practical wisdom which it is well early to learn, *to live by the day*. There are few lives in which the great proportion of *days* are not days of comfort. In most cases they are self-inflictions, either from memory or fear, which make them

otherwise. Learn then to take each day as it is. Reckon every one that is free from calamity a positive gain—clear profit. Remember that God entrusts us with a *stock* of nothing. He keeps the garner closed, but supplies daily need with a vigilance and goodness most wonderful, when we reflect on the number who live on his bounty. Be thankful, my dear child, for all you have, and remember that Christ, in fashioning a prayer for us, puts it exactly in this form—‘Give us *this day* our *daily* bread.’ So be content to receive everything, life, comfort, enjoyment, of every kind, as well as food, and you will find that in so doing that you become happy. Extract pleasures from your memory instead of pains ; and surely also you may extract hope from it ; you and your parents, and their parents, have been the pensioners of Providence, and have been supplied, how far beyond their early expectations ! Cast yourself with a cheerful confidence on God, and do not pluck poisons where he has surrounded you with wholesome fruits. Habits of mind that tend to dejection are most carefully to be avoided on every possible ground. Early formed and fixed, they render you, and *yours*, miserable beyond the effort of a strong mind to counteract. They are, too, deeply ungrateful, and must be very displeasing to Him who gives so much, and inflicts so little. Read the sixth chapter of Matthew,—let me believe that you will find agreeable and profitable employment in this, next Sabbath afternoon. ‘Let the morrow take thought for the things of itself, for sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.’

The perils of the great city, of which she sometimes caught a hint from her son’s letters, brought tender appeals like this :—

“May your home, my dear child, always be such an one as you return to with pleasure. I love the disposition which in-

clines you to love it. Find but your satisfactions in fields, and skies, and brothers and sisters, and a clean hearth, and a bright fire, and how hopefully are you formed for happiness! May your tastes never be vitiated! London is a vile place, but it is possible to escape its pollutions. Affection and intelligence will afford some preservative, but there is no *security* for any but the Christian, and none for him, any longer than he feels his danger, his weakness, his dependence, and looks to the strong for strength. I feel grateful to Mr S—— if his friendship has been the means of defending you from evil influences, but even the expressed possibility gives us pain. . . . We cannot bear to believe that there have been moments of danger—seasons in which our dear child has been on the verge of destruction!—or perhaps not on the verge, on the slope only, with nothing of abruptness to startle him to consideration.

I saw,—'twas but a moment's trance,  
 A meteor swiftly shot,  
 But fear and thrill were in the glance,  
 Nor is it yet forgot ;—  
 I saw a precipice so high,  
 It seemed to reach from sea to sky !

I saw upon the perilous brow,  
 Sharp edged, and delving o'er,  
 A youthful buoyant one, who now  
 Danced as on even floor,  
 Then, sprang with light and careless bound  
 Merrily as to music's sound.

The rocks below, the surge, the deep,  
 He did not seem to see !  
 Anon he laid him down to sleep  
 Fearlessly as could be !  
 Just on the verge of that strange hill !  
 It makes my heart's blood curdle still !



Small fragments, broken as he lay,  
Dashed, one by one below ;  
Methought the steep was giving way  
And he was sure to go !  
I tried to wake him, but it seemed  
As if of some sweet sport he dreamed.

And surely, surely, it had been  
He on these rocks had died !  
But that a silken cord unseen  
Was gently round him tied,  
Held by a hand as firm as kind,  
Hid in a thunder-cloud behind.

I did not stay,—for then it went,  
That vision strange and dread,  
But much I mused on what it meant  
And to myself I said :  
“ This, sure, is one whom heaven above  
Designs to draw with cords of love ! ”

“ Quite unintentionally I have filled my paper as you see, but it expresses so closely my fears and feelings, that you may regard it as part and parcel of a ‘ mother’s letter.’ ”

Later still the circumstances of an early attachment—too early as she thought—and which for a time did not “ run smooth,” filled the heart and the letters of this mother of mothers. Even from her diary may be learnt how tenderly she followed the course of it. “ Dear J. received his first real letter,” is one of the entries, and then a long illness of the motherless loved-one called forth all a mother’s tenderness towards her. But sympathising as she might be, she was strenuous in wholesome warnings, not to allow these heart anxieties to unnerve her son in the energetic pursuit of his profession.

“Regard her as at present in the second distance; give the whole vigour of your talents and industry to the *means* of securing her. Providence says, without the possibility of mistaking its voice, ‘wait and *work.*’ . . .

“You will perceive in all my letters that I am very anxious for you to drive at your profession, holding other matters meantime as justly subordinate. The position in which you are compelled to remain so long as you cannot stand upright is to me, and I should think to you, so revolting, that if a gigantic industry could relieve me from it I would be relieved. Papa, I see, can scarcely find in his heart to deny you the satisfaction of returning home to-morrow, but I do not think it wise. It is short sighted. It is a prospect shut out by *a woman’s hand.*”

Eventually she received to her arms and heart a daughter, the truest of daughters, and who was destined to follow her at no great distance to the “silent land.”

The term “Political Dissenter” took its rise about the year 1834, and my father was one of its first victims. Intended to stamp those to whom it was applied as actuated by mere political motives and sectarian jealousies, to none could it be less appropriate than to him, who ever dwelt among the abstract realities of things, and sought guidance only from the highest spiritual motives. Not but that in opposition to some religionists, he always maintained the right and duty of Christian men, and Christian ministers, to take part in public affairs, and especially when great moral principles were concerned. Though never introducing politics into the pulpit, “he was unwilling,” as his wife wrote, “to leave great national interests to the sole management of irreligious men, as must be the case if it be incumbent on Christians to

abandon them." But how little congenial to his mind they were, may be gathered from a confession that he never took any interest in politics till after he was forty years old. But this question of Church Establishments was to him a *religious* question of the deepest importance. He early arrived at the conviction that they inflicted the most serious injury upon Christianity itself, and were entirely inconsistent with its first principles. The reader of these memorials will easily believe that his wife entered keenly into his feelings. She was a warm "Voluntary."

"How singular it is," she writes, "that to give willingly can be thought in any respect worse than to give by compulsion! It appears as if such objectors had never read so far in the dictionary as to find out that '*willing*' and *voluntary* are synonymous. One could have supposed that the single sentence, 'God loveth a cheerful giver,' would have required no comment to place the voluntary, in all good objects, as, beyond a breath of objection, the *man in the right*. At present this is among the pleasures to come, and he must be content (if he can) to be branded as the man in the wrong."

The first public meeting in the kingdom to consider, not the grievances of Dissenters, but the abolition of a Church Establishment, was held at Nottingham this year, and Mr Gilbert moved the first resolution, in which he endeavoured to set the tone of the meeting, and to imbue it with his own religious spirit. A deputation to Earl Grey was decided upon, a leading member of which was Mr William Howitt, the well-known writer, then a member of the Society of Friends. The blunt straightforwardness, racy English, and ready tact of this gentleman,

in his interview with the Premier, tell with quite dramatic effect, even in the dull pages of the "Annual Register." "This petition, I presume," said the Earl, "is to the same purport as the other petitions from Dissenters that have been presented?" "Of that your Lordship will be a better judge than I when you have read it; I can only say that the Nottingham Dissenters did not look about to see what other Dissenters were doing, but thought and acted for themselves." After some further colloquy, the bewildered peer exclaimed,—“What is it you really do wish? Do you want entirely to do away with all Establishments of religion?” “Precisely,” was the prompt reply. “Earl Grey said he was sorry for it; the suggestion of such sweeping changes would alarm Parliament and startle the country, and he considered it the sacred duty of every government to maintain an Establishment of religion.” “People are not so easily frightened at changes nowadays,” replied the sturdy Quaker, and he proceeded to argue, that “to establish one sect in preference to another, was to establish a party and not a religion.”

Some months afterwards four hundred deputies met in London, and among them Mr Gilbert and Mr Howitt came from Nottingham. My mother followed the proceedings with eager interest; and she and Mrs Howitt—(the Mary Howitt, whose poems for children she admired as much as anybody) met and compared the letters of their respective husbands. To my father, whose practical despondency she so often cheered, she wrote,—

“You have not now to inquire whether the work be good and needful, and having that persuasion, it is easy to see that *to do it* comes next. There will be opposition no doubt. Who, ever

contemplated such an undertaking without expecting it—and even from those who ought to cheer you on? But private interests and feelings cannot be heard where a great public course has been deliberately chosen. I do from my heart believe it to be a course thus to be conscientiously pursued. I am only solicitous that the right temper should be preserved on the right side. We have every tittle of the argument, most of the clear-headed ones, and a noble result to animate us. All that ought to be feared is the ‘stormy spirit.’ How very strong will the cause of Dissent become, if all its advocates keep their temper! . . . Your interview with Lord Althorp I think most important. Be very explicit; make him understand *distinctions*.”

In after years she wrote of this period :—

“It is not always borne in mind that a second step cannot be taken without a first. It seems needful, in order to gird the courage and give form to the convictions of many, that a first step should always have one preceding it, to fall back upon! A sounder judgment and a braver zeal know better. . . . Great causes seldom fly. They emerge from a few thoughtful minds, possibly from a solitary monk in a solitary cell. By degrees they gather strength; work their way into public notice; move into first this quarter, then into that, for a while it may be, take a long sleep, or hide in prisons—carrying the brand of disloyalty, disturbance, revolution on their foreheads; and for years—it may be many—continue the quiet testimony, the holy remonstrance under as much opprobrium as interest, ignorance, or prejudice can heap upon them; the first movers being always ‘men wondered at.’”

“But that the progress of great causes is thus unequal, or for a time, even retrograde, is no proof that they are not good as well as great, and destined to ultimate success; and whenever

that day comes, first movers obtain their late honours ; history will award them. Her laurels, usually, are planted on the grave."

"Make him understand distinctions," most assuredly, never more necessary than in the discussion of this great question in which an attack upon Establishments is so constantly mistaken for an attack upon the Church. The distinction here, she was strenuous enough in pointing out to her friends.

"You will see," she writes to a friend in the West, "what the dissenters of Nottingham both think and do. I hope you are all true men, and comport yourselves as those who believe in the 'Revelations.' I cannot conceive how it can be that Christians, with their eyes open, can do otherwise than *ask* till they succeed in severing the Church from her wicked husband, which, indeed, is *not her husband*, but only the usurper of the rights of one that is. It is not as a dissenter, but as a Christian solely, that I would press the subject home,—press without ceasing till the glorious divorce ensues."

Speaking of the injurious influence of an Establishment upon the character of its ministers, she says,—

"Strange that it should ever have been thought unnecessary to separate from such a system ! For of the system this is the natural product, and will be more or less, so long as the Church offers a genteel profession to the younger son, to literary leisure, to the talented, or the untalented son of noble or wealthy families. To this, the original sin of a State religion, we have objected. We object as to a root from which such fruit cannot but grow. When will the evil be seen, felt, acknowledged, and removed—*root*, and therefore *branch* ?"

Meanwhile, all the "opprobrium that ignorance, interest, or prejudice" could heap upon the first movers, did not fail. In most cases, a very natural ignorance was, no doubt, the chief agent, but the result was cruel to some sensitive minds. Death had already removed, as the wife mournfully said, almost all the inner circle of devoted friends, many of them of singular intelligence and culture, that stood around them in their first years at Nottingham; and now, they found themselves isolated from almost all the intelligent culture of an outer circle, while, at least, one intimate friend silently withdrew. This last stroke, her husband's susceptible nature felt to the end.

Upon this question of "Establishments," the difference of opinion on ecclesiastical subjects, between the two brothers-in-law—Isaac Taylor and Joseph Gilbert—could not fail to be very strongly marked, yet, without any interruption to a cordial admiration and affection for each other. The former still, and for several years more, retained his position as a deacon in the small independent church at Ongar; but this was for the sake of supporting the cause of evangelical piety in the neighbourhood, for which, at the time, this seemed the only means; and also, as he expressed it, for the good of his own soul. For these reasons, he would, as he said, have joined the Wesleyans or any other evangelical body doing the same work, while, apart from individual preference, he considered Nonconformity a vital element in the religious life of England. But he always adhered, in principle, to episcopacy, or personal government in the church,\* and was strong for

\* Not, of course, on the ground of a so-called "Apostolical succession," for he spoke of his own father as a true "bishop."

the union of Church and State, principally, as he endeavoured to show in "Spiritual Despotism," to secure lay control over clerical claims, and to check their intolerance,—much too, because he then regarded the Church of England as the great bulwark against the power of Rome. He lived to see the insidious growth of Anti-Protestantism behind this very bulwark, and to discover that it was likely to become a fortress for its foes, instead of a defence against them. He began, mournfully, to predict disestablishment, and a separation of the Episcopal communion into three separate bodies—an Anglican, Evangelical, and Latitudinarian; but this was before the Establishment was lauded, as comprehending Romanist and Rationalist alike, which might have led him to desire, rather than to dread its dissolution. Isaac Taylor, with a strong conservative bias, aimed to be the practical statesman in church affairs, guiding himself more by existing conditions and the lessons of history, than by abstract principles. His brother-in-law's high spiritual notions, he deemed unpractical, who, again, would reply that these, if founded upon irrefragable truth, would justify themselves in the end, as the most soundly practical.

But there was little actual conflict between the two. Minds so different could scarcely find common ground for combat, while they quite understood and appreciated each other's positions. How completely cast in different moulds they were, may be judged from the following description of his friend, written several years later by Isaac Taylor.

"In a very extraordinary degree Mr Gilbert possessed and



commanded the abstractive faculty, using that term in the sense in which it stands opposed to the disposition to consider and to deal with things in the concrete, or under the aspect of their individualities. So it was that while he was completely informed in the field of history, ancient and modern, he was prone to draw off from history as a scene of confusion, yielding scarcely and precariously the available fruits of universal or general truth. . . . Man, in his esteem, or considered as an object of science, could claim little regard otherwise than as a finite moral agent, related to the Infinite Being. As to the diverse characteristics of humanity seen in the concrete, they did but constitute the picturesque of a tattered and many-coloured costume. . . . A mind of so much perspicacity and power, if, during the best years of life, it had taken its direction towards the abstruse branches of mathematical philosophy, would not have failed to win honours among those who lead the way on that field. Or, if, instead of this, Mr Gilbert had in some academic cloister given himself to his first loved studies, those embraced in the circle of theological metaphysics, it is not assuming much that is doubtful in his behalf in supposing, that he would have taken up the clue of Descartes and of Leibnitz, and have gone near to reach the impassable boundaries of human speculation concerning the primary problems of the intellectual world."

To Isaac Taylor, "the picturesque of the tattered and many-coloured costume" of humanity," presented an irresistible attraction,\* and he devoted volume after volume, with a genius all his own, to the philosophy of religious history. It was characteristic of his mind, too, that he

\* "I have cared intensely for whatever may be found to bear upon the history of our human nature as it has played its part upon this arena of mysteries—the field of religious development, ancient and modern."—PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS, by ISAAC TAYLOR.

should enter into an elaborate argument upon the "Physical Theory of another Life," and again, that he was inclined to dwell upon certain literal fulfilments of prophecy. To Joseph Gilbert, a spiritual interpretation of prophecy seemed more probable; to the physical conditions of future existence he was greatly indifferent ("I can leave all that," he would say), and the chief work from his pen was concerned with the "Principle of Substitution as applied in the Redemption of Man."

But between brother and sister there were perpetual sharp passages of warfare, sharp, but enlivened by bright flashes of wit and satire, yet never to the disturbance of the most affectionate relations; witness the following extract from a letter written by the brother after a visit to Nottingham with his wife in 1833. It contains also an estimate of his sister's powers to which he often gave utterance.

"And now, my dear sister, let me pointedly thank you for the kindness, *indefatigable, unlimited, considerate, tender*, which we received from you. I know no one like you—so wrong in matters ecclesiastical, so uniformly on the right side in all matters of the heart. You would have been killed long ago with disinterestedness, if Providence, in compassion to all about you, had not by almost miracle kept you alive. May you long, long, be so preserved, you and yours! E—— has been every way much benefitted by her visit, and her recollection has been enriched and garnished with sparkling relics of affection, and images of goodness. But I must save a space to reiterate in black and white the injunction I laid upon you to take up your proper part in public instruction. You now incur a treble responsibility if you fail to listen to earnest and *wise* advice. He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, &c."

Upon this matter he says in another letter—

“ If I had leisure I should say something very *pointed* on the subject of your pen, and try to cut it for you anew. If I can write, you can *a fortiori*, and if you would, when the fit comes, compose a ‘ Sunday Evening,’ people would quite forget ‘ Saturday Evening.’ ”

In a letter to Mrs Laurie, my mother refers to the above remonstrances.

“ Isaac, and others, are importunate with me to turn author again, and almost bind it as a duty on my conscience. But though, if I had anything to say, I should not despair of being able to say it, yet the hard sterility of the *thinking* district, after so long a fallow, discourages me from attempting to break the clods. You remember the good saying—‘ We cannot have thoughts without thinking ;’ \* and though to you, who seem essentially motion without matter, it may appear incredible, yet with me it is so much matter without motion, that real thoughts are strange things to me. My mind has indeed suffered paralysis from want of food; but I do not know that the history of my complaints can be either interesting or edifying to others—though so far as this I will add, that it would be a very desirable and serviceable exercise if all who are in any way capable of making a mental registry of such events and causes as operate on individual character, would keep a faithful retrospect of them. Some very slight and almost unobserved circumstances would often be found to have originated the most important and controlling results. But the great difficulty would be to be faithful,—so faithful as to be the precise warning which we might be, to those who are to succeed to our difficulties, and perhaps to suffer from similar mistakes. The exploded experiment of putting old

\* Jane Taylor in Q. Q.

heads upon young shoulders has never been fairly tried, because the old heads have always kept a reserve of hard earned wisdom, of which, for shame's sake, they have not suffered the young shoulders to participate; I must say that I give our children credit for having less folly about them than their mothers had (I am speaking of I by itself I, mind you), but whether this arises from a somewhat better acquaintance with my own heart than with theirs, I cannot determine.

“I think I have not written since the poems were sent me by your two girls. They are *very* promising, and must afford you no small pleasure. If they do not let their fingers run to seed, as I did mine at their age, I should say to them, ‘go on and prosper.’ There is good material, but the pleasure of thus giving outlet to the poetry of the young heart is so great that a habit of mental *expenditure* is too often induced, to the fatal discouragement of the accumulative spirit. They are perhaps favourably placed in the treadmill of imperative daily exertion, and may therefore be saved the peril of perpetual writing. As well wear an open blister to give tone to the constitution, as indulge daily in the luxuries of poetic composition if mental vigour be the object. However I am far in all this from applying, or intending to apply, a word of discouragement to your dear industrious girls. I am only giving substance to a few of the passing pangs of remorse with which at times I recall my own early history. . . .

“It is a subject of frequent regret to me that so many circumstances of our youthful days are entirely obliterated from my memory which it would have been pleasing, or mournful, or salutary, occasionally to review; and I attribute this loss very greatly to the habit early formed and deeply rooted of imaginative musings (vulgarly called castle-building). If I had twenty voices I would raise them all to warn my children, and young friends against the pernicious luxury. It indisposes to immediate duty, shuts the eye to the living world, renders tasteless the

wholesome viands of domestic life, eats out the heart and essence of prayer, and leaves a dense fog to obliterate pages and volumes of useful memory and valuable acquirement."

During the ten years immediately succeeding the death of her parents, my mother paid but two visits to Essex, where Stanford Rivers now took the place of Ongar. The



first was in 1834. Edward Irving was then fast sinking in the mire of that strange miracle-worship, which finally suffocated his genius, but she went to hear him as she passed through London.

"It was the saddest nonsense I ever heard ; no miracles except of folly. Did you know that the sixty pillars of the tabernacle indicate the sixty evangelists who are to belong to Mr Irving's church ; and the five pillars supporting the inner vail, the five—himself the centre—who are to watch over admissions into the church ? I will tell you why they were made some of brass, some of wood, some of gold, &c., when I see you, if you cannot find out before."

The following Sunday she spent with her brother at Stanford, and heard him give "a striking address" in conducting the afternoon service at Ongar, for at that time he occasionally assisted the minister in this way, besides taking village services in the evening. But brother and sister had no doubt some lively disagreement upon church matters, for she writes :—

"Did you see that a public meeting has just been held in a *church* in the Isle of Wight, praying Parliament to dis sever them from their iniquitous relationship to the State. If this fashion should be followed the work is done."

But in addition to Stanford Rivers, there was now "Pilgrims' Hatch" to visit. There, upon a picturesque common, a gate once stood, to receive the toll of pilgrims on their way by Tilbury to Canterbury, and there her brother Jefferys and his wife had taken up their abode in one of those quaint old houses, set in the midst of an ample garden, that the Taylor family always affected. In front, the common stretched away into a woodland distance, that in varying shades filled a large tract of country, up to the heights of Danbury on the horizon. Behind, another rich woodland sank gradually, some four or five miles, into the valley of the Roding, where Stanford Rivers lay. It was a charming drive between the two seclusions chosen by the brothers. Their households were very different. A large family was gathering round the scholar and philosopher, who passed continually with grave steps from the sanctum of his folios, into the nursery or schoolroom, or out among the merry voices in the garden. No children blessed the other's hearth

though his genial, careless nature seemed intended for such a surrounding, and his literary works were almost all intended for their amusement or instruction. An incorrigible "droll," he poured forth much that young wits could not appreciate, and possessed, too, of a weird imagination, he was apt in turn to chill their young blood. The mysterious treasure vaults in "Ralph Richards," the cave in "The Young Islanders," the ghostly vision in "Tales and Dialogues," witnessed to this faculty. Indeed, his massive head and sparkling grey eye seemed to indicate more of power than the delicate features of his brother Isaac, but it was a power untrained, and fitfully exerted, and the whole aspect of the man, the halting gait, supported by a stick, the burly form, the quizzical features, bespoke the wayward genius he too truly was. Just now, a brief heyday of prosperity, derived partly from mechanical invention, partly from literary strokes of luck, and most from a fortunate legacy, had landed him for a time in this congenial spot, and enabled him to exercise his large-hearted hospitality. As usual, he was surrounded by a collection of oddities, in books and bits of machinery; as usual, there was a sacred attic. At another residence he had constructed a staircase into a tree, where, sequestered among the branches, a small platform and seat provided a cosy outlook; here a ladder to the roof reached a nook with a wooden balustrade, among the chimney stacks, commanding all the country round. To this house "Ann" paid several visits in coming years. Jokes and puns roared to the roof-tree, even in presence of his philosophic brother, but all the more when his quick-witted sister was there to cap them.

In the year 1835, she spent several weeks in London and its neighbourhood, during the delivery of her husband's lectures upon the Atonement, at the Congregational Library. It was the third course of the series, in which Dr Wardlaw and Dr Vaughan had preceded him. In the subject of these lectures, and in my father's treatment of them, she took the deepest interest. She was accustomed to close and clear thinking ; she had insisted upon understanding the recondite discussions of her husband's earlier writings ; she had followed his arguments with atheists and infidels, she was not likely to fail in following this, upon a matter which concerned, as she believed, a vital truth of Christianity. To the position taken, she gave her full assent, and never ceased to regard this work as the crown of her husband's labours. At one time, indeed, she would have liked to think of it as an instalment only of work in a field which she deemed him eminently qualified to cultivate, but it was becoming sadly evident that ill health was sapping the needful energy, and that this would be his closing contribution to theology.

No doubt, if she had held the pen the style of this book, if more diffuse, would have shown more ease and brightness ; for here, unlike the preacher, the writer is somewhat rigid and elaborate. But he was dealing with a closely compacted argument, and with such profound things as—"the principles of moral administration," "the function and bearings of substitution," "qualities essential in a valid substitution," and the like, and advancing, with careful steps, through difficult ground, his manner became measured and precise. But there is no lack of clearness, and an entire absence of mysticism.



The argument seeks, on the one hand, to deliver the doctrine of Substitution from the crude and rash modes of statement, degrading to its dignity, which have given ground for much objection ; and, on the other, to establish it in the light of first principles, and in relation to the practical ends to be attained. "Substitution, in the view here maintained, is a substitute for penalty," something to answer the same end—namely, "an adequate expression of the divine fixed disapproval of sin some other way." And if it be asked, as it so often is, "to whom is the atonement made?" the answer is—"for the interest of creatures it is, that the sacrifice is made; and to them virtually, but yet only as represented by the Supreme executive power, is the price of atonement paid. Thus, it is rationally and clearly consistent to say that Christ, as a sacrifice, was offered up both to God, and by God." The argument may be represented by opponents, in a favourite phrase, as of too "forensic" a character; but, as the doctrine is essentially concerned with the governmental relations between the Divine Ruler, and the creatures whom he has gifted with free-will, it may be asked, whether the terms of human judicature are not those which best shadow forth its character and aims? whether such a representation of it be not the only one clear to common minds, and fitted therefore, as every divine doctrine must be, to influence the mass?—whether, further, it is not that which best agrees with the current phraseology of Scripture on the question?—whether, lastly, all that is objectionable in a forensic statement of it, is not guarded against or avoided?

At that time, the school of religious thought, which goes

by the name of "Broad," was scarcely established. It was some years later that my mother came into contact with it, and some passages may here be quoted, from a letter to a young minister, with whom circumstances allowed her to take that liberty, which show how she regarded its first approaches.

"In your ministrations, observations of an evangelical character slip in, but even when led by the text to expect something more, they only seem to cross the stage without taking part in the discussion. You know what popularly we mean by the "Gospel"—that which you admit to be the leading doctrine of the Christian ministry—leading, set in the van; but you have appeared to imply, that once known, once seen, it might almost be left to itself, while the practical externalities were deduced and enforced. It seemed legitimate to infer, that though Paul, in dealing with Jews and heathens, was necessitated to announce, explain, and enforce it (yet comparing Paul at Athens, and Paul to the Churches, this could scarcely be substantiated), it was a thing now known in congregations, professedly Christian, and therefore might, with more safety, be less frequently referred to. This would be obviously just, if to know the facts, and subscribe to the creed, were all required. But in Christian congregations, of even the better sort, how many are there—shall we not fear the majority?—who thus know and believe without any personal application of the doctrines, any true peace of conscience resulting from them—any root in themselves? so that the cold knowledge which they do possess, does nothing for them here, and will, we can but suppose, aggravate their condemnation hereafter! Now, to this large class, a warm and frequent explanation, enforcement, appeal, seems needful—a clear exhibition, line upon line, of the way of salvation. . . .

“ You treat your hearers almost always as lax saints—alas, too justly ! but more justly still, as I fear, might the many be regarded as *needy sinners*, more or less sensible to their condition,—some requiring to be aroused, some to be directed and encouraged to come, in all their misery, to Him who calls not the righteous, but sinners to repentance, because, upon Him, has been laid the iniquities of us all. . . .

“ At first, you know, we are obliged to judge of men by their preaching ; afterwards, it is generally safe to judge of preaching by the men. . . . I am excepting that part of your sermon in which you appeared—or might be supposed to refer to Evangelical preaching as almost a thing gone by, or belonging to earlier times, or missionary labour—which would have surprised us from anyone.”

In 1836 the husband and wife went a tour together in Derbyshire after a fashion they greatly enjoyed, driving in a gig for several weeks about that charming country, then in all the seclusion which preceded the advent of the rail. The pretty fishing inn at Rowsley was their principal centre. Thence she writes to her two young daughters at school one of the very few descriptions of scenery she ever indulged in,—why so few, perhaps the extract itself explains.

“ Many a kind thought lately have I sent towards my two dear girls along two hundred miles of hill and dale, rock and meadow, wood and stream ; and you cannot think, dear children, how pleasant it has been sometimes to drive up to some strange post-office, and on enquiring, ‘ any letters, &c.,’ to hear that nice little word, ‘ Yes.’

“ It would be vain to try and describe to you the lovely or magnificent scenery which we have travelled through. Nothing,

I believe, is more difficult than to convey an impression of such enjoyments. When I tell you that we spent a delightful day walking among the rocks, the crags, the precipices, the green slopes, the grey promontories, the rich woods, the bright, dark, turbulent waters of Dove dale, *I* can accompany every word with the image by which it was suggested ; but to you it affords little more excitement than it would to get by heart the words with their meanings from Johnson's Dictionary : As thus, *Promontory*, a bold precipitous headland ; *Rock*, a magnificent stony mass, shooting into figures, fantastic, picturesque, or sublime ; sometimes partially covered with rich mosses, sometimes with vegetation, variegated from the brightest green to the darkest purple of pine blackness, or with the scarlet, crimson, orange tints of autumnal foliage,—and so forth. . . . Yet I can scarcely help telling you of the hill for four miles out of Buxton, where the wind was so powerful that had it blown against us, I think we could scarcely have made way up it. Yet the piled and laden coaches which we see every evening rattling safely into the White Lion at Nottingham, have all weathered this fearful ascent ; and everyone that sets out in the morning for Manchester has to trot, gallop, slip, slither, scratch, or tumble down it ! Yesterday we had one of the most dreary, uninterestingly dreary, drives possible. Oh, so bleak, and bare, and desolate ! as if the world had gone to sleep without being tucked up, and got its huge shoulders uncovered in the night."

It was during this excursion that a printed lecture reached them, recently delivered by an eminent Roman Catholic physician at Sheffield, before the Mechanics' Institution of that town. Its subject was "the causes of the greater amount of Intemperance in England, as compared with the Continent," and stress was laid upon the

“greater religiousness of the people in Roman Catholic countries,” the result of the large amount of display in ceremonial and observance, by which, according to the lecturer, “a high degree of religious excitation is constantly sustained.” The friend who sent the pamphlet asked her to undertake a newspaper reply, and the leisure of a few evenings at Rowsley enabled her to do so. It was signed “A Rustic Rambler,” but was afterwards published separately with her name, to which she was rather unwilling to consent, having, she said, “purposely adopted several expressions to sound more like boots than slippers, so as to give the idea of a plain commercial traveller just struck enough with the nonsense to give his opinion upon it.”

The style of this paper, however, betrays a very different hand from that of an ordinary “commercial traveller.” She inquires—

“How far morality as a whole has gained in those countries (Italy and Spain for example), in which ceremony has been substituted for conviction, and perpetual parade for wholesome industry; whether a religion and modes of instruction by which the people generally should be excited to thought and reflection, each man for himself exercising therein the highest faculties of his nature, would not more hopefully conduce to moral improvement in all its branches, than one, the daily ceremonials of which should merely consume the time, while it held the intellect unemployed?”

She traces the intemperance of England to various causes, and proceeds—

“To counteract such facilities to destruction, the thinking

power of the country should without doubt be brought into play. Education, in its best sense and noblest bearings, should be diffused; every sort of amusement comporting with habits of decorum and industry, and with the good sense of the people, should be accessible; garden allotments as recommended by the Labourers' Friend Society should be largely made; public walks, rendered attractive by everything that is beautiful in natural scenery, should be provided; such a limitation of the hours of labour, and such a degree of fair recompense for labour should be adopted, as should allow the full advantage resulting from libraries and lectures conducted for the benefit of the working classes; and, above all, the Bible, and the religion of the Bible, should be placed in its simplicity, its spirituality, its moral beauty and greatness, in the view of every soul created for its enjoyment. A religion conversant with solemn realities, with the wants, the motives, the hopes of the human heart of whatever class or climate,—a religion which commends itself wherever it is understood or embraced, to the universal yearnings of the bosom,—which gives employment, controls passion, regains human nature to order, and bestows upon it, both in possession and in prospect, the most entire happiness of which it is susceptible;—let such a religion be presented, and from living exemplars be impressed upon the public mind; and then, if it be needed,—if the result obviously requires such an addition;—if reasonable men, with this Bible in their hands, concur to advise that the pageantries, the ceremonials, the toys, the fables, the fancies, the delusions, the mummeries, described as the lecturer describes them, should be superadded, or laid as the basis of public morals,—if they would make us more of men, or more of sober men,—why then let us have them! Let our ships be freighted with rosaries, kissed by his Holiness,\* and let us see whether these magicians

\* The Doctor had quoted a passage in Sir H. Davy's "Last Days of a Philosopher," in which he spoke of the interest attaching to such a rosary.

can do with their enchantments better than the word of God addressed to the conscience and the reason of man, can do without them."

Evangelical religion has not been credited in these days with sufficient attention to the practical welfare of mankind. It has been supposed that its energies were absorbed in care of their souls. That it was Evangelicals who stood prominently forward in the great efforts against, first the slave trade, and then slavery, is enough to confute this opinion, and the above passage shows that at least one devoted Evangelical was not indifferent to the general welfare; while the practical holiness in which alone she recognised the evidence of true religion, should remove another stigma often cast upon the tenets she professed. She was always ready to act upon the advice she gave. Now that she was more free from family cares she readily entered into public work. She was one of the founders of a Refuge for unfortunate women, and gave a great deal of her time to it when established. She was a diligent collector for a town Provident Society. She belonged to a committee for the management of a Free Library, and her diary shows her invariable attendance. Later she took an active part as a visitor to the Blind Asylum; and when advanced in years took her turn with another lady in leading out for a walk the long string of inmates, holding the hand of some timid one.

As to more definite religious work, she for many years superintended a class for young women on Sunday afternoons, and conducted a cottage service for women. At Hull she printed an address to "Collectors," couched in very earnest terms:—

“*Your exertions*” (she wrote), “present a visible answer to all the prayers of all Christians for the progress of the Gospel. Your weekly walks, slender as they may seem among the resources of Infinite Power, and inefficacious as they may appear to the eye of human wisdom, may be made the means of directing the children of sorrow to the only source of consolation—the desponding to the only hope—and ruined sinners to the only name given under heaven whereby they may be saved.”

Isaac Taylor paid one of his rare visits to Nottingham in 1836, on returning from the unsuccessful contest with Sir William Hamilton for the chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh, on which he had been persuaded to enter. His sister, before the event, had written;—“if given to me to decide I should say, perhaps, let him lose by one vote, thus attaining the honour, without running the hazards; but it is in better hands than mine.” He lost by three votes, and always considered that his rejection in favour of so distinguished an opponent, was fortunate both for the University and himself.

And now sorrow again drew nigh. The dear and faithful friend of many years was sinking to her rest. Miss Greaves, it may be remembered, after leaving the Castle, had secured her pastor and his family as neighbours in an adjoining house. Under her roof the young people were always welcomed with a gracious smile, and found there all the quiet refinement which intellectual tastes, and abundant means could supply; while many a refreshing pause in their busy life was granted to both the minister and his wife, in afternoons or evenings passed in the calm companionship of their old friend. But now, in the sum-



mer of 1837, she lay dying, and for many days insensible to sight or sound, so that her two devoted friends could only watch at her bedside.

“You will know (writes my mother) that she is in the deep waters—thankful should we now be to say that she had gained the ‘fields of living green’ on the opposite shore. We lose the benefit, and she the consolation that might have been derived had the intimations of danger presented themselves to her mind while its powers were in action. Yet it is but for a moment, and the light of eternal happiness shall show to her the deep valley from which she has safely emerged.”

She died the next day, June 19. An explanation, which it was thought necessary to make to a friend, it may be desirable to quote here:—

“She was always, as you know, most considerately kind, and appeared to study Mr Gilbert’s opinions in everything, and to have the deepest concern for his comfort, but with one or two exceptions her kindness was never costly to her.”

This lady left Mr Gilbert executor to her will, and £1000; but that she had not made any provision respecting a large sum lent at the time of the erection of the chapel pressed heavily afterwards upon the resources of the congregation, especially as the commercial condition of the town long continued deplorable, and its minister resigned a portion of his stipend to meet the difficulty. He prepared also to remove to a smaller house, but the circumstance that his wife about this time came in for her share in a bequest of her uncle Josiah Taylor (the only Taylor hitherto, who deserting the precarious ways of Art

and Literature had achieved wealth), enabled him to continue the education of his sons, and assist them liberally in the professions they had chosen. Their mother was quick to observe these things, and to see of the loving kindness of the Lord.

Referring to threatenings of illness this year she writes—

“Another such illness as I had eight years ago would at least make an old woman of me— if it left me a woman at all! I dread exceedingly being deprived of the power of active exertion. If it be the will of God, I pray to be spared that trial, but I wonder which of all the trials within His power to inflict we do not wish to be spared! We can look at none and say, ‘that is the kind I should like.’ I have much pleasure in the thought that after an interval of absence, varying from twenty to forty years, I have, within the last three years, seen again, and under my own roof, the *three* most beloved friends of my childhood and youth—Anne Watkinson, Anna Forbes, and Luck Conder.\* I have inexpressible reason to thank God for my friends. I can reflect on few of my associates who have not in some way or other said to me, ‘come up hither.’ Thrown into unfavourable association, such as at various periods of my life just glanced by me and moved away, what might I not have been! Give my love to your dear children. I pray that they may endure to the end, and so—be saved! O the unfathomable meaning of that hacknied word! How we do let great things slip from our lips and thoughts, without perceiving their immensity!”

In the summer of 1838 my mother, with two of her

\* An entry in Mrs Gilbert’s diary, March 26, 1836, is to this effect—This day died in Hartford, Connecticut, my earliest friend Mrs Wells, once Anne Watkinson. We parted in the year 1795, met once more, 1834, parted finally in July 16, that year.

children, spent three months at Skegness, a lonely place on the Lincolnshire coast, near the scenes of her husband's early life. This stay was in more than one respect memorable to her. It was on the way thither, at a small village, that she experienced that singular influx of religious peace and joy, described in her Autobiography. Of her first Sunday there, she writes—

“Too unwell for Church in the morning, and I do not know anything else for us but the Ranters in the evening. I do not like seeming ashamed of good people if they *are* good, but I do not like, either, to have my feelings shocked by extravagancies. I have borrowed two vols. of old John Newton's which please me exceedingly, and help on the Sabbath pleasantly and profitably.”

Presently there came the prospect of an anxious decision, upon which husband and wife could only correspond. He had declined the Presidency of Rotherham College sometime before, from the same sense of duty which had kept him so long at Nottingham, and now another important post was offered to him. She writes—

“We were never separate under circumstances so peculiar as now. And yet I rejoice in, rather than regret my absence from home at such a juncture. It allows us each to form an opinion more independent than we could otherwise do, and leaves *you* especially to revolve the circumstances without bias of any kind. It is not for the lure of *more money* that I should wish to accept the offer. I believe that at our time of life we should not lightly uproot ourselves in the expectation of forming more agreeable connections, or of being permanently and daily happier. It

would always be a bitter in the cup if we had the consciousness of having wronged an affectionate and willing people."

To her relief the offer did not finally reach the point requiring "aye or no."

But a very different kind of anxiety was associated also with Skegness. Her son, Henry, who, in conformity with Dr Spurzheim's prediction, was showing a marked predilection for science, had suffered for some years from an accident which deprived him of the sight of an eye, and threatened to debar a pursuit demanding such delicate processes as Chemistry. After leaving school he was at Scarborough for his health, when a pistol, carelessly discharged by a companion, left him, as it was at first supposed, blind for life, and his mother, travelling before the days of telegraphs and railways, carried with her the anguish of ignorance as to the extent of the danger. Many weeks of nursing followed, and her letters home, full of those minute and faithful particulars which she desired herself, and always gave, show what she was hourly suffering. Letters from several Christian friends came to cheer her during this weary time, for which she felt very grateful, and "except on dull evenings," when she "took her solitary turn on the sands," she was able to be cheerful herself, in the exercise of that trust of which she possessed so much. The shock long affected the system, and now six years afterwards her son had taken a voyage to St. Petersburg for the benefit of his health; while she at Skegness was expecting his return from day to day; but days and weeks passed, and there came no news.

It is the melancholy shore that our great Lincolnshire poet loves to depict, where the

. . . . "Slow dashing wave  
Heard in dead night along that table shore  
Drops flat, and after the great waters break  
Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,  
Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud,  
From less and less to nothing."

Nowhere are the "plunging seas" grander than on this coast in a storm,

"The hollow ocean ridges roaring into cataracts,"

and storm after storm now raged, driving wrecks ashore, while the sad mother writes,—

— "These terrible winds!—to go to bed on a dark night and hear them rave and roar requires an effort to enable one to sleep"—(and a week later)—"my heart sinks within me at this long delay. I give up calculating, I only wait and pray,—pray incessantly for his safety. Last Wednesday we had a terrible gale here, and two vessels were lost with their crews, in sight of shore. The lifeboat went so near as to hear their cries, but could not effect their rescue. You may imagine the heart sickness it gave me! On Sunday another vessel got aground on these dangerous sands, I felt suddenly as if both my knees had been cut away, by hearing that it was a vessel from St. Petersburg, and though it was immediately added—'a foreign vessel bound for Boston'—I did not soon recover it."

At length she wrote,—

"— last Wednesday, while at tea, I saw the donkey mail winding in, and left the table to meet it, but was disappointed,

‘no letters’—‘no newspaper.’ I went mournfully home, finished my meal, and then set out for a couple of rushlights to help through the night. I had just turned Hutton’s corner when I saw a gig far on the road. It was late for company, and I just wondered what it could be. I saw it stop at Baxter’s gate, and that they were directing it across the pastures, pointing very much, indeed, towards Mrs Guiley’s, but I still went on, and only when quite alongside discovered the well-known blue spectacles! I cannot tell you the delight of that moment—‘Henry, my dear Henry! is it you?’ He was out of the gig directly, and walked home with me, looking very well. Now, I could not sleep for thinking of it. The lightning that we had seen in the east, too far off for thunder, was a fearful tempest 150 miles out at sea. Henry was in the midst of it, and the captain said it was the most awful he had ever been in.” \*

At Skegness, and for the last time, she took up her pen with a view to publication. That anxiety for the safety of the soul, paramount to all other anxieties, both for herself and those dear to her, of which her letters show so much, seldom found other expression: She was never ready to utter deep feeling, and especially shrank from personal appeals on so momentous a subject. She not often spoke even with her children on personal religion, though she wrote with tender imploring earnestness. One thing she compelled herself to do—to continue for a time, when childhood was past, the habit of praying with them on Sunday afternoons, commenced when they were children round her knee; but a certain shyness,

\* A mining engineer from Siberia who had shared with her son the terrible five week’s passage from Cronstadt, perished with his family immediately after arrival in the wreck of the “Forfarshire.”

touching to remember, as she invited them to follow her into her room, a sigh as she knelt down, showed that it was not without cost she kept up the old practice. Once on her knees, her heart poured itself forth without constraint in free and fervent petition. She alludes to her difficulty in conversing upon religious subjects in a letter to a friend:—

"I wish, oh, how often and ardently! that I possessed the gift of improving conversation, and could be to the young people around me what a minister's wife should be. But though, I hope, careful not to do harm, I mourn under a strange inability in this way to do good. I should like to steal pleasantly into a young mind by the side door, but my only chance seems to knock direct at the principal entrance, and this is so formidable that I rarely attempt it. But what would I not give for facility and tact in thus discharging my conscience!"

Just before coming to Skegness the serious illnesses of some young people about her, one of her daughters among the number, seem to have impressed her deeply, and during this unwonted leisure she composed "Twelve letters on Recovery from Sickness." The manuscript was read to her husband on her return, and published the following year under the title of "The Convalescent." A few passages will show the character of the work, and be of some biographic interest. None ever felt more keenly than herself the anxieties of the sick room,—

"A little increase of pain, of fever, or debility, was felt like a cold arrow in our hearts, and with proportionate delight were the indications of returning health hailed by us. Many a wakeful hour of night witnessed the imploring earnestness with which on

quiet beds, or watching till the lamp grew dim, we raised our petitions, brief but frequent, to Him who heareth prayer, that the stroke we feared might be averted. . . . With looks as little dispiriting, as cheerful as we could assume, while our hearts sank in the faintness of anxiety and anguish, we endeavoured to perform the weary, willing service of the sick chamber, commending you incessantly to God, asking—oh, what did we not ask! and with what fervency!”

She depicts the severance of the sufferer from all the ordinary occupations, interruptions, recreations of the world :—

“The frivolous and pleasure-loving among our associates stand aloof from our calamity. We are severed from them as by a great gulf, which we cannot, and they would not pass, . . . so we are left alone. A few indefatigable friends, two or three who have really loved us, remain only to tread gently, and speak in whispers, and share with us the gloom—perhaps more than share in the anxieties of the sick chamber. . . . To exclude the sun and to deaden the sound is our impatient desire. We are shut up by our own consent with darkness, and stillness, and solitude, and whether or not we consent to it, with pain, restlessness, debility, and danger. . . . It is now that the past and the future press in upon us—the foolish past—the unknown, terrible future!”

But it is with the “Convalescent” that she has to do; to deal with that dangerous period when all old influences of seduction or indecision are regaining their power,—

“Trusting to-morrow! to-morrow! which to how many comes but to diminish the sensibility, strengthen the habits, add to the



difficulties, break the promises, increase the guilt, lessen the hope, perpetuate the folly, and confirm the ruin of to-day! The thought of to-morrow fans the hopes, and sucks the blood of the soul at the same moment."

"'Will you not pray with me?' Oh, my dear! I cannot express to you the music of that word to us! . . . It was indeed with pleasure that we heard that unusual, feeble, anxious cry,—'Will you not pray with me?' It seemed for the moment as if all we had been wrestling for had been suddenly granted. We thought of you as now seeking, and therefore as finding, life everlasting; and for a short time we had joy and gladness—a least and a good day. The thought of separation was no longer an agony. We felt it possible to say, 'Thy will be done.'" . . .

"The sight of a crowd is at all times affecting to me. How many individual histories, and yet how near a resemblance considered as creatures passing towards the final account! . . . How many in seasons of anxiety have prayed earnestly; have wished, and hoped, and intended to become genuine Christians; have recovered to life, and relaxed in their wishes, and deferred their intentions; have gone through this variety of conflict time after time!—till at length the weighty interests of the world have rolled heavily in upon them. They have become men overwhelmed with business, or women scarcely bearing up under ever-recurring daily pressure. They are urged onwards—they are on the road—they must proceed, or be crushed by the following trains. There is no pause for their spirits." . . .

"I know you may be disposed to say, as while writing, I have not seldom said to myself (or Satan to me), 'lay down the pen, persuasion has no efficiency to change the heart. Affliction itself, that weapon sharper than words, cannot do it. Without the interference of a Power which you cannot command, nothing

will touch the conscience, still less convert the soul !' I acknowledge that this is true ; but shall I lie down in despair, and you in a just neglect, because it is so? God forbid ! I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that this is not the legitimate inference to which His truth conducts us. . . .

“ Be satisfied that your Maker understands the thing He has made, and commits no mistake in His method of treating it. He can say, let there be light, and there is light ; or He impresses on irrational creatures, His own directing wisdom, and constrains the bee to build with mathematical accuracy. But His intelligent creation is differently dealt with,—dealt with according to its different nature. In spiritually affecting the mind, God acts *with us*, not without us. We do not sleep and wake, and find ourselves converted, a change having been put upon us like a garment. Conversion is a series of acts passing within the mind, and in the use of its natural faculties, but affected towards other objects, and in other ways, than it has been wont.”

But our quotations must stop. The last of the “Twelve Letters” deals with that caricature of religion which would represent it as “a system of privations and penances—a hard price paid as an exemption from something harder.”

“On the contrary, since the condition of the mind is alike the spring, and the index of enjoyment, should this be described as comprising—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—an equal poise of the passions, and a right bent of the affections,—happiness of the highest style, and but lightly affected by temporary and outward circumstances, must be the certain result.”

Familiarity with the sick-room and its anxieties, was her's, beyond most women. Not that she experienced an

unusual amount of illness in her family, but because her admirable qualities, as a nurse, were well known among her friends, and always freely at their service. Her firm arm was strength to the weak ; the order, neatness, and regularity that accompanied her, diffused quietness and comfort. Her ready resource inspired confidence. Her voice was all tenderness, her words full of cheerfulness, and not without little flashes of fun, if the patient could bear it, although her heart might be passing through some of the agonies she has described.

It was matter of course, that my mother should take an eager interest in the anti-slavery contests of her time, and her pen was frequently employed in contributions to current anti-slavery literature. In early years, she had thanked "the goodness and the grace" through which she

" — was not born a little slave  
 To labour in the sun,  
 And wish I were but in the grave,  
 And all my labour done."

and her fervour, in the cause, was not likely to cool. In 1838, at one of the crises of the long struggle, she thus replies to an application—

"If I should be able to comply with your request, I will do it with pleasure ; but I have scarcely more *command* of my own time or faculties than I have of yours, so that I seldom engage for such services. Sometimes a thought will flow, all without my care or payment, so that it is no trouble, and loses no time, to gather as it drops. At others, when, perhaps, much occupied, or

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bound to a fixed period for its completion, I may spend a day over a single verse, and that without success. I am sadly disabled by the pressure of more than I have time for. This has been my lot through life—always yesterday eating out the comfort of to-day! How very singular it is that, in such a heart as Montgomery's, there should float even a film of hesitation on such a subject! How exceedingly desirable does it appear to secure the mind, of the impressible particularly, from early prejudice, and any association which may render the judgment infirm! One would have thought that his was the last pen for which such a fear could have been entertained. We have no scruple, as to female petitions, in the cause of humanity. Hear Lord Brougham's opinions on the subject."

Upon this occasion—the shortening of the slave apprenticeship period—my father went to London as a member of a deputation to Government. He was in a lobby of the House of Commons on the night of the debate, along with a crowd of delegates, during a division, when there was an unexpected but small majority in their favour. Suddenly O'Connell opened a door, and thrusting out his broad face, shouted, "We have it, we have it" The delegates, most of them "grave and reverend signors," unable to control their exultation, gave way to loud, ringing cheers, and were instantly and ignominiously bundled out of the sacred precincts by the scandalised officials.

She often gave to her husband, during his absence, her shrewd judgment upon sermons preached in his pulpit, such judgment, however, being never confided to the family; criticism there she always promptly checked. On this occasion she wrote:—

"Yesterday, I believe Mr —— gave very general satisfaction.

He is within an ace of being really somebody. Whether there is not a slight touch of the absurd, which may stand between him and that eminence, I do not quite know ; but he certainly did preach extremely well."

December (1839) found her expecting the death of another old and valued Nottingham friend :—

"A slice out of this world anywhere," she wrote, "is generally well coloured with calamity, . . . . how long we are in learning practically the simple lesson, that here is not our rest ! Year after year, as we go forward in life, we are constantly making a nest for our hopes in some cherished pleasure, some happy arrangement,—something in which we have forgotten to look for the cankered side. And sometimes after wandering from hope to hope for the best, or rather the longest part of a life, we are brought suddenly to deduce the mournful moral (mournful as far as earthly expectations are concerned), that here *truly*, not merely as a passage familiar to our memories, but in fact and reality, here is not a *rest* !"



MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER VI.

*NOTTINGHAM.*

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Controversy—King Potato—National Fasting—Free Churchism  
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## CHAPTER VI.

NOTTINGHAM.

1840-1850.

"Some honour I would have,  
Not from great deeds, but good alone."

COWLEY.

"—— Faith that soars on high,  
And Sympathy that dwells on earth."

"TANNHÄUSER."

IN the ten years now before us no great sorrow broke in upon the life of which we tell the story, but it was an arduous, and in several respects, an anxious period to a mind so active, a heart so sensitive, a life bound up with so many other lives. Sons settling in different professions and forming homes of their own, pressed hard upon resources, and obliged a frequent drawing upon "Hook, Crook, & Co.," as their mother used to say; while in consequence of her husband's failing health and a laborious occupation in addition to his pastorate which now came to his hands, almost all the correspondence with them fell upon her. Perhaps none made greater use in domestic affairs than herself of "the glorious penny postage" as she called it, which began on the 10th of January 1840. The introduction of envelopes however, so far destroying the

integrity of the old-fashioned letter, and causing "an everlasting sub, sub, note writing," was to her detestable.

Not less did she rejoice in the development of the railway system, which during these years took such amazing dimensions. It was rather remarkable that with a temperament dwelling so fondly upon the past, clinging so tenderly to places and associations, and keenly alive to the picturesque, a change so great should have been welcome. But she heartily rejoiced in all conquests of mind, and in all quickened energies of life. The old coach made part of a picturesqueness she enjoyed, but when she ran to a garden gate to see it pass along a country road, or watched the laden mail with scarlet coat and sound of horn, rattle through the streets of Nottingham, tears came to her eyes, as much from sympathy with the stir and movement of life and business, as from any other feeling. And so with the railway works now pushing everywhere; true, the sod of a sweet pasture was turned up by the ruthless navy, but it was to make way for that triumph of steam, which conquering time and space, was weaving together all the towns and peoples of the land, and more than all to her, destroying that long and bitter separation of families, from which in earlier days she had suffered so much. The following lines, portions of a poem, first printed in the "London University College Magazine," give expression to this hearty sympathy with the great instrument of modern progress:—

THE SONG OF THE TEA-KETTLE.

Since first began my ominous song,  
Slowly have moved the ages long;

There I hung, or there I stood,  
Giving what sign my nature could,  
Content till man the hint should catch,  
To purr to the lift of the cottage latch.

. . . . .

Fraught with the weal of kingdoms vast,  
I sighed as the simpleton man went past ;  
Vainly I gave significant proof  
By thrusting high my prisoning roof,  
My lips uncouth their witness bore,  
But inarticulate, could no more.

Slow was the world my worth to glean  
My visible secret long unseen !  
Surly, apart, the nations dwelt,  
Nor yet the magical impulse felt,  
Nor deemed that Charity, Science, Art,  
All that doth honour or wealth impart,  
Spell bound, till mind should set them free,  
Slumbered and sung, in their sleep in me !

At length the day in its glory rose  
And off in its speed the engine goes !

. . . . .

Ponderous and blind, of rudest force,  
A pin and a whisper guide its course ;  
Around its sinews of iron, play  
The viewless bands of a mental sway,  
And triumphs the soul in the mighty dower ;  
To *Knowledge*, the plighted boon is *Power*.

Hark ! 'tis the din of a thousand wheels,  
At play with the fleeces of England's fields ;  
From its bed upraised, 'tis the flood that roars  
To fill little cisterns at cottage doors :  
'Tis the many-fingered, intricate, bright machine  
With its flowery film of lace I ween.

And see where it rushes with silvery wreath  
 The span of yon arched cave beneath ;  
 Stupendous, vital, fiery, bright,  
 Trailing its length in a country's sight !  
 Riven are the rocks, the hills give way,  
 The dim valley rises to unfelt day ;  
 And man fitly crowned, with brow sublime,  
 Conqueror of distance, reigns, and Time !

Lone was the shore where the hero mused,  
 His soul through the unknown leagues transfused ;  
 His perilous bark on the ocean strayed,  
 And moon after moon since its anchor weighed,  
 On the solitude strange and drear did shine—  
 The untrack'd way of that restless brine ;  
 Till at length, his shattered sail was fur'd  
 'Mid the golden sands of a western world !

Still centuries pass'd with their measured tread,  
 While winged by the winds the nations sped ;  
 And still did the moon as she watch'd that deep,  
 Her triple task o'er the voyagers keep ;  
 And sore farewell, as they hove from land  
 Spake of absence long, on a distant strand.

She starts !—wild winds at her bosom rage,—  
 She laughs in her sport at the war they wage !  
 In queenly pomp on the surf she treads,  
 Scarce waking the sea things from their beds.

A few bright suns, and at rest she lies,  
 Glittering to transatlantic skies !

Simpleton Man ! ye tribes of yore,  
 Open awhile death's dusty door ;  
 Rise, for a glimpse of victories won,  
 Busily see the peoples run ;

Mountain and precipice melt away  
The mind's high sorcery who can stay?  
Who to her necromancy cry,  
Hither come up, but pass not by?  
No! she has felt her strength, her force,  
And springs abroad to a limitless course.  
Simpleton man! Why, who would have thought,  
To this the song of a Tea-kettle brought!

Easily touched by the "enthusiasm of humanity," any day of public interest in the town stirred her thoroughly, and on such occasions the services of her pen were not seldom asked for:—

"It is the morning (she writes) for opening the Mechanics' Exhibition—a fine holiday-making, bell-ringing Whit-monday, when the poor dressmakers, and warehouse girls, and journeymen breathe the fresh air, and one's heart leaps to look at them. There will be a Corporation procession, headed by a military band, and skirted, as I presume, by the entire ragtailia of the good town of Nottingham, from the Town Hall to the Exchange, where a noble organ, assisted by the band, is to perform the National Anthem, which I was up at six this morning to alter for the occasion."

The last stanza of this new version ran thus:—

O Lord our God arise,  
Bless every enterprize  
Worthy her reign;  
Grant her a people free,  
Men such as men should be,  
Women as fair as she,  
God save the Queen!

A fortnight afterwards, arrived one of the first Excursion

trains that ever carried its hundreds of holiday makers, and which now brought Leicester to visit its old rival Nottingham. Nothing could suit her better.

“It was a beautiful day and scene. Upwards of a thousand arrived at ten o'clock in thirty-four carriages, with colours flying, and hats and handkerchiefs out of the windows as they swept into the station, where were gentlemen of the town, with a number of flags and a band of music, to welcome their arrival. It was supposed that twenty thousand people were in the meadows to see them, and if they did not count *me*, there were twenty thousand and *one*! The town was alive the whole day. It is just the thing that I like.”

Again, she was asked, but it was late on a Saturday night, to provide a welcome to be printed for distribution among the Leicester folks. She was not one to refuse her best endeavours, but the piece bears traces of composition at an ungenial moment; for, as she wrote to her sister, “the washerwoman had only just come in with the clothes.”

“Loyalty to the Royal” was a passion with her. Descending from the old George the Third days, it had certainly suffered eclipse during the reign of the “first gentleman in Europe,” but had revived in that of his honest sailor brother, and broke forth into ardent affection for the young Queen who succeeded him; and when, in June 1840, Oxford attempted her assassination, she, like every other bard in the country, was stirred into an effusion of indignation. But we have not space for its reproduction.

A genuine pleasure to her was “market day.” The

good old housewifely custom of "marketing" lingers still at Nottingham. Twice a week the ample colonnaded market-place is filled with rows of stalls; the roads are crowded with incoming villagers; quaint vehicles of most antique pattern, and ranging from what she likened to "a stage coach run to seed"—half van, half omnibus—down to the most ricketty donkey cart, choke the back streets and every available corner. Many a glowing sunset has lighted up the old tower of St Mary's, and gilded the long lines of stalls, that as twilight deepens are each ablaze with flaring lamps. Before this, however, van and cart have moved slowly off, climbing the long hills out of the town, each crammed with market people to be dropped at distant cottage doors, in the secluded villages along the vale of Trent, or in the hollows of Sherwood Forest. Such was the inspiration of the following:—

## SATURDAY MORNING.

I love to see the country folk come in,  
Daughter and dame, on sunny market days,  
Laden from field and dairy, barn and bin,  
And glorious flowers, whole baskets in a blaze !

The young eye, ranging round the motley scene,  
Allured by gorgeous shop or busy throng,  
The matron-mother, reckoning, I ween,  
Amount of takings, as she jogs along.

Butter she brings in cloth of snowy bleach,  
"All its own colour," from the fragrant mead,  
And store of eggs new laid, transparent each,  
With pretty pinioned chickens, doomed to bleed.

And herb of every virtue, green or dried,  
Gathered in season due, with housewife care ;  
Or culled 'mid morning mists, by greenwood side,  
The savoury mushroom, fit for queenly fare.

O, yes ! I love to see them crowding by,  
From carrier's loaded van or country cart,  
Bearing the opulence of earth and sky,  
To barter Nature's gifts for wares of art.

But more I love to see them thronging home,  
All hampers empty and all bosoms light,  
Toward grassy dells, where drowsy cattle roam,  
And woods half hushed bespeak the summer night.

How have I gazed ! and fancied as they went,  
The low white homestead, hid in sheltering trees,  
The garden, redolent of bloom and scent.  
The roosting poultry, and the clustering bees ;

The primrose lanes, o'er-arched with branching sprays,  
Through which with measured trot they onward wend,  
The tidy "house-place," cleaned on market days,  
To greet the travellers at their journey's end.

There stands the old arm-chair in chimney nook,  
The oaken table there in glory shines,  
On decent shelf, good tract, and Holy Book,  
And, framed in marking stitch, some poet's lines.

The ancient clock repeats its warning tale  
To sons, as heretofore to many a sire,  
The glistening tankard tells of home-brewed ale,  
And Christmas gathering, and the "yule clog" fire.

The country ! O how beautiful, how sweet,  
Alike in wintry frost or summer shades !  
How longs the weary spirit to retreat  
And breathe refreshment in its quiet glades !



These are the touching scenes, on which one dwells  
With tender stirrings, from youth's rosy store,  
Memory of gipsy days in rural dells,  
And evening walks, with dear ones now no more !

For this I love to see them thronging in—  
And out,—those homely folk, from near and far,  
Waking up moments that in bliss have been,  
And gilding, as in sunset, things that are.

A days' "outing" to some village along the Trent, Clifton or Thrumpton especially, was as great a treat as she desired, and a farm-house never lost the charm bestowed by early experiences of Suffolk hospitality at Mr Blackadder's. Hearths as cheery were to be found within pleasant drives of Nottingham, especially just over the Derbyshire border, where, at one such farm, she stayed occasionally with some sickly one of her family, jogging home sometimes, when her host and hostess came to Nottingham on market days, in what, with a droll wink, she would call "a light conveyance"—to wit, a market cart. On the death of the good wife, some time afterwards, she wrote, "It is a real loss to the living world when such a warm spring of taste and feeling is closed to it. How much more of a chasm will she make than many more of higher pretensions !"

Much, too, she delighted in those occasional excursions among her husband's Lincolnshire relatives, in one of which, as has been related, she rode behind him on an ancient pillion. In 1841, when, from long pressure of anxiety, during an illness of my father, she wrote that, "her head was little better than a bonnet-block above her frill" (frills just then, almost rivalling in size and style,

those of Queen Elizabeth)—they hired a phaeton for a long Lincolnshire round. From farm to farm, in those fat lands, they went, enjoying all the hospitality that abundant rural wealth could command. The good people were all Wesleyans, but withal, State-churchmen, tories, and protectionists, so that discussions, ranging from the doctrines of Calvin to those of Cobden, were often loud and long, with "Uncle Joseph" and his lively wife. Naturally, they should have been dutiful sons of the Church of England, whose grand church towers ruled all their landscape; but upon a certain occasion, their common ancestor, Mr Gilbert's father, had allowed a barn of his to be used by Mr Wesley, on one of his preaching tours, and was, in consequence, dragged through a pond by a mob, the rector, it was said, surveying the sport from the belfry. It ended in the victim building a small chapel for the Wesleyans, and most of his descendants became ardent members of the "Connexion."

Of the bitterness of the Corn-Law controversy in those years, some idea may be formed, by the manner in which a respectable paper spoke of an expected visit "of that Bright" to a northern county. "Should he make his appearance, it is to be hoped there may be found some stalwart yeoman ready to treat the disaffected vagabond as he deserves." That Mrs Gilbert, along with her husband, should take an earnest part on the side of free trade, could only be expected, since, with both, it was no mere political matter, but in their judgment, deeply affected the well-being of the community, and with it, their moral and spiritual welfare. In this, they were not singular among religious people; several eminent clergy-

men of the Church of England took the same view ; they saw around them, a deep, and wide, and growing distress, which they attributed directly to bad legislation, and they protested against this in the name of interests the most sacred. These points were forcibly put in a memorial to the Queen from the women of Nottingham, which was drawn up by my mother. It is well, sometimes, to recall the real state of mind prevailing at the time of the settlement of great questions, for, when they are settled, it is often entirely lost sight of, to the injury of those concerned in the struggle.

After apologising for approaching the throne upon a public question, but encouraged by the recollection that it is filled by a *woman*, and limiting the appeal to what it might be consistent with constitutional rights to grant, she justifies it on the ground that—

“The cry of distress has been heard in the land from the length and the breadth of it. It is not a feigned cry. It is not a party cry. It is not a rebellious cry. It is, we are constrained to believe, not a temporary cry. Nor is it a cry unanticipated. It is the compressed groan of multitudes, the result, we believe, of unwise, because shortsighted, legislation.”

“Involving as it does the interests of this mighty empire (for it must no longer be regarded as the depression of a class merely—of a class that might be freighted with its miseries to some distant grave), and being as your memorialists have ground for believing, the slow ebbing out of the strength of the nation, we most solemnly, though with profound respect, urge it upon your Majesty, to divest the momentous inquiry of every consideration extrinsic to its real merits, to set out of view the names

and the parties by whom supported or opposed, and to decide, as responsible to the one only Potentate, the vital question; shall your people be permitted to obey the great law of existence —‘ in the sweat of their brow to eat bread ’—or shall they perish —surely perish ?”

Upon this matter her brother Isaac wrote—

“I wish I could feel as sure as you do that corn-law repeal would remedy the miseries now endured. I fear not, but having no leisure to make myself master of so difficult a question, can only groan about these sufferings, and let ‘the Queen and Parliament’ do what they will. Your paper is very pungent.”

My mother became an active member of the Ladies’ League Committee in Nottingham, which sometimes overwhelmed her with correspondence; and when, in 1842, the Great Anti-Corn-Law Bazaar was started at Manchester, she found herself unable to refuse taking charge, in conjunction with another lady, for whose assistance she stipulated, of the Nottingham stall. But she did not altogether like the scheme.

“I think,” she writes, “more explanation respecting the uses of the monies obtained would have been desirable, because ever so much gold in one scale would not necessarily send up the Corn Laws in the other, and the bearings are not immediately visible. Indeed, it does occur to some of us, that if all the sums expended in preparation had been devoted to the object, and all that will be contributed in articles, the *trouble* might perhaps have been spared, and the money obtained as great. I have never liked bazaars.”

The influence of the potato famine in bringing this

great social injustice to an end may now be almost forgotten. It was known there were dissensions among the members of the Peel Government, "and if," said Mr Cobden at the Guildhall, "if it be not the potato rot, I want to know what murrain it is that has crept into the Cabinet?" Sir Robert Peel himself afterwards admitted that the immediate cause of the resignation of the Government was, "the great and mysterious calamity which had befallen Europe—the failure of the potato crop." In this circumstance my mother saw the very finger of God. The following lines bear date November 1845, when Lord John Russell had been summoned to the task of the abolition of the Corn Laws.

## KING POTATO.

Beneath the wet sod,  
Lay sprouting the rod,  
While statesmen the high courts of Parliament trod,  
  
And Potato Augustus,  
There mutely *nonplussed* us,  
While the Duke and Sir Robert, so sagely discussed us.  
  
'Tis diverting to see,  
King Potato, for thee,  
What Cabinet Councils,—what panics there be !  
  
The Chemist, exploring  
With quick-lime and chlorine,  
In vain seeks a nostrum thy health for restoring :  
  
The League, with its riot,  
May grin and be quiet,  
Now Nature takes up the great question of di t !

The landed Esquire,  
 With the Knights of the shire,  
 And the Lords of the counties, in impotent ire,

Cry, " what shall we do !  
 Vile root ! is it you  
 That venture both Commons and Lords to eschew !

O ! who would have thought,  
 That we both should be brought,  
 By a simple *Potato*, to do as we ought !"

The oppressed, with their groans,  
 Have not wakened the stones,  
 But have roused the *Potato* to speak before thrones.

And vain the endeavour  
 Of wicked, or clever,  
 The righteous result from its pleadings to sever ;—

See ! breasting the gales,  
 Come paddle and sails,  
 Deck-laden to barter their bread for our bales,

And gladsome commotions  
 Of laughing old oceans,  
 Proclaim, that *Free Trade* wins the world to its notions?

*A modern Seer,  
 Appointed Bard to King Potato!*

When after all Sir Robert Peel had the honour, amidst unparalleled obloquy from his party, of carrying the great measure, my mother was quick to recognise the nobleness—"O brave Sir Robert!" she exclaims in one of her letters, but adds—"Is it not nice to see that a soft Potato slung by Providence has killed the giant!"

In March 1847 a general Fast was proclaimed—"On account of the grievous scarcity and dearth of divers articles of sustenance and necessaries of life." Upon this occasion she wrote to a friend that a united service of the Independent Churches in the town would be held,—the different ministers, Mr Gilbert included, giving addresses—

"Exactly on what grounds," she says, "I can scarcely say, except that something of the kind may be agreeable to the several congregations. Mr Gilbert is strongly opposed to any acknowledgment that "Cæsar" has a right to interfere in such matters, and he is, moreover, feeling very decidedly, that the present calamity has grown out of bad measures and bad landlords. His own views are too well known to be mistaken, and he will probably state them in the opening address. However, you see they do not prevent him from falling in with the Government suggestion. I believe that the Proclamation only adopts an old form in the mention of *penalty*. It is to be regretted that this has been done. We *cannot* act in religious matters under threat—human threat of any kind, but though bound to maintain this as a principle, and even to resist were coercion attempted, there does appear to me a seemliness in the united confessions of a nation, and as no such simultaneous expression could be obtained except by recommendation from head-quarters, I am willing and even pleased to conform to it. And although none of us may have personally shared in the particular crimes to which correction is now addressed, we each contribute a share towards the guilt of the country; and as a country we are assuredly very guilty in many ways. I like the general acknowledgment, and can only hope it may be in many instances the expression of *individual* feeling.

"To the act of *fasting* we do not conform. It would greatly

impede with most of us the exercises of the mind, but I shall give my family\* a plain sufficient dinner, without niceties, or superfluities of any kind, and endeavour to give the juniors an impression that a sense of sin is not out of place. To make it a day of solemnity and privation to them, would be, I think, worse than useless. I should feel no conscientious objection to our usual employments, but should scarcely violate the feelings of others by sending the young people to their singing lesson. In case of persons confined to daily labour, I think we are authorised to allow of complete relaxation—so far, ‘to break every yoke and let the oppressed go free.’

“I believe there are not many who hold the principles of Independency in matters of conscience more firmly than I do, but I think, in a case like this, they may perhaps be ‘honoured more in the breach than the observance.’ I would not be too stiff, but these are times in which we are called to speak out and to act vigorously. We are as much alert on the Education question at Nottingham as Nottingham usually is. Mr Gilbert says he could not die in peace leaving such an entail to his family, and he works and speaks vigorously, but generally we are behind other towns.”

The last paragraph has reference to the Education scheme of Sir James Graham, of which, in writing of her husband, she afterwards said—

“On the movement towards an education for the masses from the public purse, and under clerical superintendence, his interest was strongly excited, and he concurred with every exertion to negative the proposal. Of course it was not that he undervalued the boon—knowledge with him was the second great good; but he looked anxiously at the channel through which it was to come,

\* At that time including two or three private pupils of Mr Gilbert.



the hands by which it was to be doled out. To large ecclesiastical influence he objected, on the firmest principle, and nothing could induce him to sanction the risk. The question is one, doubtless of great difficulty, and likely to perplex even the most honestly liberal of our public men ; but so long as there is a *petted child* in the State, it is scarcely possible that fair play should be shown to the rest. Where such an anomaly, such an injustice does not exist, a system of public education does, it is said, work well—query—would not voluntary activity work better?”

The formation of the Free Church of Scotland taking place in these years, stirred her sympathies to the quick—“That noble step,” she called it, “the precursor, too,” she was sanguine enough to think, “of others south of the border.” Yet she could not but be amused that the great defender of Establishments, Dr Chalmers, should prove the great leader of Disruption, nor did she leave her brother at Stanford Rivers without significant reminders of the progress of events. Her interest in the advancement of certain great questions seemed to grow with years. One of her sons had congratulated her upon retaining such vigorous attachment to what he supposed her early principles, whereupon she thus enlightened him:—

“You talk, dear J——, of the same hearty faith in sect and party with which I started before you were born. Now, be it known to you, and you at least are not qualified to contradict me, I have to the best of my judgment a faith in sect and party *a great deal heartier!* Before you were born, or while at Colchester, I had no faith of the sort at all, but a kind of mongrel namby-pamby *Charitarianism*, much to poor father’s discomfiture, who seemed to us to go sadly too far in being a Dissenter

on principle, and wishing that we were too. The '*great truths*,' you know, and *Christian love*—they were the things—not to *contend* for, of course, but just to lie down in a nice green place somewhere, and let them fall on us like dew!—that was Christianity. I should be sorry to know less of the doctrines, and I should be glad to feel more of the love. I know that real Christian love is the highest attainment we can make; but of the principles, with which both I believe work best, I think I do understand and feel more than I did then. I believe they are the principles on which the great disruption—the sweep before the setting to rights—will take place, and that what we will not learn in our lessons we shall be taught by the rod before long. It is *my* duty, dear children, to understand about it as well as I can—it is much more *yours*. Oh, the young! the buffets they must submit to, if they will not think! And then comes acting, when, and as far as, opportunity offers; but till it offers, at least, do not be ashamed. That is the duty to-day—do it, and you will be better able to do to-morrow's. Have you read Vinet?"\*

"Perhaps (she writes) the great work is to be done irrespective of the wisdom and help of man, through his rank absurdities, which form, as it were, a hotbed for a healthier and a nobler tree than could have resulted from his best culture. Look at Scotland, at Ireland, and at England! Are not the roots already in the soil, already breaking the clouds, and promising surely to destroy the poisonous vegetation which is rampant on the ground? Oh, yes, we may almost stand still now and see the salvation of the Lord! Principles are in action which will never, I think, sleep again. Can they in Scotland? Will they in Ireland? and what is the prospect entertained by the best of the clergy in England? I hear of such, who, looking at the Scotch Church, are expecting a similar necessity for themselves.

\* Vinet's able work on "Personal Religious Conviction."

And what a relief will free air and unshackled limbs be! No *bit* in the mouth! One is ready to ask in one's simplicity, Why not now? Is it not pleasanter,—more like men, to walk out, than to be kicked out?"

This was written so far back as 1843. In 1845 she was reading with intense interest the biography of Arnold,—

"What a man he was!" she exclaims, writing to her husband, "yet I *should* like to have his little 'crookeds' set straight. . . . I read yesterday the closing chapter, including his most mournful death, so in the vigour of life and usefulness! But it gave me great pleasure to see an indication of change of view towards the close of his life, individual conviction looking larger, and national agreement less to him."

But it was not every new movement of which she approved, and she by no means favoured that for admitting women to the franchise, which was then beginning to attract notice. In reply to an application on the subject, she wrote, February 1849, a very characteristic letter:—

"To Ann Knight, in reply to several papers advocating the rights of women, particularly to the Elective Franchise:—

"DEAR FRIEND,—

"I have looked over the papers forwarded to me this morning, and cannot say that I accord with the views there advocated. On many grounds I think them untenable.

"I believe that if half every family—observe, not half the *community* (and there perhaps lies the practical mistake), for that might be a *class* only; but that, if *half of every family* is honestly

represented, the rights of the whole will be, in fact, as well secured as by any other arrangement. There will be, I think, as much justice, with perhaps less dissension—dissension which might affect domestic happiness—together with a much less cumbrous machine to manage.

“Nature seems to have settled the question *à priori*. We have not lungs; we have not courage; we have not time for it (to say nothing of interruptions which might happen inconveniently during the sittings of Parliament!). And modern science says, further, that the *division of labour* is the great secret of order and progress. So long as houses have insides as well as outsides, I think that the female head will have enough to do, even, I might almost say, irrespective of the numerous demands now making upon her by benevolent and religious societies. To these she does feel it her duty to attend, but they make a large addition to ‘woman’s work’ as understood by our grandmothers; still, with a warm heart and managing head, much of this sort may be accomplished, but it seems to me to form the boundary line of her out-of-doors business. Indoors she may do much, even politically—that is, I should say, it is her duty to instil *principles* into her children—principles affecting all the great questions—Freedom; Slavery; Justice; Humanity; War; Monopoly; Private Judgment; Voluntaryism, with as many more as may be thought of—and, supposing she do all this well, wisely, effectively, and see to it at the same time that dinners come *secundum artem*, that shirts have buttons (and buttons shirts)—that everything, in short, within the homestead is ‘done decently and in order’—she will have, to my thinking at least, enough to do!

“You adduce scripture, and, suitably applied, we all bow to its authority, but not misapplied. ‘The righteous is bold as a lion,’—certainly, and as a general truth, has no need ‘to fear what man can do unto him;’ but if applied to women as women, it would be plainly confronted by other passages especially in-

tended for our own guidance, in which 'shamefacedness,' 'subjection,' 'a meek and quiet spirit,' the 'inquiring of husbands at home,' and many such like are enumerated, as *their* virtues; and in describing their *sphere*, a very different course is assigned to them—'To guide the house;' 'to bring up children;' 'to entertain strangers;' to descend to the humblest kindnesses—are marked out for them by apostolic authority. It appears to me, therefore, that whenever Scripture legislates for *us* specially, it speaks in direct opposition to the views you advocate. I do not think they would comport with the design of our creation, or with actual, undeniable, unevadeable duties; I think they would subvert the wise result of experience in the division of labour, so necessary to the working of all great machineries; and I think after all, that we should not be a whit the better for woman's interference!

"Of course, I believe that there are both wise women and foolish men, but these terms do not divide the sexes. Generally speaking, if wise, we are not the *wisest*—on a large scale especially,—though perhaps on a small one. But 'the hand cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee,' each is best about its own business; and unless we could regard ourselves as likely to make, not only able statesmen, but the *ablest* of the two, all we could plead for would be an admission into their councils, and then, large committees are always, I believe, less effective than small ones. The fewer that *can* manage a business the better; and as Government do not take upon them to make laws for us *as women*, but only as 'all one concern' with the men, we may, I think, without anxiety, consent to 'share and share alike' with the law makers.

"These at least are my opinions, and even if incorrect, I have not leisure to remodel, or further to defend them. You have stated yours at length, I mine briefly, and if either is unconvinced, we should not perhaps effect much by saying

more. I do (woman though I am) feel a lively interest in great rights and wrongs, and rejoice in the belief that ultimately *wrong* will have the worst of it! We are going forward, but I should not expect much advantage from taking the other half of every fireside into the quarrel. My left hand has much to complain of—never either wears a thimble or holds a pen! But I don't find myself injured by this partial arrangement; one has the work, the other the needle, and so I manage between them.

“Will you excuse me for having spoken thus freely? I think yours is a false movement, and thus far I put in my protest against it. Believe me, yours frankly,\* ANN GILBERT.”

Thoroughly, indeed, the writer carried out in practice her ideal of “woman's work,”—real work of any kind, indeed, as in the old “bib and apron” days, she truly enjoyed. Upon a change of servants she writes—

“This week I am up to my ears—rather above, as the crown of my cap will testify—among pots and pans, and dirt holes unimaginable. In my rummagings I have found the handles of ten of our vanished knives and forks! Oh, it is this, and more of the same, that makes that pitiable compound, a cross old woman!”

Of her overruling concern for the spiritual welfare of all belonging to her, enough has been seen: yet she by no means considered seclusion from the world as wholesome treatment for the young, and speaks thus of a friend's son—

\* It will be seen that this letter does not apply to the aspects of the question at present mooted. When a woman is sole head of a household, the family is entirely unrepresented; and voting for members of Parliament is a widely different thing from sitting as a member.

“They feel him too great a treasure to be exposed to the world’s winds, and in fact will nurse him up in a bed of solitary prejudices till he will be unfit to deal with men, or encounter anything.”

And to a widowed mother whose heart was centred upon an only child, a daughter, she writes—

“Your dear child has possessed advantages, both moral and intellectual, equalled by few ; and I have no doubt is the dear and valuable child which such training might be expected to form ;—still, as you know, this is a world of compromise. The advantages of all systems will not result from one, though that one be the best, and I do conceive that a change now might be beneficial. We feel disposed to wrap up our children in cambric handkerchiefs (as well we may) to keep them from the taint of a wicked world, and for a time it may be well to do so ; but when a safe course has been so long persisted in, and the affections and moral habits are formed, it seems desirable to vary the method, and with all care to place them in different circumstances—a degree of stimulus, activity, expansion, ‘manner,’ and in some respects a sounder judgment might be the result.”

It was now a great pleasure to her to be entrusted occasionally with the young children of her sister, when their mother was absent from home and so to renew, for a short time, the nursery care, which was no longer required at home. Upon one such occasion, Edward, the youngest, spent some weeks with her. It was the foundation of the warmest friendship between the two, but the laying of the foundation was sometimes accompanied by scenes of contest, to which she thus refers—

“But you will like to hear news of the pet lamb which we have to nourish. He is, and has been, quite well, and very generally good, though every now and then we have a pull for it. I endeavour to evade a contest whenever it is possible, and I assure you it costs me not a little thought, to meet the prevailing tendency with all needful wisdom, and in the way most likely to overcome it. I charge you to keep an attentive eye upon him, or he may become unmanageable, sweet and reasonable as he is. My present conclusion is—1st, avoid direct opposition where it can be done honourably and unperceived; 2d, make, when necessary, a speedy and sharp appeal to the *body*, adding, as soon as convenient, a few reasonable words; and, 3dly, in case of failure, leave him totally unnoticed, as much as if he were not in the room. Let everything go on, and even go out, at the proper time, without reference of any kind to the culprit, and I think it both brings *to*, and brings *down* more surely than any method I have yet devised—and I have devised many. But he is so perfectly intentional in his resistance, that in any case of habitual failure—such as crying at going to bed, or getting up, &c.,—I have found it serviceable to converse with him very plainly on the subject beforehand; and it is not very difficult to persuade him in this way to obedience, and what he *means*, he *does* generally. You will excuse my speaking to you in this fashion; but I know how easy it is to look over, scarcely to observe, or too long to neglect, the evil tendencies of one among many, and especially of the youngest, whom we are apt to regard as the *baby*, long after he is fairly in business for himself. I think you have everything to hope or much to fear for him, and that the alternative depends, more than in most cases, on the judiciousness, or otherwise, with which he may be treated.”

In this case, “the everything to hope” was fully justified. Edward Gilbert Herbert lived to exhibit talents



which always placed him foremost among competitors, and led his friends to expect for him high distinction in more than one pursuit. He was a member of the Chancery Bar, but his death at thirty-two, frustrated all hopes. A charming essay on the "Congregationalist character," from his pen, derived much of its inspiration from the portrait-ure of his grandfather, furnished by his mother and his "Aunt Gilbert." To her, the name he bore in remembrance of her own lost child, would have sufficed to render him especially dear. In some verses addressed to him on first leaving his father's roof for school, occur these lines—

Thy name, dear Edward, to my heart its tenderest thought recalls,  
As music of a hymn long past upon the spirit falls.  
Fulfil thou but the promise that his early childhood gave,  
And nothing would we change for thee—except his early grave.

That one, so industriously careful, and faithfully exact in all details, should be an excellent "woman of business," may be easily believed. All committees upon which she served, felt this; but she was also, for many years, concerned with the management of property for a dear friend who had left the neighbourhood, and her testimony upon this point is valuable.

"The greater part of my correspondence with her, consisted of business letters, and no correspondence I have had with any man of business, was ever so satisfactory; there was never a mistake, and an explanation had never to be asked for; she never disappointed me. . . . .

"I used to be struck with the power she had of entering into the feelings of others, throwing herself into their circumstances, speaking and acting with so much wisdom and discrimination,

and often have I felt reprov'd and humbled by the fair dispassionate views she took of everything ; giving their due, even to the most unworthy, never impugning their motives, trying to look at the bright side of every character. Never did I meet with one who, with an eye so quick to detect errors, was possessed of so large a portion of that charity that "thinketh no evil, but believeth, hopeth, endureth all things."

It was to this friend, that upon occasion of an unexpected and disastrous change in her prospects, in which the honour and faithfulness of a relative seemed to be impeached, my mother wrote, striving so far, as might be, to relieve the memory of the departed from blame, but winding up thus—

"It *is* a quieting thought that whatever may have been the secondary causes, there is One, and He your best friend, who had the entire arrangement within His control, and who, nevertheless, did not interfere to prevent it. It is inexpressibly consoling, and very often are we obliged to resort to the remembrance, that, with perfect ease, everything we had desired might have been granted to us ; and that, if disappointed, it is the deliberate decision of the wisest and the kindest, as well as the most powerful of friends, that, for us, it would not have been advantageous. In reference to the long detention of property belonging to our own family, now in Chancery, my brother Isaac lately wrote, 'There is no earthly reason why the distribution should not be made to-morrow, but, perhaps, there is a heavenly one.' By such an assurance, we may be tranquilized under any circumstances, and I desire, in all things, to resort to it as demanding even more than acquiescence."

From the letter of Isaac Taylor just quoted, somewhat beyond date, I will add some further extracts. It was

accompanied by the first number of "Ancient Christianity"—

"April 1839.—My dear sister,—Would that our communications were more full and frequent! and that those things for the sake of which life is a *good* were not, so much as they are, overpowered and put aside by the mere adjuncts and incidentals of life! But so it is—each of us ('if one may speak for another') in our open boat with our precious crew and charge, and our few chattels, the billows running high, and seeming, swell after swell, as if proud with a conscious commission to swallow up our pitiful skiff and all!—each of us with knit brow reading the storm, and a hand convulsively grasping the tiller, can barely afford grace enough, once and again at distant intervals, to hail the dearest companions of the voyage, as they are tossed upon our horizon by the surge. Enough of allegory, but in fact this simile so well typifies the *truth* that it is frequently in my mind's eye, and when looking round upon my charge, I can actually feel the little leaky boat, tossing, and wrenching, and bulging under my tottering feet. The unconscious urchins are in high glee with the foam! The deep they do not sound.

"Ever since I saw the announcement of your little book,\* I have felt as if I ought as well to congratulate you, as to express my particular pleasure in finding that you have at length returned to your vocation, and left (as I heartily hope for ever) the mending of stockings to hands that cannot so well handle the pen. Some of your mended stockings have metaphorically, and perhaps literally, cost more than the silk hose which they say were presented to Queen Bess. That you will go on writing I take as a matter of course; write for grown folks, on the most comprehensive subjects; I will not speak of the little book—the precursor—until I have taken a quiet Sunday evening upon it. . . .

\* "The Convalescent."

“Never heretofore have I felt in writing, the sort of impulse which in this instance carries me forward. The crisis is great, the movement fatal in its tendency, deep, general, and on no side effectively stemmed. Few are in a position to resist *fearlessly* and regardless of consequences the wide inundation. All, or almost all, have that to care for which prevents their going straight forward. As to myself—five times in the day Satan walks into my study (unless it be my good angel), and mocks at me aloud for my presumption in thinking that with accomplishments so slender, and means altogether wanting, I should be able to encounter Oxford professors on their own ground. Notwithstanding these jeers, well founded as they are, my persuasion every day increases that I may do some service. I have the ear of a portion of the clergy, some of whom encourage and urge me on; I have the habit of writing; I possess what few out of colleges do, the books which are the text of the controversy; I have the temper and habits of labour and research; and moreover *assuredly know* that the Nicene Christianity, now obtruded on the Church, was essentially unlike Apostolic Christianity, and essentially identical with the superstitions of the middle ages. This, if spared, I shall place beyond doubt.

“You will easily believe that with such adversaries to encounter, with a parching Sahara of Greek and Latin to traverse in all directions unaided, unrefreshed, and having to carry my bread and water on my shoulder every step of the way, my daily labours are not light.”

MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER VII.

*NOTTINGHAM.*

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## CHAPTER VII.

NOTTINGHAM.

1840-1850.

“The matter that detains us now may seem  
To many, neither dignified enough,  
Nor arduous, yet will not be scorned by them,  
Who looking inward have observed the ties  
That bind the perishable hours of life  
Each to the other.”

WORDSWORTH.

THE last chapter was occupied with the various public questions of the time in which my mother took an interest, and with some miscellaneous matters ; the more domestic record of the same period—between 1840 and 1850—will now be dealt with.

In 1840, the death of a young mother, the sister of her daughter-in-law, and very dear to a large circle, came with November gloom. It almost broke some hearts, and her tender, sympathetic nature felt it deeply. To her daughter-in-law she wrote again and again, trying especially to remove a painful regret attaching to the suspicion of mistaken treatment.

. . . “Yet, dear S——, when we have done our best, acted upon the clearest judgment, or the kindest feelings, or the best advice we could command, it is equally wrong, as unavailing, to

indulge regrets and attribute sad results to our own mistakes. Whatever were the circumstances, it is clear now that her death at that time was intended, and always had been intended, by Providence. Had her life been to be prolonged, many events must have been arranged otherwise than they were ; but of her mortal existence there was and *could have been no more*. . . . . You have ever been to her, my dear child, the tenderest sister, and you ought to take the comfort of such a recollection. You did all that love could do under the circumstances, *and we are never responsible to-day for to-morrow's light*.

“ You speak of an impression which you desire never to lose, and I earnestly pray that you may not. I pray that all the hearts broken by this stroke may in this way be bound up, but sorrow itself will not do it. It will deify the past, and the heart will again idolize the present. How soon does it try to make amends to itself for the blight of one dear interest by idolizing another ! Do not yield to the delusion. Look while the veil is drawn aside at the great things beyond.”

But trouble was soon at her own door, and in one of its most trying forms. For several months in the following year, her husband lay in severe illness, at one time so serious that all his family were sent for. Of the courage, patience, and submissive trust, shown by the wife—though, as she said, “ often sickly anxious ”—it is needless to speak. The anxiety was aggravated by the necessity of moving to another house, for which his recovery only just allowed time.

“ You cannot think how I long to be as strong—as strong as Hercules' wife—at any rate, for the occasion ; but I find I can't ‘ do as I used to could,’ and must be content to pull my business



behind me, instead of pushing it before. How very few comfortable afflictions there are !”

The house, to which they now removed, was inferior both in itself and in its situation, to that they left, but from the rooms in front, and especially from my father's study, there was a prospect of gardens across the street, in spring rich with lilacs and laburnums, which often drew the now venerable figure to the window, where he would stand for several minutes at a time, lost in abstracted gaze. The room was still large enough to permit of the perambulation so necessary to his thoughts, and to hold his library, as well as the favourite stand for plants. Within these walls his last days were to be spent. The fitting up of a new home had always a charm for my mother, whatever her regrets for the old one, and notwithstanding its disadvantages, comfort soon pervaded this, as every home of hers.

“We can forget (she wrote), so far at least as not to be enduringly unhappy, at parting with scenes long endeared to us, if only other scenes of love, employment, and usefulness are opened to us elsewhere.”

And a new element was now introduced into the household. The sons gradually became only visitors at home, but pupils, first one and two, then as many as four, came in their stead. They were not sought, but offered, and at a time when the aid was very acceptable. Two, after reaching manhood, are already dead, the others, men of influence and position, retain, it may be said, an affectionate remembrance of the house in St James' Street, of the

kind-hearted tutor, who would blush while he corrected a false quantity, and of his wife—

“Gentle, untiring, tender,  
Simple, cheerful, true,”

as one of them wrote long afterwards. She was solicitous that none should come as schoolboys to a school, but as members of a family. She felt them a great responsibility, and, as always, sought help of God to perform her part. She was not given to serious speech with them, anything serious she would rather entrust to a letter, laid upon a table, or put into the hand at parting for a holiday; but she often administered smart rejoinders and sarcastic, perhaps too sarcastic, hits, which, however, as well as the letters of more earnest moment, were taken in good part. Let him, already quoted, bear his testimony on this point:—

“Kind ways she had of warning,  
For those she thought had erred,  
And sparkling wit adorning,  
Just barbing, suited word.”

Among the “kind ways of warning” may be instanced the following, contained in a letter to one of her daughters; it began:—

“Have you seen the following sad paragraph? We think we know the people,—

**FEARFUL LOSS OF LIFE!**

“It is our painful duty to record an afflictive circumstance, which will involve, it is feared, a fatal issue to nearly all the younger branches of a family well-known in the vicinity (Not-

tingham), but which, for obvious reasons, we do not at present name.

“It appears, that it had been the habit of the senior members, for a great number of years, to assemble for breakfast at eight o'clock A.M., no apparent evil resulting from this arrangement; but for reasons as yet unexplained this desirable custom had for some time past become nearly extinct! The result, as we are assured, by the ablest calculators, is the loss of at least one hour per diem to all the actors in this domestic tragedy; and this, supposing the term of life to be seventy years, and its available working time, exclusive of childhood and rest, about 35 years, will shorten that period by not less than 1672 days—days without night, or clear working time. Of course, though the proportion to a shorter life would be but the same, the *value* of loss or gain, to such an amount, would be only enhanced. We feel justified, therefore, supposing the present ruinous system to continue, in regarding it, as to all intents and purposes, a needless, an irrecoverable—a *fearful loss of life.*”

Reference has been made to the difficulties in which the people of Mr Gilbert's charge had been involved, through the pressure of a heavy debt. For the extinction of this debt, his wife now privately formed a resolution, which led to one of the most self-denying acts of her life. She would go forth and beg, hoping at least to collect a sum, which might prove “a nest-egg” (a favourite expression) for future additions.

“I have,” she writes, “lately taken up a new profession, which has occupied time, thought, strength, not a little, and the more so, as it has been carried on *incog.*—even papa knowing at present not a word of it. The case is this: I am proposing to attempt in London something towards the reduction of the chapel debt,

but I have felt that it would be requisite to any decent appeal to strangers, to be able to say that something had been done at home. So it occurred to me to act on my own responsibility. It cost me much to determine upon, and much to effect, and I am weary of the concealment imposed upon me. . . . I long a little to know what Papa will say when I display my bank notes, which I hope to do in full tale on Monday evening. I have been obliged to let the girls into the secret to account for my continual absences from home—O such trudging !”

But at Nottingham she was amongst friends. In London it was a different affair. She had indeed her son's house there to go to, and she humbly proposed an earlier visit than she feared might be convenient, on the ground of being upon the “King's business.” He, and all her family, heartily disliked the errand ; her husband, for his part, would rather, he said, “spend seven years at the treadmill ;” and there are some who still think remorsefully of the little help or encouragement they gave to their noble mother, in a task as distasteful to herself as to them, and of which, she took without murmuring, all the weariness and painfulness. With a pale anxious face she would start in a morning, and return in the evening, “dog-tired—ready to be carried away in a spoon,” as she phrased it—but radiant, or depressed in spirit, as the result of the day might have been. One generous friend she had in the large-hearted Dr Leifchild. Without his encouragement she would hardly have ventured upon the undertaking. A few passages from letters to her husband will explain how she fared.

“*June* 1842.—Dr Leifchild introduced me to his deacons ;

they were very kind; Ann Taylor, and the sister of Jane Taylor, they did not doubt many would assist with pleasure. I am really thankful to find my name everywhere so serviceable to me, for all refer to it as the ground of any success I may meet with. . . .

“One great difficulty has been to make a commencement, which the Dr. would not allow me to do for less than £10. At last I undertook to make my own commencement with Aunt Hooper, to whom I had written a few days before. I lost three hour's sleep that night from anxiety for the result, and set off with something of an aching heart. Nothing could be kinder than my reception. Not a cross word or tone during the visit. She was benevolent and tender, and gave me ten pounds as freely as if they had been so many pence. Indeed, I thanked God and took courage! There I dined (it was at Kensington), and saw the Queen and suite, with the children, going to Ascot Races, but I really saw only her parasol.”

The “Aunt Hooper” spoken of was one of that original family of Taylors who, with the exception of their brother Isaac (my mother's father), possessed a deal of grit in the composition of their powerful, rugged, but not unkindly natures. “Aunt Hooper” especially, had so caustic a humour, that nephews and nieces of very mature age were apt to shake in their shoes on approaching her door.

My mother deserved to prosper, for to many a poor minister with a “chapel case” had she given hospitality, and aid often better than money, to the jaded man. His home it might be, was far away among the Welsh hills, but he would find all the comfort of a home for days or weeks under her roof. Her success after six weeks' toil was moderate, yet she considered that her

object was sufficiently attained, and then gave herself up "without a twinge, to rest and pleasure in a visit to Stanford Rivers, going down on the top of the coach; everything, except here and there a new cottage, looking precisely as it did thirty-one years ago."

The Cecils were now at Ongar, Mr Cecil having taken the pastorate there. Several missionary students were then under his care for preliminary training, and among them David Livingstone, who showed the future explorer by walking the twenty miles to London on a straight line by compass, over hedge and ditch. Livingstone was sent one Sunday afternoon to officiate on an emergency at the small chapel at Stanford Rivers, when his performance astonished the congregation. He gave out his text, and then, after a pause, descended the pulpit stairs, took up his hat, walked straight out of the chapel, and sped back to Ongar. It could have been little foreseen that the "stickit minister" would one day find a grave in Westminster Abbey.

The bright intelligence and keen discernment of the Rotherham "Salome," disciplined by the trials of life, now found ample scope. "She is," wrote Isaac Taylor at this time, "a miracle of energy and 'au-fait-i-ty.'" He expressed, too, the greatest satisfaction at obtaining such a man as her husband for a pastor. With Salome, my mother now "enjoyed a quiet coze," rejoicing to have regained another home at Ongar.

Making the excuse of inquiring whether there was a path across the fields, she knocked at the door of the "Peaked Farm," was asked in, and went through the old rooms, where she "could all but see the dear old inhabitants." Then she "visited the graves," and walked home

to Stanford Rivers alone, "on a lovely evening—the quiet hour filled with touching recollections."

The strong friendship subsisting for many years between herself and Dr Leifchild, arose from her having largely assisted him in the publication this year, 1842, of a volume of "Original Hymns" for congregational use. She contributed seventy-six, but they were not among her happiest efforts. Some were too didactic, or even argumentative, for psalmody, others dealt too much with private experience, most of them lacked that spontaneity and ease which belonged to her occasional pieces.

She needed a personal interest, and one of the hymns included in the collection owes its superiority to this. It was written for the funeral of a lady who, during the early years of my father's ministry at Nottingham, was familiarly called "the Deaconess," from her untiring, unobtrusive labours. There had been excavated in the solid rock under the chapel, vaults in the fashion of the Roman catacombs, and the scene was very striking, when, after a service in the chapel above, the dead were borne with lights along the rough-hewn aisles below, and the mourning group, half hidden in the darkness, gathered round the spot, where the loved remains were to be sealed in their rocky tomb. Several of the honoured founders of "Friar Lane" lay there already, when this "young saint" was brought to join them, and the effect of the following lines, sung around the bier in those subterranean corridors, will not be forgotten by any who heard them.

He comes! the Saviour comes!  
His mourning Church to thin,  
The faithful few, to peaceful tombs,  
How thickly gathered in!

Here fast the ransomed dead  
 Are sheltered from the strife,  
 Each slumbering in a quiet bed,  
 Till death is lost in life.

Here mothers sink to rest,  
 Unheeding infant cries,  
 Here in his labours richly blest,  
 The Christian veteran lies.

And still with happy tears,  
 Another saint we bring !  
 How old in faith ! how young in years !  
 This gem of Christ our King !

Stir, stir thee, O my soul !  
 T'await the trumpet call ;  
 His chariot wheels how near they roll !  
 His shafts how quickly fall !

E'en now thy lamp to trim,  
 Turn thee from earth away,  
 And follow those who followed Him,  
 Through darkness into day.

For a great number of years after leaving Hull, she wrote the hymns to be sung by children and teachers at the anniversary services. These too often, like so much of her poetry after the death of her loved Edward, when writing for the young, "took the tone in which a mourner sings."

Yet, of the hymns contributed by one of her sons to Dr Leifchild's collection, she curiously makes this very complaint—"why do you write hymns for a mournful imagination only? Try something that shall fall like sunshine



on the heart—something that Plato could not have written.”

With her great love of country scenes, it was no small pleasure to her, that two of her sons finally settled down in country places. Her son Henry, however grievously disadvantaged by the accident to his sight, had now, in association with J. B. Lawes, Esq., of Rothamsted, entered upon that career of scientific investigation in relation to agriculture, which has made their names so widely known. In that ideal of an English village, Harpenden, he took up his abode, or rather on the borders of its village green, which, shaded with fine elms, spreads out from a grey church tower, upward into an extensive common, bright with gorse, and traversed by tempting footpaths. On one side, the noble trees of Rothamsted lead up to the antique manor-house; on the other, amidst a labyrinth of sequestered lanes, is hidden the “Mackery End” of Elia. Not much further off is Gorhambury, and the tomb of Bacon, who, of all men, would have rejoiced in the true Baconian methods pursued at Rothamsted. Here, in his first year of tentative experiment, came father and mother to see their son, the first, of nearly annual visits henceforward, to the country homes of their children.

It was a journey of many changes in those days, for it was long before any railway approached the spot, and traffic, even on the great lines, was interrupted by long delays. In writing to her sister of the delights of arrival, a notice of the primitive laboratory in the fields, whose successor has been styled the “Greenwich Observatory of Agriculture,” is now of some interest.

“It was half-past eight in the evening when we were left with

our luggage on the platform at Boxmoor. There was an hotel close by, and Mr G——, who was thoroughly chilled, thought nothing could be nicer than a warm, and a bed, but I thought that to get to Harpenden, and not disappoint poor Henry, would be nicer still ; so after a good warm at the fire, and spirited inquiry on my part, a conveyance was produced, which, with a brisk little nag, brought us to the next stage, Hemel Hempstead, and there, under a bright and beautiful moonlight, we took a post-chaise for the rest of the journey, through a fine hill and dale, and woody country. It was sweetly calm and pleasant, and I did enjoy it. Just as we crossed the pretty Common, at the entrance of Harpenden, a voice called, ho ! stop ! The man, I believe, thought we had fallen among thieves, for he whipped forward immediately ; but, on looking out, I joined the hue and cry, and dear Henry was on the box in a moment, so that we drove direct to the lodgings he had taken for us. It was half-past ten, the door opened into our sitting-room, bright with candles and comfort, the very *beau-ideal* of snugness ; even that night, papa could not help expressing gratuitous approbation ; and the next morning, after a sound rest, when we awoke to our snow-white furniture, a beautiful day, and the *very pretty* village—trees, houses, cottages, roses, and green, visible from the window, he could not but break out into expressions of unqualified pleasure. Three times during breakfast, he uttered various “eulogia,” not a little gratifying to me, who had been the guilty suggester and perpetrator of the journey. And now, while I have been writing, he has put down his Greek book, and said, ‘This is calm ! this is really calm ! this does seem the place to come to !’ Isn’t it a comfort ?

“Yesterday, we walked twice up to the Laboratory. Henry has, indeed, an arduous employment, or rather, employments, for there are various and distinct departments ; but he is interested in both the processes and the result. He has

frequently, and had yesterday, to remain there till eleven at night, then walk a solitary mile home, and be there again at four, not returning to breakfast till near ten; and worse than this, he is, during the evenings and mornings, entirely alone, in order to let the man sleep who watches when he is away. It is a process attended with some danger, and we neither of us liked leaving him yesterday evening (we stayed till nearly nine) alone in that solitary spot, not a soul within call (at least, not a body, the other we could not answer for), in a wild, rambling laboratory, surrounded, or rather crammed, with implements and objects, that looked more like the fossil remains of extinct species than anything else. Before we left, he closed all the doors but one, a large barn door entrance, which would have admitted a gang of gipsies very well, stuck three lighted candles, in some sort of putty or other, about the walls, and then took leave of us for two hours of dismal, and rather nervous-looking solitude, with just the possibility of an explosion before he had done."\*

But perhaps the removal of her eldest son from London to the country was even more interesting to her, for it was to Ongar that he came. Near the "three wants-way," where visitors for the old Peaked Farm used to leave the coach, and which, marked by an ash tree in the middle, was named Marden Ash, stood a house well bowered in trees. There he made his home, and it became a favourite haunt of her's for many years. Nor was the cause of the removal less interesting to her, since it was the association of her son with her brother Isaac, in the artistic management of his remarkable invention, for

\* This was before the investigations were exclusively confined to the chemistry of agriculture.

applying mechanism to the delicate and complex processes of line-engraving.

The decision to join in this matter, however, and to remove from London, had been an anxious one, and many letters had been written by both father and mother on the subject. The mother's were tinged strongly with hope, and with the delight of seeing him located between Ongar and Stanford.

"I do not love London—its habits, tastes, hours, or anything—and could not therefore regret for you the change. And oh, the beauty of the real country! and the quiet of a life uninterrupted by wheels and knockers! But this, of course, 'is as folks think, uncle.' . . . It is, I think, mercifully arranged that your decision may come piecemeal; all we need, as I say often enough, is the sight of the next stepping-stone, and if that be but afforded, and the stone itself is tolerably smooth and dry, we may not only be satisfied, but thankful.

"My thoughts, when free from the anxiety of indecision, and dwelling only on your present, and, to me, pleasant location, feel to breathe a freer air, and to be tinted with brighter colours than when they hovered over you in London; and to you, whose early and happy home it was, I should think it must be full of delightful interest. But, oh, the final yea or nay! I do dread it.

"Do not be afraid of death from suffocation from those beautiful trees. You will get to love them; and how sweet they are, with the winds and the birds, and the flowers, and the grass plots, and all the lovely items of a country garden—that one earthly good which I have coveted all my life, and do not possess! Think of turning out on to your own gravel walks before breakfast, and bringing in a fresh radish to help your appetite, if then needing help! But these radishes will make me poetical, and I must forbear. I cannot express my astonishment

and admiration, knowing as I do what engraving is, at the effects you describe. Nothing in modern invention seems to me more marvellous."

When the change was completed, she did not let the occasion pass without urging a step still more serious.

"It is not a favourable thing to be lost in the multitude of a large London congregation. Whatever may be the pulpit, there are too many pews to form a *home*. A mass of strangers, many of them exhibiting anything but a lovely phase of Christianity, is not a soil in which Christian sympathies readily expand. It is not a brotherhood. How much happier and more improving to form one in the bosom of a smaller, but compact assembly, where each knows and is known, loves and is loved. Long and anxiously, dear children, have I watched for your *progress*; but you have appeared to me to yield to unfavourable influences, and to fritter your hopes among everlasting cavils, forgetful that, after all, neither your own cavils nor those of other folks, will afford an available excuse for continuing stragglers without the fold.

"I know you have objected to the scrutiny to which a more direct course would subject you, but see whether it is a reasonable objection. Could you feel the Christian brotherhood of a church whose admissions were indiscriminate? or would it be possible for such a church to bear honourable witness for Christ in the world? Would you like to make one of such a compound? or could you read the Epistles to Colosse, Philippi, and Thessalonica, as addressed to you, being one of their number? And, if not—if in order to preserve the character and the *uses* of a Christian church, it is necessary that some candid judgment should be formed respecting those who wish to unite with it—how could you devise that it should be effected in a way less

objectionable than that usually adopted? Be reasonable, my dear children; and if, after looking seriously at the circumstances, you still feel that there are disagreeables to be encountered, still decide honestly whether they are such as would justify you, related as you both are to 'the household of faith,' in holding a solitary course, and refusing both the honour and the happiness of naming the name of Christ according to His will. Perhaps the circumstances you object to, may form the very cross which dispositions like yours maybe required—might do well to carry—a test of humility and sincerity even wisely adapted—the rough angle of the strait gate, which, nevertheless, you are required to enter. Would you have shrunk back when Jesus spat on the ground and made clay?"

She had greatly rejoiced in her son and daughter living now near to her own "Salome," but this was not long to be. The following year, 1844, Mrs Cecil died, a loss deeply felt by her old friend,—

"I have (she writes) a very nice letter from her, written only on the 15th of April. Of *you* she says: 'J—— is gone to London, and S—— is coming to tea alone. You can scarcely long more for their *obvious* salvation than I do. The Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.' These were the last words she ever addressed to me; and deeply, dear children, do I feel her loss for, and with, you. I had regarded her as a kind Christian friend, affectionately watching over you, and that such an one should be thus suddenly taken away is a loss very great, and not easily replaced. . . . Be solicitous to fill up the ranks thus broken. Surely it is time. Life is getting on even with you. There is a little 'cause' at hand, which to you, dear J——, is as your Fatherland, needing help, needing countenance, needing the young to fill up the places of the old. But still more do

*you* need a name and a place among the people of God. How would it comfort the heart of Mr Cecil to find fruit springing from the withered branch of his happiness !”

The letter, from which the following extracts are taken, was addressed to S——, the daughter above referred to :—

. . . “By-the-bye, while we are closeted together, I remember being asked a little time since—‘Mamma, is J—— the favourite?’ My prompt and honest reply was—‘No, dear, I have no favourites among you ; and hope I never shall have.’ I found, however, that the question was grounded on a suspicion existing at —— (what it can live on, poor skeleton, I cannot imagine), that he is not the favourite ! So innocent was I, that this, as the meaning, never crossed my mind. No one, I conclude, has a grown up family, without entertaining a sort of distinct anxiety for each of them. They have separate individual dangers attaching either to their characters, or circumstances, and these impart, in some degree, a separate individual feeling to a mother’s solicitude. One is thought of, feared for, loved in one way, another in another, and no wish have I, if I *could*, to balance the differences, and ascertain if there is any preponderance. . . . In truth, there is not one that I love better than dear J——, let this, therefore, remain as a question settled with whomsoever it may concern. With regard to dangers surrounding him, they are of the pleasantest kind—not, therefore, the less dangers. We are thought to differ in some respects as to our views of personal religion, and the lines of demarcation safe to draw. . . . Mixing with people of all religions, or of none, (and very agreeable notwithstanding,) without close conscientious watching, important points will be placed among the minor differences, and minor differences, though real and scriptural, will go for nothing, or be labelled ‘*bigotry*.’ Let him take care of this—especially that sort of care that says, ‘Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.’

“Whether or not my own religion is worth a straw (and I will not express my anxieties), I know I am thought to be extra strict at least. Perhaps I am, and yet it seems in this day of laxity, to be erring on the safe side. I know the habits in which I was educated, and they seem to me to be safe habits; such as partake of the nature of a fence. The Sabbath especially, I would preserve for spiritual purposes; on the mere ground of living a busy life, in which to labour for six days is indispensable, I should appropriate the seventh to those purposes for which we have confessedly, and often unavoidably, so little time in the six. This, independently of Jewish observances, or commands, I should judge to be happily equitable to ourselves. When, therefore, I object to irrelevant reading—reading which, though not light, is yet not instructive, or stimulating, believe that it is under such convictions that I make the objection. We need time and thought for our eternal interests; we are not so all awake to them as to require cooling down. Constant, real stimulus is not more than our mental sloth and indisposition call for. To do otherwise is, as if, when stopping in a long journey at a railway station for refreshments, we were to employ our ten minutes in counting the people or the dishes—not wrong in itself, but very foolish, for we shall find no food elsewhere. . . .

“When I reflect on the hazards of being afloat on the real concerns of life, without having made distinct surrender of yourselves to Christ—at least to his cause (which is certainly one fearful condition—‘he that confesses me not before men’—you know the remainder) I do feel anxious. . . . But do not think of me, or my opinions, think of, and for yourselves. Be persuaded in your own minds, and when persuaded, ask counsel of God, and avow your convictions. I am not your judge, my dear children, if ever you have thought me hard or unwise, remember that ‘to your own master you stand or fall.’”



When the step so long looked for was at last taken, by both son and daughter together, she felt it, as her sister Jane had said on a similar occasion, a joyful token of "true family prosperity." It was pleasant to her to think, that they were officially introduced to the church by Isaac Taylor, and that it was Richard Cecil who gave them "the right hand of fellowship;" yet she was far from insensible to the dangers even of church membership. To a daughter who had recently entered upon it, she wrote:—

"There is, as we think, in the ceremony of Confirmation, a tendency to deceive into the belief that all is now safe, and in becoming a member of a Nonconformist church there is a portion of the same danger. True that more care is previously taken to ascertain the genuineness of professed piety, and that more watchfulness and supervision are exercised afterwards by the society to which a young member is introduced, but still the danger exists. Many, I fear, sink down satisfied with supposed safety, and make little advance if they do not retrograde. But a dependence thus resulting from one act, and one charitable judgment, is anything but secure. Growth, vigour, fruit, must evidence *life*; and for these, my dear child, earnestly and continuously labour, maintaining the daily conflict in the hidden field."

Upon this point she also wrote upon another occasion—

"Though rejoicing when the young make an early and open profession of Christianity, it is rarely I can rejoice without trembling. The difficulty of ascertaining the genuineness of it after so short a trial, at an age when emotion is so easily excited, casts a shade which checks my gratulation. Not that there is conscious insincerity, very far otherwise, but that this early

piety, like the early flower, and the morning dew, is so often seen to pass away. If the good seed be really sown in the heart, then great are the advantages of this public surrender. It opens a spring of internal comfort, and places around the young disciple an external defence of unspeakable value. But if the impression has been only superficial, the effect of circumstances, of tenderness, of terror on the young heart, then, how even injurious both to the individual and the church may such a step become! To the former, the 'name to live,' may continue to disguise the fact of spiritual death, and the soul deceived, and let alone in its position, may never awake to a sense of its danger; while to the church is added only a dead weight, as is the case in every *body* without a *soul*. With many such members, its spiritual activity becomes only party zeal, and its function as the 'pillar and ground of the truth' is impaired or ceases. I would not willingly increase the difficulties of any who contemplate this early surrender. Many, the most genuine, entertain the most fear, and need the warm pressure of the right hand of fellowship to give assurance of cheerful welcome. But I would say, let those whose names have stood perhaps for many a long year on the church books, sometimes ask the questions,—'How came I there? ought I to be there? could I now propose myself?'—and not be easily satisfied with the answers."

It was in 1844 that with her youngest son, who had lain for months near to death, she made a long stay at Broadstairs, afterwards a favourite retreat, and a place of large family gatherings. Eventually her brother Jefferys removed to its neighbourhood. Charles Dickens was often there in those years. His letters describe some gorgeous sea effects at Broadstairs, and here is one they may have looked at unknowingly together. She writes—

“Yesterday, at tea, we had a severe storm of thunder and lightning. The appearance of sea and sky as it subsided, was most striking; the sea, at first one with the sky in heavy mist, so that scarcely a sail could be discovered, gradually cleared to a dead, leaden, immoveable plain; the vessels, one by one, like stars in twilight, became brightly visible, the sun shining upon them splendidly under the gloom, so as to make their full array of white sails, reflected again from the perfectly still sea, look like polished silver, while one which had brown sails, seemed from deck to masthead in flames. A splendid and perfect rainbow spanned the whole, and after continuing a long time, as it faded from above, looked like a stream of flame from a volcano just beyond the horizon.”

During this absence from home she wrote to her husband—

“Earnestly seeking for our dear children, ‘*first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness,’ I am willing to hope that the closing encouragement shall be fulfilled. I know, indeed, and feel, that it is easier to maintain what shall look like faith and dependence in the sun than in the shade, but real faith and dependence are, I suppose, better grown, and better tested in the shade than in the sun. Perhaps the trials and threatenings we have lately encountered are intended to excite more genuine *hope* and trust in *you*, and to deprive *me* of all that is not genuine—all that runs only in the blood.”

Her letters to her old friend Mrs Laurie, always recalling so much of the past, begin now to sound like the toll of passing years.

“A thousand dear, bright, tender regrets will cling about past life, but whether we are disposed to admit it or not, *quiet* and *rest*,

life in small compass, are the elements of comfort as we get far into it. . . . I hope now that your plans are decided, that the trials, which have threatened in several quarters, will gradually clear away, and leave you a bright evening of enjoyment, tranquility, and hope. How strange it seems, my dear friend, that you and I should have to talk now only of bright *evenings*! I suppose that other people have felt it as strange themselves, but to the *young*, old people look like a race by themselves, who never were, and had never any right to be, anything but *old*. For ourselves it appears almost as if we never could be anything but young, and as if it were very good of us to consent to be otherwise. My husband is often now threatening that he will give up, and find some quiet resting place in the country. He pines for more quiet than can be had in a country town in these stirring times. And sometimes, the prevalence of errors too wide almost to check, and yet too foolish almost to reason with, makes one all but sick of life, and cowardly under its responsibilities. I hope and pray, that a race may spring up armed for the conflict. But what a conflict it will be! and how little present appearance is there of such a phalanx."

To the same friend she wrote in 1845—

"I happened the other day to take up a sermon of Mr Burnett's on 'Errors in Prayer,' and greatly did it disturb me. It is true that much may pass for prayer, which is not prayer, but who shall say that distress shall not cry? Who could wait to be sensible of faith before he could feel a warrant to pray? My spontaneous feeling was,—'Well, right or wrong I *must* pray, and if I perish, I perish.' And most thankful was I to call to mind one (and who needs more?) direct apostolical command to a wicked man to pray,—'If so be the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee, for I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond

of iniquity,'—not neutralised by the associated term 'repent,' for both were enjoined as immediate duties; and if at the moment he had exclaimed, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' you cannot imagine Peter as interrupting him with the information that he should not have begun that so soon! No, it is well to arouse the formalist, but surely not well to cast a straw of impediment in the way of one only anxious, much less such a beam as seems the fair result of that sermon."

In the following year, giving her usual family chronicle to this friend, she says—

"You know I was taken with an attack of sixty-four in January, and do not think I have altogether recovered yet. Take care you do not catch the infection. I never saw it in any case completely got over."

Four years had passed, during which the thought of her son's residence near Ongar and association with her brother was a daily joy to her heart; but then came disaster. The adaptation of complicated machinery to so complicated and beautiful a process as line-engraving required much time and capital. Eventual success seemed to be secured by the workmanship of the plates executed for Dr Traill's translation of "Josephus," edited by Isaac Taylor, when the sudden death of the translator, who had embarked large sums in the venture, brought everything to a standstill, and some of those concerned to the verge of ruin. But for this failure, a branch of art, of which England has supplied some of the finest specimens, might have been preserved from extinction. The time and labour required, when executed by hand alone, are too great in this age of quick production, and Line-engraving is almost a lost art.

How keenly my mother felt this crisis in the affairs of brother and son, how bravely she met it, a few extracts from her letters will show. When the first number of the "Josephus" was on the point of issue there had come ready congratulation—

*Dec.* 1846.—"Nothing, I hope, will prevent your enjoying up to the safe side, a merry Christmas, and a happy new year—happier than usual, I should suppose, if Josephus really looks at daylight on New Year's morning. May that be the prelude to much honourable.— (word misspelt and lined out)—Only see!—the word *prosperity* would not allow itself to be spelt! So, suppose we say success, which will do as well."

The omen was too soon justified. When the following year things were darkening, she wrote, after a family meeting, where every one of her children gathered for a few days under their father's roof—

"I am very glad—thankful, that you have all been at home with us once more; but it was a short, hurried, and in several ways, anxious visit, such as we should not have cut out for ourselves; very much the colour of the world it grew upon. How long it is before we learn that this is just what life is intended to be!"

In the midst of the trouble she wrote her usual birthday letter to her son:—

"Hitherto life has been a safe and pleasant course to you. Tenderly do I wish, hope, and pray that it may so continue, though more of cloud and anxiety hangs over it now. It breaks our hearts to look at the position of the whole affair. I have often wondered that your uncle retains his elasticity for constant action. But how I grieve for his haggard looks and grey

hair! Last night he, and your father, and Mr Herbert, sat till past twelve discussing the matter, and your uncle said that the additional weight of a feather seemed sometimes as if it would be too much for him. However, you have the satisfaction of feeling that hitherto you have scarcely taken one *avoidable* step, and if only you feel where Providence has placed, or even pushed you, it is abundantly tranquilizing. Besides, I entirely concur with — in thinking that the change from London habits, society, and vexations has been obviously beneficial to you; and if instead of growing a richer, you have become a better man,—if you have made four years of mental and moral progress in the right direction, why, looking at life as a course, and a *whole*, it has not been ill spent time. They have not in themselves been painful years, but day by day pleasant ones. Take care now to burden your day with no more than its share.”

Again, to her daughter-in-law—

“I do not remember that I have ever felt thoroughly anxious about such things till lately. It has not been my forte; but the perils of two of my brothers,\* and the degree to which you are involved with one, seem now to prey upon me. For J—— I say as you do, that once unencumbered he would soon right himself, and though blank loss is an ugly thing to look at, yet, when you are not obliged to look at it, it may be forgotten. But my brother! How I yearn over his anxieties!

“After all, dark and trying as things appear, it is to me a comfort to reflect on the struggles and anxieties through which, during the greater part of their lives, my dear father and mother passed to an old age of comfort, and (I speak now of my father, for my poor mother was all nerve, body and mind), never dis-

\* Her brother Jefferys had at this time his own difficulties, which led to his leaving the pleasant house at Pilgrim's Hatch.

trusting or upbraiding Providence, and verily he had his reward. Always cheerful, thankful, hopeful, and trusting! My mother, too, gained something of the like tranquil dependence towards the close of life, and now they rest from their labours! May we, my dear children, be chiefly concerned to follow them whither they have gone."

But the stress was heavy upon her. "How I groan about you every time I wake in the night!" "O my heavy heart!"—show what she was enduring. In 1848 things mended a little. The engraving apparatus was taken to Manchester, and there applied with considerable success in the end, to engraving the rollers for calico printing, though the inventor gained little permanent advantage. In the summer of this year father and mother visited Marden Ash together, when the latter enjoyed at least one very happy day in an excursion to Colchester, where she took her son and daughter all round the familiar scenes of her youth. Returning home she wrote—

"Interest after interest, scene after scene, and memory after memory, have chased each other so swiftly over our hearts, that I could hardly feel all that was, or might be, included in our parting with you, and perhaps it may be as well, at our age especially, to take the present and leave the future, thankful for now, and humbly leaving then. Oh, that the storm may blow over, and skies clear for all who are now in shade!"

The skies did clear at last, and towards the close of 1849, she was able to write a cheerful greeting to her son—

"I think there are some advantages in a Sunday birthday succeeded by a Monday's festival. There are two sets of thought



and feeling so diverse, to which a birthday gives rise, but though diverse, not opposite, or destructive of each other. How many glad, and cheerful, even gay feelings, will befit the Monday! . . . Yes, a light-hearted festivity may, and I hope will, render it a red-letter day. Nothing, I trust, will be wanting, certainly not the persuasion of warm sympathy over the hills and far away.

And for the Sunday, how much there is in the inscription on one of these mile-stones that is emphatically 'Sunday reading.' If I have a pleasant thought about you, my dear child, it is that you have now taken a voluntary stand among the friends of Christ, and that by singular providences, you assist to sustain his cause in the spot so dear to us. It is, I know, an anxious post, implying no small burden, still I rejoice in your bearing it, and do hope your courage, faith, and patience will not fail."

My mother saw worth, where some are apt to see only "Philistinism." Her testimony to the virtues of that lower middle class with which her position brought her much in contact, may here find a place. It is extracted from a poem of some length upon the experiences of a minister—

———— "the folks in trade,"

Our pastor knew them, often gathered thence,  
Lessons of self-denial, patience, sense ;  
The trust in Providence, the worth of prayer,  
The energy of manly bearing there ;  
Sore struggle 'twixt the dangers of the day,  
A ruined prospect, or a crooked way !

. . . . .  
Yes, and the growth of Christian knowledge, too,  
Reaped from his labours, in the humbler pew ;

*Memorials of Mrs Gilbert.*

The listener, faint, and waiting to be fed,  
Hungry and thankful for the living bread ;  
The Sunday dinner was not seasoned there  
With cavils at his sermon, or his prayer,  
But treasured for the week, they gave supply  
To toiling souls, who lived that they might die.

Not all were such, 'tis owned, but more were found  
There of such Christians, than on higher ground,  
And freely as the glorious message fell,  
Year after year, he saw the number swell :  
Not many noble yet, that message prize,  
And more repugnant still, not many wise !

MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER VIII.

*NOTTINGHAM.*

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## CHAPTER VIII.

NOTTINGHAM.

1850-1852.

“And darkly pondering on their youth,  
Slowly have come down aged men,  
Feeble with years, and bent and hoar,  
To gaze upon the flowers once more,  
Never to gaze again.”

MARY HOWITT.

THE years were now approaching, and they were not few, in which the loving wife was to live a widow. The shadow of the coming sorrow was cast long before. In the brief diary, every returning attack of illness that visited her husband, is now carefully noted, disclosing the secret thought that it might prove the last ; and in every mention of him, there is pathos in the ever-recurring phrase, “my dear husband.” Always on the 20th of March, his birthday, a walk together in the level meadows, purple with crocuses,\* between the town and the Trent, and usually a visit to a secret hedge side, where the first

\* “In the neighbourhood of Nottingham, the vernal crocus presents a most beautiful appearance, covering many acres of meadow with its bloom, rivaling whatever has been sung of the fields of Enna ; showing, at a distance, like a perfect flood of lilac, and tempting every merry little heart, and many graver ones also, to go out and gather.”—*William Howitt.*

violets were to be found, marked the day. Gathered by his own hand, violet and crocus were taken home and treasured. But these anniversaries became trembling joys, and after one of them, she wrote—

To the meadows, to the meadows, love, the birds are on the trees,  
And the scent of springing violets comes stealthy on the breeze,  
And the pulse of early love is warm, on the cheek and in the eye,  
And the heart is beating tunefully,—it cannot tell thee why.

And we are young, my well-beloved, and life is yet to be,  
And many a spring has birthdays yet, to decorate for thee,  
Then let us to the meadows, love, the woodlands and the vale,  
And when we've found the "white thorn bush," I'll listen to thy tale.

I wakened from the pleasant dream—a dream of vanished years !  
And time upon my cheek had traced a pathway for the tears,  
And silver were the locks, my love, that o'er thy forehead strayed,  
And thou a staff hadst chosen thee, from out the hazel shade.

Yet let us to the meadows, love, e'en altered though we go,  
For still, to all things beautiful, the mellowed heart can glow,  
And few and brief the summer-tides that yet to us remain,  
And when we've taken leave of them, we see them not again.

E'en now, in some green churchyard way, the dews of night may lave  
A daisy root, like that we bore from thy young mother's grave,  
Which ere some pleasant spring or two hath made its leafy stir,  
Shall blossom over us my love, as that did over her.

Then let us to the meadows, to the woodlands, to the vale,  
Ere the golden bowl be broken, and the silver cord shall fail ;  
Green earth shall still be beautiful, when closed our little day,  
And we'll enjoy her loveliness, as twilight sinks away.

A page from the album, family record as it was, opens thus its summary of the events of 1850—

“Another Christmas! and after an eventful, and a shaking year; yet here are we again,—living to welcome it! From successive illnesses, the dear father has been much threatened, and much reduced since its commencement, and compelled almost entirely to recede from public duty, his *last* sermon during the year having been preached on Sunday, Sept. 29, from words selected without design, which had been also the text of his first sermon—‘Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.’ Up to the present time, he has continued to administer the Lord’s Supper to his church; but he has tendered to the deacons the resignation of his pastoral office, having been twenty-five years in Nottingham on the 16th of November last. This, for a time, he has been requested to suspend, but he is anxious now to withdraw from duties which he can only so partially fulfil. . . . On the 1st of August last, our dear Henry was married to Eliza Forbes Laurie, fourth daughter of a friend with whom I have been in intimate and affectionate correspondence, from the age of fifteen. . . . On Tuesday evening, December 21, on which day we had been married thirty-seven years, our children began to arrive. . . . On Christmas day, their dear father, though unwell, formed one of the party at table, but early retired to his study, and did not return during the evening. Of such lights and shadows are the years composed, and we do not look for much brighter days when the leaves are falling. God of our fathers! Be thou the God of their children, and of ours. ‘Guide us by thy counsel, and afterwards receive us to thy glory.’”

But the end was not yet. Several indications occur in these years to show the strain upon the wife’s spirit, and that the wonderful elasticity of her nature was greatly impaired.

“I cannot,” she wrote, “trundle my soul before me, and run after it quite so alertly as I used to do.” Again,—“The world is indeed thinning around us; so many with whom we have been long familiar being removed, that we feel ourselves on the brink also, and almost hurried in spirit (at least, I do) under the feeling of much imperfect or undone. There is no time to spare out of a soon-told seventy years.”

. . . “Your father must have change of air, and therefore *I* shall, though to be surrounded by daily business, and bolstered up as you may say by things imperative, seems necessary to keep up my elasticity. I am, in fact, too indolent to be safely treated with leisure, and therefore always fancy I am best at home.”

Another letter of this year, 1850, alludes to the characteristic tendency of her mind, which cheerful spirits so much concealed:—

“I cannot write even for a wedding-day without something doleful in it; much less for a birthday, of course! I remember when a girl, papa saying to me, after reading something I had written, ‘One would suppose, child, you were the most miserable creature living!’ Yet I never was, and why I so invariably slip into the melancholy I cannot tell. I think in order to avoid it just now I will only say how sincerely, my dear child, I wish you all motherly wishes, all variety of happiness—of the best sorts you know—and throwing up the recollection of a birthday entirely, give you just the few scraps of intelligence which I can call to mind. These, after all, are the parts of a letter often most interesting. Occasions that arise every year, with just the same sort of light upon them, it is very difficult to make much of after the first dozen or twenty. All the saws have been sharpened, all the advice administered, all the good wishes exhausted. A little genuine love and real interest, such as may be trusted pure from



a mother's pen, and then the few family matters in which we feel a mutual concern, are for the most part the grain of gold in the compound."

In 1851 the continued ill health and uncertain prospects of her youngest son, together with the approaching retirement of her husband from the ministry, and the anxieties belonging to the choice of a successor, preyed much upon her spirits :—

"The prospect before me," she writes, August 15, "presses upon me sadly, and occasions that doleful, indescribable gnawing distress in what poets call the heart, but which is certainly the stomach, of which, on first waking, my poor mother (who had more causes than I have) used to complain. . . . I was going to say 'all these things are against me,' but I desire to withdraw that foolish word. I desire 'to trust and not be afraid,' but when my elasticity yields I am sadly weak. Faith is better than elasticity. I wish I had more of the right sort!"

"B— has been to me with a 'case of conscience.' My reply was, 'Woe to the man who is not keeper of his own.'"

One bright fortnight occurred towards the close of the year, when she was tempted to combine with a circuit among all the dear homes of the south, a visit to the Great Exhibition of 1851. Of this she writes :—

"At eleven we found ourselves amidst the wonders! A wonder it is! but so impossible without weeks of time to look specially at anything, that it is the beauty of the thought, and thoughts suggested by it, that made on me the chief impression. The peacefulness, the industry, the amazing skill, the art and science of the whole world (Naples excepted), all in magnificent union, together with the most minute and extensive accom-

modation, provided for every want of millions of visitors—these were the essence of the delight which one must have been dead not to have enjoyed !”

But there was one thought more :—

Amid the glassy halls,  
Bedight with gold and gem,  
Where the light fountain falls,  
Behold a stately stem—  
A noble, graceful, living tree,  
Caged in that gay variety.

Its birthplace was the field,  
Pure skies its native air ;  
There sun and showers yield  
Fair food to growth so fair,  
And, still for open Heaven designed,  
It flourished, e'en in winter's wind.

Now, wherefore droops the leaf,  
Surcharged with dust of earth ?  
Alas ! this pageant brief  
Befits not such a birth ;  
From realms where purest ether played,  
How can it here but pine and fade !

Dwells not beneath the veil  
Of that fair prisoned tree,  
A monitory tale  
About the world and me !  
A spirit clad with angel wings,  
Tethered to earth by golden strings !

Oh ! not till brittle walls,  
Till life's gay glittering show,  
Till each, in ruin falls,  
Shall the freed spirit know,

Its growth, its strength, its native skies !  
Poor captive soul, awake, arise !

Christmas-day 1851 was the last at which their father sat down with sons and daughters at the family feast. Their mother thus describes it :—

“ Never before, nor can we ever again, enjoy one so memorable, so complete, so without drawback of any kind. The beloved parent was for those few hours in firmer health than usual. Before dinner, the whole of my own and my sister's family, eighteen in number, assembled to an interesting service, the baptism of our first grandchild. Interrupted by frequent emotion, my husband went through it very beautifully, addressing all, suitably and tenderly, as a Christian father about to lay down his earthly oversight. After dinner he addressed them again, warning them against the religious perils of the day, exhorting them not to regard truth as scarcely existing, or, at least, not to be found, but to search for it as treasure, even if for a time hidden treasure ; to be ever pressing forward to discover, not with the vain fancy of making it for themselves ; and then, so much as remained undiscovered here, would await them in Eternity. Truth would there shine out upon them, both to stimulate and reward perpetual progress. For himself he hoped to be even a better mathematician in heaven than he could be on earth.”

One more happy circumstance closed the year. On the 29th of December, the church and congregation met to present their late Pastor with a testimonial of their esteem, in the shape of a secretary for his study, and a purse of 220 sovereigns. He could not be present himself, but sent a letter, from which the following passage may be quoted—

“I have no need to envy those who repose on a State provision, nor to feel distrust of what is called, sometimes in derision, the ‘Voluntary Principle.’ For while it is clear that it is consecrated by the Scriptures, the old as well as the new, it is also clear, that those who, like you, take occasion practically to illustrate its excellence, and to adorn its exercise, do amply vindicate it from such ignorant censure. Let us, therefore; unite in commending it to the guardianship of God, its author, and to that of all good men, His loyal subjects and faithful servants. I rejoice, that in what you are now purposing to do, I should be the favoured instrument through whom you discharge that high function.”

His wife, in quoting this, adds—

“It was a beautiful moment when his children, then ten in number (his own and others united to his own) returned, and stood with their mother in a large circle round the venerable minister and beloved parent, to congratulate, and report to him the proceedings as above. He received the account with humble, tearful, delighted thankfulness, and after hearing as much as he could bear, sent them away and begged to be left alone.”

On the 30th of January 1852, her 70th birth-day, she wrote a letter to each of her seven children. It was unusually cheerful—

“It is just as a memorial of my being seventy, not to be burnt, but kept. Presumptuous, isn’t it? But if you have a place in which to keep letters, put this there, and if not, make one; it is one of mamma’s fancies, so excuse it; and just like her too.”

“I have a long letter from Mrs Laurie, whose heart has beaten true to times and seasons, to my certain knowledge, for more

than fifty years. Dear children, I wish you, in return for all your kindness, a life as long as mine, as happy as mine in all outward circumstances, and, dear friends, as true and warm as mine. . . . O seek till you find the right sort of happiness, and let the thought of future regrets be ever at hand, to aid and corroborate present duty, whether in the outward world, the home circle, or the little theatre within, where all the great battles have to be fought."

On the 20th of March, her husband's birth-day, once more, and only by help of a cab, they got down together to the blooming Crocus meadows for the time-honoured handful. Already these charming lakes of purple colour were invaded by inclosure, and she had uttered this lament—

THE LAST DYING SPEECH OF THE CROCUSES.

Ye tender-hearted gentle-folk of Nottingham's fair town,  
And you who long have loved us, from the Poet to the clown,  
Attend our sore complainings, while with one accord we weep,  
From mossy beds uprising, where we sought our summer sleep!

How many a pleasant spring-tide, ere a blossom peeped of May,  
Nor yet a stealthy violet its dwelling did betray,  
And scarce the winter flood had left the lowlands to the sky,  
We came in thronging multitudes to gladden every eye!

We came—a simple people, in our little hoods of blue,  
And a blush of living purple, o'er earth's green bosom threw,  
All faces smiled a welcome, as they gaily passed along,  
And "have you seen the Crocuses?" was everybody's song.

Forth came the happy children, to their revel in the flowers—  
Forth came the weary working-man, to that sweet show of ours:  
Forth came the lace-girl cheerily, the common joy to share;  
And e'en the stately gentle-folks were pleased to see us there.

But oh ! 'twas dreary midnight, when we heard the winds bewail—  
 Deep strange Eolian whisperings, came sighing on the gale ;  
 Anon, with hammer, wheel, and blast, the welkin rang around,  
 And each a deadly shiver felt, beneath us on the ground.

Awakened in the solemn gloom of that untimely hour,  
 The little spectre started up, of each ill-omened flower,  
 While o'er its head, a coming spring, in brick red trance was seen,  
 As factory, mill, and wharf, besoiled our home of meadow green.

One gentle shriek the silence broke, one quiver of despair,  
 " Our fatherland, farewell ! " we cried, " farewell, ye meadows fair ! "  
 " Dear children, born of yester spring—dear children, yet to be—  
 Ye shall but read of Crocuses—no more, alas ! to see."

" Spirit of giant trade ! We go ; on wings of night we fly,  
 Some far sequestered spot to seek, where loom may never ply.  
 Come line and rule—come board and brick—all dismal things in  
 one —  
 Dread spirit of Inclosure come—thy wretched will be done ! "

To a friend this year she writes,—

" Rest and quiet are the natural luxuries of age. But how far are they, or ought they to form, luxuries to those in youth or middle life ? The gracious curse of labour is an incalculable blessing ; and among the special mercies of my life, I have always regarded the regular confinement to daily work. . . . . Your account of — is very touching. There was an expression in a Prayer Book used by my mother at home, which always struck me,—' Without Thee, in the fulness of all mortal sufficiency, we are in straits.' And how true is it ! A vigorous high tone of piety would supply the craving of the spirit, and find both enjoyment and employment in either the lack or the abundance of this world's good. To a medium class of mind, married life with its duties and pleasures, would for a time be sufficient ; or to a

character naturally strong, ways would open which it would be exhilarating to pursue ; but which of these conditions can we command ? Or how deal with the want of them ? Indeed, I cannot advise. When the mind is not strong enough to move itself, what *can* be applied as sufficient stimulus ? For myself I have been thankful never to have been left to choice or opportunity, but always to find a groove before me, and quick trains behind."

In June a little incident cheered the wife's heart,—

"At the Public Missionary Breakfast of the year, the Exchange Hall was densely crowded. Mr Gilbert had for a long time ceased attendance at any meeting of the kind, but 'midway in the proceedings his white head was observed, as he made his way through the assembly. The speaker paused,—a warm, heart-gladdening cheer ran through the meeting ; he was assisted to the platform, and then, though interrupted by frequent emotion, he acceded to the request of his brethren, to return thanks to the ministers deputed to visit us ; this he did with nice adaptation to each.' . . . Few more anxious, or yet happier moments have I enjoyed. I must confess to the satisfaction with which, on being inquired of by a lady next me, who it was whose entrance had so interrupted the meeting, I was able to reply—*my husband.*"

In October she wrote,—

. . . "Even in early autumn the leaves begin to fall *around* us, and should we ourselves chance to be evergreens, we may be left bleakly standing. *We*, indeed, are among the fading or falling trees, and it is a strange feeling (or strange, perhaps, that it did not impress us sooner) to *know*, that the blast, or the woodman must now be near at hand !"

Yet during these last months the husband and wife together, were able to correct for the press, a new and cheaper edition of his Lectures upon the Atonement, she sedulously assisting, except when, as she laments, "a proof sheet of thirty-two closely printed pages arrives, with so much Latin and Greek in it, that I can be of little use." Mr Gilbert put a short preface to this edition, concluding with these words :—

"Verging as I now am on the limit of mortal life, the great inquiry of human nature—the great inquiry presented in the New Testament—'What shall I do to be saved?' assumes an unspeakable importance. There I find the one answer—'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' That this simple reply involved, and intended the Divine scheme of substitution, I cannot question; and I rejoice once more to attest my reliance upon it, my earnest, cordial recommendation of it, as the sole, solid dependence, the only consolation left to the spirit, in the prospect of its final account."

Later in the year a work, published anonymously in numbers, "The Restoration of Belief," afterwards acknowledged by Isaac Taylor, attracted general attention. My mother writes of this and another very different work,—

"We have read two numbers of the 'Restoration of Belief' with great interest and admiration. It rises as it proceeds. There is the Hall mark upon it, indubitably. Nobody could question the authorship. Papa is especially delighted with it. By-the-bye, is it a sheer insult at this time of day, to ask if you have read 'Uncle Tom'? Strange if you have, and yet have not mentioned it! O, what a book it is! My admiration is simply inexpressible! that is, say what I will, I ache to say more,



but cannot find words, which is, I suppose, what people mean by inexpressible." . . .

This was the last bright passage in my mother's letters for many a day. On the 25th of November the dear father was assisted from his study to his bedroom. She writes,—

"He left the scene of thought, labour, enjoyment; endeared to him, notwithstanding continual pain, by the associations of many years, and he saw it no more. He expressed satisfaction at the comfort of a small dressing-room, used during the day for a short time longer, but added significantly,—'We know what it means.'"

Later she says,—

"It distresses me to advert to it, but the alteration in your dear father I cannot shut my eyes to, though I would fain not open my lips."

In the first week of December his sons from a distance began to arrive in sorrowful expectation that the end could not be far off; and on the morning of Sunday the 5th, after sending his love to the church, to be delivered at the Lord's Table, he addressed two of his sons at some length, "preaching to them," as he said, his "last sermon." During a few following days he spoke to friends visiting him, in short sentences, but with collected and continuous thought. He was tenderly grateful and affectionate to every one around him, and his reliance was humble, cheerful, and unwavering on his "Blessed Redeemer," the term he most frequently employed.

"By the middle of the week he became silent, but a brief 'I

love you all,' and 'bless you,' expressed his *undying* affection, and still later the pressure of our hands to his lips. The last two days he fell into lethargic slumber, and we did not expect any further sign from his exhausted frame; but at noon on Saturday, when we thought every hour might be his last, he suddenly lifted up his head and searched us each out earnestly with his eyes, striving in vain to shape his lips to speak, for no sound issued, but we understood him to mean 'bless you' by the motion of them. Soon, with a sweet smile, he laid his head down again upon the pillow, and dozed off into his last sleep."

This from a letter by one of his sons. The last scene of all shall be told in my mother's words:—

"About three o'clock on Sunday morning, December 12, the audible breathing gradually subsided, and sank at last into the quietest calm. We were all assembled round his bed, and at about twenty minutes before four, we concluded that he had left us, though so gently, that for nearly half an hour we remained uncertain whether he were indeed gone. None but those who witnessed, could conceive the beautiful expression which for some time rested on his countenance. Not a movement had passed over his features—not a gasp, not a sigh was drawn—and from that which he had always dreaded, 'the unknown pang of dying,' he was, we feel sure, entirely saved."

It was the anniversary of the death of our grandfather at Ongar twenty-three years before; and it was Sunday morning, once the day of our dear father's honourable labour, but now of his sacred rest. When our mother turned from her long, fixed, silent gaze upon the countenance of exquisite placidity, where the cold shade of death was gradually settling, her eyes were full of tears,

but a smile was upon her lips as she murmured, "beautiful, beautiful."

The funeral took place on the following Sunday afternoon, not in the catacombs which have been described, but in the general cemetery. The principal service, however, was held in the chapel, where the coffin was placed in front of the pulpit. When the time came to bear it away, our mother stood up, and, stretching out her hand, rested it a moment on the lid—a final farewell. She did not accompany the funeral to the burial ground. There several thousands were assembled; the grave was reached with difficulty, and the scene justified the opening words of an address by one of his brother ministers:—"To-day the gates of this cemetery open to receive one, who is followed to his resting-place with the eyes of multitudes, and with the respectful regrets of the churches of Christ."

In the evening the large family circle, with Isaac Taylor and his widowed sister in their midst, sat late into the winter's night listening to the talk between them—he expatiating upon great themes in meditative strains, that recalled now the rich utterances of a "Saturday Evening," and now the far flights of a "Physical Theory of Another Life," she questioning or assenting. For a time the thoughts of all were lifted to those things which are "unseen and are eternal."

Too soon, as we are apt to think, the claims of life arise to draw mourners from the grave at which they would fain linger. Especially it was so now, when immediate arrangements were necessary for leaving the house, for disposing of the library, and providing another home for the widow and her daughters. To a friend she wrote:—

II.

Q.

“*January 14, 1853.*— . . . It is indeed a strange, incongruous mixture, which the world, as it moves on irrespective of our sorrows, introduces into our hearts and hands. But such are the terms on which we survive even the dearest. We *must* go on! We are permitted to weep only for a time, and even that with interruptions, which may be salutary, but which we should not have chosen for ourselves. The interval since my dear husband’s death has been one of unresting business—coming and going of my children—and only a few quiet hours in which to look at either the past or the future with its *continued* bereavement! It seems so strange that this will not alter—cannot improve, except by a gradual ‘reviving of the spirits,’ which, though kindly aimed at by our friends, it seems cruel to wish for. How often do I long to see him, as even lately, coming down from the study in his gown, his candle lighted, and his white hair almost on his shoulders! But it will never be again! That word *never* we do not at first realize. Continually the thought crosses me for the moment, ‘Oh, I will tell him!’ as things occur that would once have interested him. How far he knows now, without telling, who shall say?

“We are obliged to plan and act for ourselves, and *that* I do feel. His children come and go, and we arrange for future comfort without his advice, or a kind look or word of acquiescence. For some length of time he had desired that we should do so; but we always felt that we could ask an opinion if we would. Now we have just to make ourselves comfortable, and *please ourselves!* A sad change to get used to!”

The change was so great that she forgot her own birthday occurring a few weeks later. Being her father’s also, it had always been a family festival. She wrote to a daughter :—

“I had intended a birthday visit to the cemetery, but I just

went through the rain to the Refuge. I feel with you, dear C——, how much of a dream was that sad season! I *could not* feel as I would fain have done what was passing over me; and thankful should I now be to recall a vivid recollection of every day. But so it is. Life is a vapour we cannot grasp. It escapes us, whether as yesterday, to-day, or to-morrow—though of yesterday, we have the firmest hold of the three. I have many a quiet cry which nobody knows of, and yet I feel a constant deep thankfulness, a very touching blending of sorrow with gratitude.”

One evening, shortly after her husband’s death, she read to her children, what not long before, she had read to him, a poem, entitled “*The Minister’s Widow,*” from which a single quotation will now be given. Although not at all biographical in the portions which might be supposed to describe herself, but which had a purpose of their own, it is evident that in “the minister,” she drew from life.

There was in him a restless bent of soul,  
Of every questioned point to grasp the whole,  
And if it gained a bias from his pride,  
It was to doubt *against* his party’s side.

He could not think in grooves, but took his flight  
Far, deep, and wide, and high, as mortal might,  
Till what he gained was his by noblest right.  
And forth to noblest use such gains he gave,  
His life’s one object now, was souls to save.  
He owned One master, and to him he brought  
Each gathered fruit of toil, of prayer, of thought,  
And if he much enjoyed the kindling ray  
Of human learning, as the holiest may;  
Or felt the generous glow at honour won—  
The public plaudit in a race well run,

For higher ends was each acquirement stored,  
Strength, knowledge, fact from every realm explored.  
Talents, to him, were loans of solemn weight,  
Fields not his own, except to cultivate,  
And ever and anon he kept in view,  
The reckoning day when interest would be due ;  
O ! to be owned a faithful servant then,  
With praise of Heaven ! what now were praise of men ?

MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER IX.

*NOTTINGHAM.*

**ONTENTS OF CHAPTER IX.**

**Memoir of her Husband—Dispersion of the Household—Death of  
Jefferys Taylor—Winter at Stanford Rivers—College Hill—  
Passages from Correspondence—Summer Journies—Wales and  
Scotland—Christmas Gatherings.**



## CHAPTER IX.

NOTTINGHAM.

1852-1862.

“King of Comforts ! King of Life !  
Thou hast cheered me.”

H. VAUGHAN.

“Thus would I double my life’s fading space.  
For he, that runs it well, twice runs his race.”

COWLEY.

TOWARDS the end of the Pilgrim’s journey, Bunyan describes his entrance upon the pleasant land of Beulah, “whose air was very sweet and pleasant,”—“a country where the sun shineth night and day,” a land where “they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the kingdom to which they were bound, and drawing near to the city, they had yet a more perfect view thereof.” Our Pilgrim was now in her seventy-first year. The demand for great and strenuous exertion had in various ways ceased. The great sorrow of her life, which had long darkened it with foreboding, was passed ; more than all, the Christian’s hope grew brighter and more peaceful. These days were her best days. She recovered health and spirits. Within the bounds of her own country she travelled far and near, enjoying nature and art with a keen

relish, and with a youthful enthusiasm which her children envied.

But there must first be a great break up of old and sacred ties. The disposal of her husband's library was an immediate care. After each of his sons had made choice of a portion, the rest was sold in London, and it cost her much to strip the study walls of the treasures of many years. But she was very brave about such things. Yet one little sentence shows what she felt.

“The three beautifully bound volumes of Leibnitz (they had been bought by him abroad, but were bound only during the last year of his life as a final mark of his regard) were purchased for Rotherham for 7s. 6d. ! I cried, though nobody saw it, and my expressed regret induced Mr H. to reserve them for T——. I wonder some of you did not secure them ; the outside and the sentiment are not in Latin, if the inside is.”

Then came the surrender of the house, waiting the building of another, undertaken by one of her sons ; and the dismantling, and the warehousing of furniture for the year during which herself and daughters were to be homeless. With wonderful energy she superintended all this ; and in the midst of it, hunted from room to room by the incursions of workmen, called off every moment, she composed a memoir of her husband, to accompany “Recollections of the Discourses of his closing Years.”

“I have no idea,” she writes to a friend, “how it will sound, but I trust at least we may be thought to have done something like justice. It has been written so much against time, and interrupted by so much uncongenial business, that I have been

compelled rather to work than to feel. It does, however, come over me with constant satisfaction, that I have been spared to pay at least a genuine tribute to his beloved memory. . . . On Friday, the 13th, I do hope to start for our long, homeless, journey. I say *hope*, not because it is pleasant to leave the scene of so many dear associations, but because it is time we should be on the move."

Respecting the memoir she afterwards wrote—

"I have heard it regretted that the memoir is so distinctly that of a *dissenter*. Now, it appears to me that to have blinked such a feature in the convictions of a clear inquiring intellect, and the conduct of an active Christian life, would have betrayed a cowardly surrender of things which he, and we, held to be great truths, and shifted from under him the platform on which he stood. *I* could not have written with such a tether. But such a regret appears to me one of the collateral evils *inseparable* from an Establishment. Some moral delinquency it might have been well to veil, or with such a difficulty, to have let his history die with his life; but on what ground, but on that unjustly assumed, could it have been even desirable, to screen his theological and ecclesiastical preferences from the public eye? On none, but on the assumption *we* are right, and therefore you are wrong, and occupy a disgraceful position. Why cannot we occupy even ground? In reading the lives of Cecil, Scott, and Arnold, I perceive not the slightest attempt to screen the fact of their being clergymen,—nothing like saying in a tone of apology—'You see what men they were, and yet they belonged to the Establishment.' But if not for them, why for my husband? From what did he dissent? Assuredly from nothing obviously scriptural, not even now from the law of the land. When such a man forsakes the communion in which he was born and trained, to the obvious disadvantage of his secular prospects, and against the persuasion of

esteemed men, it is surely due, both to him and the views he embraced, to state the grounds of such a decision. His history could not have been given without the facts. His entire life and usefulness were traceable to his position as a dissenter, and I should have deemed myself cowardly, even for a woman, to have done other than I did."

On the 5th of April, she "took hasty leave of the dear old rooms—the study, the bed-rooms,—the garden where, on so many Sunday evenings of late, dear papa and I have walked! But it is all over? Now, what shall be the next change?" One circumstance connected with this removal, was not known till long afterwards. The death day of her Edward was always marked in her diary with a broad black stroke, and his age, had he lived, was noted. It was now twenty-six years since his death, but in a locked drawer were the child's clothes he had worn. She would not carry these to any new house, and alone, at dusk, one evening, buried them in the garden, along with other sad memorials. A fresh leaf in her life was turning over, and she would accept it as such.

But the first year of this new era was twice touched with sorrow. Early in the spring, the beloved wife of her second son died, and in August, at St Peter's, near Broadstairs, her brother Jefferys passed from his changeable life. His sister, with energies seemingly unimpaired, being, as she said, "single-handed but able-bodied," sat up with him, night after night, through a prolonged and solemn scene of death, daily described in her letters. The large brain could now only prompt short exclamations of "bitter, bitter." The deft hands were only thrown out towards her whenever she entered the room, pressing hers,

or drawing her down for prayer ; while the nurse, with weird, old-wife notions, teased her with—"when you take hold of his hand so, it just prevents his going when he would." His long-trying, faithful wife lay in another room.

"It is, indeed (writes the sister), a trial of patience to lie blind, helpless, feeble, dependent, hearing without being able to assist her poor husband. Sometimes she mourns that she is so useless, but I tell her she is doing more honour to Christianity by such utter passiveness, than she could have done by the most strenuous labour. We all know how much easier it is to work than to bear. . . . I think, sometimes, of your large and pleasant circle, when I sit down to my solitary meal, not that I would change places ; I rejoice to be here."

It was at this bed-side that she heard of the death of her oldest friend, Mrs Mackintosh.

"She was (she wrote) quite the earliest living of my friends ; the last remain of Colchester. And you know how I have enjoyed the latter years of her friendship—the gathering of the last ripe figs, here and there, one on the topmost bough ! Just fancy yourselves, children, standing alone among the graves of a generation ! Not one left to whom you could say, 'don't you remember that?'"

She settled for the winter of this year, 1853, under her brother Isaac's roof, at Stanford Rivers, though he was generally absent at Manchester, carrying out the application of his prolific mechanical ideas, not only to the engraving of calico patterns, but to the costly processes of calico printing.

He wrote to bid her welcome to his home, and in tender remembrance of the death day of their father, though now nearly five-and-twenty years had passed.

“ You will not have failed to recollect this 12th of December 1829. The weather *here*, to-day, is very much of the sort it was that day, and it has aided me in bringing back all the circumstances. I cherish these recollections, and when occasion arises, I feel pleasure in transmitting them to my children. You, perhaps, do the same. . . . It is getting late, and I ought to wind up for the night. What unlikely things come about,—in your journey!—in mine! Four-and-twenty years ago, nothing could have seemed more strangely improbable than the facts of the present—at Manchester, living apart from wife and children, and spending my days in the rumbling intestines of this world of machinery!

“ But now, at this late hour, when H—— takes his candle, it is my practice to invite calming meditations, and to cherish the best thoughts.”

This winter, in a country seclusion, hallowed by so many sacred associations, was very pleasant to her.

“ How beautiful everything looks! it is hard to decide between winter and summer under a bright sun; each has its loveliness. Stripped as the trees now are, there is so much variety of pencilling—so much evergreen, such sweeps, and fingers of gold and brown, and such brilliancy in the white frosts, that on the whole, we have beauty everywhere, even now. You cannot think how much I enjoy my temporary residence once more, near Ongar. The pretty little town is, almost to a brick, the same as it was forty years ago. Door-plates are altered, and there are a *few* new buildings, but the general appearance is the same. . . .”

On the day before Christmas, her wedding day, she contrived, at seventy-two, to walk to Ongar alone, and to do a memorable thing.

“I made my way to the Castle House, then to the church, up one lane, and down the other, and finding the church-door open for Christmas decorations, I went in and *stood at the Altar!* Very, very strange! sad, and yet merciful, at the end of forty years, to stand on the same spot, and see everything just as it looked *then!* to feel myself embosomed in the love of a new generation, near and distant, and to visit the many dear graves, at that time, little thought of. . . . God finds sorrow for us, we make regrets for ourselves, and may those who are young enough to profit by experience, take care that the sorrows are kept pure.”

Of her brother, who had returned home for a time, she gives this picture—

“He is indomitably active, has an eye, an ear, a thought, a contrivance for everything, and with all the pressure, a father’s heart, overflowing as human heart can be. He looks to me as if he had lived among the steam engines, till the whole tone of character was marked by high pressure. I believe the solitude of his condition at Manchester, which he bitterly feels, is yet highly advantageous, if not necessary, for the work he has to originate. J. M— — says his inventive faculty is wonderful, and except perpetual motion, which seems a property of his own nature, it appears as if all machineries were within compass of his powers. The variety of lines in which he has excelled, astonishes me. Many of his early drawings, designs, and miniatures, are beautifully executed, his domestic poetry is touching, we know his works, and we see his machines. Yesterday, he went to London to arrange for a very important adjudication in conjunction with Henry Rogers, and Professor Baden Powell of Oxford.\* Two

\* The Burnet Prize Essays on the “Testimony of Reason and Revelation to the Existence and Character of the Supreme Being,” are here referred to. The first prize was adjudged to Rev. R. A. Thomson, and the second to the present Principal Tulloch.

hundred and thirty essays were sent in, several in German, which they discarded as not intended by the testator. Eighty they disposed of as below par. One considerable volume was blank paper, ruled, with only this at the beginning—'The fool hath said, in his heart, there is no God,'—'if there be a greater fool, it is he who sets about to prove that there is'!—witty and wise too."

At a later date—"Isaac is all day at mechanics; at every meal one of the MS. vols., on which he has to adjudicate, is laid on the table; at ten, when we go to bed, he sits closely at them till twelve, and the third part of 'Restoration of Belief' is just advertised! It is killing work."

To this picture may be added a portrait of the wife, a year or two afterwards, and then staying with her husband at Manchester.

"Your remarks, as to the love and loveableness of E—— exactly express my own feelings. The very continuity of interest which wearies, perhaps, us commoner or busier people, is the outflow of an universal love and sympathy not often met with. But I think also that a few months at Manchester have opened sluices long nearly stopped by the leaves and flowers of thirty summers in the country. Her short youth was one of admiration and homage, her maturity, of maternal seclusion; and now an almost second youth has gleamed across her. She has struck me as the most of woman in simply womanly attributes, of any that I know."

Many years before she had expressed her surprise at the amount of work her brother could accomplish, and his reply includes a curious reference to the way in which one of his most noted books had been received in certain quarters—



“There is no real mystery in getting through with a good deal in the year; or if there be, one Taylor need not explain it to another. Only observe the simple rule of staying at home, and sitting so *many hours every day*, to the business in hand, and the thing is done. If free from care, and well in health, I should not scruple to undertake getting out two bouncing octavos per annum, and all original! Thank you for your favourable opinion of ‘Saturday Evening,’ but you have not near so sharp a sight as some folks, who have discovered that the author is a ‘Neologist,’ &c. . . . who contributes his help to distress and bewilder believers.”

At another time, however, he confessed to the strain of this continual brain work—

“I am compelled to use my cranial machinery very cautiously, and if I could, would take a year’s rest. But who can do as he would? I have some doubts whether Gabriel can.”

Her now only other brother, Martin, living at Welling, Kent, was also visited during this year of wandering. His fondness for animals was as marked, as a certain antipathy towards them in Isaac Taylor. The latter was annoyed to see human nature reflected in so low a sphere.

“So the months fly along, about as quickly as I do from one scene to another. . . . I greatly enjoyed my visit to Welling, though all my visits now partake much of the farewell feeling. They are as happy there as care will let them be, and Martin can throw that off pretty well for his wife’s smile, Fury’s bark, and Minnie and Fay’s (the cats) affectionate importunity. Which they love best, him or his supper, I will not say, but he thinks it is ‘*him*’! . . . It has been sadly dark and dreary for Martin’s late rides from town. How anxiously we listen for his horse’s foot,

sometimes at almost ten; and how gladly we feel assured by Fury's unmistakeable, and never mistaken welcome! When he happens to be out of doors he will distinguish 'Tom's' sober trot at a considerable distance. It is pleasant to see the happy home which our brother enjoys, cheered by all this live stock. They are, I confess, pretty creatures, with winning ways, and I am surprised and amused to see how three successive dogs have worked their cold noses into my cordial regard. But what a wife he has! last and not least, so exactly and admirably suited. . . .

"I am glad to see immense importations of foreign corn, so that housekeeping will be a little better for us all. But I am anxious about the war (with Russia), are not you?—though fully approving it as unavoidable, and greatly admiring the modern patience and caution with which it has been entered upon, so different from the word and blow system—blow first—of our forefathers."

Three years later, visiting Welling, she writes—

"I was surprised and thankful to find Martin a warm admirer of Spurgeon, about the last preacher in the world with whom it seemed likely he should coalesce. He now rises at six on Sunday morning, rides ten miles to the Surrey Gardens, and sits there from a quarter-past nine till eleven before the service begins. He does not reach home again till late in the afternoon. But he seems to labour for language to express his conviction of the genuine simplicity, earnestness and power of the preacher."

In the spring she was staying at her son's house, near Ongar, and there heard of the death of her old friend Montgomery. She writes—

"*May 15, 1854.*—Few have lived so honoured, so beloved, as our dear departed friend. It was, indeed, merciful that the

bitterness of death was so entirely removed, a favour granted to many of the children of God, within my own knowledge, to whom the physical act had always been an object of nervous dread. My sister Jane, my dear husband, whose peaceful departure is so nearly described in that of Montgomery, and our friend, Miss Chambers, had all suffered from the apprehension, which in much mercy to them was never fulfilled. They knew nothing of dying till its blessed result broke upon them.

“The past year has been one of much mercy, and the continual change has been beneficial to my health, for though I was not sensible that it required improvement I find in increased strength, and other indications, that the scenes of many previous months had impaired it. . . . My winter’s home (Stanford Rivers) was a kind, loving, soothing retreat, and though leaving it for one as happy here, with my dear children, I felt the parting very much. I should think, my dear friend, that you can sympathise in one sad feeling belonging to widowhood—the liberty to go where I please, and do as I prefer, without leave or reference. It has cast a shade of sorrow over even the kindest arrangements for my comfort, and soon now I must furnish a home for myself! Of course, the comfort and wishes of my three dear girls will be part of the plan, but there will be no *study*. O how does the world seem thinning of all with whom we have lived as of our own day! It speaks of sparing mercy to ourselves, but it is a new sad feeling which the young cannot in the least realise—one of the sure sorrows of time:—

“Live to be ninety! So my friends predict,  
 Ambiguous blessing! What does it imply?  
 That stroke on stroke my lonely heart afflict,  
 That one by one I see the dearest die!”

To her sister,—

“Some of these beautiful days I enjoy exceedingly. Every-  
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thing is so lovely, within and without,—everything is so soothing, so that sometimes I am surprised at the almost young flow of delight which, at seventy-two and with all that I have to *remember*, comes over me. The last year has been advantageous to me in many ways, and interesting in every portion of it. Very shortly, now, I must set forward into life again, and I partially dread it. A new home and new plans, at my age, carry suspicion on the front. And I am afraid, after a life of stimulus, of mental subsidence,—unless I become *too* much interested in these temporary arrangements. From so many changes, so long continued, I may have acquired desultory habits. I am anxious to see how I turn out after such a probation. At such times, and at all times, I can only say, ‘Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.’”

But she was “beginning to feel impatient of a large slice of life without an object,” and longed to be doing something. In September 1854, she rejoiced in moving all her furniture into the new built house, and entering vigorously upon reducing to order “the absolute insurrection of chairs, tables, sofas, and every thing which we ought to keep under.”

“It *is*,” she afterwards wrote, “a pleasant spot to call *home*. I do so enjoy it daily and hourly, often opening a door, or looking out of my window, for the simple pleasure of seeing how pleasant it is! Certainly the one half was not told me of the addition which the kind thought, so beautifully executed, has made to my regular enjoyment. Really the children think I am getting gay.”

At seventy-three she never thought of long enjoyment

of her new home, but yet twelve more years were to be added to her life, and during which she dated from "College Hill." A small garden attached to the house gave its mistress great delight. Hither she removed some favourite Ongar flowers, and especially lilies from Stanford Rivers—both father and brother delighted in their purity and elegance.

"I am told," she writes, "that they are not now fashionable flowers! a monstrous absurdity. There cannot be any sweeter or more beautiful, and to me they breathe the sweetest recollections. I enjoy the thought of tasting their fragrance in the drawing-room on some pleasant July evening. Yes, to me they are sweeter than the most fashionable novelty with the hardest name!"

The house nearly adjoined the "People's College," a public lower-class school, and opposite were the blank walls of a nunnery. The occasional noise of the out-pouring children was a pleasant sound to her, and she did not fail to note the contrast afforded by the convent.

"There stand the buildings ; face to face,  
In harmless brick and stone ;  
But, O, the spirit of each place  
Remote as zone from zone !

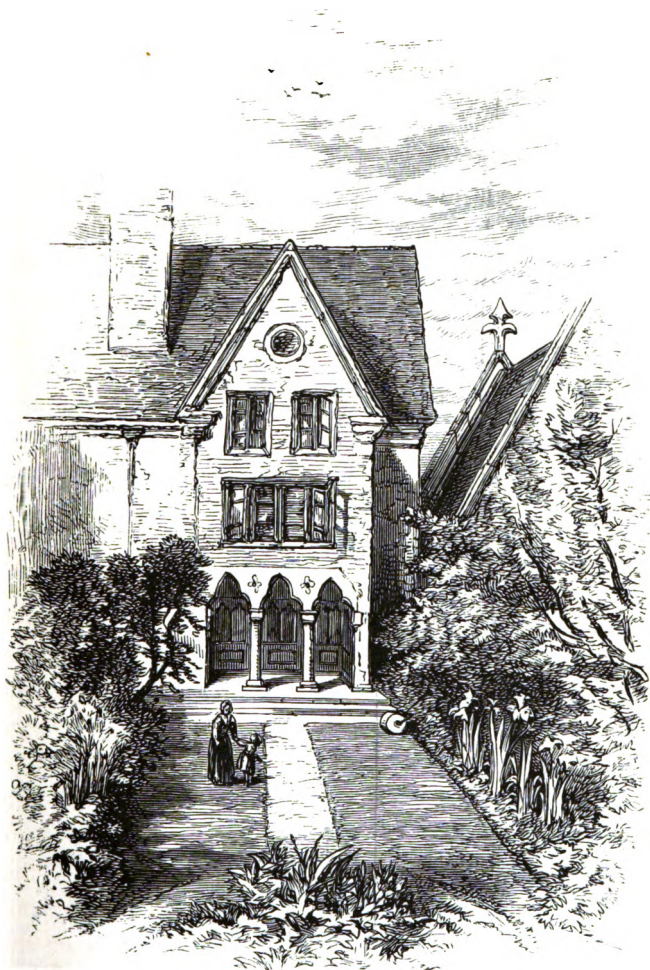
"One shines upon the hopeful poor,  
With learning's morning ray,  
A manly people to secure  
For England's coming day.

“The other—even Nature’s light,  
Heaven’s air and sun, denies,  
The young, the fair, the warm, the bright,  
Shut hopeless from her skies !”

. . . . .

“Aunt Mary says it is a house fit for anybody !” This is a name very frequent henceforth in my mother’s correspondence. It is that of a dear friend, Mrs Forbes, of Denmark Hill—no real aunt, but known in the family by that endearing title. The widow of Mrs Laurie’s brother, she knew intimately all the “byegones ;” and with her, Ann Gilbert became almost Ann Taylor again, renewing her youth in constant summer journies, arranged by the sisterly affection and generosity of her friend. In 1855, the first of these was devoted to Colchester, Lavenham, and Sudbury, where the two old ladies, young in heart, enjoyed together a honeymoon of delight.

These excursions, with now frequent visits to the homes of her sons, took her away summer after summer. She signalised a visit to Harpenden in 1857, by resuming her long-abandoned pencil. The old Barn-Laboratory of 1842 was now superseded by a large, well-appointed building (of which her third son had been the architect), and occupied by an ample staff of assistants. Important papers had for some time been issuing under the joint names of Lawes and Gilbert, and when at Harpenden she frequently took her part as one of her son’s amanuenses ; amusing herself during pauses in dictation by writing charades upon words of frequent occurrence, among the dry scientific details with which her pen was occupied.



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But now a series of careful coloured drawings of wheat and other plants—"nat.-size"—was wanted to illustrate a paper to be read at the British Association, meeting that year in Dublin.

"I devote to them," she says, "every morning, and all the light after tea ; but we have company enough for perpetual interruption. Scarcely a foreign chemist of any note comes to England without running down to see what is doing. One of them told Henry, the other day, 'that he ought to feel himself the happiest chemist in the world,' and so he well may. While I was drawing the plants out of doors, I had at command one of the boys from the British School to help me in counting the stems, which were often much entangled. He is a clever lad, resolved, I fancy, to work his way up ; and I was much amused on one occasion, when I was carrying a line too far, to be stopped by 'whooh !' That was making me work like a horse, wasn't it ?" \*

Among her excursions she never had much fancy for the sea, unless associated with scenery. From Blackpool she writes,—

"There are no walks except on the Terrace, a sort of Cheapside or Regent Street, and scarcely a drive ! It is Blackpool and people—people and Blackpool, and that only. Shall I confess to you, too, that the astronomical punctuality of the tides is a monotony which always wearies me ! Not that I complain of it as peculiar to Blackpool, but as just the one disadvantage which the beautiful sea obliges us to put up with. I have the same

\* These drawings afterwards went to America.

complaint to make of a fountain,—always playing! Up and down, up and down! always playing! It tires me.”

But, if much from home, returning to it was ever a delight as well for its own sake, as from her power of making the most of small pleasures, and the day's comfort. On this point she felt constrained to write many a lecture:—

“Why be so constantly diving into a future which we cannot penetrate, even the real colour of which may be wholly different from that with which we tint or shade our horizon. *To live by the day* is the secret of cheerful living, always remembering that our times are in God's hand, and always aiming to leave them there. How useless long plannings may be! I am sorely sensible of having injured myself, expending thought and interest to worse than no purpose in perpetual forecastings. Even my mind has been debilitated by the unprofitable habit. There are turns in Providence on which we are called to deliberate and choose; but otherwise we do but exhaust strength and spirits by endeavouring to act out paths which we may find at right angles with those we have to tread.”

“I try to convince M—— of the practical wisdom of that admonition, ‘sufficient to the day is the evil thereof,’ but she is willing to load both shoulders, one with the ills of to-day and the other, of to-morrow.”

“Yet now I am obliged to confess, that true and wise as I believe it to be, I do not feel myself in circumstances to put my belief to the test. God in his providence has for seventy years been so gracious to me, given me from humble beginnings such a goodly heritage, that I am not tried by the necessity at present for so much confidence.

“To-morrow is a lecture on a ‘Special Providence,’ of which I do not need to be convinced. But it is not from particulars that I would argue it. There could not, as it appears to me, be a *general* without a special providence. A single pin wanting would derange the machine, a pebble turn it off the line. The interweavings of Providence are to me more wonderful than the miracles of Creation. Oh, the mercy of being able to believe that we are under a system of wisdom, goodness, and power which can make all things work together for good to us! But there is a great previous question to be ascertained, Who are *we*?”

To a friend whose reverses had obliged her to open a school:—

“Whenever painful recollections of things harassing to account for force themselves on your mind, endeavour to regard the otherwise strange dealings of Providence as intended to shine on those around you, if dark in your own history. This is the light in which I have viewed them. How many families may now perpetuate the advantages derived from yours? . . . You see, my dear friend, that Providence was not asleep when the wrong was done, but that a course of usefulness was in store for you, which otherwise you would not have chosen.

“You speak very justly of leisure as a rare possession. I believe I am now regarded as a lady having time almost to waste on my hands, but it is far from true. Every season, every day, brings its appropriate work in some form or other, and I feel unable to economize time so as to do all or half I should like to do.

“There is a satisfaction in the special circumstances by which sometimes our hopes are frustrated, so that we more readily read the will of Providence in such allotments. We see it was not to be, and that in some way it will be better otherwise. I think the children of God may freely and in all cases take this con-

solution. Sometimes the only resource is to say, 'This is the finger of God!' Yet it has cut me sorely."

One of her daughters had reported some strange occurrences at Harpenden, for which the "science" there had been unable to account. After suggesting some ingenious explanations, and observing that on the same night a very remarkable aurora had been seen, she adds:—

"You know, after all, that what is termed superstition never appeared to me so unphilosophical as it is assumed to be. Of course, many supposed supernaturalisms have originated in accident, in fear, in imagination, in unconnected coincidences; but my suspicion has always been that from time to time interferences have been permitted which, whether immediately significant or not, keep up in the popular mind in all ages and countries the belief, at least the impression, of a spiritual world. This I conceive may be a worthy end when the immediate cause may appear to have scarcely a meaning. Whether there is anything in philosophy, in history, or in religion, to prove such a view absurd or impossible, I do not know. It does not appear to me that there is. . . . It is a singular circumstance that human nature cannot rid itself of the conviction that we inhabit a borderland.

"Now that I am over seventy, I often think of the nearness of that 'bourne,' and I tremble for myself and those most dear to me. To be 'cumbered with much serving'—the fatal danger of man and woman, of young and old—each in a line that seems to us duty—is a greater temptation than more obvious sins, against which both conscience and society would warn us.

"It troubles me, dear —, that I make you sorrowful by being able to enjoy for a time entire solitude; but you are by no means to conclude that I like it, except for a change, and then I do. Oh, no!—

‘That solitude is blank and drear  
Which still is solitude throughout the year’—

and I, at least, have no desire for it. I may confess to you what has often struck me as a mistake in my life and habits, that I have been *too independent*; not, if I know myself, from being proudly above assistance, but from a dislike, unwise when carried to excess, of giving trouble. And I *have* carried it to excess, depriving both my husband and children of fitting opportunities for showing their love. . . . I have long seen this, and felt that I had fallen into an evil track. Oh, my love! if we did but set out with the wisdom we may end with, what happy lives we might lead!

“I forget whether you have heard that ——— became a Plymouth brother? But his mind, or at least his judgments, have so much of the pendulum in them, that I should never confide in their permanence for either wrong or right. The singular artfulness of the votaries of that system is almost Popish. On being convinced that the Brethren were right, he at once said he must avow the change. ‘No,’ was their reply, ‘do not avow it and you will the more easily instil your sentiments. Return to your people, and do so-and-so.’ Protestant Jesuits!”

Upon a proposal to warn Sunday scholars against Romanism, she wrote, 1854—

“I have not thought very deeply about it, but I do think that real efforts to counteract Popery are called for by the times. If we could be sure that Sunday School teaching aimed simply at conversion, and would always convert, I should say *that* is nearly enough. But it is the few only who are thus benefitted, and the majority leave school to enter factories, or low associations, where some general knowledge of popish sophistries might be essentially valuable. Possibly, simple lectures from qualified

persons addressed to schools, *teachers and all*, would be better than to make universal disputants. But we have so long looked at Popery as a maimed foe, whose limping we need now only laugh at, that we are hardly awake to its new vigour.

“There is a modern cant which says, ‘I hate controversy.’ I wonder in what way we are to ‘strive earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints’ without it! I wish people would define the meaning of controversy. It is a man of straw to throw stones at as they fancy. I do not accuse *you* of this cant, but my stomach is sometimes turned by it. . . . People who see things from different points are apt to see them differently, even if not given to squint.”

“If — and — could see eye to eye by this time, I should be glad. I believe both to be as honest as honest, but if both are as particular as particular, it may be difficult to adjust the eyeglass. I hold my tongue like a good girl.”

“Yesterday’s proceedings (the celebration of peace with Russia) were well worth seeing, and with all related thoughts, too full for poetry. It was in fact continually an effort to keep the tears within doors. We had a perfect view, servants, children, and all. The procession was an hour and a quarter passing us, clergymen, ministers, &c., heading their respective schools. All windows, ledges, housetops, crowded, and waving with flags and handkerchiefs. A halt was made for a time when the Friar Lane schools were exactly opposite; they greeted us with a cheer, which we returned with white handkerchiefs, and then they attempted to sing one of my hymns—

Many voices seem to say,  
Hither children,—here’s the way,  
Haste along, and nothing fear,  
Every pleasant thing is here.

But some stronger voices in the rear interrupted, and cut it short. At the school the plates of beef devoured were scarcely credible, mashed potatoes in untold abundance, twenty-six plum-puddings of 6 lb. each, and pitchers of melted butter! The puddings came after a slightly anxious interval in a washing basket, by horse and cart, each warm in its bag. It would have done you good to hear the cheering! And to see the ignorance of the gentlemen as to the method of getting a hot pudding out of the bag! How they ran about it burning their fingers!"

Oct. 7, 1857.—The Fast Day for the Indian Mutinies.

"I cannot help fearing that gloomy times are before us as a country, and that with India at the end of a long arm, and Ireland almost at our elbow, we may find it hard work to hold upright. We have certainly prided ourselves full enough on our position and character, and all that is excessive, selfish rather than grateful, may have to come down! England has not of late been used to humiliation, but if needed, we would say—if we dared to stipulate—'Let us fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of man,'—which means, I fear, being interpreted, 'Do not humble us quite so much as might be.' Well, God will do with us wisely and justly, and above all will, I trust, shed down on us generally a deep spirit of prayer, and of supplication, with especially a sense personally, of personal sin,—good at all times."

"He that is down need fear no fall, and I think we all feel just now that blessed are the *snug*. Happy they who cannot lose much money, and will not lose any character, which is fearfully threatened in some cases! I had a talk with — yesterday, who seems to think trouble is not over yet, that it is rather the beginning than the ending in the provinces, and I fear, or hope, that many may be settling down from extravagance to a much

humbler style of things. Well, if it eradicates the gigantic folly of speculation! We were needing a lesson. Talk of gigantic,—the poor Leviathan!\* I wish it would wag its tail and be off some night all out of its own head! What will become of the engineers?"

These glances at public events mark the years that were passing. Among the circumstances of private interest were the entrance upon the ministry of a nephew.

"I can well understand that dear T—— should feel the responsibility of his undertaking—a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, whose business henceforth must be to beckon in from the crowd of wanderers. He is not the first who has said, 'Who is sufficient for these things?'" The old Adam and the young Melancthon have kept up the warfare, and Another, as he knows, must step in to secure the victory. I could not help remembering some thoughts in my folio, which he may find on the next page.

The Christian life is conflict all the way,  
 An onward pressing through a deadly fray;  
 No Reverend status, rest, or respite claims,  
 Dangers but thicken round distinguished names;  
 And while enamoured audiences conclude  
 All ghostly strife in such a soul subdued,  
 It may be, faith and prayer sustain a brunt  
 In the heart's field, as in the battle's front.  
 How hard, how hopeless, save as helped of heaven,  
 To keep all motive pure from earthly leaven! †

The marriages of a daughter and a son, both in 1856,

\* The name given to the "Great Eastern," then stranded on its slips.

† From the unpublished poem, "The Minister's Widow."



came nearer to her still. "But, dear me! what strange things have happened to us all within the last month!—the entire future of both our families altered by a few words spoken—I hope for much good."

To one of the couples on their wedding-tour, she wrote—

— "May the short journey before you, and the long journey on which you have but entered, continue as kindly prosperous as they have commenced. To think of you as almost without a care in such scenes, such circumstances, and such weather, is a bright thought at any hour of the twenty-four, busy or solitary, or whatever may be the bill of fare at home. But do not suppose me unhappy. I am much otherwise, though my happiness is not exactly like yours. I do not profess to endorse Burns on all subjects, but I have always thought him pretty true in those beautiful lines—

"If Heaven one draught of heavenly pleasure spare,  
 One cordial in this melancholy vale,  
 'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,  
 In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,  
 Beneath the milk white thorn that scents the evening gale."

'Milk white thorns' are now in season, I hope you enjoy them, and I was going to say may they be the only thorns in your path! But how foolish, impossible, unkind even, to frame, really to frame such a wish! No safe path is ever without them. It is well *not to plant them for ourselves*, which how many,—perhaps how often we all—do! I sometimes look with regret upon my own gardening, and would fain open your eyes to the wilds where the twigs are grown, which, in our folly or ignorance, we transplant into our otherwise pleasant enclosures. But personal experience, and heart religion, are the only defences. Very little efficient wisdom is gained from the experience—that is, the sins

and sorrows—of *others*, however wisely they may expostulate with those who succeed them; but *heart religion*, a constant conviction of need and weakness; a faithful inspection of our own tendencies and daily, hourly, habitual application for help from God, these *are* securities. . . . You will learn, dear children, the value of such appeals even on small occasions. No room is too noisy, no work too urgent, no occasion too small, to allow of a look for assistance, and you may sometimes be surprised to find how truly and timely it comes.”

With her grandchildren (at whose advent she was always chief minister) she often resumed the practice of her old art and mystery of discipline. Of one little body, she wrote—

“Yesterday, before he was brought as usual into my room, he indulged in a long continued, violent, thoroughly *manufactured* scream. Hitherto I have greeted his arrival with truly grandmotherly demonstrations of love and joy, but on this occasion I felt it wise to wear the calm appearance of deep silent sorrow, not bestowing a word or a smile! I do wish that you, or any unprejudiced person, could have seen the sad, motionless, enquiring, or rather conscious gaze which he fixed on me. It was strangely touching, but by dint of great self-sacrifice I maintained the same imperturbable wisdom till my own toilet was ended and I could leave the room. He knew perfectly well what was meant. This morning I made myself as agreeable as possible, proving to him the difference between a bad boy and a good one. I am still active enough to be a very harlequin of a grandmama.

“Tell M—— that books, and especially library books, should never be within reach of mischievous fingers. *My* mother’s boast was that she never allowed a child to have anything it ought not to play with. Are there better fashions now?”

To another she wrote—

“‘Little pet,’ you call her, but my dread is making her a pet. It is the bane of *only one*—or of the youngest—*sets* of pets are harmless things.”

To the young she was always young; to an expected youthful visitor she promised “to do as much as in us lies to keep a young heart beating cheerily,” which, young or old, her own heart seldom failed in.

A name long absent from these pages—Mrs Cowie—is recalled in the following quotation—

“*July 1857.*—Friend of my busiest days!—in Birkenhead? no, it is in Hull that you always live to me. How well I remember your first call on the new Pastor—even the chair on which you sat! But I remember you further back than that; I am quite sure that at Union Chapel, Islington, I sat with the Cecils in the next seat to you. I had then no special reason for remembering it, but the happy young couple I saw, left a picture in my memory, which must have been you and your dear husband soon after your marriage. It is not often that we pick up a pebble, and find it so long afterwards a gem.”

The happy journeys with Mrs Forbes were now becoming more and more a feature in the years. In 1858 they went the round of Derbyshire together by carriage, and from one of its quiet inns she sent to her “children” what she called “a few nuts to crack from the bushes of Derbyshire.” They were charades upon the names of various places visited. Two or three may be given as specimens of what she flung out constantly with abundant ease.

Unambitious my first but to lie at your feet !  
 What palace, what cottage, what cell were complete  
 Unless with my second supplied ?  
 My third,—why ! 'twould puzzle or painter or poet  
 To draw it, to sketch it, to tell it, to show it,  
 And therefore in truth I've not tried.

Pharoah of old engaged a man  
 My humble first to do ;  
 Of course the royal contract ran,  
 T' include my second too.  
 My third,—whate'er may be its charms,  
 Put us poor travellers up in " Arms !"

My first implies the dying out  
 Of winter's cozy fire ;  
 Or else it hangs its arms about  
 In graceful green attire.  
 My next's a goal, but not a gaol,  
 And so you need not fear it ;  
 My third, if not itself a dale,  
 Is really very near it.\*

In 1859 the two dear ladies explored South Wales, starting in September, and remaining to be dug out of the snow :—

" At Chepstow the weather did not allow of a drive to Tintern Abbey, which those who have seen it greatly regret. I who have not, am satisfied with the conviction that 'out of sight out of mind,' or rather 'that what the eye does not see, the heart does not rue,' which last, expresses my meaning incomparably better than the other, which indeed wholly contradicts it, as I hope you will believe. I can do very well *without* seeing anything, but, having seen, am not happy till other people see it too.

\* Matlock, Bakewell, Ashbourne.

“An immense hotel, belonging to the ‘Company,’ deluded us into the belief that we were at the veritable Milford Haven, when at dusk we found ourselves at a sort of Land’s End station—no flies, no lodgings! and through wind and rain we had to traipse up the road to that monster home, bright with lights, busy with waiters—no sitting-room at liberty!—twelve new bedrooms just built, scarcely finished, the mortar mixed with salt water, so that every wall was oozing with water and salt! I never slept among so much wetness. However, I did sleep well, and got no harm. . . . Next morning we were taken back one station towards the only habitable Milford Haven. It was still raining when we were turned into a diminutive omnibus, to be carried four miles down to the shore, where we were taken to the back door of the ‘Lord Nelson,’ large, lofty, and storm-battered outside, but within most perfectly comfortable. It is the real Milford Haven, a fine arm of the sea or enclosed gulf, with a good deal of shipping, a fine long street, with a single row of houses, facing the water, and a wide, dry, pleasant walk; but the houses look almost all of them defaced or weather-eaten.

“After more than a week we left it with high expectation for Swansea. But, though I am very glad to have been, I am at least as glad to have got away! The queerest place I ever set eye upon! I shall never forget (as the presumptuous saying is) the first appearance of it—an immense *housey* valley, and beyond, an enormous bank of mountain, stretching far and wide, studded with cottages bright in the sun, but with such a pother of smoking furnaces at the foot as I never beheld; a viaduct at either end, almost sky high, and ships, if we may judge from the masts, but no coast! I wanted sadly to get where I could see over to Ilfracombe, because I know that from Ilfracombe we could see over to Swansea, but there is no such spot that I can hear of.”

They posted sixty miles from Kington to Aberystwith—

“Rewarded by many miles of noble scenery, but with much discomfort from the miserable vehicles, which were all we could procure—lumbering machines, which seem indigenous to the country—and provoking delays in changing—at one time sitting for an hour in a carriage without horses and so forth. . . . At last we did reach Aberystwith, and in dusk and rain, housed ourselves in the best hotel. But on the following morning (October 20, 1859) there set in an intense cold. No efforts could give us the feeling of warmth. In vain we load on coats and clothing—nothing will do. The weather is wild with rain, wind, hail, lightning, and thunder. . . .

October 26, a perfect hurricane, rain, wind, and sea.\* How we are to return becomes an anxious question. We are all getting almost dismal, except when occasionally we burst out a laughing at the thought of our misery. Oh, dear me! oh, dear *us!*—and then all the doors have bells, and not knockers, so that we never *hear* the post coming.

“On the first fine morning we commenced our posting homewards. We had for several days observed streaks of snow on the hills, but did not expect to find any obstruction, and set off under beautiful sunshine, taking the Devil’s Bridge on our way. Towards this we ascended for about ten miles, when the most richly magnificent scene opened upon us that I have ever beheld. I commenced the wild descent, but having taken the guide’s arm down a flight of shattered stairs at the top, I saw immediately that, with my nervous horror of the precipitous, I could not proceed—narrow, shelving, defenceless, winding paths, strewn with fallen leaves to slip upon, were the only means of descent!

“The noble views from the road, however, satisfied me that

\* The morning that the *Royal Charter* was lost on the Welsh coast.

even that was worth coming for. Then we had continual ascent for several miles, rounding knoll after knoll of those winding roads—hill and heaven on one side, precipice with a mere sham of defence on the other. At length we began to understand the streaks of snow we had seen from our windows. Large blocks had already been cut, and lay heaped on the road side, and it did not look nice to see the steep slippery ascent still covered with it. After a slow drag, we came to a standstill in the midst, and the driver came round to say, that if we 'would just get out and *walk on the top of the wall,*' he thought he could pull through—a wall with deep snow on one side, and a fearful depth on the other! Mrs Forbes said at once she could not, and would not stir, and preferred the expectation of sitting till another pair of horses could be got from the Devil's Bridge. M—, after considerable demur, entrusted herself to the man; and, as soon as their backs were turned, I jumped into the snow, preferring to wade through any depth, to the possible depths on the other side. The carriage was up to the axle-tree, and still in *statu quo*, when, after walking till far out of sight, we returned, and found the driver and a man he had called from the deeps digging away at it. . . . Further on we found snow in many parts, but not impassable. It happened to be a cattle market at a small town on the way, and we were amused at the difficulties encountered by the poor beasts, plunging so deep that, as M— said, we might have had iced cream, cheap."

She was then seventy-eight, but had several more happy expeditions before her. The following year, 1860 (August 9), found her crossing the Border for the first time :—

"We were alone; and you may judge of the health and spirits of the dear Auntie by her rising to dance in the carriage to welcome

me to Scotland as soon as we passed the Tweed, and again on entering Edinburgh; and none of us a bit the worse for a four hundred miles travelling this morning! O that blessed Stephenson! How kindly I thought of him all the way, but at Newcastle especially, the cradle of his greatness. And what a place it is! the most singular spot in our journey; only who ever can exist in such a smoke? We drove into this noble city at 8.30, and to an hotel in one of the finest sites in Edinbro', where we were well content to stop, as apparently were some scores of travellers besides ourselves. The bedroom provided for me proved to be a sitting room on the ground floor, with a bed and mattress 'pro tem,' and lest I should exceed the exact truth, I will not say how many miles away from the rest of the party,—but there I *did* sleep.

“If only the weather would really smile upon us summer fashion, it would add much to the pleasure, but though for the last few days we have not had rain, yet every morning we have had to wonder what the fog would do with itself, and sometimes it has wrapt us about, a cheap shepherd's plaid all day!

“Edinbro' itself is a sight, and a *site* so magnificent that many additional sights are not needed. And we have seen about all that is special, Salisbury Crag, Arthur's Seat, the Castle, Calton Hill, Holyrood, and, almost as fine as anything, that which we cannot help seeing, and pay nothing for, the beautiful view from Princes Street, with the Old Town, and intervening gardens. We have had the unexpected pleasure of meeting ——; it is very pleasant to fall in with these fragments of old times, especially as we agreed that it was only by a process of logic that we understood ourselves to be 'old folks.'

“Then we have made a beautiful day to Hawthornden and Roslyn, as lovely as anything we have seen; and since that, another to Melrose and Abbotsford. In returning from the latter, we were advised to drive through the Tweed at the



'Abbot's-ford,' from which Sir Walter named his residence. It is there a broad stream, though not *quite* deep enough to reach the floor of the carriage, and the current running very strong, we jolted along for some time, not liking the amusement; but in the midst of it, we came to a stand-still,—one of the traces had broken! The driver made every effort to repair it, but at length jumped into the water, and with Payne's help, contrived to botch it up so as to pull through. There was no assistance within reach, and I began to fear that *we* should have to wade also."

. . . "We have just had a great treat in the return of the Queen and family from Balmoral. The Auntie and I contented ourselves with watching in the exquisite gardens of Princes Street, through which the train runs. It went very slowly to favour spectators, and as soon as it reached Holyrood, a salute of twenty-one guns was fired from the Castle, close in front of us. It was nearly dusk, and the lightning and thunder reverberating from every peak, hill, and building, in and around the glorious old city, were enchanting. It made one loyal to the bottom of one's heart, and the top of one's poetry—though it did not require making for the occasion—it was ready made."

. . . "My letter has just been interrupted by a call from Dr John Brown, author of 'Rab and his Friends,' so I have seen one of the pleasantest looking men I ever did see. He says, too, that his father had known me, which I was obliged to confess myself old enough to forget! Very unpolite, but I cannot help it. I often commit such mistakes now."

These holiday times gave her more opportunity for reading than she had ever had before. The following explains her interest in Newcastle.

"I have been reading till almost crazed with interest, the Life of George Stephenson. How many novels it is worth!—the very

best of them! I do not remember being so absorbed since the days of the 'Scottish Chiefs.'

"Then there is that clever old fashioned book, 'The Caxtons,' in which one of the leading characters so much resembles Mr Gilbert."

To her brother Isaac she writes—

"My wish for several weeks has been to thank you for the pleasure I have enjoyed in reading your last volume, 'The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry,'—not exactly expressed in the title. It grows upon reading, and is as valuable as beautiful, and beautiful as valuable. It opens a new door of thought. If you really intended it to be a final production, you could not have finished more nobly." . . .

"I received lately by post, without note or comment, a small volume entitled, 'Thoughts for the Heart, addressed to Women, by a Woman.' Do you happen to know by whom? It is closely printed, and I have yet read not more than a third. The first part seems to have some queer crotchets about Adam and Eve, and Eden, but I fancy the object of the book is to establish as scripture truth the annihilation of the soul instead of eternal punishment. Several years ago I read White's volume on that subject, and thought it appeared a probable view, as this does also. Have you so far encountered the reasoning as to have a fixed opinion? On many grounds it seems to me both reasonable and scriptural. Human nature shrinks almost, if not quite as much, from non-existence as from suffering."

To the question put, the only reply was the following—

"I know nothing of the volume you mention. Many such are sent to me, which I acknowledge *before* reading them. Specula-

tions are now rife of a sort that will greatly trouble the religious world, and *lead to changes*. But I must have done."

When a Government pension was granted to her brother, she wrote:

"It is a lasting satisfaction to think of such an acknowledgement to a life of no common labour and usefulness. Yes, you earned, shall we say, the first instalment against the parlour mantelpiece in Angel Lane.\* How very wrong for a *fee* to be required in such circumstances. I wish Dickens would hoot it out of fashion."

Some of the "sure sorrows of Time" descended upon 1861. Early in that year Stanford Rivers lost its sweetest charm by the death of Mrs Isaac Taylor, and by mid-August Mrs Laurie had passed away.

As rose leaves in a china jar,  
Breathe still of blooming seasons past,  
E'en so, old women as they are,  
Still doth the young affection last.

These lines had been sent from "Ann to Anna" not long before. The latter was now living near Manchester, and Mrs Forbes and my mother being in Derbyshire this summer, went over to see her. The bright mind was failing, but looking up gaily into her friend's face, she said, "Yes, I used to call you Nanny," and then repeated with perfect memory five or six verses addressed to her by Ann in the early Colchester days. Less than a fortnight after, the shades of death closed softly round her.

\* See p. 167.

The day after Christmas-day 1861, my mother wrote a long letter to her brother :—

“ There are remembrances we can scarcely touch, sad thoughts which might cast their shadow, but once a year we try, if we can, to evade them. . . . And I do feel it a great, I am disposed to think it, an uncommon privilege, to remain so long within a family circle which, whether near or distant, is, without exception, a loving one, ‘ neither screw nor cratchel wrong.’ Happily there has been no great Will case to disturb *us*, and we are not sorry for that ! Never yet has the wedge of gold made entry amongst us, or who knows how many screws would have been cracked by this time !”

At these Christmas gatherings, when now from twenty to thirty of sons and daughters, nephews, nieces, and grandchildren surrounded the hospitable board, my mother for several years enjoyed a little ceremony that came with dessert, when a casket of letters was brought in, these directed with her own hand, and each containing a few verses of wise and witty appropriateness, were distributed to the guests ; often they were so slyly appropriate as to set the table in a roar, in which the victim could always heartily join. They ceased with the Christmas of 1862, when the writer, then just eighty-one, thought it well to close the series, which she did with the following :—

“ Oh yes ! oh yes ! The Bellman said,  
 Oh yes ! oh yes ! say I,  
 Take notice that the muse is dead,  
 Which this doth certify.

“ Long I’ve been knocking at her door,  
 Long pulling at her bell,  
 But what I thought kind looks before,  
 Meant but a kind farewell !

“ And if sometimes she threw me scraps,  
My craving hands to fill,  
'Twere simple greed, to think, perhaps,  
She'd name me in her will !

“ Then fare thee well, fair Patroness,  
In classic shades interred,  
Such loss, 'twere hopeless to express,  
Without thy helping word.

“ So know it all, both great and small,  
That ' Muse and Co.' have parted ;  
And sunk the slender capital  
With which poor ' Co.' had started !”



MEMORIALS OF MRS. GILBERT.

CHAPTER X.

*NOTTINGHAM*

**CONTENTS OF CHAPTER X.**

**Thankfulness and Trust—Italy and America—Home Scenes—Illness  
and Death of her Youngest Son—Edinburgh and Ilfracombe—  
Last Correspondence with Isaac Taylor—His Death—Last Visit  
to Lavenham—A Hint of the End.**



## CHAPTER X.

NOTTINGHAM.

1862-1866.

“ Yes, 80 years ! They did not crawl,  
Nor, as we fancy, fly ;—  
They kept their pace with Time’s foot-fall,  
And slid in silence by.”

ANN GILBERT.

“ Christiana, the bitter is before the sweet. Thou must through troubles, as did he that went before thee, enter this celestial city.”

BUNYAN.

“ A STREAM of comfort has flowed *up hill* from the low levels of Lavenham :” so wrote our dear mother as she looked back on the long course now nearly closed. “ Giving thanks always for all things ” might have been her motto through life, and in the bright evening of her days thankfulness, amid some sore trials yet befalling her, was always on her lips. This grateful spirit illuminates every page of the letters now before me. In writing to her brother Isaac, who had remarked, *inter alia*, “ my father was a man of talent, but my mother was a woman of genius,” she says—

“ I rejoice in your full and warm acknowledgement of obligation to our dear parents. When I reflect on their mutual disad-

vantages, I wonder ! They extracted good out of much evil,—taught by contraries ; and I own most thankfully how much of any right views I have, is due to them. It is very nice to feel a stream of benefit flowing over us, so long and so widely, from that modest source. I do love and revere their memories.”

In similar strain she wrote the following—

My father ! Well the name he bore,  
 For never man was *father* more ;  
 Gentle but firm, his loving eye  
 Looked with no grudge as by and bye  
 His quiver filling to the brim,  
 (St Malthus was no saint to him)  
 Around his frugal table met  
 Of Olive plants a goodly set.  
 Shallow the soil, but little doubt  
 Had he that heaven would eke it out,  
 And by its blessing, timely showered,  
 Bring to fair fruit what there had flowered,  
 Nor any worthy good deny,  
 To prayer, and faith, and industry.

So 'twas with him ;—through many a day  
 He and my mother toiled away,  
 She fearing lest the cruse should dry,  
 He drawing out with upward eye,  
 And feeling that his prayer was said,  
 When he had asked for *daily* bread,  
 And owning that his prayer was heard,  
 If daily answered that one word.”

“ Petitions in detail,” she wrote to her daughter, “ I scarcely dare to offer, for I may just ask that which would not conduce to your happiness, and as God knows well that that is my object, I am thankful to leave the direction in His hands. I could mark

out a course for you, my love, which would appear delightful, but I would rather not. . . . I am rejoiced to see you able and willing to live usefully, which, as far as this life is concerned, is the real secret of happiness. *Occupation*, not only in fancy work, but in doing good both at home and abroad, fulfilling as a hireling your day, is the sweet smile worn by the original curse.

“There is nothing in my own history for which I have felt more thankful than the sort of workboard life provided for me, almost from one end to the other. If Providence do for you, as successively it has done for me,—lift up a corner of the curtain, and say—‘Look here!’—I shall, I think, be willing, almost willing, to leave the rest; or that, at the least, is the wisest way.”

This, the father’s trustfulness, never forsook the daughter, and grew with years; nor was she ever weary of pointing out the wonderful ways of Providence, and the often visibly happy result. Referring to an instance of the sort, she wrote—

“I compare it to walking up inside a church tower, so walled in that you could not miss your way, and yet so dark that you cannot see the steps; but, oh, the prospect at the top!”

And so again—

“A marvellous development of marvellous providences woven for many years behind a dark cloud.” . . . “I felt sure that good was on the road, but the night was too dark to see, and the storm too loud to hear.”

Trust was strong, however dark the cloud—

“He who deals the stroke can pour in such influences, sustain by such thoughts, and even bestow such calm unreasoning submission, as shall almost seem like a quiet happiness—reposing

under the ancient question, still held to by so many hearts, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'

But trust has other fields for its exercise—

"It does me good to think, I at any time say a word in season, but I have great faith in *truths*; they are standing benefits,—never get mouldy or out of fashion, and for medicine I wish to give nothing else."

"There are reasons sometimes for avoiding ecclesiastical collision, otherwise it is good occasionally to have one's recollections refreshed, or instructed as the case may be. Truth will take the throne it is heir to, and it is no discredit to any who may assist at the ceremony. All kinds of truth will come right in time."

Yet, meanwhile, she would not omit clearly to express what she believed to be truth—considering, no doubt, that she did thereby "assist at the ceremony." She more than once quoted with satisfaction from a letter of her brother's his trenchant criticism upon a volume of Broad Church sermons,—

"Very nice and silky, a swansdown Christianity; no such thing as Paul preached. Take my firm testimony that this flimsy stuff is not the Gospel. Let it be advertised as court-plaster for pimples, not thus are deep wounds to be treated. Out and out Romanism is a better thing. But there will be a reaction; you will see it in its time."

And, again, his description of the theology of an American work, popular in England, to which she had drawn his attention—"German beer that has been carried twice across the Atlantic with the cork out." Of any new views which came before her, she seldom said much at the

time, but, as in the following instance, her letters frequently showed that she had been pondering them:—

“1864.—It is not to be regretted that Mr —— thinks for himself, but one of his views disturbs me—the third class passengers that he books for heaven—or rather for the portico, for I do not see any opening for them from the terminus—do you? It is not the first time that the inquiry has been made. It was once put to One who could well have answered, but when it was asked, ‘Are there few that shall be saved?’ His only reply was, ‘Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.’ It does look, if not like an answer, yet as much as to suggest that more than that is not needful, perhaps not desirable for us to know. And I could not help feeling that the easy inference from this new definite doctrine would be with *very many*, ‘Oh, then, I need not mind so much, I shall do somehow after all.’ It opens at least to such a conclusion. I only hope Mr —— will put the same question himself to Christ before he expresses his present views too largely. He explained his argument to me by the ‘ninety-and-nine righteous who need no repentance.’ Do you think that is anything but an illustration? One thing pleased me, Mr —— said he always studied from the Greek Testament; if so, he will come right in time.’

With still lively interest she followed public events, in spite of her more than eighty years still keeping step with the century. She watched the struggles of both Italy and America as scenes in the great drama of Providence. Her view, indeed, of the contest in America, with her strong attachment to anti-slavery principles and liberal policy, was not what might have been expected;

II.

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but she was at this period a daily reader of the *Times*, provided by a friend, and this may account for some colouring matter in her generally clear, and always honest, judgments. She was ever ready to be convinced. June 4, 1861, she wrote:—

“To-night, Dr Cheever, from New York, lectures in the Mechanics’ Hall upon the American Crisis, and I mean to go to hear him, if I can get in. I should like to be set right, if he can do it.”

“*June 7.*—How very sorry I am to hear this morning of the death of Cavour! It was posted in our market-place last night. Oh! what a pity to lose calm wisdom at such a crisis—as much wanted as bravery. I think I told you that we were to hear Dr Cheever on Tuesday, and a treat it was. Such a voice I never heard, and he is a very interesting man. It was not on the American Crisis, except as it bears upon slavery, but his object is to awaken the country to the claim of the South to be recognised as an independent State. If this is done *unconditionally*, slavery exists as before, and the only condition upon which it should be granted must be, that every slave born after that recognition should be declared free. I do hope the country will be unanimous in this requirement. He and Mrs Cheever very kindly called upon me—of course, as the sister of Jane Taylor—nobody suspecting that I am my own sister, too! I asked if he knew the disposition of our Government on the subject. He said he knew only individually the opinions of some, which were the same as his own.”

“You have witnessed,” she wrote to a friend, “the wonderful changes going on in Italy—poor down-trodden, uprising Italy! It has always appeared to me one of the most God-like expressions of the Divine nature to be so slow to work. If we had the

power, should we not have made quick work of it? Not so He whose work it is. But when will eyes be open as well as limbs be free?"

"*July 21, 1862.*—What do you say to American news? I wonder whether the thought ever occurs to the North that the South has as much right to separate from them as they all had to separate from *us*?—within my own memory too, for I distinctly recollect standing at the best parlour window in Red Lion Street, Holborn, to witness rejoicings on the proclamation of peace with America! and I *think* it was on the 23d of September 1783, the day on which Aunt Jane was born, but this I do not say on oath." \*

"All kinds of truth will come right in time," and so has the truth about the great American conflict. The comments of my mother upon the successive phases of it are only interesting as showing how difficult it was for contemporary and distant observers to appreciate its character, and how general was the impression that prevailed in England irrespective of political party.

Most of these comments occurred in furnishing reports of public affairs to her son and his wife abroad. Their yearly wanderings in the Dolomite regions of the Eastern Alps were to her a yearly source more of anxiety than pleasure. Light and active as she was herself, she had always a nervous horror of an edge or a height, and when, to the risks she pictured of Alpine travelling, were added those of unknown and distant mountains, it was as much as she could bear. "Now, don't tumble over precipices for the prettiest sight in the world, for then you will never

\* Peace was signed at Paris, September 3, 1783.

see another," she urged. And when the first far flight was arranged, she wrote:—

"Where you are going, I have no notion. I daresay it is somewhere not in the maps, or at least not christened when I learnt geography. I had much rather you were not going at all. It is a pleasure with so many slips and slides in it, that I should prefer to think of it as over, not to come. But write as often and as fully as you can, remembering that if *you* take 'slip and slide and gulf and rock,' I claim my share in—'The Postman's knock.'

The fulfilment of this injunction led to the accumulation of a mass of material which afterwards formed the foundation of a volume published in 1864. She expressed her approbation of the book in a few terse terms of praise, but, like her father before her, strongly deprecated "a life of writing." "You have secured enough of literary credit to append to your watch-chain, and if you let that suffice it will be no small physical advantage. People die now of standing on their heads."

Mountains did not suit her, but with ever young delight, she welcomed the home-landscapes of England. "There go the beautiful harvest waggons! I do so enjoy to see them—picturesque, bountiful, and how merciful," she would exclaim in the middle of a letter.

"It is exactly half a century since I first knew and began to love Ongar, little surmising the large part of my history to be written on its green pages."

It was the real country seclusion there that made much of the charm; and of Harpenden, not so rich in memories, but rich in trees and lanes, she writes—



“Everything around is so beautiful—trees, flowers, hay-making in perfection, and every day a drive through the beautiful wiggles of the tree’d-up lanes. I do not know when I have enjoyed a country holiday so much.”

And this at eighty-two! But she retained other sympathies also.

“I met — in the market this morning,—yes, dear S—, it was in the *market* I met him. Wasn’t it nice? For hereby I confess I do like the ‘Market Place, Nottingham.’ I like to go there for several reasons, one being that it always implies something to be done, which is as you know a constitutional disease of mine, I believe inherited from both parents, whose revered names I do not wish to vilify. Again, and still more astonishing, there is something to me almost of poetry in a large scene of business! The clatter of a factory has music in it, and suggests, if one does but listen with the right ear, not simply pounds, shillings, and pence! Do give me credit for this if you can. Yesterday I chanced to meet your friend Mrs T., who broke out, much to my satisfaction, in praise of the town, the old town! without a single caveat against the market-place, so that I felt quite thankful—under shelter as one may say. Yes, the good old town! in which, strange to say, I have already spent very nearly half my long life!

But this happy life was not to close without one more bitter pang. “Fully ripe” as she seemed, she had yet to be made perfect through suffering. In the autumn of 1863, her youngest son, “James Montgomery,” his name bearing testimony to an ancient friendship, began to show symptoms which, for a long time mysterious, declared themselves at last as a mortal and terrible disease. In

him she had possessed a son of bright intellectual gifts, and who was all she wished in early piety and purity of mind and heart. A young wife and four children graced his pleasant home at Bowdon, in Cheshire. His long illness was a long anguish to those who loved him, and a few passages from her letters, following the melancholy dates, will suffice to show how his mother bore herself in this valley of the shadow of death.

Aug. 17.—“It has been as much as I could do to wait for this morning’s letters, and in order to bear the suspense, I, as it were, *quench myself*—put all my thoughts and feelings into a stupid oblivion as far as I can. Of course you think all sorts of thoughts. I cannot say more than repeat the injunction so timely, ‘pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks.’”

Sept. 11.—“So, dear children, our anxiety keeps alive, and I fear it has yet long to run. Oh, that our united prayers may be graciously answered! This they will be, but how apt we are to feel—‘Yes, but let it be in our own way!’”

Sept. 28.—“I cannot feel much cheered by the report this morning;—instead of immediate danger, I look forward to months, years, perhaps a life of disablement! *It is sent.* We dare not complain. ‘Can a living man complain?’ We would at least try not, but to us it does seem mournful to see a young, active, useful, and promising life so stricken down! However, that it is, and has been, a Christian life is an unspeakable consolation. ‘Tis but a speck, and we and they, the happy port shall gain,’ and we do hope as well as pray for strength equal to the day of trial. Many are the mercies, great as many, by which its severity is mitigated. I have always looked upon the word *friendless* as almost the most bitter word in the language, but how far, dear child, is he from that!

“My heart is heavy. Do not say this at Bowdon. I will do as well as I can.”

Oct. 22. “Very thankful were we this morning for your letter of faithful detail. Sad enough, but yet we all feel disposed to hope, and Oh, how thankful shall we feel if the result should justify the hope? We do endeavour to wait, to rest, to pray, and with as much patient submission as we can. It is a sorrow so unlooked for, that we cannot yet feel quite equal to it.”

She went to Bowdon, but at this time she began to be troubled with deafness, which she touchingly laments, now that she is continually in the sick-room.

“Though constantly assured that he only says what it is neither needful nor interesting for me to hear—just to move his pillows, stir the fire, or such like, still I do *not* hear, and can only fall into the conviction that it is one of those uninteresting remarks; and in the course of time, should time be allowed me, I shall, I hope, accept the inevitables of age as such, and therefore to be borne patiently, as all trials should be.”

“*December 1.*—For myself I am up and down continually. If I wake in the night I give him up almost entirely; if I see him in the morning cheery and speaking with a natural voice and manner, I think—‘O, no certainly,’ and so I waver. . . . If the back is not quite fitted to the burden, how nearly and mercifully is the burden to the back!”

“*December 26.*—It has not been such an anniversary as we would have chosen, not by many, such as we *have* enjoyed. Our Christmases have been allowed to slide, they have not been wrenched away, and sad as recollections might be, if we chose to indulge them, we are not compelled to feel only grief. I think

the rattling of the arrival wheels (hitherto so musical to me) on Christmas Eve, is the thing which I miss nearly most! What different lives we should lead if we would but take things by the *minute*—60 of them would make many a pleasant hour for us.”

In January 1864 the end was near, and she regretted that, through his continued wandering, it had become too late to converse, as she would have wished, upon the great things from which the veil to him was soon to be lifted. “Something like a prepared expectation is desirable for even the most advanced Christian,” she wrote, “we should have liked to see a bright sunset.” She lived in lodgings at a little distance, and every night through the dreary winter moonlight of this month, her slight and silent figure, accompanied by son or daughter, passed to and from, the house of watching. On the night of the 16th a messenger presently followed her home, and told, with a tearful smile, that the “dear fellow was at last at rest.” A few days afterwards she wrote to her friend, Mrs Forbes—

“You know what sorrow means; and if you had known more of my precious child you would know more of what ours must be. And yet for him we cannot mourn. A life of love and usefulness, and now a home of eternal happiness, cannot be overbalanced by a few months of intense anguish, or weeks of sad unconsciousness. But you know for whom we must and do feel—dear M——! the sight of her and of the four dear children, all under six years old, is the bitterest of all. But for the widow and the fatherless there are such special consolations stored up, that seem to say—‘Yes, I know they are the greatest sorrows that you will have to bear, and *here am I*,’ ready to help according to the need!”

“He will lie in the beautiful churchyard here—beautiful from

the fine old building, and the lovely view that it commands, and catching the light of every setting sun."

"It has always seemed to me a mistake to deprive children of a sight and share in the last scenes. Dear tender Herbert especially, I feel as if he had been deprived of his birthright not to have had his hand in J——s at that sad time. He should have attended as chief mourner, as, in fact, he must ultimately be, but everyone was against me, and I withdrew the suggestion. Instead of false and unhealthy influence I think that the real difference between soul and body might have been explained and impressed by it. He understands fully that 'dear papa is gone to heaven,' but before long it will render the churchyard a strange enigma, which will probably be explained to him by some one not wise in such explanations. He asked nurse if she had seen Jesus when He took dear papa away? and, under the circumstances, she gave, I think, a very nice answer—'No,' she said, 'He was in the room, but I did not see Him.'"

Some lines, written a few years previously, express the feeling to which she again gave utterance as she turned away from Bowdon Churchyard.

Oh, the first night-fall on a precious grave,  
Remote, deserted e'en of those most dear!  
No effort now the tender one to save!  
No anxious wakeful fondness watching near!

But there the cold moon sleeps upon his bed,  
Dear child! Just parted from our warm embrace;  
And spring's first dews their chilly drops will shed  
Unheeded, on his lonely resting-place.

Around the hearth,—returned again, convenes  
The wonted household,—saving one away!  
Oh, the strange sadness of those altered scenes,  
That mute assembling, and the dark array!

Perhaps they listen to the falling rain,  
 Perhaps they chide the starlit evening sky,—  
 Brightness or gloom brings each its gush of pain,  
 The throb of memory, and the brimming eye.

For months afterwards expressions well up in her letters which show how the sorrow was working in her soul.

“ I feel the moonlight like a touching reminder, we used to depend on it so. . . . As far as we are right in calling any arrangement of Providence *mysterious*, I think we may regard this as such. But how do a very few years close such views ! ”

‘ It is not till God applies consolation Himself that it really reaches us. Affliction I believe does not effect its purpose till we take both it, and its consolations, as direct from Him.’

“ Oh, those dear ones ! But God knows all about it, and He is the real Executor. . . . If Providence lays down a line, we may be thankful for direction so far, and venture to travel with our little all upon it. To dear M—— I have neither spoken nor written ! The great sorrow has lived in our hearts in silence, but there it is ! ”

“ Can trouble live with April days,  
 Or sadness in the summer moons ? ”

Yes, indeed, they may ; but yet that sorrowing heart could not be insensible to the touch of spring. She was suffering from a new infirmity in a troublesome lameness :—

“ My knee does not in the least improve, and now that spring says, ‘ just step out and shake hands with me, ’ I feel it the more trying. . . . But what right have I, in my eighty-third year, to

wonder at anything, or to expect much improvement? The earthly house of this tabernacle must dissolve, and at present it is doing it gently."

"One thing I am, or ought to be, very thankful for, that the rheumatism does not trouble me in the night. Very generally when a chronic rheumatism attacks old people, it makes its headquarters between the blankets."

Her dear old friend did not fail her in this stress, and arranged one journey after another as summer advanced, while she responded cheerfully to such efforts. Again they started for Scotland, this time by a different route :—

"The new line was to me especially interesting, through so much of dear, green, smoky Yorkshire—just as I left it (railways excepted) almost fifty years ago! I knew it by its tall red brick chimnies; then its bordering meadows—with bright streams twisting about like the border of a carpet—and fenced in by noble shoulders of wood, rich in foliage. It was beautiful in the present, and touchingly eloquent of the past, saying many things to me that other people could not hear!

"To be deaf and lame, since my last visit to Edinburgh, is not an improvement, but how much worse it might have been! On Sunday morning M—— and I heard Dr Candlish; that is, she heard, and I saw him—a short man, with broad shoulders and a head large enough for his diploma. But O, such nervous varieties! If I were his wife, I *would* make his waistcoat and his gown fit better—they were never doing their duty to his satisfaction."

Returned from Scotland, she was presently tempted away—a device of affection—to visit, of all places, Ilfra-

combe again! Resting at Harpenden on the way, she glories in "the summer moons."

"The lanes, the fields, the woods, so beautiful that it is a treat, go which way we will, and an early tea, leaves us a pleasant evening till dark—and the harvest is magnificent. It is wonderful to see the sickles at work on one side the hedge, and the steam-engine on the other, threshing away into sacks, in total neglect of either barn or stack! It will soon be, I should think, a plough at one end, and a loaf at the other!"

*August 29, Lynnmouth.*—"For how many ages has 'good news from a far country' been held as a blessing? We have been trundling about for some days, and at last are here. A beautiful drive, and beautiful weather, but O such a road! You might as well drive down a corkscrew! At last we left the carriage and luggage to fend for themselves, and accomplished the last few twirls on foot. On the 1st of October 1812, I slept at Barnstaple before, and now, 1864, I slept there again! How large and full a life has passed in that interval! A letter from J——. He and Churchill took a walk of twenty-five miles with a girl of seventeen as porter; she bore it well till the last hour, and then said—"Well, we must laugh while we can, and cry when we must." A remark well worth remembering.

"Exactly opposite to our windows here, hanging like a strip of yellow ribband from the summit of a fine wooded hill, is the coach road to Minehead, and the two lamps of the coach we see sparkling down at nine every evening. It is now nearly sixty-three years since, early one fine morning in May, Isaac, and Jane, and I, with a man, and our luggage carried on a pack-horse, walked over the bridge to climb that hill, from the top of which we could just descry on the hill beyond, the chaise, like a speck of gold, which we had ordered to meet us from Minehead. There was no coach then, and that any coach now should venture, in



either dark or daylight, down the fearful hill, on which we trace it nightly, is scarcely credible, but seeing is believing.

“At Lynton, where we lunched, my object was to realise old recollections, but it was difficult. We found ourselves in a long handsome hotel, wholly different from the small white house with bay windows on each side. I was determined, however, to make it out if I could, and walking nearly the length of the premises I did find the veritable spot, known by its old-fashioned windows, now, alas! converted into a coach-house. You cannot think (though perhaps you can) how much I enjoyed these reminiscences.”

*September 14, Ilfracombe—* . . . “It is so altered that I recognise scarcely anything but the sea, the rocks, and the Capstan Hill. Houses, terraces, everything, new since we left it; the old chapel pulled down, and two new ones built. By chance, however, we drove to the Britannia, the inn where your father stayed during his short visit. And I have sought out our veritable house on the Quay. Several houses looked like it, and I went into one, but though *like*, it was not it; so seeing an old man who might, I thought, have known it fifty years ago, I made up to him, found he had lived all his life there, remembered Mrs Blackmore’s, to which he took me, and to be sure there was the veritable room—its two windows, fireplace, and closet, like enough to be sworn to, together with our back bedroom, and uncle’s small one in front—all to the life! And I have now a correct photograph of the Quay, gave a shilling to the good woman, and sixpence to the old man, and so feel myself cheaply satisfied.”

“And I did get too an introduction to one of the young women known to us through Mr Gunn, and sure enough she was identified by a smile of welcome recognition as soon as she found who I was. She replied to questions respecting us from

J—— and C—— with amusing correctness, even to the dresses we wore. A nice old creature we all thought her. She and one sister are in lodgings together, the church paying their rent, and I had the pleasure of slipping something into her hand as I left.”

So summer and autumn wore away, and after a visit to the dear Essex homes, she returned for the winter to College Hill, whence she wrote :—

“I did not like leaving you, however thankful that I had been spared to see homes and faces so dear once more, though with every year increasing probabilities against another such enjoyment. But this I desire to leave, ‘meet for the inheritance,’ being the only suitable thought.”

Her brother Isaac and herself in these last years exchanged several loving little greetings. Thus he wrote :—

“It should not be so, my dear sister, and I often feel it, that our correspondence should be so infrequent as it is—we travelling on so far toward the end of a long journey! But you know that penny post has ended the dispensation of *letters*, bringing in the dispensation of scores of notes, each as brief as Saxon may make it. The locust swarm of scraps in an envelope, has eaten up almost every green thing in the fields and gardens of soul-land. This is what we have come to under Whig administration!”

He asked at this time for her photograph, which had been applied for by a friend in America, and added :—

“You are in high regard throughout the Northern States. In truth, my dear sister, it is true of each of us, that for one reader in England we have ten or twenty in America. Among all sorts of regrets in looking back through years past, we may be thank-

ful thus far that we have not been *allowed* to spend seventy or eighty years in filling cabinets with coins, moths, botanic samples. Something has been done which has gone far, and already effected good. Something which may speak when we are gone. NOTHING to be proud of, something to be thankful for. Is it not so?"

She took leave of the year in a letter to Stanford Rivers:—

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—for I conclude the last time, till 1864 has done its duty! It will ever be to both of us a year of sorrowful memories.\* I trust that to the two deepest sufferers real and enduring consolation will be afforded. The best of all consolations came with the stroke, one that will increase in comfort as life proceeds, and end at last in undying satisfaction. . .

"Dr M— writes to me that 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star,' has been translated *well* into both Greek and Latin. How little did such a possibility enter Jane's head in writing it! We have had really cold weather, but I have been able to brave the outer world better than might have been. I have felt also much relieved in walking—quite able to walk from Marden Ash to Stanford Rivers without inconvenience, and to say so at eighty-three, is it not a mercy?

"I form no plans; for me a plan was formed in January 1782, which I have learned to trust to."

To this, in the beginning of the year 1865 (his last of life), came the following reply from Isaac Taylor:—

"So it is, my dear sister, that I have now two of your loving letters in hand, unacknowledged; true, also, that I have an envelope directed to College Hill, which has been a fortnight

\* His eldest daughter had become a widow in the course of it.

or more in readiness for a note to be written the first open moment ; true, also, that such moments are rare, except at the end of a morning when any more work would do me harm. . . . It is ground of thankfulness to each of us that we are spared so long, held up in body and mind, so as to be serviceable to those dear to us, and not a burden—*this* is indeed a mercy ; able to comfort, and perhaps to help and advise as parents, not able or wishing to do as heretofore what our children can much better do than we can. And so it is, as we may say, that gently, and step by step, we recede descendingly from our places, and at the same time have more or less of space granted to us to call in our thoughts as to the past, and to muse upon the future.”

Some little time before, he had written :—

“ My answer very lately to a kind invitation was this,—Whoever asks *me* must invite me *and* my infirmities, which invitation includes more than it did twelve months ago. So it is, my dear sister, that the pins are taking out, and screw heads losing their hold. I distinctly know this, and think of it daily—hourly.”

She in similar strain replies to him :—

“ You and I my dear brother are each under a certainly fatal disease. At present I am mercifully spared severe indications, though much in advance of you as to time. May we both be found maturing for the inheritance. I seem to have been very long under treatment, with how little benefit !

To her old friend, Mrs Cowie, she sends a message—

“ Tell her I can now better sympathise with her deafness than when I last saw her. It is like living in a house with the blinds always down ; so cut off from the world we have lived in. . . . But spring seems a new thing, old as it is, it never comes amiss.”

Yet spring was bringing sorrow. The accounts from Stanford Rivers grew worse. In April her brother wrote that he was "only just crawling about." In May she herself had not any hope of him. But trouble fell upon a calm spirit now, she had entered into that blessed condition of which her brother, in a recent Christmas letter, had spoken—

"Happy are those whose habits of thought are such as to make the blending of the sorrowful and the joyous an easy and natural process—a harmony of the soul in which the sorrowful is joyous, and the joyous, if not sorrowful, yet thereto tending, and nearly allied."

She was dwelling in "the pleasant land of Beulah where the sun shineth night and day;" and so when at last the news came that, on the 28th of June, sitting upon his couch, in the room that had been his first, and after a long interval his latest, study at Stanford Rivers, her brother had breathed his last,\* she only wrote—

"How can we mourn? There is no further suffering, there is no more death, neither crying nor tears. What a life! laborious, anxious, but loving and useful how far beyond most! May we, as far as equal to the lesson, 'follow those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.' And again—'Where is the room for bitter grief? My dear James, and my dear brother, one mysteriously early, the other venerably late, have been taken, but infinitely happy for them!"

"Yes, so it is," she wrote to another friend—"So—

\* True to his father's memory, her brother's constant companion during the months of his last illness was the hymn book, the purchase of which had led to his father's early rising, and out of which he had daily sung his morning hymn.

— ‘ One by one I see the dearest die ;  
 Father and mother half-a-century gone,  
 No features of past time to gaze upon.’

It is a tax always paid by eighty and ninety for the boon of survivance.”

Again, her old friend gave herself sedulously to provide change of scene, and this time bethought herself of Lavenham and Colchester. The experience of Ilfracombe had shown that nothing gave her companion so much pleasure as revisiting old scenes. They travelled leisurely the sixty miles from London by carriage. At Colchester—my mother writing to her sister, lamented—“ you know what it is now; almost every house new fronted, so that just set down in the midst, I could not have said where I was.” But at Lavenham it was different.

“ Well, by six o'clock on Thursday evening, we drove into dear quaint old Lavenham, called in passing at Mr Meeking's to enquire about the ‘ Swan,’ drove there and found we could all four be accommodated. It is where, in the olden time, stylish assemblies used to be held, and Jane and I learned to dance. Then after tea, to lose no time, I set off down Water Street, on to the Common, up Shilling Street, and happily gained a friendly admittance to both houses, and gardens. The next morning the horses were put to, and under my direction the coachman commenced a slow drive, down Water Street, the Common, and to both houses again. It was most kind of Mrs Forbes to contrive such a treat for me, but her interest and sympathy almost rival my own, so that it is a real pleasure to say—‘ Look here, or look there!’ The lady who lived in our first house told us that an old man, still living, when he saw Uncle Isaac's death in the paper, said, ‘ why, he was born in that house.’” . . .



All sorts of recollections crowded upon her, and amongst them, this—

“A farthing a week each was granted to Jane and me as weekly allowance, early at Lavenham, and of this we were at liberty to dispose as we thought proper. Sometimes when it happened that two farthings were not at hand, we had to divide a halfpenny, always in that case taking it over to the variously diversified shop of our friend Mr Meeking, by whom it was exchanged for the smaller coin, and then having each possessed herself of her private share, it was not seldom laid out again in a farthing cake for each. Once, I remember buying a farthing’s worth of pins at Michaelmas to be in readiness for dressing our dolls at Christmas. You know I always like to be in time!” ‘,’ ‘

A visit to Hoddesdon, where her only surviving brother, Martin, lived, concluded a round among the southern homes. “He was himself to a nicety,” she declared, and spoke of this meeting as one of the happiest days of her long life. Then, before the autumn was over, there was Edinburgh again, where the effects of a fall, detained her some time. “But,” she wrote, “what a feast it is!

Everything grand or beautiful to see, and everything historic to give it interest." You cannot think how often the dear old family feeling comes over me for a moment—"dear me! we ought to tell papa and mamma!"—

"But say; has no 'Physical Theory' been wrought,  
By which happy spirits, still nigh, but unseen,  
May listen, and learn in the stillness of thought,  
Of the homes and the hearts, where those histories have been?"

And now, the last of the long roll of years had come; before the close of 1866 she had joined the blessed company, "so thickly gathered in" during these latter days. January the 30th, her last birth-day, she was eighty-four. "Oh what a length of mercy," was entered in her diary. All her family assembled to spend the evening with her, and there was little perceptible failing, except from the deafness, peculiarly trying to one who took so bright an interest in every passing matter, but which she bore with perfect patience.

"But, dear Aunt Mary, my deafness does not improve. I do not expect that at my age it will, and it gives me a sort of isolation, not pleasant to sustain. The daily interests of life are small matters, not absorbingly great things, and these are lost to the deaf—things too small to repeat, yet leaving a gap of silence between them, and the running interests of the day."

In the summer she visited, for the last time, Ongar and Stanford Rivers, and drew up an inscription for her brother's grave in the sequestered churchyard of the latter. In July she explored the Lake scenery for the first and only time. "Magnificent and beautiful at every turn,"



she described it, "do not trouble yourselves, whoever you may be, to go out of England till you have been to the Lakes. It is a shame to risk half-a-dozen necks in Switzerland while this is unexplored." Later in the year, at the conclusion of the "seven weeks war," she wrote to her son abroad—"I am enough of a politician to rejoice in the present unwonted condition of Europe. Will it continue? Is it an approach to millennial blessedness? Prussia gives a noble programme of her constitutional changes, and you, I conclude, will all but hear the grasp, as Austria and Italy shake hands."

Almost all her family were abroad at this time, and she, though staying with her friend, felt alone in England. Just in the midst of it some slight but significant attacks of a paralytic nature made her anxious for the return of all dear to her, but she would not allow "a shade to be cast over the holidays," by communicating what had occurred, and she appeared presently to regain her usual health. It happened, however, that the severe inundations of North Italy that year, delayed not only the travellers but correspondence, and she suffered an anxiety the acuteness of which was not understood till afterwards, when joy, relief, thankfulness burst from her heart and lips. Going to Denmark Hill after my return, I saw her, as soon as the hospitable door was opened, standing alone in the middle of the wide, well lighted hall—the slight figure, the pale tender countenance—watching intently the opening door for the arrival she was expecting. It is my last vivid impression of her, alive and conscious.

She returned to College Hill and wrote cheerfully, yet with frequent reference to what had occurred.

“ *October 29.*—At present I do not feel that to resign all home duties would be a relief to me ; habits of ancient date could not be broken without feeling the rupture. I am thankful that I am not disabled ; the time cannot be very distant, I do feel that, and earnestly hope to stand prepared for the change. The more than hint conveyed by my late queer illness, could not, and ought not, to be misunderstood. . . . The last few months have given me many lessons, may they well accomplish their mission ! but we all forget too much the solemn, yet certain future.”

In December she wrote, explaining a longer silence than usual—

“It is long since I wrote to you, yet I have been, I might almost say, *writing* ever since. You cannot think what a green sprig of laurel has lately sprung over my grey hairs, for it has been with no small surprise that I am heard of as still without a monument ! . . . .

“You remember that in May last, there was a discussion in the ‘Athenæum’ on my poem, ‘My mother,’ which surprised everybody as an announcement and advertisement—(or producing one from me) of my continued existence, so that the Post-Office has gained all but a revenue from letters addressed to me, which kindly complimentary as they are, I have, of course, had to answer. Some ask for, “My Mother” in your hand ;’ some, ‘your veritable autograph ;’ some,—but I need not go on. Several want to know whether there is an engraved portrait of me in existence, for they have enquired in vain (certainly).

. . . . “So you write still ! I could wish you were more like a gentleman of fortune, but if launched in the ink-bottle I am afraid of your being connected with the female part of that family—misfortune ! for will your health stand it long ?

It is with reluctance that I give up the Christmas party. I have long delighted in it. The last fell on a Sunday, most happily obliterating the recollection, and I cannot say that I wish it restored. O, the changes that time and Providence make !”

She was always cheerful, but the following lines from a poem, addressed to her now only surviving brother Martin, suggest the thoughts of her heart.

I breathed a sigh that spake of tears  
At thought of life's departing years !  
Well ! Speed they must, but O, to stand  
Equipped for that near—distant land !  
My soul stands trembling but to think  
Of that unseen, that awful brink,  
And for herself, and all, she prays—  
“ Lord search our thoughts, and try our ways,  
And see in that vain world within,  
Or error's blight, or hidden sin.”



MEMORIALS OF MRS GILBERT.

CHAPTER XI.

*THE END.*

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**A Leaflet Message—Sunday Evening—Last Letter—The Last Sleep  
—The Graves of the Taylors.**

## CHAPTER XI.

THE END.

1866.

“ Now when they were come up to the gate, there was written over it in letters of gold,—‘ Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.’”—BUNYAN.

ABOUT a week before the *end*, my mother received one of those little leaflets which some are in the habit of enclosing in their letters. She had been reading it to herself, and then, evidently touched with its appropriateness, brought it to her daughters, saying, “ I rather like this.” It contained these two verses, the full significance of which a few more days revealed :—

The way is long, my Father ! and my soul  
Longs for the rest and quiet of the goal ;  
While yet I journey through this weary land,  
Keep me from wandering. Father ! take my hand,  
Quickly and straight  
Lead to heaven’s gate  
Thy child.

The way *is* long, my child ! but it shall be  
Not one step longer than is best for thee ;  
And thou shalt know, at last, when thou shalt stand  
Close to the gate, how I did take thy hand,  
And quick and straight  
Lead to heaven’s gate  
My child.

On Sunday, December 16, she did not feel very well, and remained at home all day. In the evening one of her daughters read from Raleigh's "Quiet Resting Places" the sermon that came in course, that noble one, the "Kingdom and the Keys," and my mother, leaning forward, listened intently to the words of peace:—

"Fear not for *thyself*. I will console thee in trouble, strengthen thee for duty, open a way for thee amidst life's perplexities, pitch thy tent in safe places, and be around thy tabernacle with my sheltering presence until it is taken down, and thou art called to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Thy path may seem rugged and cheerless; but it is open and onward; and I will pass with thee myself along all its length, nor leave thee in the shades which hang over its close. I will be with thee in the dark valley to support thy trembling steps, with my rod and staff; I will softly unlock the awful door, and usher thee into Hades, where a thousand sights of beauty will fill thy delighted eye, and a thousand voices of welcome will hail thy coming."

On Monday she said, with a bright smile, "I am quite well again," and in the evening wrote her last letter. To serve all who fell in her way had been her constant practice, and this last effort of her pen was to me in behalf of a young lady who desired by copying pictures to do something for a livelihood. "I always feel for such cases," she said. From other portions of this now precious letter I quote a few passages:—

"*December 17.*—My very dear J—, I believe that I told you how much I was engaged in writing to my complimentary



correspondents, so as to occupy all the time allowed for writing. Happily this demand was completed on Friday last, and I now am allowed to feel that I have a family. Many things I know I *had* to say, though how many I may now recollect I cannot be sure of, for my memory—oh, you do not know what a vagabond it is! . . . .

“ I had so very poor a night on Saturday, that yesterday I was unable to go out at all—so much disabled; but, though with much apprehension, I enjoyed a delightful night after it—not once conscious till this morning. Oh, what a merciful mercy sleep is! and for how many years did I enjoy it, I fear with scarcely a sense of it, except as just going to bed—and who feels they have to be thankful for that? . . . I cannot say that, bereft as we now are, I regret your absence at Christmas, though I should be very sorry to lose a family meeting entirely, so am thankful to have been born as early as January 30, which affords a reason for meeting then. . . . I am summoned to reading down stairs, and wish I had anything to say just now, in order to use the ink in my pen (which you see I had not), but I never waste any if I can help it. . . . I have reached the end of both time and subject, so now, dear child, one more good-bye from your affectionate old mother,

ANN GILBERT.”

That evening she wrote up her diary, settled her accounts to a halfpenny, as she delighted to do, and then took up her reading of Froude's history, in which she was greatly interested. She was very cheerful that night, and in no melancholy tone, looking round the room, said to her two daughters: “ I should like to think of you, dears, as remaining here with all these things about you after I am gone. I wonder how it could be managed.” Before supper, according to lifelong custom, she retired for her

sacred half hour of private devotion, her last utterance, in this world, of "praise and prayer." On going to bed, one of her daughters assisted in arranging her silver hair, as had been needful ever since the accident at Edinburgh, which had injured one arm. Her mother kissed her, saying "that's for thank you," and then a second time, with "that's for good night."

I was reading my mother's letter the following day, when a boy passed the window, and a telegraphic message was brought in—"Mrs Gilbert very ill, come directly." That morning she had seemed to be sleeping soundly at her usual hour for rising, and she was left therefore undisturbed. Time went on, and still she slept, breathing calmly. At ten o'clock an attempt was made to rouse her; but no loving voice could reach her—no passionate appeal; still she slept! Every doctor was out on his rounds, help was long delayed, and when, one after another, they came in haste, still nothing availed to break the slumber. By evening, all her children had come from their several homes, but the arriving wheels brought no throb to her heart. They gathered round her, and still, still, she slept!

So it went on. It had been thought that in the course of the following day, Wednesday, she might, perhaps, wake naturally, and that this should be without shock of any kind, those about her were advised not to disturb her with speaking. Once she seemed to notice a remark uttered louder than was intended, and once, as I touched her hand—that honest and good hand! she grasped mine firmly in return. She even took a little food, but never opened her

eyes upon those who gave it. By the evening all hope was gone. The breathing became quick and heavy, and towards morning gradually subsided. Her six surviving children stood round her bed, and just as the neighbouring convent bell sounded for matins at dawn in the winter morning, December 20, a single sigh closed the long life.

O tender and most loving mother! the cold daylight opened upon a forlorn world to us her children, but she had been taken—

Quick and straight  
To Heaven's gate.

All sadly fell our Christmas Eve, and on the day of happy festival the house was dark and silent, for our mother lay dead in her chamber. On the 27th she was carried to the grave that fourteen years before had received her husband. In addition to the lines quoted on the first page of this work, there was inscribed over her remains—

"In Psalms and Hymns and spiritual songs,"  
"She being dead yet speaketh."

In her will, she disposed of her little property, chiefly copyrights which are now extinct, with "a poor mother's love," and the last words of it were—"May you share largely, and for ever, in an enduring inheritance. See that ye fail not of the grace of God; to His everlasting love I commend you."

The one life has been twined with other lives, for the family bond woven at Lavenham and Colchester was a

very strong one. They are now all at rest save one. The father and mother, with their daughter Jane, "the first to die, the first to live," lie at Ongar, but their graves have been enclosed within the enlarged buildings of the chapel; the vestry floor is above them, and close to the honoured dust, the children of the Sunday school, so dear to them in life, assemble. It is no desecration. At Stanford Rivers, in a churchyard surrounded by trees, and in the midst of the fields, rest Isaac Taylor and his wife, with two daughters who preceded them, "waiting for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." "My only claim," said Isaac Taylor in his humility, "is that I am one of those who love His appearing." Across the sweet valley of the Roding, amidst the woods, is the secluded Church of Navestock; the bells of Stanford and Navestock "answer each other through the mist." There, close to the church porch, lie Martin Taylor and his wife. Jefferys is buried at St. Peter's, near Broadstairs.

To Ann Gilbert and her husband, the general Cemetery at Nottingham affords no such quiet resting place; but it is on the scene of his twenty-five years of faithful ministry, and in the midst of the old town she loved.

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"I have been dwelling on enchanted ground,  
Looking on thee, and dreaming of the past;  
A spell of shrouded faces, and lost sound  
Thou hast around me cast."

A P P E N D I X.



## A P P E N D I X.

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### THE PRISONER INFIDEL.

MRS GILBERT sometimes regretted that she had not revised and re-arranged this poem, so as to fit it for publication. No more is now attempted than to give selections, which will show its character and scope.

Opening with a doleful picture of the prisoner for unbelief, who cries—

—“At sound of lock, and bolt, and bar,  
These *Christian* arguments, how strong they are !”

she dwells upon the absolute immunity of religious, or irreligious belief from human authority. A brief quotation from this portion of the poem has been given in the text,—

“But still opinion is man’s freehold ground,  
Belief by chain of law was never bound,” &c.

Nor would, she urges, religion suffer from this freedom, for “who,” she exclaims—

—Who the living truth shall long withstand?  
Who, in the face of common sense aver  
That man were better, if deprived of her ?

Nor take some lonely hermit for your test,  
But see such truth extend from breast to breast ;  
Courts with their councils, cities with their wealth,  
Towns with their business, hamlets with their health,  
Men of all classes, characters, pursuits,  
Thus bringing forth Religion’s native fruits ;

Miss not a grace that Scripture doth enforce,  
 Nor add one virtue drawn from other source ;  
 Let the twelfth chapter of the "Romans" stand  
 For common law and statute of the land,  
 Not a dead letter, but a living code,  
 The rule of shop and market, field and road,  
 So as in figure did the seer foretell—  
 "Holiness written on the horse's bell."  
 We ask no fetters for such Truth to plead,  
 She stands alone, and scorns the broken reed :  
 Ye who cry—"murder! help!" to human laws,  
 Thus live, thus love, and fear not for your cause !

From the next section of the poem, a personal appeal to the solitary atheist soul, a quotation has also been given. One or two more may be added.

Yes, when I view thee as a brother born  
 My pity melts and mourns thee, most forlorn !  
 Yes, blood for blood the same, we own thee man,  
 Created brethren when the race began,  
 All nature's sympathies, in each the same,  
 One mortal fabric, one immortal frame,  
 Up from the moment when we lay at rest  
 Infants and helpless on a mother's breast,  
 Thro' life's ten thousand changes, till we thread  
 The great enigma, known but to the dead !  
 Then why this dissonance?—This breach immense?  
 Spirit with spirit has like exigence,  
 In fear, in hope, in destiny allied—  
 Brother ! this gulf ! whence comes it ? deep and wide ?

Dwelling on the common sense of need, and of dependence, she asks—

O why this strange discordance ! Light my way  
 To that dark path that led thee thus astray—

and endeavours to trace the circumstances or the reasonings that have led the Atheist to—

This thy sole hope,—that hope will soon be gone !



Then follows an appeal to the happier and purer intuitions of youth.

Call back that hour when thought was glad and young,  
When skies, and stars, and woods, and silent plains  
Shot thrilling voices thro' thy answering veins,  
And whispers met thee on the mountain wind,  
Fraught with high meanings to thy opening mind ;  
Did then the thought come o'er thee to refuse  
A boundless scope, and bind thy dusty views  
Down to an atom? When thou wouldst have flown  
Athirst, attracted towards a Great Unknown,  
Did Nature frown thee backward, and aver  
The yearnings of thy soul were not from her :

O tell me not, that nature, feeling, thought—  
Fair virtue's instinct,—in thy bosom wrought  
This change from hope to gloom, from sky to clod,  
From life to death,—to idiot chance, from God !

Some spot with green grass covered, does it hold  
Nothing thou lovest in its bosom cold ?

O if thou art a brother, art a man,  
Thou must have known, consoling as it ran  
Thro' thy heart's wounds, with healing in its scope,  
The sovereign virtue of immortal hope !  
And whence the cry of nature in her need  
Of joy or anguish? Whence this living creed  
Wrought in thy bosom as a finer sense,  
And quick to spring in deepest exigence ?  
Spontaneous growth of innermost distress,  
Spontaneous flow of grateful happiness,  
Spontaneous striving of our beings bent,  
To seek, to find, the One Omnipotent !

Where else appears a craving unsupplied ?  
For meaner thirst breaks out the sparkling tide,  
For gasping lungs expands the vital air,  
For mental taste, the beautiful and fair,  
For the heart's loneliness, around, above,  
The exquisite varieties of Love !

—— The Being whose thou art  
 Hath stamped His conscious presence in thine heart,  
 Given thee the clue, inwoven with thy frame  
 By which to track, and trace, and find his name ;  
 And placed a guard of strong emotions near,  
 To pour th' incessant wisdom on thine ear.

After a picture of the social disorganisation of an Atheist world, she anticipates the retort—

“ But these,” exclaims the Infidel, “ are crimes  
 Of Christian countries, and religious times,  
 Point out enormities that are not found  
 To stalk or creep on consecrated ground ;  
 The Holy office, with St Peter's keys,  
 And ' kings by grace of God ' can wink at these.  
 A world of infidels has yet to be,  
 Why call them fruits then of an Atheist tree ? ”

Yes, infidelity is yet unknown  
 As legal occupier of the throne ;  
 Laws, titles, seemings, compliments, and names,  
 With decent look, allow to God His claims ;  
 But while in heart denied him, all the fruit  
 Springs black and cankered from this evil root.  
 Hearts may be atheist, where the man is drest  
 In God's own livery, with the cross His crest ;  
 And deeds like these are ever streams that flow  
 Forth from a spring of atheist thought below.  
 Give unobstructed passage to the wave,  
 And peace and virtue find a common grave.

I know thy boast, that thus it needs not be,  
 The wary atheist dares not so be free ;  
 Tho' safe from dread of future ill severe,  
 Yet nature holds her child in wholesome fear,  
 Her laws avenging wisely all offence,  
 And chiming in with happiness and sense.  
 If any venture from her laws to stray  
 She rolls the rock of fate athwart his way,  
 And in her blindness, blest with vision keen,  
 Crushes that rebel 'neath her vast machine.

Good, good, my friend ! for more I scarcely ask,  
It saves my labouring logic half her task,  
Mark how our God and all His works agree,  
His word but well interprets things we see,  
No arbitrary rule His laws impose,  
'Tis truth and fitness for the frame he knows,  
And lest our heedless passions miss the way,  
He sets His beacon where we else might stray.

Had there been strange discordances to blend,  
Had God and nature each a different end,—  
Spoke languages that had no common root,—  
It might have opened passage for dispute.

After admitting exceptions in the

“ Few calm souls with honey in their blood,”

and the “ few beside of philosophic mould,” she asks for a creed—

Not picked to please and fit, a one in ten,  
Or in ten thousand, but for common men ;  
A faith that holds for better or for worse,  
Dull labour's solace, and affliction's nurse ;  
A bond that girds the young, supports in age,  
With power the master passions to engage ;  
And where but in the Bible shall we find  
A scheme thus ample as the human kind ?

Look with calm eye, the lucid story read,  
'Tis no inexplicable depth of creed !  
Beheld aright, the reasoner dare not carp,  
It breaks in music from th' angelic harp,  
Pealing one song from earth and heaven above,  
“ O height, and depth, and breadth, and length, of Love !”

In dealing explicitly with the Atheist argument, she first points out the distinctive character of nature's work and means, and their adaptation to the human function, as suggestive of an intelligent adapter.

'Tis odd, for instance, in her ample range,  
Wide, various, full, she never dreams of change.

From one fixed line no power can make her stir,  
 She'll trench no more on man, than he on her !  
 'Tis wonder she confines her cunning art  
 To things where he, with all his boasts, must pause,  
 Helps him so far, then slips behind her laws !

'Tis not more difficult to rear a shed,  
 Than weave upon its walls the ivy's thread,  
 And wherefore never, or in work or play,  
 Doth nature exercise herself that way ?  
 She might, one would suppose, to prove her skill,  
 Just now and then erect a house, a mill,  
 Or leave a watch in blossom on some bush,  
 To show what she can manage at a push.  
 But no,—no never,—since the world began,  
 She frames the stuff, but leaves the work to man ;  
 He for the raw material must defer  
 With humble, hopeless impotence to her,  
 But where his wisdom can the rest fulfil,  
 She keeps her ground, and leaves him to his skill.  
 So nice a bargain, one would think, should show  
 Some drawn agreement marked, where each should go ;  
 Tho' ages would suffice not to intrigue  
 The million articles of that great league.  
 Sure neither chance nor fate could fit to man  
 The very dovetails of this curious plan !  
 And though to such conclusion one were loth,  
 There seems at least some power beyond them both,  
 Some "Great first cause," benevolent as wise,  
 Who warp and woof of this great scene supplies.

Then follow sketches of five or six theories to which great philosophic names—ancient and modern—might be attached.

Yes, it is only motion ! Good, my friend,  
 Thou really then hast reached thy journey's end !  
 Motion, with matter, are the clear beginning  
 (Save some odd push or so, to set them spinning,  
 Just not worth mentioning). Beyond a doubt  
 They need no God who do so well without.  
 I only wish they'd let me peep to see  
 How such amazing miracles can be.

Man with his powers of intellect, refined,  
The vast resources of reflecting mind,  
Has not the skill with every art he knows  
To frame the humblest blade of grass that grows ;  
Much less his incantations hope to raise  
The clod of being to its vital blaze ;  
Yet (so at least by sages we've been taught),  
Matter is but the stepping stone to thought !  
'Tis monstrous mortifying to be beat  
By blind brute substance, in so wise a feat.  
Yet, if 'tis so, why then, with one consent,  
Let us urge on the rare experiment ;  
Some process yet to learn may give the clue,  
And make the creature man, creator too,  
Till, in the march of science, we may hope  
To form both molecule and microscope.  
May we?—I do not—but I think we might,  
If only the hypothesis were right.

But now to business,—bring thy tools and try,  
Mechanics press to serve, and chemistry,  
The task commence with philosophic zeal,  
Galvanic pile, and multiplying wheel ;  
Beat well about thee,—drive poor matter on  
Till its old *vis inertiae* be gone ;  
Something will come, if not a perfect thing,  
At least a rudiment, some leg or wing,  
If but a feather, or a film come o'er,  
“Thankful for little,” looks we know, for more.  
And who in this dark state of things can tell  
What forms may linger in thy crucible ?  
Well, I'll reduce my challenge to a straw,  
And all I ask is just to *see* the law :  
Have perfect proof that this one simple thing  
From such or such a power did solely spring.  
I'll not be *told* that atoms in their glee  
Kicked up a rout, and so it came to be ;  
But if they do it dancing, I'll be there,  
And see as well as thou,—it is but fair.  
Believe a thing I've neither seen nor heard !  
Nay,—leave to Christians to be so absurd.

'Tis true the wits have differed now and then  
 About that puzzling job, the making men ;  
 How first they came, and more, as there were two,  
 Both male and female,—twice the work to do !  
 However, each accounted for should be,  
 And that by them, and therefore let us see.

Some *think*, that on the ocean rose a scum,  
 Of course at first insensate, deaf and dumb ;  
 But after age on age had rolled along,  
 It grew so thick, attenuate, and strong,  
 That,—there's the point it seems so hard to drive,  
 But somehow it began to be alive !

Well, 'twas at first mere life, an abstract thing ;  
 Then grew, perchance an ear, perchance a wing,—  
 Or fin more likely, for they seem to wish  
 To prove this miracle at first a fish.  
 And fish it might be, but it did not stay  
 Above some centuries, less or more, they say,  
 Before its slumbering energies began  
 To push this way and that, to make a man.  
 Nobody saw it,—that of course we know,  
 But no one can deny it then, if so ;  
 And thus 'tis fairly proved, since none refute,  
 That man emerged from this amphibious brute.  
 Still there's the question, whence the woman springs  
 But—never mind—we'll talk of other things.

And yet 'tis odd that products each so rare,  
 Should thus be timed so nicely as they were.  
 If no design, as million ages rolled,  
 Watched the slow germ, and bade its powers unfold,  
 But so it *happened*, that to life it grew,  
 What strange coincidence produced the *two* ?  
 Methinks our worthy grandsire had been dead  
 Before his finny mate had shown her head,  
 If wild fortuity alone had wrought  
 The finished product, up to life and thought.  
 That simultaneously they sprang to birth,  
 Appears the luckiest accident on earth.

But some then *think*, that floating in the skies,  
Or on the earth, or else some other wise,  
Were ever living filaments, that strayed  
This way and that, as favouring zephyrs played ;  
Threads, finer, thinner, than—we know not what,  
But when to some entanglement they got,  
Caught, hooked, inwoven, they began to frame  
Life to some shape, and win themselves a name.

From moss to herb, from herb to shrub and tree,  
From thence, a leap both down and up must be  
From mountain oak to animalcule.  
But so it happened seemingly, and then  
The thing went forward till it came to men.  
The various steps 'twere needless to rehearse,  
One can but get the outline into verse,  
And show how reasonable, wise and just,  
These people-makers are, that people trust.  
One point, however, one can scarce rebuff,  
*Their* minds can be but matter sure enough.

But other geniuses new truths unfold ;  
They were not filaments, as some would hold,  
No, for they *think* (the difference is but small)  
That life was first a microscopic ball,  
A globule, quick, significant, and fraught  
With such a cargo—organism and thought !  
Millions of these, eternally at play,  
(Matter and motion see you—that's the way)  
Attracted strangely, and to concourse driven,  
Had, as time rolled, a gradual figure given,  
And each, with something of a Roman soul,  
Gave up his single rights to form a whole.  
Life, long content within a mote to reign,  
Now framed a league to widen his domain,  
And as the conscious grains together ran,  
The million parts agreed to make one man.  
It puzzles simple intellects to tell  
How, with no head, they managed it so well,  
And ranged in order so remarkable.

'Tis true that others *think*, as centuries ran  
 Innumerable, ere they perfected a man,  
 And matter all that time was on the twist,  
 Wreathed in all shapes, that none could thus be missed ;  
 Sooner or later, from the teeming mass  
 Would start the varied forms of every class ;  
 Some monsters doubtless,—though we wonder why  
 Monsters should find they were but such, and die ;  
 For so it seems they did, and nothing stood  
 Perpetuate, but the beautiful and good.  
 One feels at times with such a scheme as this  
 But little wiser than with Genesis !

Well, but if form and organism rise  
 'Mid these eternal possibilities,—  
 The goodly frame, the instrument entire,—  
 Yet whence originates the vital fire ?  
 Another tells us,—but the tale's so long,  
 'Tis difficult to weave it in my song ;  
 And philosophic too, with words so fine  
 I scarce can bend or break them to my line,  
 But not to be outwitted, let me try,—

This other *thinks* then (though a simple “ why ”  
 Might sorely pose his ingenuity),  
 But then he *thinks*, that thus the case is clear,—  
 “ Intense excitement of the atmosphere,”  
 Produced by divers motions of the earth,  
 To heat, and then to life, has given birth.  
 The energetic atoms of the air  
 Fixed in the lungs, become quiescent there,  
 But motion, ever in its mass the same,  
 Lost to the atom, lodges in the frame,  
 Sets the blood running up to summer heat,  
 While certain muscular dilations meet  
 With rarefactions, and contractile touch,  
 Mechanical disturbances, and such ;  
 Till, from this transfer of atomic force,  
 What think you comes? Vitality of course,—  
 Life, with its wondrous process, and effect—  
 Heat, motion, consciousness, and intellect ;



And so the veil is rent, and nature sits  
Exposed in open daylight to the wits !

But others *think*, that *first*, they never came,  
" You see the world it always was the same ;"  
From son to sire continuous, they ascend  
Through millions, billions, trillions, without end,  
Infinite series,—not in thought, but fact.  
Was ever proven logic more exact ?  
" It seems so natural—what we daily find.  
Sceptic, believe your *eyes*, and never mind,  
There's not a word of truth in what we *hear*."  
(Well, when I read such nonsense, so I fear.)

Vain pilots, steering in a stormy night,  
And sending rockets up for polar light ;  
While dim, but steady to the watchful eye,  
Beams truth's benignant beacon in the sky !

Though many keen sarcastic touches enliven this portion of the poem, yet pity and earnest warning predominate throughout all appeals to the Atheist himself ; and a scathing indignation is reserved for Christians who are such in name only—

— the men whose lives with silent force  
Obstruct the blessed gospel in its course ;  
Win none to love the truth they so abuse,  
And fix the shaken sceptic to refuse.

Ye men of hollow heart who cringe and bend  
With holy seemings for some earthly end,  
Call God your Father, and with saintly eye,  
" Our blessed Saviour " as your watchword cry,  
Yet live as they, or worse than they who own  
No power above them save on nature's throne ;  
Sinners in Zion, doff your coward shame,  
And if in Satan's service, wear his name,  
Step boldly forth, and rank with him confess  
Who bears the Atheist brand upon his breast ;  
Nor leave to Infidels that polished blade  
Which he has furbished who makes truth his trade.

And you, ye Christian born, at church baptized,  
 Confirmed, and by the holy rite apprised  
 That you the Holy Spirit doth create  
 Anew in Jesus, and regenerate,  
 Who take the solemn compliment for truth,  
 And safe beneath it give to sin your youth ;—  
 Who nursed in frightful confidence can die  
 Without once trembling for eternity,  
 Absolved upon its threshold, and conveyed  
 By prayer-book promise safe into the shade ;  
 Who never saw the utterness of need  
 In which ye stand, and fled to Christ indeed,  
 And look no more, compared with Christian law,  
 Like a true Christian than a man of straw,—  
 How great the scandal which the truth endures  
 From this sham Christianity of yours !  
 Call yourselves Bell-men, Steeple-men, or ought,  
 You best may please, but set not Christ at naught.

True to her Nonconformist creed, and long before the phrase,  
 “political dissenter,” was devised, she denounces as part of the great  
 scandal of the Church, its union with the State.

But where's the hope to which, deceived ye cling,  
 That *time* shall make the Church a purer thing ?  
 That so it will, no Christian feels a doubt,  
 But not by turning a few errors out.  
 No, He, the jealous God, to new create,  
 Will first divorce the adulteress from the State,  
 Then clothe her with that raiment, white and clean,  
 On which nor spot nor wrinkle shall be seen.  
 Fair morn of happiness for which we gaze !  
 For which the unsuspecting Churchman prays,  
 When oft with other meanings, or with none,  
 He cries, “ Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.”  
 Imbibe the spirit of the heavenly plea,  
 And add a pure amen, “ so let it be.”

Still do not say, with narrow view confined,  
 I seize the dross, and leave the ore behind,  
 Forget your holy doctrine, Scripture creed,  
 And large proportion of the precious seed

Or close the gates of charity on all  
 Who keep the other side my party wall.  
 No, God has owned, and surely so may we,  
 The thread of gold in each community.  
 Hay, straw, and stubble, men in folly mix,  
 But Heaven makes use of all to burn her bricks,  
 And fair the temple that shall hence arise,  
 Though reared on earth, the topstone in the skies !

The poem ends with an appeal to all Christians, in deed and in truth,—that all who—

Live by His power, His pity, and His death,  
 Should consecrate their being and their breath,  
 Health, reason, vigour, influence, and days,  
 His will to work, and spread His worthy praise.

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#### A SKETCH.

Some verses under the above title (a few lines of which have been already quoted in the text), written by one who lived under her roof for several years as a private pupil of her husband's, contain so true a portraiture of the subject of these memorials, that they may be allowed to form their final word.

Gentle, untiring, tender,  
 Simple, cheerful, true ;  
 Genius beneath, to lend her  
 Brightness and varied hue :

A slender, active figure,  
 A straight, unconscious gait ;  
 A mien from which the rigour  
 Of age could scarce abate :

Genial, social,—trying  
 All things in her fresh thought,  
 Oft from a large heart sighing,  
 While busy fingers wrought :

Child—wise and sage—wise, loyal,  
Flushed with a noble deed ;  
Royalist to the Royal,  
Scornful to pride and greed ;

And ever mostly leaning  
To some the world despised,  
She thought her Master's meaning—  
Such lowly ones He prized :

With kindly ways of warning  
For those she thought had erred,  
And sparkling wit, adorning,  
Just barbing, suited word ;

The force of Genius yielded  
To force of Love in her ;  
The unresting pen, she wielded,  
Knew not ambition's spur.

Affection only guided,  
Lent the lustre and the grace,  
And most of wealth confided  
Where dearest eyes would trace.

Through gloom and brightness changing,  
We felt how unchanced she,  
Her faith-borne spirit ranging,  
Humble and strong and free.

Gentle, untiring, tender,  
Simple, cheerful, true ;  
Sleep unto death did lend her,  
And the great morning grew !

E. C. H.

I N D E X .

II.

Y



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