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Author: Emily Sarah Holt

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Emily Sarah Holt

"Joyce Morrell's Harvest"

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## Preface.

Those to whom "Lettice Eden" is an old friend will meet with many acquaintances in these pages. The lesson is partly of the same type—the difference between that which seems, and that which is; between the gold which will stand the fire, and the imitation which the flame will dissolve in a moment; between the true diamond, small though it be, which is worth a fortune, and the glittering paste which is worth little more than nothing.

But here there is a further lesson beyond this. It is one which God takes great pains to teach us, and which we, alas! are very slow to learn. "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure." In the dim eyes of frail children of earth, God's steps are often very slow. We are too apt to forget that they are very sure. But He will not be hurried: He has eternity to work in, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." How many of us, who fancied their prayers unheard because they could not see the answer, may find that answer, rich, abundant, eternal, in that Land where they shall know as they are known! Let us wait for God. We shall find some day that it was worth while.

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## Chapter One.

### The Dwellers at Selwick Hall.

"He would be on the mountain's top, without the toil and travail of the climbing."—Tupper.

*Selwick Hall, Lake Derwentwater, October ye first, Mdlxxix.*

It came about, as I have oft noted things to do, after a metely deal of talk, yet right suddenly in the end.

Aunt *Joyce*, *Milly*, *Edith*, and I, were in the long gallery. We had been talking a while touching olden times (whereof Aunt *Joyce* is a rare hand at telling of stories), and *Mother's* chronicle she was wont to keep, and hath shown us, and such like matter. When all at once quoth *Edith*—

"Why should not *we* keep a chronicle?"

"Ay, why not?" saith Aunt *Joyce*, busied with her sewing.

*Milly* fell a-laughing.

"Dear heart, *Edith*, and what should we put in a chronicle?" saith she. "'*Monday*, the cat washed her face. *Tuesday*, it rained. *Wednesday*, *Nell* made a tansy pudding. *Thursday*, I lost my temper. *Friday*, I found it again. *Saturday*, *Edith* looked in the mirror, and Aunt *Joyce* made an end of a piece of sewing.' Good lack, it shall be a rare jolly book!"

"Nay, I would never set down such stuff as that," answered *Edith*.

"Why, what else is there?" saith *Milly*. "We have dwelt hither ever since we were born, saving when we go to visit Aunt *Joyce*, and one day is the very cut of an other. Saving when Master *Stuyvesant* came hither, nought never happened in this house since I was born."

"Would'st love better a life wherein matters should happen, *Milly*?" saith Aunt *Joyce*, looking up at her, with a manner of face that I knew. It was a little mirthful, yet sorrowful withal.

"Ay, I would so!" quoth she.

"Child," Aunt *Joyce* makes answer, "'happy is the man that hath no history.'"

"But things do happen, *Milly*," saith *Edith*. "Thou hast forgot *Anstace* her wedding."

"*That* something happening!" pouts *Milly*. "Stupid humdrum business! Do but think, to wed a man that dwelleth the next door, which thou hast known all thy life! Why, I would as lief not be wed at all, very nigh."

"It seemed to suit *Anstace*," puts in *Edith*.

"Aught should do that."

"Ay," saith Aunt *Joyce*, something drily, "'godliness is great riches, if a man be content with that he hath.'" (Note 1.)

"Easy enough, trow, when you have plenty," quoth *Milly*.

"Nay, it is hardest then," saith she. "'Much would have more.'"

"What wist Aunt *Joyce* thereabout?" murmurs *Milly*, so that I could just hear. "She never lacked nought she wanted."

"Getting oldish, *Milly*, but not going deaf, thank God," saith Aunt *Joyce*, of her dry fashion. "Nay, child, thou art out there. Time was when I desired one thing, far beyond all other things in this world, and did not get it."

"Never, *Aunt*?"

"Never, *Milly*." And a somewhat pained look came into her face, that is wont to seem so calm.

"What was it, Aunt *Joyce*, sweet heart?"

"Well, I took it for fine gold, and it turned out to be pinchbeck," saith she. "There's a deal of that sort of stuff in this world."

Methought *Milly* feared to ask further, and all was still till *Edith* saith—

"Would you advise us, Aunt *Joyce*, to keep a chronicle, even though things did not happen?"

"Things will happen, trust me," she made answer. "Ay, dear maids, methinks it should be profitable for you."

"Now, Aunt *Joyce*, I would you had not said that!"

"Why, *Milly*?"

"By reason that things which be profitable be alway dry and gloomsome."

"Not alway, *Lettice Eden's* daughter."

I could not help but smile when Aunt *Joyce* said this. For indeed, *Mother* hath oft told us how, when she was a young maid like *Milly*, she did sorely hate all gloom and sorrowfulness, nor could not abide for to think thereon. And *Milly* is much of that turn.

"Then which of us shall keep the grand chronicle?" saith *Edith*, when we had made an end of laughing.

"Why not all of you?" quoth Aunt *Joyce*. "Let each keep it a month a-piece, turn about."

"And you, Aunt *Joyce*?"

"Nay, I will keep no chronicles. I would not mind an' I writ my thoughts down of the last page, when it was finished."

"But who shall read it?" said I.

"There spake *Nell*!" quoth *Milly*. "'Who shall read it?' Why, all the world, for sure, from the Queen's Majesty down to Cat and Kitling."

These be our two serving-maids, *Kate* and *Caitlin*, which *Milly* doth affect dearly to call Cat and Kitling. And truly the names come pat, the rather that *Kate* is tall and big, and fair of complexion, she being *Westmoreland* born; while *Caitlin*, which is *Cumberland* born, is little and wiry, and of dark complexion. "The Queen's Majesty shall have other fish to fry, I reckon," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "And so shall *Kate* and *Caitlin*,—if they could read."

"But who is to make a beginning of this mighty chronicle?" saith *Edith*. "Some other than I, as I do trust, for I would never know what to set down first."

"Let *Nell* begin, then, as she is eldest of the three," quoth Aunt *Joyce*.

So here am I, making this same beginning of the family chronicle. For when *Father* and *Mother* heard thereof, both laughed at the first, and afterward grew sad. Then saith *Mother*—

"Methinks, dear hearts, it shall be well for you,—at the least, an' ye keep it truly. Let each set down what verily she doth think."

"And not what she reckons she ought to think," saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Then, *Father*, will it please you give us some pens and paper?" said I. "For I see not how, otherwise, we shall write a chronicle."

"That speech is right, *Nell!*" puts in *Milly*.

"Why, if we dwelt on the banks of the *Nile*, in *Egypt*," saith *Father*, "reeds and bulrushes should serve your turn: or, were ye old *Romans*, a waxen tablet and iron stylus. But for *English* maidens dwelling by Lake *Derwentwater*, I count paper and pens shall be wanted—and ink too, belike. Thou shalt have thy need supplied, *Nell!*"

And as this morning, when he came into the parlour where we sat a-sewing, what should *Father* set down afore me, in the stead of the sheets of rough paper I looked to see, but this beautiful book, all full of fair blank paper ready to be writ in,—and an whole bundle of pens, with a great inkhorn. *Milly* fell a-laughing.

"Oh dear, dear!" saith she. "Be we three to write up all those? Verily, *Father*, under your good pleasure, but methinks you should pen a good half of this chronicle yourself."

"Nay, not so much as one line," saith he, "saving those few I have writ already on the first leaf. Let *Nell* read them aloud."

So I read them, as I set them down here, for without I do copy them, cannot I put in what was said.

*"Fees and Charges of the Chronicle of Selwick Hall.—Imprimis, to be writ, turn about, by a month at each, by Helen, Milisent, and Editha Louvaine."*

*Milly* was stuffing her kerchief into her mouth to let her from laughing right out.

*"Item, the said Helen to begin the said book."*

*"Item, for every blot therein made, one penny to the poor."*

"Oh, good lack!" from *Milly*.

"I care not, so *Father* give us the pennies," from *Edith*.

"I reckon that is what men call a dividing of labour," saith *Father* in his dry way. "I to pay the pennies, and *Edith* to make the blots. Nay, my maid: the two must come of one hand."

"Then both of yours, *Father*," saith *Milly*, saucily.

*"Item, for every unkind sentence touching an other, two pence to the poor."*

"Lack-a-daisy!" cries *Milly*; "I shall be ruined!"

"Truth for once," quoth Aunt *Joyce*.

"I am sorry to hear it, my maid," saith *Father*.

*"Item, for every sentence disrespectful to any in lawful authority over the writer thereof, sixpence to the poor."*

"*Father*," quoth *Milly*, "by how much mean you to increase mine income while this book is a-writing?"

*Father* smiled, but made no further answer.

*"Item, for a gap of so much as one week, without a line herein writ, two pence to the poor."*

"That is it which shall work my ruin," saith *Edith*, a-laughing.

"Therein art thou convict of laziness," quoth *Father*.

*"Item, on the ending of the said book, each of them that hath writ the same shall read over her own part therein from the beginning: and for so many times as she hath gainsaid her own words therein writ, shall forfeit each time one penny to the poor."*

"That will bring both *Edith* and me to beggary," quoth *Milly*, "Only *Nell* shall come off scot-free. *Father*, have you writ nought that will catch her?"

*"Item, the said book shall, when ended, but not aforetime, be open to the reading of Aubrey Louvaine, Lettice Louvaine, Joyce Morrell, and Anstace Banaster."*

"And none else? Alack the day!" saith *Milly*.

"I said not whom else," quoth *Father*. "Be that as it like you."

But I know well what should like me,—and that were, not so much as one pair of eyes beyond. *Milly*, I dare reckon—but if I go on it shall cost me two pence, so I will forbear.

"Well!" saith *Edith*, "one thing will I say, your leave granted, *Father*: and that is, I am fain you shall not read my part till it be done. I would lief be at my wisest on the last page."

"Dear heart! I look to be wise on no page," cries *Milly*.

"Nay," said I, "I would trust to be wise on all."

"There spake our *Nell!*" cries *Milly*. "I could swear it were she, though mine eyes were shut close."

"This book doth somewhat divert me, *Joyce*," quoth *Father*, looking at her. "Here be three writers, of whom one shall be wise on each page, and one on none, and one on the last only. I reckon it shall be pleasant reading."

"And I reckon," saith Aunt *Joyce*, "they shall be reasonable true to themselves an' it be thus."

"And I," saith *Milly*, "that my pages shall be the pleasantest of any."

"*Ergo*," quoth *Father*, "wisdom is displeasing matter. So it is, *Milly*,—to unwise folks."

"Then, *Father*, of a surety my chronicling shall ill please you," saith she, a-laughing.

*Father* arose, and laid his hand upon *Milly's* head as he passed by her.

"The wise can love the unwise, my maid," saith he. "How could the only wise God love any one of us else?"

### ***Selwick Hall, October ye ii.***

*Milly* saith, and *Edith* likewise, that I must needs set down somewhat touching all us,—who we be, and how many, and our names, and such like. Truly, it seemeth me somewhat lost labour, if none but ourselves are to read the same. But as *Milly* will have it the Queen's Majesty and all her Council shall be highly diverted thereby (though little, as methinks, they should care to know of us), I reckon, to please these my sisters, I must needs do their bidding.

We therefore, that dwell in *Selwick Hall*, be Sir *Aubrey Louvaine*, the owner thereof (that is *Father*), and Dame *Lettice* his wife, and us their daughters, *Helen*, *Milisent*, and *Editha*. Moreover, there is Aunt *Joyce Morrell*, that dwelleth in *Oxfordshire*, at *Minster Lovel*, but doth once every five year tarry six months with us, and we with her the like: so that we see each the other once in every two or three years. 'Tis but a week Aunt *Joyce* hath been hither, so all the six months be to run. And here I should note she is not truly our aunt, but *Father's* cousin, her mother being sister unto his mother: but *Father* had never no brother nor sister, and was bred up along, with these his cousins, Aunt *Joyce* and Aunt *Anstace*, after whom mine eldest sister hath her name: but Aunt *Anstace* hath been dead these many years, afore any of us were born. I would I had known her; for to hear them talk of her,—*Father*, and *Mother*, and Aunt *Joyce*,—I could well-nigh think her an angel in human flesh. Now, wherefore is it, for I have oft-times marvelled, that we speak more tenderly and reverently of folk that be dead, than of the living? Were I to die a young maid, should *Milly* (that loves to mock me now) tell her children henceforward of their Aunt *Helen*, as though she had been somewhat better than other women? May-be. If we could only use folks we love, while they do live, with the like loving reverence as we shall do after they be dead, if we overlive them! Wherefore do we not so? We do seem for to forget then all that we loved not in them. Could we not essay to do the same a little sooner?

And when *Milly* cometh hither in her reading, as sure as her name is *Milisent*, shall she say,—“Now, Mistress *Nell*, there you go, a-riding your high horse of philosophy! Prithee, keep to common earth.”

Beside those I have named, in the house dwelleth Mynheer *Floris Stuyvesant*, a *Dutch* gentleman that did flee from his country when the persecution was in *Holland*, eleven years gone: and *Father*, which had a little known him aforetime when he made the grand tour, did most gladly welcome him hither, and made him (of his own desire) governor to *Ned* and *Wat*, our brothers. These our brothers dwell not now at home, for *Wat* is squire unto my very good Lord of *Oxenford*, that is *Father's* kinsman: and *Ned* is at sea with Sir *Humphrey Gilbert*. We therefore see them but rarely. Then, beyond, there is likewise in the house Mistress *Elizabeth Wolvercot*, that is a cousin of *Mother*, whom all we do alway call Cousin *Bess*; she dwelleth with us at all times. Also be *Kate* and *Caitlin*, of whom I have aforetime spoken: and old *Matthias*, our serving-man; and the boy, *Adam* o' *Bill's* o' old *Mall's*.

And here I should note that once were two of us more, *Aubrey* and *Julian*: of whom *Aubrey* died a babe, three years afore I was born, and *Julian* a little maid of eleven years, between *Milly's* birth and *Edith's*. I mind her well, for she was two years elder than I, so that I was nine years old when she departed; but *Milly*, that was only three, cannot remember her.

Our eldest of all, *Anstace*, is wife unto Master *Henry Banaster*, and dwelleth (as *Milly* saith) next door, he having the estate joining *Father's* own. She hath two children, *Aubrey*, that is of seven years, and *Cicely*, that is four; beside her eldest, *Lettice*, which did decease in the cradle.

I reckon I have told all now, without I name the cows, which be *Daisy*, and *Molly*, and *Buttercup*, and *Rose*, and *Ladybird*, and *June*; and the great house-dog, which is *Clover*; and the cat, which is a *Spanish* cat (a tortoise-shell cat, then a rarity), her name *Hermosa* (the which *Ned* gave her, saying a *Spanish* cat should have a *Spanish* name, and *Hermosa* signifieth beautiful in that tongue), but *Caitlin* will make it *Moses*, and methinks she is called *Moses* more than aught else. She hath two kits, that be parti-coloured like herself, their names (given of *Milly*) *Dan* and *Nan*.

And now I feel well-nigh sure I have said all.

Nay, and forgot the horses! *Milly* will laugh at me, for she dearly loveth an horse. We have six riding-horses, with two baggage-horses, but only four of them have names,—to wit, *Father's*, that is *Favelle*, because he is favel-colour (chestnut); and *Mother's*, *Garnet*; and mine, *Cowslip*; and the last, that *Milly* or *Edith* doth commonly ride when we journey, is called *Starlight*.

And now I have verily told every thing.

(At this point the handwriting of the chronicle changes.)

'Tis not yet my turn to write, but needs must, or it shall cause me to split in twain with laughter. Here is our *Nell*, reckoning three times o'er that she hath told all, and finding somewhat fresh every time, and with all her telling, hath set down never a note of what we be like, nor so much as the colour of one of our eyes. So, having gat hold of her chronicle, I shall do it for her. I dare reckon she was feared it should cost her two pence each one. But nothing venture, nothing have; and *Mother* laid down that we should write our true thoughts. So what I think shall I write; and how to make *Father's* two pence rhyme with *Mother's* avisement, I leave to Mistress *Nell* and her philosophy.

*Father* is a gentleman of metely good height, and well-presented, but something heavy built: of a dark brown hair, a broad white brow, and dark grey eyes that be rare sweet and lovesome. Of old time was he squire of the body unto my right noble Lord of *Surrey*, that was execute in old King *Henry's* days. Moreover, he is of far kin (yet not so far, neither) unto my most worthy Lord of *Oxenford*. Now, sithence I am to write my thoughts, I must say that I would *Father* had a better nose. I cannot speak very truth and set down that I did ever admire *Father's* nose. But he hath good white teeth, and a right pleasant smile, the which go far to make amends for his nose.

*Mother* was right fair when she was a young maid, and is none so ill now. She is graceful of carriage, very fair of complexion, and hath the sweetest, shining golden hair was ever seen. Her eyes be pale grey (blue), right like the sky.

Of us three maids, *Edith* is best-favoured, and all that see her do say she is right the very picture of *Mother*, when she was young. Next her am I; for though I say it, I am a deal fairer than either *Anstace* or *Nell*, both which favour (resemble) *Father*, though *Nell* is the liker, by reason she hath his mind as well as his face. Now, *Nell* is all ways slower than *Edith* and me, and nothing like so well-favoured.

But for beauty, the least I did ever see in any man is in Mynheer *Stuyvesant*, which hath a flat nose and a stoop in the shoulders, and is high and thin as a scarecrow. Cousin *Bess* is metely well,—she is rosy and throddy (plump). For Aunt *Joyce*, I do stand in some fear of her sharp speeches, and will say nought of her, saving that (which she can not deny) she hath rosy cheeks and dark brown hair (yet not so dark as *Father's*), and was, I guess, a comely young maid when she were none elder than we. As for *Ned* and *Wat*, *Ned* is the better-favoured, he having *Mother's* nose and the rest of him *Father*; but *Wat* (which favoureth *Mother* of his colouring, yet is not so comely) a deal the courtlier.

Now when they shall all come to read this same, trow, shall they know their own portraits? or shall they every one cry out, "This is not me!"

So now I leave the rest to Mistress *Helen*, till it shall come to me next month, when I will say what I think yet again.

***Selwick Hall, October ye v.***

(*In Helen's handwriting.*)

Dear heart, but what hath *Milly* been a-doing! I could not think last night where was my book, but I was rare sleepy, and let it a-be. And here this morrow do I find a good two pages all scribbled o'er of *Milly's* writing. Well! 'tis not my fault, so I trust shall not be my blame.

And it is true, as *Milly* saith, that she is better-favoured than I. As for *Anstace*, I wis not, only I know and am well assured, that I am least comely of the four. But she should never have writ what she did touching *Father's* nose, and if it cost me two pence, that must I say. I do love every bit of *Father*, right down to the tip of his nose, and I never thought if it were well-favoured or no. 'Tis *Father*, and that is all for me. And so should it be for *Milly*,—though it be two pence more to say so.

***Selwick Hall, October ye vi.***

We had been sat at our sewing a good hour this morrow,—that is, *Mother*, and Aunt *Joyce*, and we three maids,—when all at once *Milly* casts hers down with a sigh fetched from ever so far.

"Weary of sewing, *Milly*?" saith *Mother* with a smile.

"Ay—no—not right that, *Mother*," quoth she. "But here have I been this hour gone, a-wishing I had been a man, till it seemed me as if I could not abide for to be a woman no longer."

"The general end of impossible wishes," saith *Mother*, laughing a little.

"Well!" quoth Aunt *Joyce*, a-biting off her thread, "in all my wishing never yet wished I that."

"Wherefore is it, *Milly*?" saith *Mother*.

"Oh, a man has more of his own way than a woman," *Milly* makes answer. "And he can make some noise in the world. He is not tied down to stupid humdrum matters, such like as sewing, and cooking, and distilling, and picking of flowers, with a song or twain by now and then to cheer you. A man can preach and fight and write books and make folk listen."

"I misdoubt if thou art right, *Milly*, to say that a man hath the more of his own way always," saith *Mother*. "Methinks there be many women get much of that."

"Then a man is not tied down to one corner. He can go and see the world," saith *Milly*.

"In short," quoth Aunt *Joyce*, "the moral of thy words, *Milly*, is—'Untie me.'"

"I wish I were so!" mutters *Milly*.

"And what should happen next?" saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Why, I reckon I could not do much without money," answereth *Milly*.

"Oh, grant all that," quoth Aunt *Joyce*,—"money, and leave, and all needed, and Mistress *Milisent* setting forth to do according to her will. What then?"

"Well, I would first go up to *London*," saith she, "and cut some figure in the Court."

Aunt *Joyce* gave a dry little laugh.

"There be figures of more shapes than one, *Milly*," saith she. "Howbeit—what next?"

"Why, then, methinks, I would go to the wars."

"And bring back as many heads, arms, and legs, as thou tookest thither?"

"Oh, for sure," saith *Milly*. "I would not be killed."

"Just. Very well,—Mistress *Milisent* back from the wars, and covered with glory. And then?"

"Well—methinks I would love to be a judge for a bit."

"Dry work," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "And then a bishop?"

"Ay, if you will."

"And then?"

"Why, I might as well be a king, while I went about it."

"Quite as well. I am astonished thou hast come thither no sooner. And then?"

"Well,—I know not what then. You drive one on, Aunt *Joyce*. Methinks, then, I would come home and see you all, and recount mine adventures."

"Oh, mightily obliged to your Highness!" quoth Aunt *Joyce*. "I had thought, when your Majesty were thus up at top of the tree, you should forget utterly so mean a place as *Selwick* Hall, and the contemptible things that inhabit there. And then?"

"Come, I will make an end," saith *Milly*, laughing. "I reckon I should be a bit wearied by then, and fain to bide at home and take mine ease."

"And pray, what hindereth that your Grace should do that now?" saith Aunt *Joyce*, looking up with a comical face.

"Well, but I am not aweary, and have no adventures to tell," *Milly* makes answer.

"Go into the garden and jump five hundred times, *Milly*, and I will warrant thee to be aweary and thankful for rest. And as to adventures,—eh, my maid, my maid!" And Aunt *Joyce* and *Mother* smiled one upon the other.

"Now, *Mother* and *Aunt*, may I say what I think?" cries *Milly*.

"Prithee, so do, my maid."

"Then, why do you folks that be no longer young, ever damp and chill young folks that would fain see the world and have some jollity?"

"By reason, *Milly*, that we have been through the world, and we know it to be a damp place and a cold."

"But all folks do not find it so?"

"God have mercy on them that do not!"

"Now, *Aunt*, what mean you?"

"Dear heart, the brighter the colour of the poisoned sweetmeat, the more like is the babe to put in his mouth."

"Your parable is above me, Aunt *Joyce*."

"*Milly*, a maiden must give her heart to something. The Lord's word unto us all is, Give Me thine heart. But most of us will try every thing else first. And every thing else doth chill and disappoint us. Yet thou never sawest man nor Woman that had given the heart to God, which could ever say with truth that disappointment had come of it."

"I reckon they should be unready to confess the same," saith she.

"They be ready enough to confess it of other things," quoth Aunt *Joyce*. "But few folks will learn by the blunders of any but their own selves. I would thou didst."

"By whose blunders would you have me learn, *Aunt*?" saith *Milly* in her saucy fashion that is yet so bright and coaxing that she rarely gets flitten (scolded) for the same.

"By those of whomsoever thou seest to blunder," quoth she.

"That must needs be thee, *Edith*," saith *Milly* in a demure voice. "For it standeth with reason, as thou very well wist, that I shall never see mine elders to make no blunders of no sort whatever."

"Thou art a saucy baggage, *Milly*," quoth Aunt *Joyce*. "That shall cost thee six pence an' it go down in the chronicle."

"Oh, 'tis not yet my turn for to write, *Aunt*. And I am well assured *Nell* shall pay no sixpences."

"Fewer than thou, I dare guess," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Who has been to visit old *Jack Benn* this week?"

"Not I, *Aunt*," quoth *Edith*, somewhat wearily, as if she feared Aunt *Joyce* should bid her go.

"Oh, I'll go and see him!" cries *Milly*. "There is nought one half so diverting in all the vale as old *Jack*. *Aunt*, be all *Brownists* as queer as he?"

"Nay, I reckon *Jack* hath some queer notions of his own, apart from his *Brownery*," quoth she. "But, *Milly*,—be diverted as much as thou wilt, but let not the old man see that thou art a-laughing at him."

"All right, *Aunt!*" saith *Milly*, cheerily. "Come, *Nell*. *Edith* shall bide at home, that can I see."

So *Milly* and I set forth to visit old *Jack*, and *Mother* gave us a bottle of cordial water, and a little basket of fresh eggs, for to take withal.

He dwells all alone, doth old *Jack*, in a mud cot part-way up the mountain, that he did build himself, ere the aches in his bones 'gan trouble him, that he might scanty work. He is one of those queer folk that call themselves *Brownists*, and would fain have some better religion than they may find at church. *Jack* is nigh alway reading of his Bible, but never no man could so much as guess the strange meanings he brings forth of the words. I reckon, as Aunt *Joyce* saith, there is more *Jack* than *Brownist* in them.

We found *Jack* sitting in the porch, his great Bible on his knees. He looked up when he heard our voices.

"Get out!" saith he. "I never want no women folk."

'Tis not oft we have fairer greeting of *Jack*.

"Nay, truly, *Jack*," saith *Milly* right demurely. "They be a rare bad handful,—nigh as ill as men folk. What thou lackest is eggs and cordial water, the which women can carry as well as jackasses."

She held forth her basket as she spake.

"Humph!" grunts old *Jack*. "I'd liever have the jackasses."

"I am assured thou wouldst," quoth *Milly*. "Each loveth best his own kind."

Old *Jack* was fingering of the eggs.

"They be all hens' eggs!"

"So they be," saith *Milly*. "I dare guess, thou shouldst have loved goose eggs better."

"Ducks'," answereth old *Jack*.

"The ducks be gone a-swimming," saith she.

I now drew forth my bottle of cordial water, the which the old man took off me with never a thank you, and after smelling thereto, set of the ground at his side.

"What art reading, *Jack?*" saith *Milly*.

"What *Paul's* got to say again' th' law," quoth he. "'Tis a rare ill thing th' law, Mistress *Milisent*. And so be magistrates, and catchpolls (constables) and all the lawyer folk. Rascals, Mistress *Milisent*,—all rascals, every man *Jack* of 'em. Do but read *Paul*, and you shall see so much."

"Saith the Apostle so?" quoth *Milly*, and gave me a look which nigh o'erset me.

"He saith 'the law is not given unto a righteous man,' so how can they be aught but ill folk that be alway a-poking in it? Tell me that, Mistress. If 'birds of a feather will flock together,' then a chap that's shaking hands every day wi' th' law mun be an ill un, and no mistake."

"Go to, *Jack*: it signifies not that," *Milly* makes answer. "Saint *Paul* meant that the law of God was given for the sake of ill men, not good men. The laws of *England* be other matter."

"Get out wi' ye!" saith *Jack*. "Do ye think I wis not what *Paul* means as well as a woman? It says th' law, and it means th' law. And if he'd signified as you say, he'd have said as th' law wasn't given again' a righteous man, not to him. You gi'e o'er comin' a-rumpagin' like yon."

For me, I scarce knew which way to look, to let me from laughing. But *Milly* goes on, sad as any judge.

"Well, but if lawyers be thus bad, *Jack*—though my sister's husband is a lawyer, mind thou—"

"He's a rascal, then!" breaks in *Jack*. "They're all rascals, every wastrel (an unprincipled, good-for-nothing fellow) of 'em."

"But what fashion of folk be better?" saith *Milly*. "Thou seest, *Jack*, we maids be nigh old enough for wedding, and I would fain know the manner of man a woman were best to wed."

"Best let 'em all a-be," growls *Jack*. "Women's always snarin' o' men. Women's bad uns. Howbeit, you lasses down at th' Hall are th' better end, I reckon."

"Oh, thank you, *Jack*!" cries *Milly* with much warmth. "Now do tell me—shall I wed with a chirurgeon?"

"And take p'ison when he's had enough of you," quoth *Jack*. "Nay, never go in for one o' them chaps. They kills folks all th' day, and lies a-thinkin' how to do it all th' night."

"A soldier, then?" saith *Milly*.

"Hired murderers," saith *Jack*.

"Come, *Jack*, thou art hard on a poor maid. Thou wilt leave me ne'er a one. Oh, ay, there is the parson."

"What!" shrieks forth *Jack*. "One o' they *Babylonian* mass-mongers? Hypocrites, wolves in sheep's clothing a-pretending for to be shepherds! Old *Zekiel*, he's summut to say touching them. You get home, and just read his thirty-fourth chapter; and wed one o' them wastrels at after, if ye can! Now then, get ye forth; I've had enough o' women. I telled ye so."

"Fare thee well, *Jack*," quoth *Milly* in mocking tribulation. "I see how it is,—I shall be forced to wed a lead-miner."

I was verily thankful that *Milly* did come away, for I could bear no longer. We ran fast down the steep track, and once at the bottom, we laughed till the tears ran down. When we were something composed, said I—

"Shall we look in on old *Isaac Crewdson*?"

"Gramercy, not this morrow," quoth *Milly*. "*Jack's* enough for one day. Old *Isaac* always gives me the horrors. I cannot do with him atop of *Jack*."

So we came home. But if *Milly* love it not, then will I go by myself to see old *Isaac*, for he liketh me well.

### ***Selwick Hall, October ye ix.***

Aunt *Joyce* went with me yesterday to see *Isaac*. We found him of the chimney-corner, whence he seldom stirreth, being now infirm. Old *Mary* had but then made an end of her washing, and she was a-folding the clean raiment to put by. I ran into the garden and gathered sprigs of rosemary, whereof they have a fine thriving bush.

"Do tell me, *Mall*," said I, "how thou orderest matters, for to have thy rosemary thrive thus? Our bush is right stunted to compare withal."

"I never did nought to it," quoth old *Mall*, somewhat crustily. She is *Jack Benn's* sister, and truly they be something like.

"Eh, Mistress *Nell*, dunna ye know?" saith *Isaac*, laughing feebly. "Th' rosemary always thrives well where th' missis is th' master. Did ye never hear yon saying?"

"Shut up wi' thy foolish saws!" saith *Mall*, a-turning round on him. "He's a power of proverbs and saws, Mistress *Nell*, and he's for ever and the day after a-thrustin' of 'em in. There's no wit i' such work."

"Eh, but there's a deal o' wit in some o' they old saws!" *Isaac* makes answer, of his slow fashion. "Look ye now,—'*Brag's* a good dog, but *Holdfast's* better'—there's a true sayin' for ye. Then again look ye,—'He that will have a hare to breakfast must hunt o'er night.' And 'A grunting horse and a groaning wife never fails their master.' Eh, but that's true!" And old *Isaac* laughed, of his feeble fashion, yet again.

"There be some men like to make groaning wives," quoth *Mall*, crustily. "They sit i' th' chimney-corner at their ease, and put ne'er a hand to the work."

"That is not thy case, *Mall*," saith Aunt *Joyce*, cheerily. "So long as he were able, I am well assured *Isaac* took his share of the work. And now ye be both infirm and stiff of the joints, what say ye to a good sharp lass that should save your old bones? I know one that should come but for her meat,—a good stirring maid that should not let the grass grow under her feet. What sayest, *Mall*?"

"What, me?" saith *Mall*. "Eh, you'd best ask th' master. I am none th' master here, howso the rosemary may thrive. I would say she should ne'er earn the salt to her porridge; but I'm of no signification in this house, as I well wis. You'd best ask o' them as is."

"Why, then, we mun gi'e th' porridge in," quoth *Isaac*. "Come, *Mall*, thou know'st better, lass."

But old *Mary*, muttering somewhat we might not well hear, went forth to fetch in a fresh armful of linen from the hedge.



"What hath put her out, *Isaac*?" asks Aunt *Joyce*.

"Eh, Mistress *Joyce*, there's no telling!" saith he. "'Tis not so much as puts her in. She's easy put out, is *Mall*: and 'tis no good on earth essaying to pull her in again. You'd best let her be. She'll come in of hersen, when she's weary of threapin'." (Grumbling, fault-finding.)

"I reckon thou art weary first, most times," saith *Aunt*.

"Well! I've ay kept a good heart up," quo' he. "'The still sow eateth all the draff,' ye ken. I've bore wi' *Mall* for fifty year, and it comes easier than it might to an other man. And the Lord has bore wi' me for seventy odd. If He can bear wi' me a bit longer, I reckon I can wi' *Mall*."

Aunt *Joyce* smiled on old *Isaac* as she rose up.

"Ay, Goodman, that is the best way for to take it," saith she. "And now, *Nell*, we must hurry home, for I see a mighty black cloud o'er yonder."

So we home, bidding God be wi' ye to old *Mall*, in passing, and had but a grunt in answer: but we won home afore the rain, and found *Father* and *Mynheer* a-talking in the great chamber, and *Mother* above, laying of sweet herbs in the linen with *Edith*.

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Note 1. Passages from the New Testament are quoted from Cranmer's or the Geneva version, both then in common use.

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## Chapter Two.

### Wherein Ideas Differ.

"O man, little hast thou learned of truth in things most true."—Martin Farquhar Tupper.

(In *Helen's* handwriting.)

***Selwick Hall, October the xii.***

Well! *Milly* saith nought never happens in this house. Lack-a-daisy! but I would fain it were so!

One may love one's friends, and must one's enemies, *Father* saith. But how should one feel towards them that be nowise enemies, for they mean right kindly, and yet not friends, seeing they make your life a burden unto you?

Now, all our lives have I known Master *Lewthwaite*, of *Mere Lea*, and Mistress *Lewthwaite* his wife, and their lads and lasses, *Nym*, *Jack*, and *Robin*, and *Alice* and *Blanche*. Many a game at hunt the slipper and blind man's buff have we had at *Mere Lea*, and I would have said yet may, had not a thing happed this morrow which I would right fain should ne'er have happened while the world stood.

What in all this world should have made *Nym* so to do cannot I so much as conceive. He might have found a deal fairer lasses. Why, our *Milly* and *Edith* are ever so much better-favoured. But to want me!—nor only that, but to come with so pitiful a tale, that he should go straight to ruin an' I would not wed with him; that I was the only maid in all the world that should serve against the same; and that if I refused, all his sins thereafter should be laid at my door! Heard any ever the like?

And I have no list to wed with *Nym*. I like him—as a dozen other lads: but that is all. And meseems that before I could think to leave *Father* and *Mother* and all, and go away with a man for all my life, he must be as the whole world to me, or I could never do it. I cannot think what *Nym* would be at. And he saith it shall be my blame and my sin, if I do it not. *Must I wed Nym Lewthwaite?*

I sat and pondered drearily o'er my trouble for a season, and then went to look for Aunt *Joyce*, whom I found in the long gallery, at her sewing in a window.

"Well, *Nell*, what hast ado, maid?" saith she.

"Pray you, Aunt *Joyce*, tell me a thing," said I.

"That will I, with a very good will, my maid," saith she.

"Aunt *Joyce*, if a man were to come to you and entreat you to wed with him, by reason that he could not (should he say) keep in the right way without you did help him, and that, you refusing, you should be blameworthy of all his after sins—what should you say to him?"

I listened right earnestly for her answer. I was woeful 'feared she should say, "Wed with him, *Nell*, for sure, and thus save him."

"Say?" quoth Aunt *Joyce*, looking up, with (it seemed me) somewhat like laughter in her eyes. "Fetch him a good buffet of his ear, forsooth, and ask at him by what right he called himself a man."

"Then you should not think you bound to save him, *Aunt*?"

"Poor weak creature! Not I," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "But whatso, Nell? Hast had any such a simpleton at thee?"

"*Aunt*," said I, "'tis *Nym Lewthwaite*, who saith an' I wed him not, he shall go straight to ruin, and that I must answer unto God for all his sins if so be."

"Ask him where he found that in the Bible," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Take no thought about him, *Nell*. Trust me, if a man cannot keep straight without thee, he will not keep straight with thee. Poor limping soul! to come halting up and plead with a weak woman to leave him put his hand on her shoulder, to help him o'er the stones! 'Carry me, prithee, good Mistress, o'er this rough place.' Use thine own two legs, would I say to him, and be ashamed of thy meanness. And I dare be sworn he calls himself one of the nobler sex," ends Aunt *Joyce* with a snort of scorn.

"O *Aunt*, I am so thankful you see it thus!" said I, drawing a long breath. "I was so afeard you should bid me do as *Nym* would."

"Nay, not this while," quoth she, of her dry fashion. "When we lack stuff for to mend the foul roads, *Nell*, we'll find somewhat fitter to break up than thee. If young *Lewthwaite* harry thee again, send him to me. He'll not want to see me twice, I'll warrant."

"I was 'feared I was wicked to shrink from it, *Aunt*," I made answer. "*Nym* said so. He said 'twas all self-loving and seeking of mine ease that alone did make me for to hesitate; and that if I had loved God and my neighbour better than myself, I would have strake hands with him at once. And I was 'feared lest it should be true."

"Ay, it is none so difficult to paint black white," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "'Tis alway the self-lovers that cry out upon the unkindness of other folks. And thou art one of them, *Nell*, my maid, that be prone to reckon that must needs be right which goes against the grain. There be that make self-denial run of all fours in that fashion. They think duty and pleasure must needs be enemies. Why, child, they are the best friends in the world. Only *Duty* is the elder sister, and is jealous to be put first. Run thou after *Duty*, and see if *Pleasure* come not running after thee to beseech thee of better acquaintance. But run after *Pleasure*, and she'll fly thee. She's a rare bashful one."

"Then you count it not wrong that one should desire to be happy, *Aunt*?"

"The Lord seems not to count it so, *Nell*. He had scarce, methinks, told us so much touching the happiness of Heaven, had He meant us to think it ill to be happy. But remember, maid, she that findeth her happiness in God hath it alway ready to her hand; while she that findeth her happiness in this world must wait till it come to seek her."

"I would I were as good as *Father*!" said I; and I believe I fetched a sigh.

"Go a little higher, *Nell*, while thou art a-climbing," quoth Aunt *Joyce*. "'I would I were as good as *Christ*.'"

"Eh, *Aunt*, but who could?" said I.

"None," she made answer. "But, *Nell*, he that shoots up into the sky is more like to rise than he that aims at a holly-bush."

"Methinks *Father* is higher than I am ever like to get," said I.

"And if thou overtop him," she made answer, "all shall see it but thyself. Climb on, *Nell*. Thou wilt not grow giddy so long as thine eyes be turned above."

I am so glad that Aunt *Joyce* seeth thus touching *Nym*!

### ***Selwick Hall, October ye ii.***

There goeth my first two pence for a blank week. In good sooth, I have been in ill case to write. This weary *Nym* would in no wise leave me be, but went to *Anstace* and *Hal*, and gat their instance (persuaded them to intercede) unto *Father* and *Mother*. Which did send for me, and would know at me if I list to wed with *Nym* or no. And verily, so bashful am I, and afeared to speak when I am took on the sudden thus, that I count they gat not much of me, but were something troubled to make out what I would be at. Nor wis I what should have befallen (not for that *Father* nor *Mother* were ever so little hard unto me, good lack! but only that I was stupid), had not Aunt *Joyce* come in, who no sooner saw how matters stood than she up and spake for me.

"Now, *Aubrey* and *Lettice*," saith she, "both of you, fall a-catechising me in the stead of *Nell*. The maid hath no list to wed with *Nym Lewthwaite*, and hath told me so much aforetime. Leave her be, and send him away the other side of *Jericho*, where he belongs, and let him, an' he list, fetch back a *Syrian* maiden with a horn o'er her forehead and a ring of her nose."

"Wherefore didst thou not tell us so much, *Nell*, my lass?" saith *Father* right kindly, laying of his hand on my shoulder.

But in the stead of answering him thankfully, as a dutiful daughter should, what did I but burst forth o' crying, as though he had been angered with me: yea, nor might I stop the same, but went on, truly I knew not wherefore, till *Mother* came up and put her arms around me, and hushed me as she wont to do when I was a little child.

"The poor child is o'erwrought," quoth she, tenderly. "Let us leave her be, *Aubrey*, till she calms down.—There, come to me and have it out, my *Nelly*, and none shall trouble thee, trust me."

Lack-a-daisy! I sobbed all the harder for a season, but in time I calmed down, as *Mother* says, and when so were, I prayed her of pardon for that I could be so foolish.

"Nay, my lass," saith she, "we be made of body and soul, and either comes uppermost at times. 'Tis no good trying to live with one, which so it be."

"Ah, the old monks made that blunder," saith *Father*, "and thought they could live with souls only, or well-nigh so. And there be scores of other that essay to live with nought but bodies. A man that starves his body is ill off, but a man that starves his soul is yet worsen. No is it thus, *Mynheer*?"

*Mynheer van Stuyvesant* had come in while *Father* was a-speaking.

"Ah!" saith he, "there be in my country certain called *Mennonites*, that do starve their natures of yonder fashion."

"Which half of them,—body or soul?" saith *Father*.

"Nay, I would say both two," he makes answer. "They run right to the further end of every matter. Because they read in their Bibles that 'in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin,' therefore they do forbid all speech that is not of very necessity,—even a word more than needful is sin in their eyes. If you shall say, 'Sit you down in that chair to your comfort,' there are eight words more than you need. You see?—there are eight sins. 'Sit' were enough. So, one mouthful more bread than you need—no, no!—that is a sin. One drop of syrup to your bread—not at all! You could eat your bread without syrup. All that is joyous, all that is comfortable, all that you like to do—all so many sins. Those are the *Mennonites*."

"What sinful men they must be!" saith *Father*.

"Good lack, Master *Stuyvesant*, but think you all those folks tarried in *Holland*?" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Marry, I could count you a round dozen I have met in this country. And they *be* trying, I warrant you. My fingers have itched to shake them ere now."

"How do they serve them when they would get them wed?" saith *Father*. "Quoth Master *John* to Mistress *Bess*, 'Wed me' and no more?—and saith she, 'Ay' and no more? A kiss, I ween, shall be a sin, for 'tis no wise necessary."

I could not help to laugh, and so did Aunt *Joyce* and *Mother*.

"Wed!" makes answer *Mynheer*, "the *Mennonites* wed? Why, 'tis the biggest of all their sins, the wedding."

"There'll not be many of them, I reckon," saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"More than you should think," saith he. "There be to join them every year."

"Well, I'll not join them this bout," quoth she.

"Now, wherein doth that differ from the old monks?" saith *Father*, as in meditation. "Be we setting up monasteries for *Protestants* already?"

*Mynheer* shrugged up his shoulders. "They say, the *Mennonites*," he made answer, "that all pleasing of self is contrary unto God's Word. I must do nothing that pleases me. Are there two dishes for my dinner? I like this, I like not that. Good! I take that I love not. Elsewise, I please me. A Christian man must not please himself—he must please God. And (they say) he cannot please both."

"Ah, therein lieth the fallacy," saith *Father*. "All pleasing of self counter unto God, no doubt, is forbidden in Holy Scripture. But surely I am not bid to avoid doing God's commandments, if He command a thing I like?"

"Why, at that rate," quoth Aunt *Joyce*, "one should never search God's Word, nor pray unto Him,—except such as did not love it. Methinks these *Mennonites* stand o' their heads, with their heels in air."

"Ah, but they say it is God's command that thou shalt not please thyself," saith *Mynheer*. "Therefore, that which pleases thee cannot be His will. You see?"

"They do but run the old monks' notions to ground," quoth *Father*. "They go a bit further—that is all. I take it that whensoever my will is contrary unto God's, my will must go down. But when my will runneth alongside of His, surely I am at liberty to take as much pleasure in doing His will as I may? 'Ye have been called unto liberty,' saith *Paul*: 'only, let not your liberty be an occasion to the flesh, but in love serve one another.'"

"And if serving one another be pleasant unto thee, then give o'er," quoth Aunt *Joyce*. "Good lack, this world doth hold some fools!"

"Pure truth, *Joyce*," saith *Father*. "Yet, for that of monks, in good sooth I do look to see them back, only under other guise. Monachism is human nature: and human nature will out. If he make not way at one door, trust him to creep forth of an other."

"But, *Aubrey*, the Church is reformed. There is no room for monks and nuns, and such rubbish," saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"The Church is reformed,—ay," saith he: "but human nature is not. That shall not be until we see the King in His beauty,—whether by our going to Him in death, or by His coming to us in the clouds of heaven."

"Dear heart, man!—be not alway on the watch for black clouds," quoth she. "As well turn *Mennonite* at once."

"Well, 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,'" *Father* makes answer: "and so far thou art right, *Joyce*. Yet it is well we should remember, at times, that we be not yet in Heaven."

“‘At times!’” quoth Aunt *Joyce*, with a laugh. “What a blessed life must be thine, if those that be about thee suffer thee to forget the same save ‘at times’! I never made that blunder yet, I can tell thee.”

And so she and I away, and left all laughing.

***Selwick Hall, October ye xxii.***

This afternoon come *Hal* and *Anstace*, with their childre. *Milly* soon carried off the childre, for she is a very child herself, and can lake (play) with childre a deal better than I: and *Hal* went (said he) to seek *Father*, with whom I found him an hour later in the great chamber, and both right deep in public matter, whereof I do love to hear them talk at times, but *Milly* and *Edith* be no wise compatient (the lost adjective of compassion) therewith. *Anstace* came with me to our chamber, and said she had list for a good chat.

“Whereof be we to chat?” said I, something laughing.

“Oh, there is plenty,” saith she. “We shall not be done with the childre this hour.”

“Thou wilt not, *Anstace*,” said I, “for in very deed all mothers do love rarely to talk over their childre, and I need not save thee. But I am no great talker, as thou well wist.”

“That do I,” saith she: “for of all young maids ever I saw, thou hast the least list (inclination) to discourse. But, *Nell*, I want to know somewhat of thee. What ails thee at *Nym Lewthwaite*?”

“Why, nothing at all,” I made answer: “save that I do right heartily desire him to leave me be.”

“Good sooth, but I thought it a rare chance for thee,” quoth she: “and I was fair astonied when *Edith* told me thou wouldst have none ado with him. But thou must mind thy shooting, *Nell*: if thou pitchest all thine arrows over high, thou wilt catch nought.”

“I want to pitch no arrows,” said I.

“Well, but I do desire thee to conceive,” saith she, “that too much niceness is not good for a young maid. ‘Tis all very well to go a-picking and a-choosing ere thou art twenty: but trust me, *Nell*, by the time thou comest to thirty, thou shouldst be thankful to take any man that will have thee.”

“Nay!” said I, “that shall I not.”

“Eh, but thou wilt,” quoth she, “yea, if it were *Nym Lewthwaite*.”

“I won’t!” said I.

*Anstace* fell a-laughing. “Then thou wilt have to go without!” saith she.

“Well,” said I, “that could I do, may-be, nor break my heart o’er it neither. But to take any that should have me, —*Anstace*, I would as soon sell me for a slave.”

“Come, *Nell*!—where didst pick up such notions?” quoth she.

“Verily, I might answer thee, of the Queen’s Majesty,” said I: “and if I be not in good company enough, search thou for better. Only, for pity’s sake, Sister *Anstace*, do let me a-be.”

“Eh, I’ll let thee be,” saith she, and wagged her head and laughed. “But in good sooth, *Nell*, thou art a right queer body. And if it should please the Queen’s Highness to wed with *Mounseer* (Note 1), as ‘tis thought of many it shall, then thou wilt be out of her company, and I shall be in. What shalt thou do then for company?”

“Marry, I can content me with Aunt *Joyce* and Cousin *Bess*,” quoth I, “and none so bad neither.”

So at after that we gat to other discourse, and after a while, when *Milly* came in with the childre, we all went down into the great chamber, where *Father*, and *Hal*, and *Mynheer*, were yet at their weighty debates. Cousin *Bess* was sat in the window, a-sewing on some flannel: and Aunt *Joyce*, in the same window, but the other corner, was busied with tapestry-work, being a cushion that she is fashioning for a *Christmas* gift for some dame that is her friend at *Minster Lovel*. ‘Tis well-nigh done; and when it shall be finished, it shall go hence by old *Postlethwaite* the carrier; for six weeks is not too much betwixt here and *Minster Lovel*.

As we came in, I heard *Father* to say—

“Truly, there is no end of the diverse fantasy of men’s minds.” And then he brought forth some *Latin*, which I conceived not: but whispering unto Aunt *Joyce* (which is something learned in that tongue) to say what it were, she made answer, “So many men, so many minds.” (*Quot homines, tot sententiae.*)

“Ha!” saith *Mynheer*. “Was it not that which the Emperor *Charles* did discover with his clocks and watches? He was very curious in clocks and watches—the Emperor *Charles* the Fifth—you know?—and in his chamber at the Monastery of *San Yuste* he had so many. And watching them each day, he found they went not all at one. The big clock was five minutes to twelve when the little watch was two minutes past. So he tried to make them at one: but they would not. No, no! the big clock and the little watch, they go their own way. Then said the Emperor, ‘Now I see something I saw not aforetime. I thought I could make these clocks go together, but no! Yet they are only the work of men like me. Ah, the foolish man to think that I could compel men to think all alike, who are the work of the great God.’ You see?”

“If His Majesty had seen it a bit sooner,” quoth *Hal*, “there should have been spared some ill work both in *Spain* and

the Low Countries."

*Mynheer* saith, "Ah!" more than once, and wagged his head right sadly.

"Why," quoth *Hal*, something earnestly, "mind you not, some dozen years gone, of the stir was made all over this realm, when the ministers were appointed to wear their surplices at all times of their ministration, and no longer to minister in gowns ne cloaks, with their hats on, as they had been wont? Yea, what tumult had we then against the order taken by the Queen and Council, and against the Archbishop and Bishops for consenting thereto! And, all said, what was the mighty ado about? Why, whether a man should wear a black gown or a white. Heard one ever such stuff?"

"Ah, *Hal*, that shall scantily serve," saith *Father*. "Mind, I pray thee, that the question to the eyes of these men was somewhat far otherwise. Thou wouldst not say that *Adam* and *Eva* were turned forth of *Paradise* by reason they plucked an apple?"

"But, I pray you, Sir *Aubrey*, what was the question?" saith *Mynheer*. "For I do not well know, as I fain should."

"Look you," quoth *Father*, "in the beginning of the Book of Common Prayer, and you shall find a rubric, that 'such ornaments of the church and of the ministers thereof, at all times of their ministration, shall be retained and be in use, as were in this Church of *England*, by the authority of Parliament, in the second year of King *Edward* the Sixth.'"

"But they were not retained," breaks in *Hal*, that will always be first to speak of aught.

(Lack-a-day! shall that cost me two pence?)

"They were not retained," repeateth *Father*, "but the clergy took to ministering in their gowns and other common apparel, such as they ware every day, with no manner of vestments of no sort. Whereupon, such negligence being thought unseemly, it pleased the Queen's Majesty, sitting in her Council, and with consent of the Archbishop and Bishops, to issue certain injunctions for the better ordering of the Church: to wit, that at all times of their ministration the clergy should wear a decent white surplice, and no other vestment, nor should minister in their common apparel as aforetime."

"Then the rubric touching the garments as worn under King *Edward* was done away?" saith *Mynheer*.

"Done away completely," quoth *Hal*, afore *Father* could speak.

"But not by Parliament?" answers *Mynheer*.

"Good lack, what matter?" saith *Hal*. "The Queen's Majesty is supreme in this Church of *England*. If she issue her injunctions through her great Council, or her little Council, or her Bishops, they are all one, so they be her true injunctions."

"These were issued through the Bishops," saith *Father*, "though determined on in the Privy Council."

"Then did the ministers not obey?" asks *Mynheer*.

"Many did. But some counted the surplice a return towards Popery, and utterly refused to wear it. I mind (remember) there was a burying at that time at Saint *Giles'* Church in *London*, without (outside) *Cripplegate*, where were six clerks that ware the white surplice: and Master *Crowley*, the Vicar, stood in the church door to withstand their entering, saying that no such superstitious rags of *Rome* should come into his church. There should have been a bitter tumult there, had not the clerks had the wit to give way and tarry withoutside the door. And about the same time, a *Scots* minister did preach in *London* right vehemently against the order taken for the apparel of ministers. Why, at Saint *Mildred's* in *Bread Street*, where a minister that had conformed was brought of the worshipful of that parish for the communion service, he was so withstood by the minister of the church and his adherents, that the Deputy of the Ward and other were fain to stand beside him in the chancel to defend him during the service, or the parson and his side should have plucked him down with violence. And at long last," saith *Father*, laughing, "the *Scots* minister that had so inveighed against them was brought to conform; but no sooner did he show himself in the pulpit of Saint *Margaret Pattens* in a surplice, than divers wives rose up and pulled him forth of the pulpit, tearing his surplice and scratting his face right willingly."

"Eh, good lack!" cries *Mynheer*. "Your women, they keep silence in the churches after such a manner?"

"There was not much silence that morrow, I warrant," quoth *Hal*, laughing right merrily.

"Eh, my gentlemen, I pray you of pardon," saith Cousin *Bess*, looking up earnestly from her flannel, "but had I been in yon church I'd have done the like thing. I'd none have scrat his face, but I'd have rent a good tear in that surplice."

"Thou didst not so, *Bess*, the last *Sunday* morrow," quoth *Father*, laughing as he turned to look at her.

"Nay, 'tis all done and settled by now," saith she. "I should but get took up for brawling. But I warrant you, that flying white thing sticketh sore in my throat, and ever did. An' I had my way, no parson should minister but in his common coat."

"But that were unseemly and undecent, *Bess*," quoth Aunt *Joyce*.

"Nay, Mistress *Joyce*, but methinks 'tis a deal decenter," answers she. "Wherefore, if a man can speak to me of earthly things in a black gown, must he needs don a white when he cometh to speak to me of heavenly things? There is no wit in such stuff."

"See you, *Mynheer*," saith *Father*, again laughing, "even here in *Selwick* Hall, where I trust we be little given to quarrel, yet the clocks keep not all one time."

"Eh! No!" saith *Mynheer*, shrugging of his shoulders and smiling. "The gentlewomen, they be very determined in their own opinions."

"Well, I own, I like to see things decent," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "I desire not to have back the Popish albs and such like superstitious gauds—not I: but I do like to see a parson in a clean white surplice, and I would be right sorry were it laid aside."

Cousin *Bess* said nought, but wagged her head, and tare her flannel in twain.

"Now, I dare be bound, *Bess*, thou countest me gone half-way back to *Rome*," saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"That were nigh the *Via Mala*," quoth *Father*.

"Eh, Mistress *Joyce*, I'll judge no man, nor no woman," makes answer Cousin *Bess*. "The Lord looketh on the heart; and 'tis well for us He doth, for if we were judged by what other folk think of us, I reckon we should none of us come so well off. But them white flying kites be rags of *Popery*, that *will* I say,—yea, and stand to."

"Which side be you, *Father*?" asks *Anstace*.

"Well, my lass," saith he, "though I see not, mine own self, the Pope and all his Cardinals to lurk in the folds of Dr *Meade's* white surplice, and I am bound to say his tall, portly figure carrieth it off rarely, yet I do right heartily respect *Bess* her scruple, and desire to abstain from that which she counteth the beginnings of *evil*."

"Now, I warrant you, *Bess* shall reckon that, of carrying it off well, to be the lust of the eye," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "She's a bit of a *Mennonite*, is *Bess*."

"Eh, Mistress *Joyce*, pray you, give me not such an ill word!" saith Cousin *Bess*, reproachfully. "I never cared for Mammon, not I. I'd be thankful for a crust of bread and a cup of water, and say grace o'er him with *Amen*."

We all laughed, and *Father* saith—

"Nay, *Bess*, thou takest *Joyce* wrong. In that of the *Mennonites*, she would say certain men of whom *Mynheer* told us a few days gone, that should think all things pleasurable and easeful to be wrong."

"Good lack, Mistress *Joyce*, but I'm none so bad as that!" saith *Bess*. "I'm sure, when I make gruel for whoso it be, I leave no lumps in, nor let it burn neither."

"No, dear heart, thou art only a *Mennonite* to thyself, not to other folk," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Thou shouldst be right well content of a board for thy bed, but if any one of us had the blanket creased under our backs, it should cost thee thy night's rest. I know thee, *Bess Wolvercot*."

"Well, and I do dearly love to see folk comfortable," quoth she. "As for me, what recketh? I thank the Lord, my health is good enough; and a very fool were I to grumble at every bit of discomfort. Why, only do think, Mistress *Joyce*, how much worsen I might have been off! Had I been born of that country I heard Master *Banaster* a-telling of, where they never see the sun but of the summer, and dwell of huts full o' smoke, with ne'er a chimney—why, I never could see if my face were clean, nor my table rubbed bright. Eh, but I wouldn't like that fashion of living!"

"They have no tables in *Greenland* for to rub, *Bess*," quoth *Hal*.

"Nor o'er many clean faces, I take it," saith *Father*.

"Ah! did you hear, Sir," saith *Mynheer*, "of *Mynheer Heningsen's* voyage to *Greenland* the last year?"

"I have not, *Mynheer*," saith *Father*. "Pray you, what was notable therein?"

"Ah! he was not far from the coast of *Greenland*, when he found the ship go out of her course. He turned the rudder, or how you say, to guide the ship—I am not sea-learned, I ask your pardon if I mistake—but the ship would not move. Then they found, beneath a sunken rock, and it was—how you say?—magnetical, that drew to it the iron of the ship. Then *Mynheer Heningsen*, he look to his charts, for he know no rock just there. And what think you he found? Why, two hundred years back, exactly—in the year of our Lord 1380, there were certain *Venetians*, the brothers *Zeni*, sailing in these seas, and they brought word home to *Venice* that on this very spot, where *Heningsen* found nothing but a sunken rock, they found a beautiful large island, where were one hundred villages, inhabited by *Christian* people, in a state of great civility (civilisation), but so simple and guileless that hardly you can conceive. Think you! nothing now but a sunken rock."

"But what name hath the island?" asks *Hal*.

"No name at all. No eyes ever saw it but the brothers *Zeni* of *Venice*."

"Nay, *Mynheer*, I cry you mercy," saith *Father* of his thoughtful fashion. "If the brothers *Zeni* told truth (as I mean to signify no doubt), there was One that saw it, from the time when He pronounced all things very good, to the day when some convulsion of nature, whatso it were, by His commandment engulfed that fair isle in the waters. 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He,—in heaven, and in earth, and in the sea, and in all deep places.' Not one hair from the head of those unknown *Christians*, that were *Christians* in truth, perished in those North waters. We shall know it when we meet them in the Land that is very far off."

Mine hand was so weary when I was come to the last sentence afore this, that I set down no more. Truly, there was little at after that demerited the same.

And now I be come to the end of my month, I have been a-reading over what I writ, to see how much I must needs pay. There be but two blots, the which shall be so many pence: and two blank spaces of one week or over, the which at two pence each brings the account to sixpence. I cannot perceive that I have at any time writ disrespectfully of my betters—which, I take it, be *Father*, and *Mother*, and Aunt *Joyce*, and Cousin *Bess*, and Mynheer *Stuyvesant*. But for speaking unkindly of other, I fear I am not blameless. I can count six two-pences, which shall be one shilling and sixpence. I must try and do better when my month cometh round again. Verily, I had not thought that I should speak unkindly six times in one month! 'Tis well to find out a body's faults.

So now I pass my book over to *Milly*—and do right earnestly desire that she may be less faultful than I. What poor infirm things be we, in very sooth!

Note 1. François Duke of Anjou, who visited the Queen in September, 1579, to urge his suit. Elizabeth hesitated for some time before she gave a decided negative.

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## Chapter Three.

### Milisent Makes a Friend.

“The inward depths of that deceitful fount  
Where many a sin lies sleeping, but not dead.”

(In *Milisent's* handwriting.)

*Selwick Hall, November ye first.*

Things be alway going awry with me. Elsewise, this jolly book should ne'er have come into my hands first of a *Sunday*. I would love dearly to read o'er what my philosophical sister hath writ, and comment on the same: but I reckon I must tarry till to-morrow.

Now, *Mother* said I was to write what I thought, and I mean to do the same. As to the pennies and the two-pences, they may count up themselves, for all I care. They'll not outrun half-a-crown, I reckon: and having paid the same at my month end, I shall just worry the life out of *Father* till he give me an other. So here goes it!

Well, the first thing I think is,—Why must everything pleasant be set aside while *Monday*? *Father* saith happiness and wickedness be not alike, though (quoth he) some folk think so much. Now, it seems me that happiness and holiness should be the same thing. Why should a matter not be right simply by reason that I like it? I want to know, and I will ask somebody, some of these days.

Howbeit, of one thing am I assured,—namely, that it cannot be wicked to write on *Sunday* what it is not wicked to do. So I shall tell what we did.

Now, there some folk are so queer! They will take down a gown, and shake out the folds, and talk an half-hour o'er it, —how this gimp should be better to run that way, and next week the bottom must needs be fresh bound: all of a *Sunday*. But to stick a neeld in, and make the gimp run that way, and fresh bind the bottom,—good lack! they should count you a very heathen an' you asked them. Now, I want to know how the one is a bit better than the other. I cannot see a pin to choose betwixt them.

Well! we gat out of bed this morrow—I reckon that is the first thing, beyond opening one's eyes.

*Nell* is alway the first up, and *Edith* the last. She is rare hard to wake, is *Edith*; or rather, not to wake, but to make her rise up when she is woke. She takes a deal of shaking and talking to, some mornings specially. *Nell* does the talking, and I do the shaking: and I warrant you, I give it her.

Howbeit, we were all up, at long last—and if one of us be late of a *Sunday* morrow, *Father* looks as if we had brake his heart. Our *Sunday* gowns at this season be of green satin, of sixteen shillings the yard,—eh, good lack! should I have set that down of a *Sunday*? Well, never mind; 'tis now done—and furred with pampilion (an unknown species of fur). Our out-door hoods be black velvet: and in this gear went we to church, at *Keswick*. And I would with all mine heart we had a church nearer unto us than three weary miles, though every body saith 'tis mighty near. *Father* rid on *Favelle*, with *Edith* behind him; and *Mother* on *Garnet*, behind Master *Stuyvesant*; and *Nell* and I on *Cowslip*; and Aunt *Joyce* of her own hackney, that is called *Hermit*, with old *Matthias*. Cousin *Bess* come ambling after, on *Starlight*, with *Adam* afore her: and behind trudged *Kate* and *Kitling*. And by the same token, *Moses* came a-mewing to the door to see us depart.

So came we to the church, and there found afore us my Lord *Dilston* and his following, that had rowed over from *Lord's Island*, whereon of old time the Barons of *Dilston* (the Radcliffes, subsequently created Earls of Derwentwater) have had an house (I am mindful of strangers the which shall read our chronicle, which is more, I reckon, than *Nell* shall have been), and in good sooth, but Mistress *Jane* is fair of face, and I do love to look upon her. Well, of course, *Father* being but a knight, we stood of one side to let pass a baron: and when all they were gone up, went up we, in due order, *Father* handing *Mother*, and *Mynheer* with Aunt *Joyce*, and then Cousin *Bess* and we three maids. And there was Dr *Meade* with his white rag of *Popery* (as Cousin *Bess* will have it) a-flying behind him as he came from the vestry: and I might not forbear to give a little pinch to *Edith* as I saw it fly. 'Tis to no good to pinch *Nell*, for she

doth but kill me with a look. And there, of either side (which I had nigh forgot), stood the common folk, the townfolk, and the lead-miners from *Vicar's Island* (anciently belonging to Fountains Abbey) and such like, all a-gaping and a-staring on us as we went by, to see the baron and the knight. And eh, but I do love to be gaped on! 'Tis the best bit of all the *Sunday*, for me.

(Now, *Mother*, you said I was to write what I thought.)

Then come matins, which one has to sit through, of course: the only good matter being the chants. I can sing out, and I do. Then come the sermon, which is unto me sore weariness, and I gape through it as I best may. Dear heart, what matter is it to me if *Peter* were ever at *Rome* or no, or if *Saint James* and *Paul* do both say the same thing touching faith and works? We have all faith—say we not the Creed every *Sunday*? and what would you have more? And as to works, I hate good works. Good works always means doing the very thing you would rather not. 'Tis good works to carry a pudding to old *Nanny Crewdson* through a lane where I nigh lose my shoes in the mire, right at the time when I want to bide at home and play the virginals. Or 'tis sitting of a chair and reading of *Luther's* Commentary on the *Galatians* to one of my betters, when my very toes be tingling to be out in the sunshine. Good lack, but I do owe a pretty penny to Master Doctor *Luther* for that commentary! I have had to sit and read it a good score of times when it should have done me marvellous ease to have boxed his ears with it. Had I been Mistress *Katherine*, it should have gone hard with me but I would have pulled Master Doctor out of his study, and made him lake with little *Jack* and *Maudlin*, in the stead of toiling o'er yon old musty commentary. *Nell* saith she loveth to read it. In good sooth, but I wish she may!

Well! matins o'er, come the communion, for which all tarried but *Edith*; she, not being yet confirmed, is always packed off ere it begin. And when that were o'er—and I do love the last *Amen* of all—went all we to dinner with Mistress *Huthwaite*, at whose house we do ever dine of a *Sunday*: and mighty late it is of a communion *Sunday*; and I am well-nigh famished ere I break bread. And for dinner was corned beef and carrots, and for drink sherris-sack and muscadel. Then, at three o' the clock, all we again to church: and by the same token, if Dr *Meade* gave us not two full hours of a sermon, then will I sell my gold chain for two pence. And at after church, in the porch were my Lord *Dilston* and fair Mistress *Jane*; and my Lord was pleased to take *Father* by the hand, and *Mother* and Aunt *Joyce* likewise; but did but kiss us maids. (Note 1.) But Mistress *Jane* took us all three by the hand, and did say unto me that she would fain be better acquainted. And in very deed, it should be a feather in my cap were I to come unto close friendship with my Lord *Dilston* his daughter, as I do right heartily trust I may. Nor, after all, were it any such great preferment for me, that am daughter unto Sir *Aubrey Louvaine* of *Selwick* Hall, Knight, which is cousin unto my right honourable Lord the Earl of *Oxenford*, and not so far off neither. For my most honourable Lord, Sir *Aubrey de Vere*, sometime Earl of *Oxenford*, was great-great-great-grandfather unto my Lord that now is: and his sister, my Lady *Margaret*, wife to Sir *Nicholas Louvaine*, was great-great-grandmother unto *Father*: so they twain be cousins but four and an half times removed: and, good lack, what is this? Surely, I need not to plume me upon Mistress *Jane Radcliffe* her notice and favour. If the *Radcliffes* be an old house, as in very deed they be, so be the *Veres* and the *Louvaines* both: to say nought of the *Edens*, that have dwelt in *Kent-dale* these thousand years at the least. But one thing will I never own, and that is of Mynheer *Stuyvesant*, which shall say, and hold to it like a leech, that our family be all *Dutch* folk. He will have it that the *Louvaines* must needs have sprung from *Louvain* in the Low Countries; but of all things doth he make me mad (angry: a word still used in the north of England) when he saith the great House of *Vere* is *Dutch* of origin. For he will have it a weir to catch fish, when all the world doth know that *Veritas* is *Latin* for truth, and *Vere* cometh of that, or else of *vir*, as though it should say, one that is verily a man, and no base coward loon. And 'tis all foolishness for to say, as doth *Mynheer*, that the old *Romans* had no surnames like ours, but only the name of the family, such like as *Cornelius* or *Julius*, which ran more akin unto our *Christian* names. I believe it not, and I won't. Why, was there not an Emperor, or a Prince at the least, that was called *Lucius Verus*? and what is that but *Vere*? 'Tis as plain as the barber's pole, for all *Mynheer*, and that will I say.

Howbeit, I am forgetting my business, and well-nigh that it is *Sunday*. So have back. Church over, all we come home, in the very order as we went: and in the hall come *Moses* a-purring to us, and a-rubbing of her head against *Nell*; and there was *Dan* a-turning round and round after his tail, and *Nan*, that had a ball of paper, on her back a-laking therewith. So we to doff our hoods, and then down into the hall, where was supper served: for it was over late for four-hours (Note 2), and of a communion *Sunday* we never get none. Then *Nell* to read a chapter from Master Doctor *Luther* his magnificent commentary: and by the mass, I was glad it was not me. Then—(Eh, happy woman be my dole! but if *Father* shall see that last line, it shall be a broad shilling out of my pocket at the least. He is most mighty nice, is *Father*, touching that make of talk. I believe I caught it up of old *Matthias*. I must in very deed essay to leave it off; and I do own, 'tis not over seemly to swear of a *Sunday*, for I suppose it is swearing, though 'tis not profane talk. Come, *Father*, you must o'erlook it this once: and I will never do so no more—at the least, not till the next time.)

Well then, had we a chapter of *Luke*, and a long prayer of *Father*: and I am sore afeared I missed a good ten minutes thereof, for I wis not well what happed, nor how I gat there, but assuredly I was a-dancing with my Lord of *Oxenford*, and the Queen's Majesty and my Lord *Dilston* a-looking on, and Mistress *Jane* as black as thunder, because I danced better than she. I reckon *Father's* stopping woke me, and I said *Amen* as well as any body. Then the Hundredth Psalm, *Nell* a-playing on the virginals: and then (best of all) the blessing, and then with good-night all round, to bed. I reckon my nap at prayers had made me something wakeful, for I heard both *Nell* and *Edith* asleep afore me.

***Selwick Hall, November ye iii.***

Now have I read o'er every line my philosophical sister hath writ: and very nigh smothered me o' laughing at divers parts. The long discourses she putteth in, touching all manner of dreary matters! I warrant, you shall not see me to deal with the Queen's Majesty's injunctions touching the apparel of parsons, nor with the *Dutch Mennonites*, nor with philosophical questions touching folks' thoughts and characters, nor no such rubbish. I like sunlight, I do. Catch me a-setting down Master *Stuyvesant* his dreary speeches! (I go not further, for then should it cost me sixpence: but Master *Stuyvesant* hath no authority over me, so I may say what I will of him for two pence.) But it seemeth me, for all her soberness and her killing looks, that Mistress *Helena* is something diverted with my speeches, else had she not put so many in. But I ought not to have said what I did, quotha, touching *Father's* nose! Ought I not, forsooth?



Mistress *Helena*, that shall cost you two pence, and I shall be fain to see the fine paid.

(Eh, lack-a-day! but that shall cost me two pence! Dear heart, whatever was *Father* a-thinking of? I shall be as clean ruined as the velvet doublet that *Ned* dropped in the fish-pond!)

It seemeth me *Father* must have desired to make a good box for the poor. I would it had not been at my cost.

One thing is plain,—that Mistress *Nell* keeps a conscience. I scarce think I do. There is a cushion full of pins somewhere down near my stomach, and now and then I get a prick: but I do but cry pish and turn the pin end into the cushion. *Nell*, on the contrary, pulleth forth the pin and looketh on it, holding it in all lights. But there was one time, I mind, that I did not cry pish, and methinks every pin in the cushion had set a-work to prick me hard. 'Twas ever so long gone, when *Wat* and I dressed up the mop in a white sheet, and set it on the stairs for to make *Anstace* and *Nell* scream forth, a-taking it for a ghost: but as ill luck would have it, the first came by was *Mother*, with *Edith* in her arms, that was then but a babe, and it so frightened her she went white as the very sheet, and dropped down of a dead faint, and what should have come of *Edith* I wis not, had not *Anstace*, that came after, been quick to catch at her. Eh, but in all my life never saw I *Father* as he then were! It was long time ere *Mother* come to, and until after said he never a word, for he was all busied with her: but when she was come to herself and well at ease,—my word! but he did serve out *Wat* and me! *Wat* gat the worst, by reason he was the elder, and had (said *Father*) played the serpent to mine *Eva*: but I warrant you I forgat not that birch rod for a week or twain. Good lack! we never frightened nobody again.

And after all, I do think *Father's* talk was worsen than the fustigation (whipping). How he did insense it into us, that we might have been the death of our mother and sister both, and how it was rare wicked and cruel to seek to fright any, and had been known to turn folks' heads ere this! You see, *Father*, I have not forgot it, and I reckon I never shall.

But one thing *Father* alway doth, and so belike do all in this house, which I hear not other folks' elders for to do. When *Alice Lewthwaite* gets chidden, Mistress *Lewthwaite* saith such matters be unseemly, or undutiful, and such like. But *Father*, he must needs pull forth his Bible, and give you chapter and verse for every word he saith. And it makes things look so much worsen, some how. 'Tis like being judged of God instead of men. And where Mistress *Lewthwaite* talks of faults, *Father* and *Mother* say sins. And it makes ever so much difference, to my thinking, whether a matter be but a fault you need be told of, or a sin that you must repent. Then, Mistress *Lewthwaite* (and I have noted it in other) always takes things as they touch her, whereas *Father* and *Mother* do look on them rather as they touch God. And it doth seem ever so much more awfuller thus. Methinks it should be a sight comfortabler world if men had no consciences, and could do as it listed them at all times without those pin-pricks. I am well assured folks should mostly do right. I should, at any rate. 'Tis but exceeding seldom I do aught wrong, and then mostly because I am teased with forbiddance of the same. I should never have touched the fire-fork, when I was a little maid, and nigh got the house a-fire, had not old Dame *Conyers*, that was my godmother, bidden me not do the same. Had she but held her peace, I should ne'er have thought thereon. Folks do not well to put matters into childre's heads, and then if aught go wrong the childre get the blame. And in this world things be ever a-going wrong. But wherefore must I be blamed for that, forsooth? 'Tis the things go wrong, not me. I should be a very angel for goodness if only folks gave o'er a putting of me out, and gainsaying of me, and forbidding things to be done. In good sooth, 'tis hard on a poor maid that cannot be suffered to be as good as she should, were she but let a-be.

### ***Selwick Hall, November ye vi.***

Yesterday, the afternoon was so fair and sunshine, that *Edith* and I (*Mother* giving us leave) rowed o'er to Saint *Hubert's* Isle, where *Edith* sat her down of a great stone, and said she would draw the lake's picture in little. So I, having no list to stand behind and look on, went off to see if I could find aught, such as a squirrel or a pie, to divert me withal. As for *Adam*, which had rowed us o'er, he gathered up his nose and his heels all of a lump on the grass, and in five minutes he was snoring like an owl. For me, I wandered on a while, and went all over the ruins of the hermitage, and could find nought to look at save one robin, that sat on a bough and stared at me. After a while I sat me down, and I reckon I should have been a-snoring like *Adam* afore long, but I heard a little bruit (noise) that caused me turn mine head, and all suddenly I was aware of a right goodly gentleman, and well clad, that leaned against a tree, and gazed upon me, yet with mighty respect and courtesy. He was something past his youth, yet right comely to look to; of a fair hair and beard, and soft eyes, grey (blue) as the sky. Truly, I was something fluttered, for he ware a brave velvet jerkin, and a gold chain as thick as Master *Mayor's*. And while I meditated if I should speak unto him or no, he spake first. "I pray you, fair my Mistress, or Madam (then restricted to noble ladies and knights' wives) if so be, of your good pleasure, to do a stranger to wit of the name of this charming isle?"

"Saint *Hubert's* Isle, Sir," quoth I. "Of old time, as 'tis said, Saint *Hubert* had an hermitage hereon: the ruins whereof you may see down yonder."

"Truly, the isle is better accommodated at this present," saith he, and smiled one of the comeliest smiles ever saw I on a man's face. "And who was Saint *Hubert*, if it please my fair damosel?"

"In good sooth, Sir, that know I not," said I; "save that he were one of the old saints, now done away."

"If the old saints be done away," saith he, "thank goodness, the new at least be left."

Good lack! but I wist not what to answer to so courtly compliments, and the better liked I my neighbour every minute. Methought I had never seen a gentleman so grand and amiable, not to say of so good words.

"And, I pray you, sweet Mistress," saith he, yet a-leaning against the tree, which was an oak, and I could find it again this minute: "is it lawful for the snared bird to request the name of the fowler?"

"Sir, I pray you of pardon," I made answer, and I could not help to laugh a little, "but I am all unused to so courtly and flattering words. May it please you to put what you would say into something plainer *English*?"

"Surely," saith he, "the rose is not unaccustomed to the delightsome inhalation of her fragrance. Well, fairest Mistress, may I know your name? Is that *English* plain enough to do you a pleasure?"

"Sir," quoth I, "my name is *Milisent Louvaine*, to serve you."

"Truly," saith he, "and it shall serve me right well to know so mellifluous a name. (Note 3.) And what dwelling is honoured by being your fair home, my honey-sweet damsel?"

"Sir," said I, "I dwell at *Selwick* Hall, o'er the lake in yonder quarter."

"It must be a delightsome dwelling," he made answer. "And—elders have you, fairest Mistress?"

"I thank the Lord, ay, Sir. Sir *Aubrey Louvaine* is my father, and Dame *Lettice*, sometime named *Eden*, my mother."

"*Lettice Eden!*" saith he, and methought something sorrowfully, as though *Mother's* old name should have waked some regrets within him. "I do mind me, long time gone, of a fair maiden of that name, that was with my sometime Lady of *Surrey*, and might now and then be seen at the Court with her lady, or with the fair Lady of *Richmond*, her lord's sister. Could it have been the same, I marvel?"

"Sir," said I, "I cast no doubt thereon. My mother was bower-maiden unto my Lady of *Surrey*, afore she were wed."

"Ah!" saith he, and fetched a great sigh. "She was the fairest maiden that ever mine eyes beheld. At the least—I thought so yesterday."

"My sister is more like her than I," I did observe. "She is round by yonder, a-playing the painter."

"Ah," quoth he, something carelessly, "I did see a young damsel, sitting of a stone o'er yonder. Very fair, in good sooth: yet I have seen fairer,—even within the compass of Saint *Hubert's* Isle. And I do marvel that she should be regarded as favouring my good Lady your mother more than you, sweet Mistress *Milisent*."

I was astonished, for I know *Edith* is reckoned best-favoured of all us, and most like to *Mother*. But well as it liked me to sit and listen, methought, somehow, I had better get me up and return to *Edith*.

"Alas!" saith he, when he saw me rise, "miserable man, am I driving hence the fairest floweret of the isle?"

"Not in no wise, Sir," answered I; "but I count it time to return, and my sister shall be coming to look for me."

"Then, sweet Mistress, give me leave to hand you o'er these rough paths."

So I put mine hand into his, which was shapely, and well cased in fair *Spanish* leather; and as we walked, he asked me of divers matters; as, how many brothers I had, and if they dwelt at home; and if *Father* were at home; and the number and names of my sisters, and such like; all which I told him. Moreover, he would know if we had any guests; which, with much more, seeing he had been of old time acquainted with *Mother*, I told. Only I forgot to make mention of Aunt *Joyce*.

So at long last—for he, being unacquainted with the Isle, took the longest way round, and I thought it good manners not to check him—at long last come we to *Edith*, which was gat up from her stone, and was putting by her paper and pencils in the bag which she had brought for them.

"We shall be something late for four-hours, *Milly*," saith she. "Prithee, wake *Adam*, whilst I make an end."

Off went I and gave *Adam* a good shake, and coming back, found *Edith* in discourse with my gentleman. I cannot tell why, but I would as lief he had not conversed with any but me.

"Sir," said I, "may we set you down of the lakeside?"

"No, I thank you much," saith he: and lifting his bonnet from his head, I saw how gleaming golden was yet his hair. "I have a boat o'er the other side. Farewell, my sweet mistresses both: I trust we shall meet again. Methinks I owe it you, howbeit, to tell you my name. I am Sir *Edwin Tregarvon*, of *Cornwall*, and very much your servant."

So away went he, with a graceful mien: and we home o'er the lake. All the way *Edith* saith nought but—"Milly, where didst thou pick up thy *cavaliere*?"

"Nay," said I, "he it was who picked me up. He was leaning of a tree, of t'other side, over against *Borrowdale*: and I sat me down of a log, and saw him not till he spake."

*Edith* said no more at that time. But in the even, when we were doffing us, and *Nell* was not yet come up, quoth she—

"Milly, is Sir *Edwin* something free to ask questions?"

"Oh, meterly," (tolerably) said I.

"I trust thou gavest him not o'er full answers."

"Oh, nought of import," said I. "Beside, *Edith*, he is an old friend of *Mother*."

"Is he so?" quoth she. "Then we can ask *Mother* touching him."

Now, I could not have told any wherefore, but I had no list to ask *Mother*, nor had I told her so much as one word

touching him. I believe I was half afeared she might forbid me to encourage him in talk. I trust *Edith* shall forget the same, for she hath not an over good memory.

***Selwick Hall, November ye ix.***

I well-nigh do wish I had not writ down that same o' *Friday* last. Howbeit, there is no penalty against tearing out o' leaves: and that must I do, if need be. Meanwhile, I will go right forward with my chronicling.

I did verily think I saw Sir *Edwin* part-way up the hill behind us o' *Saturday* even: but o' *Sunday* he was not in church, for I looked for him. I reckon he must have left this vicinage, or he should scarce run the risk of a twenty pound fine (the penalty per month for non-attendance at the parish church), without he be fairly a-rolling in riches, as his gold chain looked not unlike.

Thank goodness, *Edith* hath forgot to say aught to *Mother*, and 'tis not like she shall think on now.

***Selwick Hall, November ye xii.***

*Mother* bid me, this morrow, carry a basket of eggs and a spice-cake (the northern name for a plum-cake) to old *Jack*. They were ducks' eggs, for I had told her what *Jack* said the last time we visited him. I bade *Edith* go with me (Note 4), but she would not, the day being somewhat foul. I did never see a maid so unwilling to mire her shoes as our *Edith*. So I all alone up to *Jack Benn's*: which saw me from his hut door, and gave me his customary courteous welcome.

"There's a woman a-coming!" quoth he. "Get away wi' ye! I hate women."

"Nay, *Jack*," said I; "thou alway savest me, as thou wist. Here be eggs for thee—ducks', every one: and a spice-cake, which I know thou lovest."

"I love nought so much as I hate women," saith he. But he took the cake and the eggs off me, notwithstanding. "They're fleshly folk, is women," quoth old *Jack*.

"Nay, what signifiest?" said I. "Women have no more flesh than men, I reckon."

"Mistress *Milisent*, does thou wit what *Paul* says to th' *Romans*, touching th' flesh and th' spirit?"

"Oh ay, *Jack*, I have read it afore now."

"Well, and does thou mind how he threaps again' th' flesh?"

"To be sure," said I.

"Now look ye here," saith he. "Here's my hand,"—and he reacheth forth a great brown paw. "Does thou see it?"

"Ay, I am thankful I have eyes good enough for that, *Jack*!"

"Well—this hand's made o' flesh, does thou wit?"

"I reckon so much, *Jack*."

"Good. Well, *Paul* he says we're none to mind th' things o' th' flesh, but only th' things o' th' spirit. Your spirit's your thoughts and meditations like. And that's why women's such ill uns—because they are alway minding th' things o' th' flesh: scrubbing, and washing, and baking, and sewing, and such like. And it stands to reason, Mistress *Milisent*, that what ye do wi' th' flesh mun be th' things o' th' flesh. Does thou see?"

"Well, *Jack*, I am afeared I do not entirely."

"Get thee gone!" saith he. "Women never can see nought. They're ill uns, I tell ye—they're ill uns!"

"But, *Jack*, the sins of the flesh have nought to do with cooking and washing."

"Does thou think I dunna know better nor a woman? Thee be off, or I'll let fly th' broom at thee."

"*Jack*, thou art a very uncivil companion," said I; but I gathered up my gown for to go.

"I never were civil to a woman yet," saith he, "and I hope I never shall be. That's a sin I'll none have to answer for."

"In very deed it is, *Jack*," said I, "and I will bear witness for thee to that end if need be. Farewell."

So away turned I from the grim old man, but had not run many steps down ere I was aware of an hand, very different from *Jack's*, held forth to me, and a voice saluting me in exceeding diverse language.

"Fairest Mistress *Milisent*, well met this cloudy morrow! I see the flowers be out, though the sun shine not. Give me leave, I pray you, to aid your graceful steps down this rough hill-side."

So down the hill with me came Sir *Edwin*, and mighty pleasant discourse had we—all the fairer for coming after *Jack*. And much he told me of his estate in *Cornwall*, where he hath a fair castle, built of old time, and mines like to ours, saving they be tin, not lead. And these *Cornish* mines, as he told me, were worked of old time by the *Jews*: but when I did demand of him how *Jews* should come to work them, that (quoth he) could he not say. And at times, in these mines, deep down in the old workings, do they hear the ghosts of them that worked them a thousand years ago, a-

knocking with the pickaxe; and when they do break into the ancient workings, they come on the olden pickaxes of stags' horn, used of these old *Jews* and *Romans*, that did labour in these mines of old time.

"Good lack!" cried I: "and be these the very pickaxes used of these ghosts? Verily, I would be feared for to touch them."

"Nay, the tools themselves be no ghosts," saith he, laughing: "and I do ensure you, fair my mistress, I have seen and handled divers thereof."

Then he told me, moreover, of a new custom is risen up in the Queen's Majesty's Court: for right courtly discourse he hath, and the names of dukes and earls do fly about in his talk as though he were hand and glove with every man of them. I do love to hear such discourse, and that right dearly. Many a time have I essayed for to win *Mother* to enter into talk touching those days when she dwelt in *Surrey* Place with my good Lady Countess of *Surrey*: but I wis not well wherefore, she ever seemeth to have no list to talk of that time. She will tell us of her 'prisonment in the *Counter*, and how *Father* brought the little shell for to comfort her, and at after how he fetched her out, and rode away with her and had a care of her, when as she was let forth: but even in that there seems me like as there should be a gap, which she never filleth up. I marvel if there were somewhat of that time the which she would not we should know. (Note 5.) I did once whisper a word of this make unto *Nell*: but Mistress *Helena*, that doth alway the right and meet thing, did seem so mighty shocked that I should desire to ferret forth somewhat that *Mother* had no list for me to know, that I let her a-be. But for all that would I dearly love to know it. I do take delight in digging up of other folks' secrets, as much as in keeping of mine own.

Howbeit, here am I a great way off from Sir *Edwin* and his discourse of the new Court custom, the which hath name *Euphuism*, and is a right fair conceit, whereby divers gentlemen and gentlewomen do swear friendship unto one the other, by divers quaint names the which they do confer. Thus the Queen's Majesty herself is pleased to honour some of her servants, as my Lord of *Burleigh*, who is her *Spirit*, and Sir *Walter Raleigh* her *Water*, and Mr Vice-Chamberlain (Sir Christopher Hatton) her *Sheep*, and Mr Secretary (Sir Francis Walsingham) her *Moon*. Sir *Edwin* saith he had himself such a friendship with some mighty great lady, whose name he would not utter, (though I did my best to provoke him thereto) he calling her his *Discretion*, and she naming him her *Fortitude*. Which is pleasant and witty matter. (Note 6.)

"And," quoth Sir *Edwin*, "mine honey-sweet Mistress, if it may stand with your pleasure, let us two follow the Court fashion. You shall be mine *Amiability*, (loveliness, not loveableness), and (if it shall please you) shall call me your *Protection*. Have I well said, my fairest?"

"Indeed, Sir, and I thank you," I made answer, "and should you do me so much honour, it should like me right well."

By this time we were come to the turn nigh the garden gate, and I dared not be seen with Sir *Edwin* no nearer the house. The which he seemed to guess, and would there take his leave: demanding of me which road led the shortest way to *Kirkstone* Pass. So I home, and into our chamber to doff my raiment, where, as ill luck would have it, was *Nell*. Now, our chamber window is the only one in all the house whence the path to *Jack's* hut can be seen: wherefore I reckoned me fairly safe. But how did mine heart jump into my mouth when *Nell* saith, as I was a-folding of my kerchief—

"Who was that with thee, *Milly*?"

Well, I do hope it was not wicked that I should answer,—"*A* gentleman, *Nell*, that would know his shortest way to *Kirkstone* Pass." In good sooth, it was a right true answer: for Sir *Edwin* is a gentleman, and he did ask me which were the shortest way thereto. But, good lack! it seemed me as all the pins that ever were in a cushion started o' pricking me when I thus spake. Yet what ill had I done, forsooth? I had said no falsehood: only shut *Nell's* mouth, for she asked no further. And, dear heart, may I not make so much as a friend to divert me withal, but I must send round the town-crier to proclaim the same? After I had writ thus much, down come I to the great chamber, where I found *Anstace* and *Hal* come; and *Hal*, with *Father* and *Mynheer*, were fallen of mighty grave discourse touching the news of late come, that the Pope hath pretended to deprive the Queen's Majesty of all right to *Ireland*. Well-a-day! as though Her Majesty should think to let go *Ireland* or any other land because a foreign bishop should bid her! Methinks this companion the Pope must needs be clean wood (mad).

*Hal*, moreover, is well pleased that the Common Council of *London* should forbid all plays in the City, the which, as he will have it, be ill and foolish matter. Truly, it maketh little matter to me here in *Derwent* dale: but methinks, if I dwell in *London* town, I should be but little pleased therewith. Why should folk not divert them?

Being awary of Master *Hal's* grave discourse, went I over to *Anstace*, whom I found mighty busied of more lighter matter,—to wit, the sumptuary laws of late set forth against long cloaks and wide ruffs, which do ill please her, for *Anstace* loveth to ruffle it of a good ruff. Thence gat she to their *Cicely*, which is but ill at ease, and Dr *Bell* was fetched to her this last even: who saith that on *Friday* and *Saturday* the sign (of the Zodiac) shall be in the heart, and from *Sunday* to *Tuesday* in the stomach, during which time it shall be no safe dealing with physic preservative, whereof he reckoneth her need to be: so she must needs tarry until *Wednesday* come seven-night, and from that time to fifteen days forward shall be passing good.

Howbeit, we gat back ere long to the fashions, whereof *Anstace* had of late a parcel of news from her husband's sister, Mistress *Parker*, that dwelleth but fifty miles from *London*, and is an useful sister for to have. As to the newest fashion of sleeves (quoth she), nothing is more certain than the uncertainty; and likewise of hoods. Cypress, saith she, is out of fashion (the which hath put me right out of conceit with my cypress kirtle that was made but last year), and napped taffeta is now thought but serving-man-like. All this, and a deal more, *Anstace* told us, as we sat in the compassed window (bay window).

Dr *Meade's* hour-glass is broke of the sexton. I am fain to hear the same, if it shall cut his sermons shorter.

Note 1. At this time, shaking hands indicated warmer cordiality than the kiss, which last was the common form of greeting amongst all classes.

Note 2. Four-hours answered to afternoon tea, and was usually served, as its name denotes, at four o'clock.

Note 3. Millicent has really no connection with Melissa, though many persons have supposed so. It comes, through Milisent and Melisende, from the Gothic *Amala-suinde*, which signifies Heavenly wisdom.

Note 4. Bade is the imperfect, and bidden the participle, of bid, to invite, as well as of bid, to command.

Note 5. The reader who wishes for more light on this point than was allowed to Milisent, will find it in "Lettice Eden."

Note 6. At this time "pleasant" meant humorous, and "witty" meant intellectual. This curious child's play termed Euphuism, to which grave men and sedate women did not hesitate to lower themselves, was peculiar to the age of Elizabeth, than whom never was a human creature at once so great and so small.

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## Chapter Four.

### In By-Path Meadow.

"I thought that I was strong, Lord,  
And did not need Thine arm;  
Though dangers thronged around me,  
My heart felt no alarm:  
I thought I nothing needed—  
Riches, nor dress, nor sight:  
And on I walked in darkness,  
And still I thought it light."

*Selwick Hall, November ye xv.*

I have but now read o'er what I writ these last few days, and have meditated much whether I should go on to tell of Sir *Edwin*, for it shall ne'er serve to have folk read the same. And methinketh it best for to go straight on, and at the end, if need be, tear out the leaves. For it doth me a mighty pleasure to write and think upon the same: and I can make some excuse when I come to it.

Though Mistress *Nell*,  
I guess right well,  
Of neatness should be heedful:  
Yet I will tear  
The leaves out fair,  
If it shall so be needful.

There! who saith I cannot write poesy?

This morrow again (I being but just without the garden gate), I met with my *Protection*, who doffed his plumed bonnet and saluted me as his most fair *Amiability*. I do see him most days, though but for a minute: and in truth I think long from one time to another. Coming back, I meditated what I should say to Mistress *Nell* (that loveth somewhat too much to meddle) should she have caught sight of him: for it shall not serve every time to send him to *Kirkstone*. Nor, of course, could I think to tell a lie thereabout. So I called to mind that he had once asked me what name we called the eye-bright in these parts, though it were not this morrow, but I should not need to say that, and it should be no lie, seeing he did say so much. Metrusteth the cushion should not prick me for that, and right sure am I there should be no need.

*Selwick Hall, November ye xvii.*

Truly, as saith the old saw, 'tis best not to halloo till thou be out of the wood. This very afternoon, what should *Edith* say, without one word of warning, as we were sat a-sewing, but—

"*Mother*, do you mind a gentleman, by name *Tregarvon*?"

"What name saidst, *Edith*?" asks *Mother*.

"*Tregarvon*," quoth she. "*Sir Edwin Tregarvon*, of *Cornwall*."

"Nay, I never knew no gentleman of that name," saith *Mother*. "Where heardst of him, child?"

"'Twas when we went o'er to Saint *Hubert's* Isle, *Mother*," she made answer,— "what day were it, *Milly*?—about ten days gone—"

"Aye, I mind it," saith *Mother*.

"Well, while I sat of the rock a-drawing, come up a gentleman to me," saith she, "and asked at me if *Louvaine* were not my name. (Why, then, he knew us! thought I.) I said 'Aye,' and he went on to ask me if *Father* were at home, for he had list to have speech of him: and he said he knew you, *Mother*, of old time, when you were Mistress *Lettice*. I

told him *Father* was at home, and he desired to know what time should be the best to find him: when I told him the early morrow, for he was oft away in the afternoon. And then—”

“Well, my lass?” saith *Mother*, for *Edith* was at a point.

“Well, *Mother*, methinks I had better tell you,” saith she, a-looking up, “for I cannot be easy till I have so done, and I wis well you will not lay to my charge a thing that was no blame of mine. So—then he ’gan to speak of a fashion that little liked me, and I am assured should have liked you no better: commending my drawing, and mine hair, and mine eyes, and all such matter as that: till at the last I said unto him, ‘Sir, I pray you of pardon, but I am not used to such like talk, and in truth I know not what to answer. If your aim be to find favour with me, you were best hold your peace from such words.’ For, see you, *Mother*, I thought he might have some petition unto *Father*, and might take a fantasy that I could win *Father* to grant him, and so would the rather if he talked such matter as should flatter my foolish vanity. As though *Father* should be one to be swayed by such a fantasy as that! But then, of course, he did not know *Father*. I trust I did not aught to your displeasance, *Mother*?”

“So far as I can judge, dear child, thou didst very well,” saith *Mother*: “and I am right glad thou wert thus discreet for thy years. But what said he in answer?”

“Oh, he tarried not after that,” quoth she: “he did only mutter somewhat that methought should be to ask pardon, and then went off in another minute.”

*Mother* laid down her work with a glow in her eyes.

“O *Edith*!” saith she: “I am so thankful thou art not,”—but all suddenly she shut up tight, and the glow went out of her eyes and into her cheeks. I never know what that signifieth: and I have seen it to hap aforetime. But she took up her sewing again, and said no more, till she saith all at once right the thing which I desired her not to say.

“Did this gentleman speak with thee, *Milly*?”

I made my voice as cool and heedless as I could.

“Well, *Mother*, I reckon it was the same that I saw leaning against a tree at the other side of the isle, which spake to me and asked me what the isle was called, and who Saint *Hubert* were. He told me, the same as *Edith*, that he had known you aforetime.”

“Didst get a poem unto thy sweet eyes, *Milly*?” saith *Edith*, laughing.

“Nay,” said I, “mine eyes be not so sweet as thine.”

“Did he ask at thee if *Father* were at home?”

“Ay, he asked that.”

Herein told I no falsehood, for that day he said not a word touching mine eyes.

Then Cousin *Bess* looks up. Cousin *Bess* was by, but not Aunt *Joyce*.

“What manner of man, my lasses?” saith she.

I left *Edith* to make answer.

“Why,” saith she, “I reckon he might be ten years younger than *Father*, or may-be more: and—”

“Oh, not a young man, then?” saith *Mother*, as though she were fain it so were.

“Oh, nay,” quoth *Edith*: “but well-favoured, and of a fair hair and beard.”

“And clad of a dark green velvet jerkin,” saith Cousin *Bess*, “and tawny hose, with a rare white feather in ’s velvet bonnet?”

“That is he,” saith *Edith*.

“Good lack, then!”

Cousin *Bess* makes answer, “but he up to me only yester-morrow on the *Keswick* road, as I come back from *Isaac*’s. My word, but he doth desire for to see Sir *Aubrey* some, for he asked at us all three if he were at home.”

“Was he a man thou shouldest feel to trust, *Bess*?” asks *Mother*.

“Trust!” saith she. “I’d none trust yon dandified companion, not for to sell a sucking-pig.”

Dear heart, but what queer things doth she say at times! I would Cousin *Bess* were somewhat more civiler. To think of a gentleman such as he is, a-selling of pigs! Yet I must say I was not o’er well pleased to hear of his complimenting of *Edith*: though, ’tis true, that was ere he had seen me.

“What like is he, *Bess*?” saith *Mother*. “I would know the thought he gave to thee.”

“Marry, the first were that he was like to have no wife, or she should have amended a corner of his rare slashed sleeve, that was ravelling forth o’ the stitching,” saith she. “And the second were, that he were like the folk in this

vicinage, with his golden hair and grey eye. And the third, that he were not, for that his speech was not of these parts. And the fourth, that his satin slashed sleeves and his silver buckles of his shoes must have cost him a pretty penny. And the last, that I'd be fain to see the back of him."

"Any more betwixt, *Cousin?*" saith *Edith*, laughing.

"Eh, there was a cart-load betwixt," saith she. "I mattered him nought, I warrant you."

"Well, neither did I, o'er much," saith *Edith*.

Dear heart, thought I, but where were their eyes, both twain, that they saw not the lovesomeness and gentillesse of that my gallant *Protection*? But as for *Cousin Bess*, she never had no high fantasies. All her likings be what the *French* call *bourgeois*. But I was something surprised that *Edith* should make no count of him. I marvel if she meant the same.

"Well, there must needs be some blunder," saith *Mother*, when we had sat silent a while: "for I never knew no man of that name, nor no gentleman of *Cornwall*, to boot."

"May-be he minds you, *Mother*, though you knew not him," quoth *Edith*.

"Soothly," saith she, "there were knights in the Court, whose names I knew not: but if they saw me so much as thrice, methinks that were all—and never spake word unto me."

"See you now, *Cousin Lettice*," saith *Bess*, "if this man wanted somewhat of you, he'd be fain enough to make out that he had known you any way he might."

"Ay, very like," saith *Mother*.

"And if he come up to the door, like an honest companion, and desire speech of Sir *Aubrey*, well, he may be a decent man, for all his slashed sleeves and flying feathers: but if not so, then I write him down no better than he should be, though what he is after it passeth my wit to see."

"I do believe," quoth *Edith*, a-laughing, "that *Cousin Bess* hates every thing that flies. What with Dr *Meade's* surplice, and Sir *Edwin's* long feather—verily, I would marvel what shall come a-flying next."

"Nay, my lass, I love the song-birds as well as any," saith *Cousin Bess*: "'tis only I am not compatiend with matter flying that is not meant to fly. If God Almighty had meant men and women to fly, He'd have put wings on them. And I never can see why men should deck themselves out o' birds' feathers, without they be poor savages that take coloured beads to be worth so much as gold angels. And as for yon surplice, 'tis a rag o' *Poperie*—that's what it is: and I'd as lief tell Dr *Meade* so as an other man. I did tell Mistress *Meade* so, t' other day: but, poor soul! she could not see it a whit. 'Twas but a decent garment that the priest must needs bear, and such like. And 'Mistress *Meade*,' says I, 'I'll tell you what it is,' says I: 'you are none grounded well in *Hebrews*,' says I. 'Either Dr *Meade's* no priest, or else the Lord isn't,' says I: 'so you may pick and choose,' says I. Eh dear! but she looked on me as if I'd spake some ill words o' the Queen's Majesty—not a bit less. And 'Mistress *Wolvercot*,' says she, 'what ever do you mean?' says she. 'Well, Mistress *Meade*,' says I, 'that's what I mean—that there can be no *Christian* priests so long as *Christ* our Lord is alive: so if Dr *Meade's* a priest, He must be dead. And if so,' says I, 'why then, I don't see how there can be no *Christians* of no sort, priests or no,' says I. 'Why, Mistress *Wolvercot*!' says she, 'you must have lost your wits.' 'Well,' says I, 'some folks has: but I don't rightly think I'm one,'—and so home I came."

*Edith* was rarely taken, and laughed merrily. For me, I was so glad to see the talk win round to Mistress *Meade*, that I was fain to join.

"Thou art right, *Bess*," saith *Mother*.

"Why," saith she, "I'm with *Paul*: and he's good company enough for me, though may-be, being but a tent-maker by trade, he'd scarce be meet for Dr *Meade*. I thought we'd done with bishops and priests and such like, I can tell you, when the Church were reformed: but, eh dear! they're a coming up again every bit as bad as them aforetime. I cannot see why they kept no bishops. Lawn sleeves, forsooth! and rochets! and cassocks! and them square caps,—they're uncommon like the Beast! I make no count of 'em."

"And rochets can fly!" cries *Edith* merrily.

"Why, *Cousin Bess*," said I, "you shall be a *Brownist* in a week or twain."

"Nay, I'll be ruled by the law: but I reckon I may call out if it pinches," saith she.

So, with mirth, we ended the matter: and thankful was I when the talk were o'er.

***Selwick Hall, November ye xix.***

I do keep my book right needfully locked up, for I would not for all the world that *Nell* nor *Edith* should read this last fortnight. Yester even, just as it grew to dusk, met I with my *Protection* outside the garden door, that would fain win me to meet with him some whither on the hills, where (said he) we might talk more freely. But so feared was I to vex *Father* and *Mother* that this I did deny, though I could see it vexed him, and it went to mine heart to do thus. And he asked at me if I loved him not, and did very hard press me to say that I would love him: for he saith he loveth me better than all the world. Yet that would I not fully grant him, but plagued him a bit thereon. 'Tis rare fun plaguing a man. But methought I would try this even if I could not wring a fashion of consent out of *Father*, without his knowing the same: so when none was there but he and I and *Moses*, quoth I—

"Father, is it ever wrong to love any?"

"Love is of God," he made answer. "Surely no."

And therewith should I have been content, and flattered me that I had *Father's* assent to the loving of my *Protection*: but as ill luck would have it, he, that was going forth of the chamber, tarried, with the door in his hand, to say—

"But mind that it be very love, my maid. That is not love, but unlove, which will help a friend to break God's commandments."

I had liefer he had let that last alone. It sticketh in my throat somewhat. Yet have I *Father's* consent to loving: and surely none need break God's commandments because they love each other. 'Tis no breaking thereof for me to meet and talk with Sir *Edwin*—of that am I as certain as that my name is *Milisent*. And I have not told a single lie about it, sithence my good *Protection* revealed in mine ear the right way not to tell lies: namely, should *Mother* ask me, "*Milly*, hast thou seen again that gentleman?" that I should say out loud, "No, *Mother*,"—and whisper to myself, under my breath, "this morrow,"—the which should make it perfectly true. And right glad was I to hear of this most neat and delicate way of saving the truth, and yet not uttering your secrets.

**Selwick Hall, November ye xxii.**

If Mistress *Helena Louvaine* could ever hold her peace from saying just the very matter that I would give her a broad shilling to be quiet on! Here, now, this even, when all we were sat in hall, what should she begin with, but—

"Father, there is a thing I would ask at you."

"Say on, my maid," quoth he, right kindly as his wont is: for *Father* is always ready to counsel us maids, whensoever we may desire it.

"Then, *Father*," saith she, "what is falsehood? Where doth it begin and end? Put a case that I am talking with *Alice Lewthwaite*, and she shall ask me somewhat that I list not to tell her. Should I commit sin, if I told her but the half?"

"Hardly plain enough, my maid," saith *Father*. "As to where falsehood begins and ends,—it begins in thine heart: but where it ends, who shall tell but God? But set forth thy case something plainer."

"Well," saith she, "suppose, *Father*, that *Mother* or you had showed to me that *Wat* was coming home, but had (for some cause you wist, and I not) bidden me not to tell the same. If *Alice* should say 'Hast heard aught of late touching *Wat*, *Nell*?' must I say to her plain, 'I cannot answer thee,'—the which should show her there was a secret: or should there be no ill to say 'Not to-day,' or 'Nought much,' or some such matter as that?"

"Should there be any wrong in that, *Father*?" saith *Edith*, as though she could not think there should.

"Dear hearts," saith *Father*, "I cannot but think a man's heart is gone something wrong when he begins to meddle with casuistry. The very minute that *Adam* fell from innocence, he took refuge in casuistry. There was not one word of untruth in what he said to the Lord: he was afraid, and he did hide himself. Yet there was deception, for it was not all the truth—no, nor the half. As methinks, 'tis alway safest to tell out the plain truth, and leave the rest to God."

"*Jack Lewthwaite* said once," quoth *Edith*, "that at the grammar school at *Kendal*, where he was, there was a lad that should speak out to the master that which served his turn, and whisper the rest into his cap; yet did he maintain stoutly that he told the whole truth. What should you call that, *Father*?"

"A shift got straight from the father of lies," he made answer. "Trust me, that lad shall come to no good, without he repent and change his course."

Then Aunt *Joyce* said somewhat that moved the discourse other whither: but I had heard enough to make me rare diseaseful. When I thought I had hit on so excellent a fashion of telling the truth, and yet hiding my secrets, to have *Father* say such things came straight from *Satan*! It liketh me not at all. I would *Nell* would let things a-be!

**Selwick Hall, November ye xxiv.**

My good *Protection* tells me 'tis country fashion to count such matter deceit, and should never obtain in the Court at all. And he asked me if *Father* were not given to be a little *Puritan*—he smiling the while as though to be a *Puritan* were somewhat not over well-liked of the great. Then I told him that I knew not well his meaning, for that word was strange unto me. So he said that word *Puritan* was of late come up, to denote certain precise folk that did desire for to be better than their neighbours, and most of them only to make a talk, and get themselves well accounted of by such common minds as should take them at their own appraisement.

"Not, of course," saith he, "that such could ever be the case with a gentleman of Sir *Audrey's* worshipfulness, and with such an angel in his house to guard him from all ill."

I did not well like this, for I would alway have *Father* right well accounted of, and not thought to fall into mean country ways. But then 'gan he to talk of mine eyes, which he is ever a-praising, and after a while I forgot my disease.

Still, I cannot right away with what *Father* said. If only *Father* and *Mother* could know all about this matter, and really consent thereto, I would be a deal happier. But my *Protection* saith that were contrary unto all custom of love-matters, and they must well know the same: for in all matters where the elders do wit and order the same themselves, 'tis always stupid and humdrum for the young folks, and no romance left therein at all.

"It should suit well with Mistress *Nell*," saith he, "from what I do hear touching her conditions (disposition): but never



were meet for the noble and generous soul of my fairest *Amiability*, that is far above all such mean things."

So I reckon, if the same always be, I must be content, and not trouble me touching *Father's* and *Mother's* knowing. But I do marvel if *Father* and *Mother* did the like their own selves, for I know they married o' love. Howbeit, *Mother* had none elders then living, nor *Father* neither, now I come to think thereon: wherefore with them 'twas other matter.

Sithence I writ that last, come *Alice* and *Blanche Lewthwaite*, and their *Robin*, to four-hours: and mighty strange it is how folk be for ever a-saying things as though they wist what I were a-thinking. Here *Blanche* saith to *Nell*, that she would account that no jolly wedding where her elders had ordered all for her, but would fain choose for herself.

"I would likewise fain have my choice go along therewith," saith *Nell*, "and so, doubtless, would every maid: nor do I think that any father and mother should desire otherwise. But thou signifiest not, surely, *Blanche*, that thou shouldst love to order the whole matter thine own self, apart from thine elders' pleasure altogether?"

"Ay, but I would," saith she: "it should have a deal better zest."

"It should have a deal less honesty!" saith *Nell* with some heat—heat, that is, for *Nell*.

"Honesty!" quoth *Blanche*: "soft you now (gently),—what dishonesty should be therein?"

"Nay, *Blanche*, measure such dealing thyself by God's ell-wand of the Fifth Commandment, and judge if it were honouring thine elders as He bid thee."

"I do vow, *Nell*, thou art a *Puritan!*"

"By the which I know not what thou meanest," saith *Nell*, as cool as a marble image.

"Why, 'tis a new word of late come up," quoth *Blanche*. "They do call all sad, precise, humdrum folk, *Puritans*."

"Who be 'they'?" asks *Nell*.

"Why, all manner of folks—great folk in especial," saith she.

"Come, *Blanche!*" saith *Edith*, "where hast thou jostled with great folk?"

"An' I have not," quoth she, something hotly, "I reckon I may have talked with some that have."

"No great folk—my Lord *Dilston* except—ever come to *Derwent-side*," saith *Edith*.

"And could I not discourse with my Lord *Dilston*, if it so pleased him and me?" quoth *Blanche*, yet something angered.

"Come, my maids, fall not out," saith *Alice*. "Thou well wist, *Blanche*, thou hast had no talk with my Lord *Dilston*, that is known all o'er for the bashfullest and silentest man with women ever was. I do marvel how he e'er gat wed, without his elders did order it for him."

Well, at this we all laughed, and *Alice* turned the talk aside to other matter, for I think she saw that *Blanche's* temper (which is ne'er that of an angel) were giving way.

I cannot help to be somewhat diseaseful, for it seemeth me as though *Blanche* might hint at Sir *Edwin*. And I do trust he hath not been a-flattering of her. She is metely well-looking,—good of stature, and a fair fresh face, grey eyes, and fair hair, as have the greater part of maids about here, but her nose turns up too much for beauty. She is not for to compare with me nor *Edith*.

I must ask at Sir *Edwin* to-morrow if he wist aught of *Blanche*. If I find him double-tongued—good lack! but methinks I would ne'er see him no more, though it should break mine heart—as I cast no doubt it should.

### ***Selwick Hall, November ye xxv.***

'Tis all well, and *Blanche* could not have meant to hint at my *Protection*. I asked at him if he knew one *Blanche Lewthwaite*, and he seemed fair astonished, and said he knew no such an one, nor that any of that name dwelt in all the vale. Then I told him wherefore I had asked it. And he said that to think I was jealous of any for him did him uttermost honour and pleasance, but did his fairest *Amiability* (quo' he) think he could so much as look on any other face at after hers?

Then I asked at him (as I had often desired to wit) where he were of a *Sunday*, for that he never came to church. And he told me that he had an old friend, a parson, dwelling on *Winander-side*, and he did alway abide with him o'er the *Sunday*. Moreover he was something feared (saith he) to be seen at *Keswick* church, lest *Father* should get scent of him, wherefore he did deny himself the delight it had been (quoth he) to feast his eyes on the fair face of his most sweet *Amiability*.

"Then," said I, laughing, "you did not desire for to see *Father* at the first?"

"Soft you now!" saith he, and laughed too. "'All is fair in love and war.'"

"I doubt if *Father* should say the same," said I.

"Well, see you," quoth he, "Sir *Aubrey* is a right excellent gentleman, yet hath he some precise notions which obtain not at Court and in such like company. A man cannot square all his dealings by the Bible and the parsons, without he go out of the world. And here away in the country, where every man hath known you from your cradle, it is easier to

ride of an hobby than in Town, where you must do like other folk or else be counted singular and ridiculous. No brave and gallant man would run the risk of being thought singular."

"Why, *Father's* notion is right the contrary," said I. "I have heard him to say divers times that 'tis the cowards which dare not be laughed at, and that it takes a right brave man to dare to be thought singular."

"Exactly!" saith he. "That is right the *Puritan* talk, as I had the honour to tell you aforetime. You should never hear no gentleman of the Court to say no such a thing."

"But," said I, "speak they alway the most truth in the Court?"

This seemed to divert him rarely. He laughed for a minute as though he should ne'er give o'er.

"My fairest *Amiability*," saith he, "had I but thee in the Court, as is the only place meet for thee, then shouldst thou see how admired of every creature were thy wondrous wit and most incomparable beauties. Why, I dare be sworn on all the books in *Cumberland*, thou shouldst be of the Queen's Majesty's maids in one week's time. And of the delights and jollities of that life, dwelling here in a corner of *England*, thou canst not so much as cast an idea." Methought that should be right rare.

### ***Selwick Hall, November ye xxvii.***

With Aunt *Joyce* this morrow to visit old *Nanny Crewdson*, that is brother's widow to *Isaac*, and dwelleth in a cot up *Thirlmere* way. I would fain have avoided the same an' I might, for I never took no list in visiting poor folk, and sithence I have wist my right noble *Protection* do I take lesser than ever. In very deed, all relish is gone for me out of every thing but him and the jolly Court doings whereof he tells me. And I am ever so much happier than I was of old, with nought but humdrum matter; only that now and then, for a short while, I am a deal more miserabler. I cannot conceive what it is that cometh o'er me at those times. 'Tis like as if I were dancing on flowers, and some unseen hand did now and then push aside the flowers, and I saw a great and horrible black gulf underneath, and that one false step should cast me down therein. Nor will any thing comfort me, at those times, but to talk with my *Protection*, that can alway dispel the gloom. But the things around, that I have been bred up in, do grow more and more distasteful unto me than ever.

Howbeit, I am feared to show folk the same, so when Aunt *Joyce* called me to come with her to *Nanny*, I made none ado, but tied on mine hood and went.

We found old *Nanny*—that is too infirm for aught but to sit of a chair in the sunshine—so doing by the window, beside her a little table, and thereon a great Bible open, with her spectacles of her nose, that she pulled off and wiped, and set down of the book to keep her place.

"Well, *Nanny!*" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "'Sitting down under His shadow,' dear heart?"

"Ay, Mistress *Joyce*," saith she, "and 'with great delight.'"

I marvel if old folk do really like to read the Bible. I never did. And the older I grow, the lesser doth it like me. Can they mean it, trow? If they do, then I suppose I shall like it when I am as old as *Nanny*. But, good lack! what gloomsome manner of life must that be, wherein one shall find one's diversion in reading of the Bible!

I know *Father* and *Mother* would say clean contrary. But they, see you, were bred up never to see a Bible in *English* till they were grown: which is as different as can be to the like of us maids, that never knew the day when it lay not of the hall table. But therein runs my pen too fast, for *Anstace* can well remember Queen *Mary's* time, though *Nell* scarce can do so,—only some few matters here and there.

So then Aunt *Joyce* and *Nan* fell a-talking,—and scarce so much as a word could I conceive. (Note 1.) They might well-nigh as good have talked *Greek* for me. Yet one matter will I set down the which I mean to think o'er—some time, when I am come to divert me with the Bible, and am as old as *Nanny*. Not now, of course.

"Where art reading, *Nanny?*" saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"In *Esaias*, Mistress *Joyce*. Fifty-eighth chapter, first and second verses. There's fine reading in *Esaias*."

"Ay, *Nan*, there is," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "But what toucheth it? I am ill set to remember chapter and verse."

"Well, Mistress, first it saith, 'Show My people their transgression.' And i' th' very next verse,—'Yet they seek me daily,'—nay, there's more—they take delight in approaching to God.'"

"Well, *Nan?* That reads strange,—no doth it?"

"Ah, it doth, Mistress *Joyce*. But I think, look ye, there's a deal i' th' word *approaching*. See ye, it saith not they take delight to get near. Nay, folk o' that make has a care not to get too near. They'll lay down a chalk line, and they'll stop outside on't. If they'd only come near enough, th' light 'd burn up all them transgressions: but, ye see, that wouldn't just suit 'em. These is folk that wants to have th' Lord—a tidy way from 'em—and keep th' transgressions too. Eh, Mistress, but when a man can pray right through th' hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm, his heart's middlin' perfect wi' the Lord. Otherwise, he'll boggle at them last verses. We don't want Him to search us when we know He'll find yon wedge o' gold and yon *Babylonish* garment if He do. Nay, we don't so!"

Now, I know not o'er well what old *Nan* meaneth: but this do I know—that whenever I turn o'er the *Psalter*, I ever try to get yon Psalm betwixt two leaves, and turn them o'er both together, so that I see not a word on't. I reckon *Nan* should say my heart was not perfect by a great way. Well, may-be she'd be none so far out.

To-morrow shall be the last day of my month, and *Tuesday* even must I give up the book to *Edith*. I shall not tear out the leaves till the last minute, and I will keep them when I do.

I do never see nought of my *Protection* of a *Sunday*, but all other days meet I him now (whenas I can) in the little copse that lieth *Thirlmere* way, not so far from *Nanny's* hut. Last even was he essaying to win me for to wed him (as he hath done afore) without *Father* and *Mother* knowing. I have ever held off till now: but I am not so sure I shall do it much longer. He saith he wist a *Popish* priest that should do it: and it so done, *Father* and *Mother* must needs come in and give us leave to be wed rightly in church. But I will consider of the same a day or twain longer.

As to setting down what we do of a *Sunday*, 'tis always the same o'er again, so it should be to no good. Once is enough for all.

**Selwick Hall, November ye last.**

Such a fright have I had this morrow, I may scantily hold my pen. I set forth for the copse where I do meet with my *Protection*, and had well-nigh reached it,—verily, I could discern him coming through the trees to meet me—when from *Nanny's* hut, right upon us, who should come out save *Father*, and *Mother*, and *Edith*, their own selves. I cast but a glint to him that he should not note me, and walked on to meet them.

"Why, *Milly!*" saith *Mother*. "I wist not thou wert coming this way, child."

"Under your pleasure, *Mother*, no more did I of you," said I.

"Why, *Milly*, do but look at yon gentleman!" saith *Edith*, as he passed by us, taking no note of us at all. "Is it not the same we met on Saint *Hubert's* Isle?"

"Is it so?" said I, making believe to look after him, the rather since it gave me an excuse to turn my back on them. "He bears a green jerkin,—otherwise—"

Wherein I am very sure I said *no* falsity, as whatso *Father* might say.

"I do think it is the same," saith *Edith*. "Came he ever to speak with you, *Father?*"

"Nay, my lass, I mind him not," saith *Father*.

"He is not ill-looking," saith *Mother*.

"May-be not," quoth *Father*. "Thou art a better judge of such matters than I, dear heart. I only note the way a man's soul looketh out of his eyes, not the colour of the eyes whence it looketh."

"Now, *Father*, under your good leave, that is not well said," *Edith* makes answer: "for you have your own self the fairest eyes ever a man's soul looked forth of."

*Father* laughs at this, and doffs his cap merrily.

"Your very humble servant, Mistress *Editha Louvaine*," quoth he: "when I do desire to send forth to the world a book of all my beauties, learning, and virtues, I will bid you to write therein touching mine eyes. They serve me well to see withal, I thank God, and beyond that issue have I never troubled me regarding them."

"And how liked you the manner of Sir *Edwin Tregarvon's* soul looking forth, *Father?*" saith *Edith*, also laughing.

"Why, that could I not see," quoth he, "for he keeping his eyes bent upon the ground, it did not look forth. But I cannot say his face altogether pleased me."

How mighty strange is it that all they—and in especial *Father*, that I have always reckoned so wise—should have so little discernment!

Well, methought, as they were there, I must needs come home with them: and this afternoon, if I can steal hence without any seeing me, will I go yet again to the copse, to see if I may find my *Protection*: for I have well-nigh granted the privy wedding he hath pled so hard for, and this morrow we thought to order the inwards thereof (settle the details). As next *Sunday* at even, saith he, I am to steal forth of the garden door, and he shall meet me in the lane with an hackney and two or three serving-men for guard: and so go we forth to *Ambleside*, where the priest shall join our hands, and then come back and entreat *Father* and *Mother's* pardon and blessing. I dare be bound there shall be much commotion, and some displeasent speeches; but I trust all shall blow o'er in time: and after all (as saith my *Protection*) when there is no hope that *Father* and *Mother* should give us leave aforehand, what else can we do?

Verily, it is a sore trouble that elders will stand thus in young folks' way that do love each other. And my *Protection* is not so much elder than I. In the stead of only ten or fifteen years younger than *Father*, he is twenty-five well reckoned, having but four-and-thirty years: and I was twenty my last birthday, which is two months gone. And if he look (as he alloweth) something elder than his years, it is, as he hath told me, but trouble and sorrow, of which he hath known much. My poor *Protection!* in good sooth, I am sorry for his trouble.

I shall not tear out my leaves afore I am back, and meantime, I do keep the book right heedfully under lock and key.

As for any paying of two-pences, that is o'er for me now; so there were no good to reckon them up. My noble *Protection* saith, when he hath but once gat me safe to the Court, then shall I have a silken gown every day I do live,

and jewelling so much as ever I shall desire. He will set off his *Amiability* (quoth he) that all shall see and wonder at her. Though I count *Father* doth love me, yet am I sure, my *Protection* loveth me a deal the more. 'Tis only fitting, therefore, that I cleave to him rather.

Now must I go forth and see if I may meet with him.

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Note 1. The words *understand* and *conceive* have changed places since the days of Elizabeth. To understand then meant to originate an idea: to conceive, to realise an imparted thought.

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## Chapter Five.

### Aunt Joyce Spoils the Game.

"We shun two paths, my maiden,  
When strangers' way we tell—  
That which ourselves we know not,  
That which we know too well.  
"I 'never knew!' Thou think'st it?  
Well! Better so, to-day.  
The years lie thick and mossy  
O'er that long-silent way.  
"The roses there are withered,  
The thorns are tipped with pain:  
Thou wonderest if I tell thee  
'Walk not that way again?'  
"Oh eyes that see no further  
Than this world's glare and din!  
I warn thee from that pathway  
Because I slipped therein.  
"So, leave the veil up-hanging!  
And tell the world outside—  
'She cannot understand me—  
She nothing has to hide!'"

(In Edith's handwriting.)

### Selwick Hall, December the first.

I would have fain let be the records of this sad first day that this chronicle is come to mine hand. But *Father* and *Mother* do desire me to set down honestly what hath happened, the which therefore I must essay to do.

It was of long time that I had noted a strange difference in *Milly*, and had talked with *Nell* thereabout, more than once or twice. Though *Milisent* is by four years elder than I, yet she had always been the one of us most loving frolicsome merriment. But now it seemed me as though she had grown up over my head, all at once. Not that she was less mirthful at times: nay, rather more, if aught. But at other times she seemed an other maid, and not our *Milly* at all. It was not our *Milly's* wont to sit with her hands on her lap, a-gazing from the window; nor to answer sharp and short when one spake to her; nor to appear all unrestful, as though she were in disease of mind. And at last, *Nell* thinking less thereof than I, I made up my mind to speak with Aunt *Joyce*, that I knew was wise and witty (sensible), and if there were aught gone wrong, should take it less hard than *Mother*, and could break the same to *Mother* more gentler than we. To say truth, I was feared—and yet I scarce knew why—of that man we met on Saint *Hubert's* Isle. I had noted that *Milly* never named him, though he were somewhat cause of mirth betwixt *Helen* and me: and when an other so did, she seemed as though she essayed to speak as careless as ever she could. This liked me not: nor did it like me that twice I had met *Milly* coming from the garden, and she went red as fire when she saw me. From all this I feared some secret matter that should not be: and as yester-morrow, when we were come from *Nanny's*, I brake my mind to Aunt *Joyce*.

Aunt *Joyce* did not cry "Pish!" nor fault me for conceiving foolish fantasies, as I was something feared she might. On the contrary part, she heard me very kindly and heedfully, laying down her work to give better ear. When I had done, she saith—

"Tell me, *Edith*, what like is this man."

I told her so well as I could.

"And how oft hast thou seen him?"

"Three times, *Aunt*. The first on Saint *Hubert's* Isle, whereof you know: the second, I met him once in the lane behind the garden, as I was a-coming home from *Isaac Crewdson's*: and the last, this morrow, just as we came out of *Nanny's* door, we met *Milisent*, full face: and a minute at after, this Sir *Edwin* passed us on the road."

"Took he any note of you, either time?"

"When he met me alone, he doffed his cap and smiled, but spake not. This morrow he took no note of any one."

"*Could* she be going to meet him?" saith Aunt *Joyce* in a low and very troubled voice.

"In good sooth, *Aunt*," said I, "you have put into words my very fear, which I did scarce dare to think right out."

"*Edith*," saith she, "is *Milly* within, or no?"

"She was tying on her hood a moment since, as though she meant to go forth. I saw her through a chink of the door, which was not close shut, as I passed by."

"Come thou with me quickly," saith Aunt *Joyce*, and rose up. "We will follow her. 'Tis no treachery to lay snare for a traitor, if it be as I fear. And 'tis not she that is the traitor, poor child—poor, foolish child!"

We walked quickly, for our aim was to keep *Milisent* but just in view, yet not to let her see us. She was walking fast, too, and she took the road to *Nanny's*, but turned off just ere she were there, into the little shaw that lieth by the way. We followed quietly, till we could hear voices: then Aunt *Joyce* stayed her behind a poplar-tree, and made me a sign to be still.

"All things be now ordered, my fairest," I heard a voice say which methought was Sir *Edwin's*: and peeping heedfully round the poplar, I caught a glimpse of his side-face, enough to be sure it were he. Aunt *Joyce* could see him likewise. "All things be ordered," quoth he: "remember, nine o' the clock on *Sunday* night."

"But thou wilt not fail me?" saith *Milisent's* voice in answer.

"Fail thee!" he made answer. "My sweetest of maids, impossible!"

"I feel afeared," she saith again. "I would they had wist at home. I cannot be sure 'tis right."

"Nay, sweet heart, call not up these old ghosts I have laid so oft already," saith he. "Sir *Aubrey's Puritan* notions should never suffer him to give thee leave afore: but when done, he shall right soon o'erlook all, and all shall go merry as a marriage bell. Seest thou, we do him in truth a great kindness, sith he should be feared to give consent, and yet would fain so do if his conscience should allow."

"Would he?" asks *Milly*, in something a troubled tone.

"Would he!" Sir *Edwin* makes answer. "Would he have his daughter a right great lady at the Court? Why, of course he would. Every man would that were not a born fool. My honey-sweet *Milisent*, let not such vain scruples terrify thee. They are but shadows, I do ensure thee."

"I think thus when I am with thee," saith she, smiling up in his face: "but when not—"

"Sweet heart," saith he, bending his goodly head, "*not* is well-nigh over, and then thy cruel *Puritan* scruples shall never trouble thee more."

"It is as we feared," I whispered into the ear of Aunt *Joyce*, whose face was turned from me: but when she turned her head, I was terrified. I never in my life saw Aunt *Joyce* look as she did then. Out of her cheeks and lips every drop of blood seemed driven, and her eyes were blazing fire. When she whispered back, it was through her set teeth.

"'As!' Far worse. Worser than thou wist. Is this the man?"

"This is Sir *Edwin*!"

Without another word Aunt *Joyce* stalked forth, and had *Milisent* by the arm ere she found time to scream. Then she shrieked and shrank, but Aunt *Joyce* held her fast.



"Get you gone!" was all she said to Sir Edwin.

A 137.

"Get you gone!" was all she said to Sir *Edwin*.

"Nay, Mistress, tell me rather by what right—"

"Right!" Aunt *Joyce* loosed her hold of *Milisent*, and went and stood right before him. "Right!—from you to me!"

"Mistress, I cry you mercy, but we be entire strangers."

"Be we?" she made answer, with more bitterness in her voice than ever I heard therein. "Be we such strangers? What! think you I know you not, *Leonard Norris*? You counted on the change of all these years to hide you from *Aubrey* and *Lettice*, and you counted safely enough. They would not know you if they stood here. But did you fancy years could hide you from *Joyce Morrell*? Traitor! a woman will know the man she has loved, though his own mother were to pass him by unnoted."

Sir *Edwin* uttered not a word, but stood gazing on Aunt *Joyce* as though she had bound him by a spell.

She turned back to us a moment. "*Milisent* and *Edith*, go home!" she saith. "*Milisent*, thank God that He hath saved thee from the very jaws of Hell—from a man worsen than any fiend. *Edith*, tell thy father what hath happed, but say nought of all this to thy mother. I shall follow you anon. I have yet more ado with him here. Make thy mind easy, child—he'll not harm *me*. Now go."

*Milisent* needed no persuasions. She seemed as though Aunt *Joyce's* words had stunned her, and she followed me like a dog. We spake no word to each other all the way. When we reached home, *Milly* went straight up to her own chamber: and I, being mindful of Aunt *Joyce's* bidding, went in search of *Father*, whom I found at his books in his closet.

Ah me, but what sore work it were to tell him! I might scarce bear to see the sorrowful changes wrought in his face. But when I came to tell how Aunt *Joyce* had called this gentleman by the name of *Leonard Norris*, for one minute his eyes blazed out like hers. Then they went very dark and troubled, and he hid his face in his hands till I had made an end of my sad story.

"And I would fain not have been she that told you, *Father*," said I, "but Aunt *Joyce* bade me so to do."

"I must have heard it from some lips, daughter," he saith sorrowfully. "But have a care thou say no word to thy mother. She must hear it from none but me. My poor *Lettice*!—and my poor *Milisent*, my poor, foolish, duped child!"

I left him then, for I thought he would desire it, and went up to *Milly*. She had cast off her hood and tippet, and lay on her bed, her face turned to the wall.

"Dost lack aught, *Milly*?" said I.

"Nay," was all she said.

"Shall I bide with thee?"

"Nay."

Nor one word more might I get out of her. So I left her likewise, and came down to the little parlour, where I sat me to

my sewing.

It was about an hour after that I heard Aunt *Joyce's* firm tread on the gravel. She came into the parlour, and looked around as though to see who were there. Then she saith—

“None but thee, *Edith*? Where are the rest?”

There was a break in her voice, such as folk have when they have been sore troubled.

“I have been alone this hour, *Aunt*. *Milly* is in our chamber, and *Father* I left in his closet. Whither *Mother* and *Nell* be I know not.”

“Hast told him?”

“Ay, and he said only himself must tell *Mother*.”

“I knew he would. God help her!”

“You think she shall take it very hard, *Aunt*?”

“*Edith*,” saith Aunt *Joyce* softly, “there is more to take hard than thou wist. And we know not well yet all the ill he may have wrought to *Milisent*.”

Then away went she, and I heard her to rap on the door of *Father's* closet. For me, I sat and sewed a while longer: and yet none coming, I went up to our chamber, partly that I should wash mine hands, and partly to see what was come of *Milly*.

She still lay on the bed, but her face turned somewhat more toward me, and by her shut eyes and even breathing I could guess that she slept. I sat me down in the window to wait, when mine hands were washen: for I thought some should come after a while, and may-be should not count it right that I left *Milisent* all alone. I guess it were a good half-hour I there sat, and *Milly* slept on. At the last come *Mother*, her eyes very red as though she had wept much.

“Doth she sleep, *Edith*?” she whispered.

I said, “Ay, *Mother*: she hath slept this half-hour or more.”

“Poor child!” she saith. “If only I could have wist sooner! How much I might have saved her! O poor child!”

The water welled up in her eyes again, and she went away, something in haste. I had thought *Mother* should be angered, and I was something astonished to see how soft she were toward *Milly*. A while after, Aunt *Joyce* come in: but *Milly* slept on.

“I am fain to see that,” saith she, nodding her head toward the bed. “A good sign. Yet I would I knew exactly how she hath taken it.”

“I am afeared she may be angered, Aunt *Joyce*, to be thus served of one she trusted.”

“I hope so much. 'Twill be the best thing she can be. The question is what she loved—whether himself or his flattering of herself. She'll soon get over the last, for it shall be nought worsen with her than hurt vanity.”

“Not the first, *Aunt*?”

“I do not know, *Edith*,” she saith, and crushed in her lips. “That hangs on what sort of woman she be. There shall be a wound, in either case: but with some it gets cicatrised over and sound again with time, and with other some it tarries an open issue for ever. It hangs all on the manner of woman.”

“What should it be with you, Aunt *Joyce*?” said I, though I were something feared of mine own venturesomeness.

“What it *is*, *Edith*,” she made answer, crushing in her lips again, “is the open issue, bandaged o'er so that none knows it is there save He to whose eyes all things be open. Child, there be some things in life wherein the only safe confidant thou canst have is *Jesu Christ*. I say so much, by reason that thine elders think it best—and I likewise—that ye maids should be told somewhat more than ye have heard aforetime. Ay, I give full assent thereto. I only held out for one thing—that I, not your mother, should be she that were to tell it.”

We were silent a moment, and then *Milisent* stirred in her sleep. Aunt *Joyce* went to her.

“Awake, my dear heart?” saith she.

*Milly* sat up, and pushed aside her hair from her face, the which was flushed and sullen.

“Aunt *Joyce*, may the Lord forgive you for this day's work!” saith she.

I was fair astonished that she should dare thus to speak. But Aunt *Joyce* was in no wise angered.

“Amen!” she saith, as softly as might be spoken. “Had I no worsen sins to answer for, methinks I should stand the judgment.”

“No worsen!” *Milisent* blazed forth. “What, you think it a light matter to part two hearts that love well and truly?”

"Nay, truly, I think it right solemn matter," saith Aunt *Joyce*, still softly. "And if aught graver can be, *Milly*, it is to part two whereof the one loveth well, and the other—may God forgive us all!"

"What mean you now?" saith *Milisent* of the same fashion. "Is it my love you doubt, or his?"

"*Milisent Louvaine*," saith Aunt *Joyce*, "if thou be alive twenty years hence, thou shalt thank God from thy very heart-root that thou wert stayed on that road to-day."

"Oh ay, that is what folk always say!" murmurs she, and laid her down again. "'Thou wilt thank me twenty years hence,' quoth they, every stinging stroke of the birch. And they look for us beaten hounds to crede it, forsooth!"

"Ay—when the twenty years be over."

"I am little like to thank you at twenty years' end," saith *Milly* sullenly, "for I count I shall die of heart-break afore twenty weeks."

"No, *Milly*, I think not."

"And much you care!"

Then I saw Aunt *Joyce*'s face alter—terribly.

"*Milisent*," she said, "if I had not cared, I should scantily have gone of set purpose through that which wrung every fibre of my heart, ay, to the heart's core."

"It wrung me more than you," *Milisent* makes answer, of the same bitter, angered tone as aforetime.

Aunt *Joyce* turned away from the bed, and I saw pain and choler strive for a moment in her eyes. Then the choler fell back, and the pain abode.

"Poor child! She cannot conceive it." She said nought sterner; and she came and sat in the window alongside of me.

"I tell you, Aunt *Joyce*,"—and *Milisent* sat up again, and let herself down, and came and stood before us—"I tell you, you have ruined my life!"

"My maid," Aunt *Joyce* makes answer, with sore trouble in her voice, "thine elders will fain have thee and thy sisters told a tale the which we have alway kept from you until now. It was better hidden, unless you needed the lesson. But now they think it shall profit thee, and may-be save *Helen* and *Edith* from making any like blunder. And—well, I have granted it. Only I stood out for one point—that I myself should be the one to tell it you. Wait till thou hast heard that story, the which I will tell thee to-morrow. And at after thou hast heard it,—then tell me, *Milly*, whether I cared for thee this morrow, or whether the hand that hath ruined thy life were the hand of *Joyce Morrell*."

"Oh, but you were cruel, cruel!" sobbed *Milly*. "I loved him so!"

"So did I, *Milisent*," saith Aunt *Joyce* very softly, "long ere you maids were born. Loved him so fondly, trusted him so wholly, clung to him so faithfully, that mine eyes had to be torn open before I would see the truth—that even now, after all these years, it is like thrusting a dagger into my soul to tell you verily who and what he is. Ay, child, I loved that man in mine early maidenhood, better than ever thou didst or wouldst have done. Dost thou think it was easy to stand up to the face that I had loved, and to play the avenging angel toward his perfidy? If thou dost, thou mayest know much of foolishness and fantasy, but very little of true and real love."

*Milisent* seemed something startled and cowed. Then all suddenly she saith,—*"But, Aunt Joyce! He told me he were only of four-and-thirty years."*

Aunt *Joyce* laughed bitterly.

"Wert so poor an innocent as to crede that, *Milly*?" saith she. "He is a year elder than thy father. But I grant, he looks by far younger than he is. And I reckon he 'bated ten years or so of what he looked. He alway looked young," she saith, the softened tone coming back into her voice. "Men with fair hair like his, mostly do, until all at once they break into aged men. And he hath kept him well, with washes and unguents."

It was strange to hear how the softness and the bitterness strave together in her voice. I count it were by reason they so strave in her heart.

"Wait till to-morrow, *Milly*," saith Aunt *Joyce*, arising. "Thou shalt hear then of my weary walk through the thorns, and judge for thyself if I had done well to leave thee to the like."

*Milly* sobbed again, but methought something more softly.

"We were to have been wed o' *Sunday* even," saith she, "by a *Popish* priest, right as good as in church,—and then to have come home and won *Father* and *Mother* to forgive us and bless us. Then all had been smooth and sweet, and we should have lived happy ever after."

Oh, but what pitifulness was there in Aunt *Joyce*'s smile!

"Should you?" saith she, in a tone which seemed to me like the biggest nay ever printed in a book. "Poor innocent child! A *Popish* priest cannot lawfully wed any, and evening is out of the canonical hours. Wist thou not that such marriage should ne'er have held good in law?"



"It might have been good in God's sight, trow," saith she, something perversely.

"Nay!" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "When men go to, of set purpose, to break the laws of their country,—without it be in obedience to His plain command,—I see not how the Lord shall hold them guiltless. So he promised to bring thee home to ask pardon, did he? Poor, trusting, deluded child! Thou shouldst never have come home, *Milly*—unless it had been a year or twain hence, a forlorn, heart-broken, wretched thing. Well, we could have forgiven thee and comforted thee then—as we will now."

I am right weary a-writing, and will stay mine hand till I set down *Aunt's* story to-morrow.

***Selwick Hall, December ye second.***

I marvel when I can make an end of writing, or when matters shall have done happening. For early this morrow, ere breakfast were well over, come a quick rap of the door, which *Caitlin* opened, and in come *Alice Lewthwaite*. Not a bit like herself looked she, with a scarf but just cast o'er her head, and all out of breath, as though she had come forth all suddenly, and had run fast and far. We had made most of us an end of eating, but were yet sat at the table.

"*Alice*, dear heart, what aileth thee?" saith *Mother*, and rose up.

"Lady *Lettice*, do pray you tell me," panteth she, "if you have seen or heard aught of our *Blanche*?"

"Nay, *Alice*, in no wise," saith *Mother*.

"Lack the day!" quoth she, "then our fears be true."

"What fears, dear heart?" I think *Father*, and *Mother*, and Aunt *Joyce*, asked at her all together.

"I would as lief say nought, saving to my Lady, and Mistress *Joyce*," she saith: so they bare her away, and what happed at that time I cannot say, saving that *Father* himself took *Alice* home, and did seem greatly concerned at her trouble. Well, this was scantily o'er ere a messenger come with a letter to *Mother*, whereon she had no sooner cast her eyes than she brake forth with a cry of pleasure. Then, *Father* desiring to know what it were, she told us all that certain right dear and old friends of hers, the which she had not seen of many years, were but now at the *Salutation* Inn at *Ambleside*, and would fain come on and tarry a season here if it should suit with *Mother's* conveniency to have them.

"And right fain should I be," saith she; and so said *Father* likewise.

Then *Mother* told us who were these her old friends: to wit, Sir *Robert Stafford* and his lady, which was of old time one Mistress *Dulcibel Fenton*, of far kin unto my Lady *Norris*, that was *Mother's* mistress of old days at *Minster Lovel*: and moreover, one Mistress *Martin*, a widow that is sister unto Sir *Robert*, and was *Mother's* fellow when she served my dear-worthy Lady of *Surrey*. So *Father* saith he would ride o'er himself to *Ambleside*, and give them better welcome than to send but a letter back: and *Mother* did desire her most loving commendations unto them all, and bade us all be hasteful and help to make ready the guest-chambers. So right busy were we all the morrow, and no time for no tales of no sort: but in the afternoon, when all was done, Aunt *Joyce* had us three up into her chamber, and bade us sit and listen.

"For it is a sorrowful story I have to tell," saith she: and added, as though she spake to herself,—“ay, and it were best got o'er ere *Dulcie* cometh.”

So we sat all in the window-seat, *Milly* in the midst, and Aunt *Joyce* afore us in a great cushioned chair.

"When I was of your years, *Milly*," saith she, "I dwelt—where I now do at *Minster Lovel*, with my father and my sister *Anstace*. Our mother was dead, and our baby brother *Walter*, and of us there had never been more. But we had two cousins—one *Aubrey Louvaine*, the son of our mother's sister,—you wot who he is," she saith, and smiled: "and the other, the son of our father's sister dwelt at *Oxford* with his mother, a widow, and his name was—*Leonard Norris*."

The name was so long a-coming that I marvelled if she meant to tell us.

"I do not desire to make my tale longer than need is, dear hearts," pursueth she, "and therefore I will but tell you that in course of time, with assent of my father and his mother, my cousin *Leonard* and I were troth-plight. I loved him, methinks, as well as it was in woman to love man: and—I thought he loved me. I never knew a man who had such a tongue to cajole a woman's heart. He could talk in such a fashion that thou shouldst feel perfectly assured that he loved thee with all his heart, and none but thee: and ere the sun had set, he should have given the very same certainty to *Nan* at the farm, and to *Mall* down in the glen. I believe he did rarely make love to so little as one woman at once. He liked—he once told your father so much—a choice of strings for his bow. But of all this, at first, lost in my happy love, I knew nothing. My love to him was so true and perfect, that the very notion that his could be lesser than so never entered mine head. It was *Anstace* who saw the clouds gathering before any other—*Anstace*, to whom, in her helpless suffering, God gave a strange power of reading hearts. There came a strange maiden on the scene—a beautiful maiden, with fair eyes and gleaming hair—and *Leonard's* heart was gone from me for ever. Gone!—had it ever come? I cannot tell. May-be some little corner of his heart was mine, once on a time—I doubt if I had more. He had every corner and every throb of mine. Howbeit, when this maid—"

"How was she called, Aunt *Joyce*?" saith *Milly*, in rather an hard voice.

Aunt *Joyce* did not make answer for a moment: and, looking up on her, I saw drawn brows and flushed cheeks.

"Never mind that, *Milly*. I shall call her *Mary*. It was not her name. Well, when this maid first came to visit us, and I brought her above to my sister, that as ye know might never arise from the couch whereon she lay—I something

marvelled to see how quick from her face to mine went *Anstace's* eyes, and back again to her. I knew, long after, what had been her thought. She had no faith in *Leonard*, and she guessed quick enough that this face should draw him away from me. She tried to prepare me as she saw it coming. But I was blind and deaf. I shut mine eyes tight, and put my fingers in mine ears. I would not face the cruel truth. For *Mary* herself, I am well assured she meant me no ill, nor did she see that any ill was wrought till all were o'er. She did but divert her with *Leonard's* words, caring less for him than for them. She was vain, and loved flatteries, and he saw it, and gave her them by the bushel. She was a child laking with a firebrand, and never knew what it were until she burnt her fingers. And at last, maids, mine eyes were forced open. *Leonard* himself told me, and in so many words, what I had refused to hear from others,—that he loved well enough the gold that was like to be mine, but he did not love me. There were bitter words on both sides, but mine were bitterest. And so, at last, we parted. I could show you the flag on which he stood when I saw his face for the last time—the last, until I saw it yester-morrow. Others had seen him, and knew him not, through the changes of years. Even your father did not know him, though they had been bred up well-nigh as brothers. But mine eyes were sharper. I had not borne that face in mine heart, and seen it in my dreams, for all these years, that I should look on him and not know it. I knew the look in his eyes, the poise of his head, the smile on his lips, too well—too well! I reckon that between that day and this, a thousand women may have had that smile upon them. But I thought of the day when I had it—when it was the one light of life to me—for I had not then beheld the Light of the World. *Milly*, didst thou think me cruel yester-morrow?—cold, and hard, and stern? Ah, men do think a woman so,—and women at times likewise—think her words hard, when she has to crush her heart down ere she can speak any word at all—think her eyes icy cold, when behind them are a storm of passionate tears that must not be shed then, and she has to keep the key hard turned lest they burst the door open. Ah, young maids, you look upon me as who should say, that I am an old woman from whom such words are strange to you. They be fit only for a young lass's lips, forsooth? Childre, you wis not yet that the hot love of youth is nought to be compared to the yearning love of age,—that the maid that loveth a man whom she first met a month since cannot bear the rushlight unto her that has shrined him in her heart for thirty years."

Aunt *Joyce* tarried a moment, and drew a long breath. Then she saith in a voice that was calmer and lower—

"*Anstace* told me I loved not the *Leonard* that was, but only he that should have been. But I have prayed God day and night, and I will go on yet praying, that the man of my love may be the *Leonard* that yet shall be,—that some day he may turn back to God and me, and remember the true heart that poured all that love upon him. If it be so, let the Lord order how, and where, and when. For if I may know that it is, when I come into His presence above, I can finish my journey here without the knowledge."

"But it were better to know it, Aunt *Joyce*?" saith *Helen* tenderly. Methinks the tale had stirred her heart very much.

"It were happier, *Nelly*," quoth Aunt *Joyce* softly. "God knoweth whether it were best. If it be so, He will give it me.—And now is the hardest part of my tale to tell. For after a while, *Milly*, this—*Mary*—came to see what *Leonard* meant, and methinks she came about the same time to the certainty that she loved one who was not *Leonard*. When he had parted from me he sought her, and there was much bitterness betwixt them. At the last she utterly denied him, and shut the door betwixt him and her: for the which he never forgave her, but at a later time, when in the persecutions under King *Henry* she came into his power, he used her as cruelly as he might then dare to go. I reckon, had it been under *Queen Mary*, he should have been content with nought less than her blood. But it pleased the good Lord to deliver her, he getting him entangled in some briars of politics that you should little care to hear: and so when she was freed forth of prison, he was shut up therein."

"Then, Aunt *Joyce*, is he a *Papist*?" saith *Helen*, of a startled fashion.

"Ay, *Nell*, he is a black *Papist*. When we all came forth of *Babylon*, he tarried therein."

"And what came of her you called *Mary*, if it please you, *Aunt*?" quoth I.

"She was wed to one that dwelt at a distance from those parts, *Edith*," saith Aunt *Joyce*, in the constrained tone wherein she had begun her story. "And sithence then have I heard at times of *Leonard*, though never meeting him,—but always as of one that was journeying from bad to worse—winning hearts and then breaking them. Since *Queen Elizabeth* came in, howbeit, heard I never word of him at all: and I knew not if he were in life or no, till I set eyes on his face yesterday."

We were all silent till Aunt *Joyce* saith gently—

"Well, *Milly*,—should we have been more kinder if we had let thee alone to break thine heart, thinkest?"

"It runneth not to a certainty that mine should be broke, because others were," mutters *Milly* stubbornly.

"Thou countest, then, that he which had been false to a thousand maids should be true to the one over?" saith Aunt *Joyce*, with a pitying smile. "Well, such a thing may be possible,—once in a thousand times. Hardly oftener, methinks, my child. But none is so blind as she that will not see. I must leave the Lord to open thine eyes,—for I wis He had to do it for me."

And Aunt *Joyce* rose up and went away.

"I marvel who it were she called *Mary*," said I.

"Essay not to guess, dear heart," saith *Helen* quickly. "'Tis plain Aunt *Joyce* would not have us know."

"Why, she told us, or as good," quoth *Milisent*, in that bitter fashion she hath had to-day and yesterday. "Said she not, at the first, that 'it were well to get the tale o'er ere *Dulcie* should come'? 'Tis my Lady *Stafford*, of course."

"I am not so sure of that," saith *Helen*, in a low voice: and methought she had guessed at some other, but would not say out (Note 1). "I think we were better to go down now."

So down went we all to the great chamber, and there found, with *Mother*, Mistress *Lewthwaite*, that was, as was plain to see, in a mighty taking (much agitated).

"Dear heart, Lady *Lettrice*, but I never looked for this!" she crieth, wiping of her eyes with her kerchief. "I wis we have been less stricter than you in breeding up our maids: but to think that one of them should bring this like of a misfortune on us! For *Blanche* is gone to be undone, of that am I sure. Truth to tell, yonder Sir *Francis Everett* so took me with his fine ways and goodly looks and comely apparel and well-chosen words,—ay, and my master too—that we never thought to caution the maids against him. Now, it turns out that *Alice* had some glint of what were passing: but she never betrayed *Blanche*, thinking it should not be to her honour; and me,—why, I ne'er so much as dreamed of any ill in store."

"What name said you?" quoth *Mother*, that was trying to comfort her.

"*Everett*," saith she; "Sir *Francis Everett*, he said his name were, of *Woodbridge*, in the county of *Suffolk*, where he hath a great estate, and spendeth a thousand pound by the year. And a well-looking man he was, not o'er young, belike, but rare goodly his hair fair and his eyes shining grey,—somewhat like to yours, my Lady."

*Helen* and I looked on each other, and I saw the same thought was in both our minds. And looking then upon *Mother*, I reckoned it had come to her likewise. At *Milisent* I dared not look, though I saw *Helen* glance at her.

"And now," continueth Mistress *Lewthwaite*, "here do I hear that at *Grasmere* Farm he gave out himself to be one Master *Tregarvon*, of *Devon*; and up in *Borrowdale*, he hath been playing the gallant to two or three maids by the name of Sir *Thomas Brooke* of *Warwickshire*: and the saints know which is his right one. He's a bad one, Lady *Lettrice*! And after all, here is your Mistress *Bess*, she saith she is as sure as that her name is *Wolvercot*, that no one of all these names is his own. She reckons him to be some young gentleman that she once wist, down in the shires,—marry, what said she was his name, now? I cannot just call to mind. She should ne'er have guessed at him, quoth she, but she saw him do somewhat this young man were wont to do, and were something singular therein—I mind not what it were. Dear heart, but this fray touching our *Blanche* hath drove aught else out of mine head! But Mistress *Bess* said *he* were a bad one, and no mistake."

"Is *Blanche* gone off with him, Mistress *Lewthwaite*?" saith *Helen*.

"That is right what she is, *Nell*, and ill luck go with her," quoth Mistress *Lewthwaite*: "for it will, that know I. God shall never bless no undutiful childre,—of that am I well assured."

"Nay, friend, curse not your own child!" saith *Mother*, with a little shudder.

"Eh, poor lass, I never meant to curse her," quoth she: "she'll get curse enough from him she's gone withal. She has made her bed, and she must lie on it. And a jolly hard one it shall be, by my troth!"

Here come Cousin *Bess* and Aunt *Joyce* into the chamber, and a deal more talk was had of them all: but at the last Mistress *Lewthwaite* rose up, and went away. But just ere she went, saith she to *Milisent* and me, that were sat together of one side of the chamber—

"Eh, my maids, but you twain should thank God and your good father and mother! for if you had been bred up with less care, this companion, whatso his name be, should have essayed to beguile you as I am a *Cumberland* woman. A pair of comely young lasses like you should have been a great catch for him, I reckon."

"Ah, Mistress mine," saith Cousin *Bess*, "when lasses take as much care of their own selves as their elders of them, we shall catch larks by the sky falling, I reckon."

"You are right, Mistress *Bess*," saith she: and so away hied she.

No sooner was Mistress *Lewthwaite* gone, than *Mother* saith,—"*Bess*, who didst thou account this man to be? Mistress *Lewthwaite* saith thou didst guess it to be one thou hadst known down in the shires, but she had forgot the name."

I saw Cousin *Bess* look toward Aunt *Joyce* with a question in her eyes: and if ever I read *English* in eyes, what Aunt's said was,—"Have a care!" Then Cousin *Bess* saith, very quiet—

"It was a gentleman in *Oxford* town, Cousin *Lettrice*, that I was wont to hear of from our *Nell* when she dwelt yonder."

"Oh, so?" saith *Mother*: and thus the matter ended.

But at after, in the even, when *Father* and Aunt *Joyce* and I were by ourselves a little season in the hall, I heard Aunt *Joyce* say, very soft—

"*Aubrey*, didst thou give her the name?"

Methought *Father* shook his head.

"I dared not, *Joyce*," saith he. "She was so sore troubled touching—the other matter."

"I thought so," quoth Aunt. "Then I will beware that I utter it not."

"But *Edith* knows," answereth *Father* in a low voice.

"The maids all know," saith she. "I did not reckon thou wouldest keep it from her."

"I should not, but,"—and *Father* paused. "Thou wist, *Joyce*, how she setteth her heart on all things."

"I am afear'd, *Aubrey*, she shall have to know sooner or later. Mistress *Lewthwaite* did all but utter it to her this morning, only I thank God her memory failed her just at the right minute."

"We were better to tell her than that," saith *Father*, and leaned his head upon his hand as though he took thought.

Then *Mother* and *Helen* came in, and no more was said.

#### ***Selwick Hall, December the fourth.***

I had no time to write yestereven, for we were late abed, it being nigh nine o' the clock ere we came up; and all the day too busy. My Lady *Stafford* and Sir *Robert* and Mistress *Martin* did return with *Father*—the which I set not down in his right place at my last writing,—and yesterday we gat acquaint and showed them the vicinage and such like. As to-morrow, *Mother* shall carry them to wait on my Lord *Dilston*.

Sir *Robert Stafford* is a personable gentleman, much of *Father's* years; his nose something high, yet not greatly so, and his hair and beard now turning grey, but have been dark. Mistress *Martin* his sister (that when *Mother* wist her was Mistress *Grissel Stafford*) is much like to him in her face, but some years the younger of the twain, though her hair be the greyer. My Lady *Stafford*, howbeit, hath not a grey hair of her head, and hath more ruddiness of her face than Mistress *Martin*, being to my thought the comelier dame of the twain. *Mother*, nathless, saith that Mistress *Grissel* was wont to be the fairer when all were maids, and that she hath wist much trouble, the which hath thus consumed her early lovesomeness. For her husband, Captain *Martin*, that was an officer of *Calais*, coming home after that town was lost in Queen *Mary's* time, was attaint of heresy and taken of Bishop *Bonner*, he lying long in prison, and should have been Brent at the stake had not Queen *Mary's* dying (under God's gracious ordering) saved him therefrom. And all these months was Mistress *Martin* in dread disease, never knowing from one week to another what should be the end thereof. And indeed he lived not long after, but two or three years. Sir *Robert Stafford*, on the other part, was a wiser man; for no sooner was it right apparent, on Queen *Mary's* incoming, how matters should turn, than he and his dame and their two daughters gat them over seas and dwelt in foreign parts all the days that Queen *Mary* reigned. And in *Dutchland* (Germany) were both their daughters wedded, the one unto a noble of that country, by name the Count of *Rothenthal*, and the other unto a priest, an Englishman that took refuge also in those parts, by name Master *Francis Digby*, that now hath a living in *Somerset*.

Medoubteth if *Mother* be told who Sir *Edwin Tregarvon* were. *Milly* 'bideth yet in the sulks, and when she shall come thereout will I not venture to guess. *Alice Lewthwaite* come over this afternoon but for a moment, on her way to her aunt's, Mistress *Rigg*, and saith no word is yet heard of their *Blanche*, whom her father saith he will leather while he can lay on if she do return, while her mother is all for killing the fatted calf and receiving her back with welcome.

#### ***Selwick Hall, December the v.***

This morrow we set forth for *Lord's Island*, a goodly company—to wit, *Father*, and *Mother*, and Sir *Robert* and my Lady *Stafford*, and Mistress *Martin*, and *Milisent*, and me. Too many were we for *Adam* to row, and thought to take old *Matthias*, had not *Robin Lewthwaite* chanced on us the last minute, and craved leave to take an oar, saying it should be a jolly pleasance for him to spend the day on *Lord's Island*. So *Father* took the second oar, and *Adam* steered, and all we got well across, thanks to God. We landed, *Father* gave his hand to my Lady *Stafford*, and Sir *Robert* to *Mother*, and *Robin*, pulling a face at *Milly* and me (for I wis well he had liever have been with us), his to Mistress *Martin*.

"Well, *Edith*," saith *Milly*, the pleasantest she hath spoken of late, "I reckon I must be thy *cavaliero*."

"Will you have my cap, *Milisent*?" saith *Robin*, o'er his shoulder.

"Thanks, I reckon I shall manage without," quoth she.

"Well, have a care you demean yourself as a *cavaliero* should," saith he. "Tell her she is the fairest maid in all the realm, and you shall die o' despair an' you get not a glance from her sweet eyes."

"Nay, I'll leave that for you," saith *Milly*.

"Good. I will do mine utmost to mind it the next opportunity," quoth *Robin*.

So, with mirth, come we up to *Dilston Hall*.

My Lord was within, said the old serving-man, and so likewise were Mistress *Jane* and Mistress *Cicely*: so he led us across the hall, that is set with divers coloured stones, of a fashion they have in *Italy*, and into a pleasant chamber, where Mistress *Cicely* was sat at her frame a-work, and rose up right lovingly to welcome us. Mistress *Jane*, said she, was in the garden: but my Lord come in the next minute, and was right pleasant unto us after his sad and bashful fashion, for never saw I a man like him, as bashful as any maid. Then Mistress *Jane* come anon, and bare us—to wit, *Milisent* and me—away to her own chamber, where she gave us sweet cakes and muscadel; and Mistress *Cicely* came too. And a jolly time should we have had, had it not come into Mistress *Cicely's* head to ask at us if it were true that *Blanche Lewthwaite* was gone away with some gallant. I had need to say *Ay*, for *Milisent* kept her mouth close shut.

"And who were he?" quoth Mistress *Jane*. I answered that so far as we heard he had passed by divers names, all about this vicinage: but the name whereby he had called himself at *Mere Lea* (which is Master *Lewthwaite's*) was *Everett*.

"I warrant you, *Jane*," saith Mistress *Cicely*, "'tis the same *Everett Farmer Benson* was so wroth with, for making up to

his *Margaret*. He said if ever he came nigh his house again, he should go thence with a bullet more than he brought. A man past his youth, was he, *Edith*, with fair shining hair—no grey in it—and mighty sweet spoken?”

“Ay, that is he,” said I, “or I mistake, Madam.”

“Dear heart, but what an ill one must he be!” quoth Mistress *Jane*. “Why he made old *Nanny’s* grand-daughter *Doll* reckon he meant to wed her, and promised to give her a silver chain for her neck this next *Sunday!*”

All this while sat *Milisent* still and spake never a word. I gat discourse turned so soon as ever I might. Then after a little while went we down to hall, and good mirth was had of the young gentlewomen with *Robin* and me: but all the while *Milisent* very still, so that at last Mistress *Cicely* noted it, and asked her if her head ached. She said ay: and she looked like it. So, soon after came we thence, and crossed the lake again, and so home. *Milly* yet very silent all the even: not as though she sulked, as of late, but rather as though she meditated right sadly.

***Selwick Hall, December ye vii.***

This morrow, I being in Aunt *Joyce’s* chamber, helping her to lay by the new-washed linen, come *Milisent* in very softly.

“Aunt *Joyce*,” she saith, “I would fain have speech of you.”

“Shall I give thee leave (go away and leave you), *Milly?*” said I, arising, for I was knelt of the floor, before the bottom drawer.

“Nay, *Edith*,” she makes answer: “thou knowest my faults, and it is but meet thou shouldst hear my confession.”

Her voice choked somewhat, and Aunt *Joyce* saith lovingly, “Dost think, then, thou hast been foolish, dear child?”

“I can hardly tell about foolish, *Aunt*,” saith she, casting down her eyes, “but methinks I have been sinful. Will you forgive me mine hard words and evil deeds?”

“Ay, dear heart, right willingly. And I shall not gainsay thee, *Milly*,” saith Aunt *Joyce*, sadly: “for ‘the thought of foolishness is sin,’ and God calls many a thing sin whereof we men think but too lightly. Yet, bethink thee that ‘if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.’ Now, dear heart, if thou wilt be ruled by me, thou wilt ‘arise and go to thy father’ and thy mother, and say to them right as did the prodigal, that thou hast sinned against Heaven and in their sight. I think neither of them is so much angered as sorrowful and pitying: yet, if there be any anger in them, trust me, that were the way to disarm it. Come back, *Milly*—first to God, and then to them. Thou shalt find fatherly welcome from either.”

*Milly* still hid her face.

“Aunt *Joyce*,” she saith, “I dare not say I have come *back* to God, for I have been doubting this morrow if I were ever near Him. But I think I have *come*. So now I may go to *Father* and *Mother*.”

Aunt *Joyce* kissed her lovingly, and carried her off. Of course I know not what happed betwixt *Father* and *Mother*, and *Milly*, but I know that *Milly* looks a deal happier, and yet sadder (graver), than she hath done of many days: and that both *Father* and *Mother* be very tender unto her, as to one that had been lost and is found.

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Note 1. Helen guessed rightly. As the readers of “Lettice Eden” will know, the “Mary” of the tale was her mother.

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## Chapter Six.

### Christmas Cheer.

“Then opened wide the baron’s hall  
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;  
All hailed with uncontrolled delight,  
And general voice, the happy night  
That to the cottage, as the crown,  
Brought tidings of salvation down.”  
Scott.

(In *Edith’s* handwriting.)

***Selwick Hall, December ye x.***

Here have I been a-thinking I should scantly write a word when my month was come, and already, with but ten days thereof, have I filled half as much paper as either *Helen* or *Milisent*. But in good sooth, I do trust the next ten days shall not be so full of things happening as these last. Nathless, I do love to have things happen, after a fashion: but I would have them to be alway pleasant things. And when things happen, they be so oft unpleasant.

Now, if one might order one’s own life, methinks it should be a right pleasant thing. For I reckon I should not go a-fooling, like as some lasses do. Mine head is not all stuffed with gallants, nor yet with velvet and gold. But I would love to be great. Not great like a duchess, just a name and no more: but to make a name for myself, and to have folks talk of me, how good and how clever I were. That is what I would fain be thought—good and clever. I take no

care to be thought fair, nor in high place; howbeit, I desire not to be ugly nor no lower down than I am. But I am quite content with mine own place, only I feel within me that I could do great things.

And how can a woman do great things, without she be rare high in place, such like as the Queen's Majesty, or my Lady Duchess of *Suffolk*? Or how could I ever look to do great things, here in *Derwent* dale? Oh, I do envy our *Wat* and *Ned*, by reason they can go about the world and o'er the seas, and make themselves famous.

And, somehow, in a woman's life everything seems so little. 'Tis just cooking and eating; washing linen and soiling of it; going to bed and rising again. Always doing things and then undoing them, and alway the same things over and over again. It seems as if nought would ever stay done. If one makes a new gown, 'tis but that it may be worn out, and then shall another be wanted. I would the world could give o'er going on, and every thing getting worn out and done with.

Other folks do not seem to feel thus. I reckon *Helen* never does, not one bit. Some be so much easier satisfied than other. I count them the happiest.

I cannot tell how it is, but I do never feel satisfied. 'Tis as though there were wings within me, that must ever of their nature be stretching upward and onward. Where should they end, an' they might go forward? Would there be any end? Can one be satisfied, ever?

I believe *Anstace* and *Helen* are satisfied, but then 'tis their nature to be content with things as they be. I do not know about *Mother* and Aunt *Joyce*. I misdoubt if it be altogether their nature. But then neither do they seem always satisfied. *Father* doth so: and his nature is high enough. I think I shall ask *Father*. As for Cousin *Bess*, an' I were to ask at her, she should conceive me never a whit. 'Tis her nature to cook and darn and scour, and to look complacently on her cake and her mended hole and her cleaned chamber, and never trouble herself to think that they shall lack doing o'er again to-morrow. Chambers are like to need cleansing, and what were women made for save to keep them clean? That is Cousin *Bess*, right out. For Master *Stuyvesant*, methinks he is right the other way, and rather counts the world a dirty place and full of holes, that there shall be no good in neither cleansing nor mending. And I look not on matters in that light. Methinks it were better to cleanse the chamber, if only one could keep it from being dirtied at after. I shall see what *Father* saith.

### ***Selwick Hall, December the xii.***

Yester even, as we were sat in the great chamber,—there was *Mother* and *Helen* at their wheels, and Aunt *Joyce* and my Lady *Stafford* a-sewing, and Mistress *Martin* and *Milisent* and me at the broidery,—and *Father* had but just beat Sir *Robert* in a game of the chess, and *Mynheer*, one foot upon his other knee, was deep in a great book which thereon rested,—and fresh logs were thrown of the fire by *Kate*, which sent forth upward a shower of pleasant sparkles, and methought as I glanced around the chamber, that all looked rare pleasant and comfortable, and we ought to thank God therefore. When all had been silent a short while, out came I with my question, well-nigh ere I myself wist it were out—

"*Father*, are you satisfied?"

"A mighty question, my maid," saith he,—while *Helen* looked up in surprise, and Aunt *Joyce* and Mistress *Martin* and *Milisent* fell a-laughing. "With what? The past, the present, or the future?" quoth *Father*.

"With things, *Father*," said I. "With life and every thing."

"Ah, *Edith*, hast thou come to that?" saith my Lady *Stafford*: and she exchanged smiles with *Mother*.

"*Daughter*," *Father* makes answer, "methinks no man is ever satisfied with life, until he be first satisfied with God. The furthest he can go in that direction, is not to think if he be satisfied or no. A man may be well pleased with lesser things: but to be satisfied, that can he not."

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again," quoth *Mother*, softly.

"Ay," saith Sir *Robert*; "and wit you, Mistress *Edith*, what cometh at times to men adrift of the ocean, when all their fresh water is spent?"

"Why, surely, they should find water in plenty in the sea, Sir," said I.

"Right so do they," saith he: "and 'tis a quality of the sea-water, that if a man athirst doth once taste the same, his thirst becometh so great that he drinketh thereof again and again, the thirst worsening with every draught, until at last it drives him mad."

"An apt image of the pleasures of this world," answers *Father*. "Ah, how is all nature as God's picture-book, given to help His dull childer over their tasks!"

"But, *Father*,"—said I, and stayed.

"Well, my maid?" he answers of his kindly fashion.

"I cry you mercy, *Father*, if I speak foolishly; but it seems me that pious folk be not alway satisfied. They make as much fume as other folk when things go as they would not have them."

"The angels do not so, I reckon," saith *Mynheer*, a-looking up.

"We are not angels yet," quoth *Father*, a little drily. "Truth, my maid: and we ought to repent thereof, seeing such

practices but too oft cause the enemy to blaspheme, and put stumbling-blocks in the way of weak brethren. Ay, and from what we read in God's Word, it should seem as though all murmuring and repining—not sorrowing, mark thou; but murmuring—went for far heavier sin in His eyes than it doth commonly in ours. We count it a light matter if we grumble when things go awry, and matters do seem as if they were bent on turning forth right as we would not have them. Let us remember, for ourselves, that such displeaseth the Lord. He reckons it unbelief and mistrust. 'How long,' saith He unto Moses, 'will this people provoke Me? and how long will it be ere they believe Me?' Howbeit, as for our neighbours, we need not judge them. And indeed, such matters depend much on men's complexions (Note 1), and some find it a deal easier to control them than other. And after all, *Edith*, there is a sense wherein no man can ever be fully satisfied in this life. We were meant to aspire; and if we were entirely content with present things, then should we grovel. To submit cheerfully is one thing: to be fully gratified, so that no desire is left, is another. We shall not be that, methinks, till we reach Heaven."

"Shall we so, even there?" saith Sir *Robert*. "It hath alway seemed to me that when *Diogenes* did define his gods as 'they that had no wants,' he pointed to a very miserable set of creatures. Is it not human nature that the thing present shall fall short of the thing prospective?"

"The *in posse* is better than the *in esse*?" saith *Father*. "Well, it should seem so, in this dispensation. But how, in the next world, our powers may be extended, and our souls in some degree suffer change, that we can be fully satisfied and yet be alway aspiring—I reckon we cannot now understand. I only gather from Scripture that it shall be thus. You and I know very little, *Robin*, of what shall be in Heaven."

"Ah, true,—true!" saith Sir *Robert*.

"It hath struck me at times," saith *Father*, "that while it may seem strange to the young and eager soul, yet it is better understood as one grows older,—how the account of Heaven given us in Scripture is nearly all in negations. God and ourselves are the two matters positive. The rest are nays: there shall be no pain, no crying, no sorrow, no night, no death, no curse. And though youth would oft have it all yea, yet nay suits age the better. An old man and weary feels the thought of active bliss at times too much for him. It wearies him to think of perpetual singing and constant flying. It is rest he needs—it is peace."

"Well, *Father*," saith *Milisent*, looking up, "I hope it is not wicked of me, but I never did enjoy the prospect of sitting of a cloud and singing *Hallelujah* for ever and ever."

"Right what I was wont to think at thy years, *Milly*," saith *Mother*, a-laughing.

"Dear hearts," saith *Father*, "there is in God's Word a word for the smallest need of every one of us, if we will only take the pain to search and find it there. 'They had no rest day neither night,' (Cranmer's version of Revelations chapter four verse 8)—that is for the eager, active soul that longs to be up and doing. And 'they rest from their labours,'—that is for the weary heart that is too tired for rapture."

"Yet doth not that latter class of texts, think you," saith Sir *Robert*, "refer mainly to the rest of the body in the grave?"

"Well, it may be so," answers *Father*. "yet, look you, the rest of the grave must be something that *will rest us*."

"What is thy notion, *Aubrey*," saith Aunt *Joyce*, "of the state of the soul betwixt death and resurrection?"

"My notion, *Joyce*," saith *Father*, "is that *Scripture* giveth us no very plain note thereon. I conclude, therefore, that it shall be time to know when we come to it. This only do I see—that all the passages which speak thereof as 'sleep,' 'forgetfulness,' and the like, be in the Old Testament: and all those—nay, let me correct myself—most of those which speak thereof as of a condition of conscious bliss, 'being with *Christ*,' and so, are in the New. There I find the matter: and there, under your good pleasure, will I leave it."

"Well, that should seem," quoth Aunt *Joyce*, "as if the condition of souls had been altered by the coming of our Lord."

"By His death, rather, as methinks, if so be. It may be so. I dare not be positive either way."

"Has it never seemed strange to you, *Louvaine*," saith Sir *Robert*, "how little we be told in God's Word touching all those mysteries whereon men's minds will ever be busying themselves—to all appearance, so long as the world lasts? This matter of our talk—the origin of evil—free-will and sovereign grace—and the like. Why are we told no more?"

"Why," saith *Father*, with that twinkle in his eyes which means fun, "I am one of the meaner intelligences of the universe, and I wis not. If you can find any whither the Angel *Gabriel*, you may ask at him if he can untie your knots."

"Now, *Aubrey*, that is right what mads me!" breaks in Aunt *Joyce*. "Sir *Robert* asks why we be told no more, and thine answer is but to repeat that we be told no more. Do, man, give a plain answer to a plain question."

"Nay, now thou aft like old Lawyer *Pearson*?" quoth *Father*. "'I wis not, Master,' saith the witness. 'Ay, but will you swear?' saith he. 'Why,' quoth the witness, 'how can I swear when I wis not?' 'Nay, but you must swear one way or another,' saith he. Under thy leave, *Joyce*, I do decline to swear either way, seeing I wis not."

Aunt *Joyce* gives a little stamp of her foot. "What on earth is the good of men, when they wit no more than women?" quoth she: whereat all laughed.

"Ah, some women have great wits," saith *Father*.

"Give o'er thy mocking, *Aubrey*!" answers she. "Tell us plain, what notion thou hast, and be not so strict tied to

chapter and verse."

"Of what worth shall then be my notions? Well," saith *Father*, "I have given them on the one matter. As for the origin of evil, I find the origin of mine evil in mine own heart, and no further can I get except to *Satan*."

"Ay, but I would fain reach over *Satan*," saith she.

"That shall we not do without *Satan* overreaching us," quoth *Father*. "Well, then—as to free-will and grace, I find both. 'Whosoever will, take of the water of life,'—and 'Yet will ye not come unto Me that ye might have life.' But also I find, 'No man can come to Me, except the Father draw him;' and that faith cometh 'Not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.'"

"Come, tarry not there!" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "How dost thou reconcile them?"

"Why, I don't reconcile them," quoth he.

"Ay, but do!" she makes answer.

"Well," saith he, "if thou wilt come and visit me, *Joyce*, an hundred years hence, at the sign of the *Burnt-Sacrifice*, in *Amethyst Lane*, in the *New Jerusalem*, I will see if I can do it for thee then."

"*Aubrey Louvain!*" saith Aunt *Joyce*, "thou art—"

"Not yet there," he answers. "I am fully aware of it."

"The wearifullest tease ever I saw, when it liketh thee!" saith she.

"Dost thou know, *Joyce*," quoth *Mother*, laughing merrily, "I found out that afore I was wed. He did play right cruelly on mine eagerness once or twice."

"Good lack! then why didst thou wed him?" saith Aunt *Joyce*.

*Mother* laughed at this, and *Father* made a merry answer, which turned the discourse to other matter, and were not worth to set down. So we gat not back to our sad talk, but all ended with mirth.

This morrow come o'er *Robin Lewthwaite*, with a couple of rare fowl and his mother's loving commendations for *Mother*. He saith nothing is yet at all heard of their *Blanche*, and he shook his head right sorrowfully when I asked at him if he thought aught should be. It seemed so strange a thing to see *Robin* sorrowful.

### ***Selwick Hall, December ye xvi.***

This morrow, my Lady *Stafford*, Aunt *Joyce*, and I, were sat at our work alone in the great chamber. *Milly* was gone with *Mother* a-visiting poor folk, and Sir *Robert* and Mistress *Martin*, with *Helen* for guide, were away towards *Thirlmere*,—my Lady *Stafford* denying to go withal, by reason she had an ill rheum caught yesterday amongst the snowy lanes. All at once, up looks my Lady, and she saith—

"*Joyce*, what is this I heard yestereven of old *Mall Crewdson*, touching one *Everett*, or *Tregarvon*—she wist not rightly which his name were—that hath done a deal of mischief in these parts of late? What manner of mischief?—for old *Mary* was very mysterious. May-be I do not well to ask afore *Edith*?"

"Ay, *Dulcie*, well enough," saith Aunt *Joyce*, sadly, "for *Edith* knows the worst she can already. And if you knew the worst you could—"

"Why, what is it?" quoth she.

"*Leonard*," saith Aunt *Joyce*, curtly.

"*Leonard!*" Every drop of blood seemed gone out of my Lady's face. "I thought he was dead, years gone."

"So did not I," Aunt *Joyce* made low answer.

"No, I wis thou never didst," saith my Lady, tenderly. "So thy love is still alive, *Joyce*? Poor heart!"

"My heart is," she saith. "As for love, it is poor stuff if it can die."

"There is a deal of poor stuff abroad, then," quoth her Ladyship. "In very deed, so it is. So he is yet at his old work?"

Aunt *Joyce* only bent her head.

"Well, it were not possible to wish he had kept to the new," pursueth she. "I do fear there were some brent in *Smithfield*, that had been alive at this day but for him. But ever since Queen *Mary* died hath he kept him so quiet, that in very deed I never now reckoned him amongst the living. Where is he now?"

"God wot," saith Aunt *Joyce*, huskily.

My Lady was silent awhile: and then she saith—

"Well, may-be better so. But *Joyce*, doth *Lettice* know?"



"That *Tregarvon* were he? Not without *Aubrey* hath told her these last ten days: and her face saith not so."

"No, it doth not," my Lady makes answer. "But Sir *Aubrey* wist, then? His face is not wont to talk unless he will."

"In no wise," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Ay, *Dulcibel*; I had to tell him."

"Thou?" saith my Lady, pityingly.

"None knew him but me," made she answer, and her voice grew very troubled. "Not even *Aubrey*, nor *Lettice*. *Bess* guessed at him after awhile, but not till she had seen him divers times. But for me one glimpse was enough."

Aunt *Joyce*'s work was still now.

"Hadst thou surmised aforetime that it were he?"

Aunt *Joyce* shook her head.

"No need for surmising, *Dulcie*," she said. "If I were laid in my grave for a year and a day, I should know his step upon the mould above me."

"My poor *Joyce*!" softly quoth my Lady *Stafford*. "Even God hath no stronger word than 'passing the love of women.' Yet a woman's love lasts not out to that in most cases."

"Her heart lasts not out, thou meanest," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Hearts are weak, *Dulcie*, but love is immortal."

"And hast thou still hope—for him, *Joyce*?" answereth my Lady. "I lost the last atom of mine, years gone."

"Hope of his ultimate salvation? Ay—as long as life lasts. I shall give over hoping for it when I see it."

"But," saith my Lady slowly, as though she scarce liked to say the same, "how if thou never wert to see it?"

"Between the stirrup and the ground,  
Mercy I sought, mercy I found."

"Thou wist that epitaph, *Dulcie*, on him that lost life by a fall from the saddle. My seeing it were comfort, but no necessity. I could go on hoping that God had seen it."

Aunt *Joyce* arose and left the chamber. Then saith my Lady *Stafford* to me—

"There goes a strong soul. There be women such as she: but they are not to be picked, like blackberries, off every bramble. *Edith*, young folks are apt to think love a mere matter of youth and of matrimony. They cannot make a deeper blunder. The longer love lasts, the stronger it groweth."

"Always, my Lady?" said I.

"Ay," saith she. "That is, if it be love."

We wrought a while without more talk: when suddenly saith my Lady *Stafford*:—

"*Edith*, didst thou see this *Tregarvon*, or how he called himself?"

"Ay, Madam," said I. "He made up to me one morrow, when my sister *Milisent* and I were on Saint *Hubert's* Isle in the mere yonder, and I was sat, a-drawing, of a stone."

"Ay so?" quoth she, with some earnestness in her voice. "And what then?"

"I think he took not much of me, Madam," said I.

My Lady *Stafford* smiled, yet methought somewhat pensively.

"May I wit what he said to thee, *Edith*?"

"Oh, a parcel of stuff touching mine hair and mine eyes, and the like," said I. "I knew well enough what colours mine hair and eyes were of, without his telling me. Could I dress mine hair every morrow afore the mirror, and not see?"

"Well, *Edith*," saith she, "methinks he did not take much of thee. I would I could have seen him,"—and her voice grew sadder. "Not that my voice should have had any potency with him: that had it never yet. But I would fain have noted how far the years had changed him, and if—if there seemed any more hope of his amendment than of old time. There was a time when in all *Oxfordshire* he was allowed the goodliest man, and I fear he was not far from being likewise the worst."

Here come in *Mother*, and my Lady *Stafford* changed the discourse right quickly. I saw I must say no more. But I am well assured Aunt *Joyce's* *Mary* was never my Lady *Stafford*. Who methinks it were it should serve no good end to set down.

***Selwick Hall, December ye xix.***

As we sat this even of the great chamber, saith *Father*:—

"*Stafford*, do you remember our talk some days gone, touching what manner of life there should be in Heaven?"

"That do I well," Sir *Robert* made answer.

"Well," quoth *Father*, "I have fallen to think more thereupon. And the thought comes to me—wherefore account we always that we shall do but one thing there, and that all shall do the same? Here is *Milisent*—ay, and *Lettice* too—that think they should be weary to sit of a cloud and sing for ever and ever."

"Truly, so should I, methinks," saith Sir *Robert*.

"So should we all, I cast no doubt," answers *Father*, "if our capacity for fatigue did extend into that life. But why expect the same thing over and over? It is not so on earth. I am not reading, nor is *Lettice* sewing, nor *Milisent* broidering, with no intermission, from the morning to the night. Neither do we all the same fashion of work."

"Ay," saith Aunt *Joyce*, somewhat eagerly; "but the work done here below is needful, *Aubrey*. There shall be no necessity for nought there."

"Art avised o' that, *Joyce*?" saith *Father*.

"Why," saith she, "dost look for brooms and dusters in Heaven? Shall *Bess* and I sweep out the gold streets, thinkest, or fetch a pan to seethe the fruits of the Tree of Life?"

"One would think," saith Sir *Robert*, "if all be allegorical, as some wise doctors do say, that they should be shadowy brooms that swept parabolical streets."

"Allegorical fiddlesticks!" quoth Aunt *Joyce*. "I did never walk yet o'er a parabolical paving, nor sat me down to rest me of an allegorical chair. Am I to be allegorical, forsooth? You be a poor comforter, Sir *Robert*."

"Soft you now!" saith *Father*. "I enter a *caveat*, as lawyers have it. Methinks I have walked for some years o'er a parabolical paving, and rested me in many an allegorical chair. Thou minglest somewhat too much the spiritual and the material, *Joyce*."

"I count I take thee, *Audrey*," saith she: "thou wouldst say that the allegorical city is for the dwelling of the spirit, and the real for the body. But, pray you, if my spirit have a dwelling in thine allegorical city—"

"Nay, I said not the city were allegorical," quoth he. "Burden not me withal, for in truth I do believe it very real."

"No, that was Sir *Robert*," saith she, "so I will ask at him, as shall be but fair. Where, I pray you, is my body to be, Sir, whilst my soul dwelleth in your parabolical city?"

"There shall be a spiritual body, my mistress," makes he answer, smiling.

"Truth," quoth she, "but I reckon it must be somewhere. It seems me, to my small wit, that if my soul and my spiritual body be to dwell in an allegorical city, then I must needs be allegorical also. And I warrant you, that should not like me a whit."

"Let us not mingle differences," saith *Father*. "Be the spiritual and the allegorical but one thing?"

"Nay, I believe there be two," saith Aunt *Joyce*: "'tis Sir *Robert* here would have them alike."

"But how would you define them?" saith Sir *Robert* to *Father*.

"Thus," he made answer. "The spiritual is that which is real, as fully as the material: but it is invisible. The allegorical is that which is shadowy and doth but exist in the fantasy. If I say of these my daughters, they be my jewels, I speak allegorically: for they be not gems, but maidens. But I do not love them in an allegory, but in reality. Love is a moral and spiritual matter, but no allegory. So, Heaven is a spiritual place, but methinks not an allegorical one."

"But the *New Jerusalem*—the Golden City which lieth four-square—that is allegorical, surely!"

"We shall see when we are there," saith *Father*. "I think not."

Sir *Robert* pursed up his lips as though he could no wise allow the same.

"Mind you, *Robin*," saith *Father*, "I say not that there may not be allegory touching some of the details. I reckon the pearls of the twelve gates were never found in earthly oysters: nor do I account that the gold of the streets was molten in an earthly furnace. No more, when *Edith* saith she will run and fetch a thing, should I think to accuse her of falsehood if I saw that she walked, and ran not. 'Tis never well to fetch a parable down on all fours. You and I use allegory always in our common talk."

"Ay," quoth Sir *Robert*: "but you reckon they be pearls, and gold?"

"I will tell you when I have seen them," saith *Father*, and smiled. "Either they be gold and pearls, or they be that to which, in our earthly minds, gold and pearls come the nearest. Why, my friend, we be all but lisping children to God. Think you one moment, and tell me if every word we use touching Him hath not in it more or less of parable? We call Him Father, and King, and Master, and Guide, and Lord. Is not every one of these taken from earthly relationships, and doth it not presuppose a something which is to be found on earth? We have no better wits than to do so here. If God would teach us that we know not, it must be by talking to us touching things we do know. Did not you the same with your children when they were babes? How far we may be able to penetrate, when we be truly men, grown up unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of *Christ*, verily I cannot tell. Only I do see that not only all *Scripture*, but all analogy, pointeth to a time when we shall emerge from this caterpillar state, and spread our wings as

butterflies in the sunshine. Nay, there is yet a better image in nature. The grub of the dragon-fly dwelleth in the waters, and cannot live in the air till it come forth into the final state. Tell me then, I pray you, how shall this water-grub conceive the notion of flying through the air? Supposing you able to talk with him, could you represent the same unto him other than by the conceit of gliding through water with most delightsome swiftness and directness? To talk of an element wherein he had no experience should be simply so much nonsense to him. Now, it may be—take me not, I pray you, as meaning it must be—that all that shall be found in Heaven differs as greatly from what is found on earth as the water differs from the air. Concerning these matters, I take it, God teaches us by likening them to such things as we know that shall give the best conceit of them to our minds. Here on earth, the fairest and most costly matter is gold and gems. Well, He would have us know that the heavenly city is builded of the fairest and most precious matter. But that the matter is real, and that the city is builded of somewhat, that will I yield to none. To do other were to make it a fairy tale, Heaven in cloud-land, and God Himself but the shadow of a dream. The only difference I can see is, that we should never awake from the dream, but should go on dreaming it for ever.”

“O *Louvaine!*” saith Sir *Robert*. “I can never allow of matter in Heaven. All there is spiritual.”

“Now, what mean you by matter?” saith *Father*. “Matter is a term of this world. I argue not for matter in Heaven as opposed to spirit, but for reality as opposed to allegory.”

“You’ll be out of my depth next plunge,” saith Sir *Robert*, merrily.

“We shall both be out of our depth, *Robin*, ere long, and under your leave there will we leave it. But I see you are a bit of a *Manichee*.”

“That is out of my depth, at any rate,” quoth he. “I am but ill read in ancient controversies, though I know you dabble in them.”

“Why, I have dipped my fingers into a good parcel of matters in my time,” saith *Father*. “But the *Manichees*, old friend, were men that did maintain the inherent evil of matter. All things, with them, were wicked that had to do therewith. Wherein, though they knew it not, they were much akin to the *Indian* mystics of *Buddha*, that do set their whole happiness in the attaining of *Nirvana*.”

“What is that?” saith Aunt *Joyce*. “Is it an *India* goddess, or something good to eat?”

“It is,” quoth *Father*, “the condition of having no ideas.”

“Good lack!” saith she, “then daft *Madge* is nearest perfection of us all.”

“Perhaps she is, in sober truth,” *Father* makes answer.

“Meseemeth,” whispers *Milisent* to me, “that *Jack Benn* is a *Manichee*.”

“’Tis strange,” saith *Father*, as in meditation, “how those old heresies shall be continually re-born under new names: nor only that, but how in the heart of every man and woman there is by nature a leaning unto some form of heresy. Here is *Robin Stafford* a *Manichee*: and *Bess* a *Mennonite*: and my Lady *Stafford* (if I mistake not) a *Stoic*: and *Mynheer* somewhat given to be a *Cynic*: and *Lettice* and *Milisent*, methinks, are by their nature *Epicureans*. Mistress *Martin*, it seemeth me, should be an *Essene*: and what shall we call thee, *Edith*?”

“Aught but a *Pharisee*, *Father*,” said I, laughing.

“Nay, thou art no *Pharisee*,” saith he. “But that they were a nation and not a sect, I should write thee down a *Sybarite*. *Nell* is as near a *Pharisee* as we have one in the chamber; yet methinketh it were to insult her to give her such a name.”

“Go on,” saith Aunt *Joyce*. “I’m waiting.”

“What, for thine own class?”

“Mine and thine,” saith she.

*Father’s* eyes did shine with fun. “Well, *Joyce*, to tell truth, I am somewhat puzzled to class thee: but I am disposed to put thee amongst the *Brownists*.”

“What on earth for?” saith she.

“Why,” quoth he, “because thou hast a mighty notion of having things thine own way.”

“Sir *Robert*,” quoth Aunt *Joyce*, “pray you, box my cousin’s ears for me, as you sit convenient.—And what art thou thine own self, thou caitiff?”

“A *Bonus Homo*,” answers *Father*, right sadly: whereat all that did know *Latin* fell a-laughing. And I, asking at my Lady *Stafford*, she told me that *Bonus Homo* is to say Good Man, and was in past time the name of a certain Order of friars, that had carried down the truth of the Gospel from the first ages in a certain part lying betwixt *Italy* and *France*.

“*Nell*,” saith *Father*, “I did thee wrong to call thee a *Pharisee*: thou art rather a *Herodian*.”

“But I pray you, Sir *Aubrey*, what did you mean by the name you gave me?” saith Mistress *Martin*. “For I would fain wit my faults, that I may go about to amend them: and as at this present I am none the wiser.”

"The *Essenes*," saith he, "Mistress *Martin*, were a sect of the Jews, so extreme orthodox that they did deny to perform sacrifice or worship in the Temple, seeing there they should have to mingle themselves with other sects, and with wicked men that brought not their sacrifices rightly. Moreover, they would neither eat flesh-meat nor drink wine: and they believed not that there were so much as one good woman in the whole world."

"Then I cry you mercy, Sir *Aubrey*," quoth she, "but if so be, assuredly I am not of them. I do most heartily believe in good women, whereof methinks I can see four afore me, at the very least, this instant moment: nor have I yet abjured neither wine nor flesh-meat."

"Oh no, the details be different," saith he: "yet I dare be bold to say, you have a conceit of a perfect Church, whereinto no untrue man should ever be suffered to enter."

"Ay, that have I," said she. "Methinks the Church of *England* is too comprehensive, and should be drawn on stricter lines."

"And therein are you an *Essene*," answereth *Father*.

"Oh, *Grissel* would fain have every man close examined," saith Sir *Robert*, "and only admitted unto the Lord's Supper by the clergy after right strict dealing."

"Were you alway of this manner of thought, Mistress *Martin*?" asks *Father*.

"I trow not," said she. "As one gets on in life, you see, one doth perceive many difficulties and differences that one noted not aforetime."

"One is more apt to fall into ruts, that I know," saith Aunt *Joyce*: "I had ado enough, and yet have, to keep me out of them."

"A man is apt to do one of two things," saith *Father*. "either to fall into a rut, or to leave the road altogether. Either his charity contracteth, and he can see none right that walk not in his rut; or else his charity breaketh all bounds, and he would have all to be right, which way soever they walk."

"Why, those be the two ends of the pole," quoth Sir *Robert*, "and, I warrant you, you shall find *Grissel* right at the end, which so it be. She hath a conceit that a man cannot be too right, nor that, if a thing be good, you cannot have too much thereof."

"Ah, that hangeth on the thing," saith *Father*. "You cannot have too much faith nor charity, but you may get too much syllabub. Methinks that is scantily the true rendering thereof. Have not the proportions much to do withal? If a man's faith outrun his charity, behold him at the one end of your pole; but if his charity outrun his faith, here is he at the other. Now faith and charity should keep pace. Let either get afore the other, and the man is no longer a perfect man; but a man with one limb grown out, and another shrivelled up."

"But, Sir *Aubrey*," quoth Mistress *Martin*, "can a man be too holy, or too happy?"

"Surely not, Mistress *Martin*," saith he. "But look you, God is the fountain and pattern of both: and in Him all attributes are at once in utmost perfection, and in strictest proportion. We sons of *Adam*, since his fall, be gone out of proportion. And note you, for it is worthy note—that nothing short of revelation did ever yet conceive of a perfect God. The gods of the heathen were altogether such as themselves. Even very *Christians*, with revelation to guide them, are ever starting aside like a broken bow in their conceits of God. Either they would have Him all justice and no mercy, or else all mercy and no justice: and the looser they hold by the revelation God has made of Himself, the dimmer and the more out of proportion be their thoughts of God. The most men frame a God unto themselves, and be assured that he shall be like themselves—that the sins which he holds in abhorrence shall be the sins whereto they are not prone."

"Are we not, in fine," saith Sir *Robert*, "so far gone from original righteousness, that our imperfect nature hath lost power to imagine perfection?"

"Not a doubt thereof," saith *Father*. "Look you but abroad in the world. You shall find pride lauded and called high spirit and nobleness: covetousness is prudence and good thrift: flattery and conformity to the world are good nature and kindness. Every blast from Hell hath been renamed after one of the breezes of Heaven."

There was silence so long after this that I reckoned the discourse were o'er. When all suddenly saith Sir *Robert*:—

"*Louvaine*, have you much hope for the future—whether of the Church or of the world?"

"All hope in God: none out of Him."

"Nay, come closer," saith Sir *Robert*. "What shall hap in the next few reigns?"

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until He come whose right it is: and I will give it Him.' There is our pole-star, *Robin*: and I see no other stars. 'This same *Jesus* shall so come.' 'Even so, come, Lord *Jesus*!'"

"Yet may He not be said to 'come' by the Spirit shed abroad in the hearts of men, and so the world be regenerated?"

"Find that in God's Word, *Robin*, afore He comes, and I will welcome it with all my heart," answers *Father*. "I could never see it there. I see there a mighty spread of knowledge, and civility (civilisation), and communications of men—as hath been since the invention of printing, and may be destined to spread yet much further abroad. But knowledge is not faith, nor is civility *Christianity*. And, in fine, He is to come as He went. He did not go invisibly in the hearts of

men.”

“But ‘the kingdom of God is within you.’”

“Ay, in the sense wherein the word is there used. The power of *Christ*, at that time, was to be a power over men’s hearts, not an outward show of regality: but ‘He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go,’ is a very different matter.”

“Oh, of course we look for our Lord’s advent in His own person,” quoth Sir *Robert*: “but I cannot think He will come to a sin-stained earth. It were not suitable to His dignity. The way of the Lord must be prepared.”

“We shall see, when He comes,” gently answereth *Father*. “But if He *had* not deigned to come to a sin-stained earth, what should have come either of *Robin Stafford* or of *Aubrey Louvaine*?”

**Selwick Hall, December ye xxiii.**

Four nights hath it taken me to write that last piece, for all the days have we been right busy making ready for *Christmas*. There be in the buttery now thirty great spice-cakes, and an hundred mince pies, and a mighty bowl of plum-porridge (plum-pudding without the cloth) ready for the boiling, and four barons of beef, and a great sight of carrots and winter greens, and two great cheeses, and a parcel of sugar-candy for the childre, and store of sherris-sack and claret, and *Rhenish* wine, and muscadel. As to the barrels of ale, and the raisins of *Corance* (currants) and the apples, and the conserves and codiniac (quince marmalade), and such like, I will not tarry to count them. And to-day, and yet again it shall be to-morrow, have *Mother* and Aunt *Joyce*, and we three maids, trudded all the vicinage, bidding our neighbours to the Hall on *Christmas* Eve and for the even of *Christmas* Day. And as to-night am I well awearry, for *Thirlmere* side fell to my share, and I was this morrow as far as old *Madge*’s bidding her and young *Madge*, and that is six miles well reckoned. *Father* saith alway that though it be our duty at all times, yet is it more specially at *Christmas*, to bid the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind: so we have them alway of *Christmas* night, and of *Christmas* Eve have we a somewhat selecter gathering, of our own kin and close friends and such like: only Master *Banaster* and *Anstace* come both times. Then on New Year’s Day have we alway a great sort of childre, and merry games and music and such like. But the last night of the old year will *Father* have no gatherings nor merrymaking. He saith ‘tis a right solemn time; and as each one of us came to the age of fourteen years have we parted at nine o’ the clock as usual, but not on that night for bed. Every one sitteth by him or herself in a separate chamber, with a Bible or some portion thereof open afore. There do we read and pray and meditate until half-past eleven, at which time all we gather in the great chamber. Then *Father* reads first the 139th *Psalms*, and then that piece in the *Revelation* touching all the dead standing afore God: and he prayeth a while, until about five minutes afore the year end. Then all gather in the great window toward *Keswick*, and tarry as still as death until Master *Cridge* ring the great bell on *Lord* Island, so soon as he hear the chimes of *Keswick* Church. Then, no sooner hath the bell died away, which telleth to all around that the New Year is born, then *Father* striketh up, and all we join in, the 100th *Psalms*—to wit, “All people that on earth do dwell.”

And when the last note of the *Amen* dieth, then we kiss one another, and each wisheth the other a happy new year and God’s blessing therein: and so away to bed.

I reckon I shall not have no time to write again until *Christmas* Day is well over.

“*Father*,” said I last night to him—we were us two alone that minute—“*Father*, do you love *Christmas*?”

He looked on me and smiled.

“I love to see my childre glad, dear maid,” saith he: “and I love to feast my poor neighbours, that at other times get little feasting enough. But *Christmas* is the childre’s festival, *Edith*: for it is the festival of untroubled hearts and eyes that have no tears behind them. For the weary hearts and the tearful eyes the true feast is *Easter*. The one is a hope: the other is a victory. There are no clouds o’er the blue sky in the first: the storm is over, and the sun is out again, in the last. ‘We believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.’ But we are apt to believe in the resurrection the most truly when the grave hath been lately open: and the life of the world to come is the gladdest thought to them for whom the life of the world that is seems not much to live for.”

**Selwick Hall, December the xxviii.**

“Well, *Edith*,” quoth Aunt *Joyce* to me last night, “thou hast had a rare time of it!”

“I have, *Aunt*,” said I: “yet I warrant you, I was not sorry to have *Sunday* come at after.”

Eh, but I was weary when I gat me abed on *Christmas* night, and it were ten o’clock well told ere I so did. *Helen* and *Milisent* were later yet: but *Mother* packed me off, saying that growing maids should not tarry up late: and when I found me withinside the blankets, I warrant you, but I was thankful!

I reckon, being now something rested, I must set down all that we did: and first for *Christmas* Eve.

*Hal* and *Anstace* came early (their childre were bidden to *Keswick* unto a childre’s gathering): then about three o’ the clock, Master and Mistress *Lewthwaite*, with *Alice*, *Nym*, *Jack*, and *Robin* (and by the same token, *Nym* played the despairing gallant that I could not choose but laugh, his hat awry and his ruff all o’ one side, and a bombasted (padded) doublet that made him look twice his own size). And methought it a sore pity to miss *Blanche*, that was wont to be merriest of us all (when as she were in a good humour) and so *Alice* said unto me, while the water stood in her eyes. A little while after come Doctor and Mistress *Meade*, and their *Isabel*: then old Mistress *Rigg*, and her three tall daughters, Mrs *Martha*, Mrs *Katherine*, and Mrs *Anne*: then Farmer *Benson* and his dame, and their *Margaret* and *Agnes*; and Master *Coward*, with their *Tom* and *Susan*; and Master and Mistress *Armstrong*, with their

*Ben, Nicholas, and Gillian.* Last of all come *Master Park* and *Master Murthwaite*, both together, and their mistresses, with the young folk,—*Hugh* and *Austin Park*, and *Dudley, Faith, and Temperance Murthwaite*. So our four-and-thirty guests, with ourselves, thirteen, made in all a goodly company of forty-seven.

First, when all were come in and had doffed their out-door raiment, and greeting over, we sat us down to supper: where one of the barons of beef, and plum-porridge, and apple-pies, and chicken-pies, and syllabub, and all manner of good things: but in very deed I might scarce eat my supper for laughing at *Nym Lewthwaite*, that was sat right over against me, and did scarce taste aught, but spent the time in gazing lack-a-daisically on our *Helen*, and fetching great sighs with his hand laid of his heart. Supper o'er, we first had snap-dragon, then hot cockles, then blindman's buff, then hunt the weasel. We pausing to take breath at after, *Father* called us to sing; so we gathered all in the great chamber, and first *Mynheer* sang a *Dutch* song, and then *Sir Robert* and *Mistress Martin* a rare part-song, touching the beauties of spring-time. Then sang *Farmer Benson*, *Master Armstrong*, and *Ben* and *Agnes*, "The hunt is up," which was delightsome to hear. Then *Aunt Joyce* would sing "Pastime with good company," and would needs have *Milisent* and me and *Robin Lewthwaite* to help her. After this *Jack Lewthwaite* and *Nick Armstrong* made us to laugh well, by singing "The cramp is in my purse full sore." The music ended with a sweet glee of *Faith* and *Temperance Murthwaite* (something sober, but I know it liked *Father* none the worse) and the old *English* song of "Summer is ycumen in," sung of *Father* and *Sir Robert*, our *Helen*, and *Isabel Meade*. Then we sat around the fire till rear-supper, and had "Questions and Commands," and cried forfeits, and wound up with "I love my love." And some were rare witty and mirthful in that last, particularly *Sir Robert*, who did treat his love to oranges and orfevery in the *Orcades* (Hebrides) (and *Father* said he marvelled how he gat them there), and *Aunt Joyce*, who said her love was *Benjamin Breakrope*, and he came from the Tower of *Babel*. Then, after that, fell we a-telling stories: and a right brave one of *Father*, out of one of his old *Chronicles*, how *Queen Philippa* gat a pardon from her lord for the six gentlemen of *Calais*: and a merry, of *Dr Meade*, touching *King John* and the *Abbot of Canterbury*, and the three questions that the King did ask at the *Abbot's* gardener (he playing his master), and the witty answers he made unto him. Then would *Master Armstrong* tell a tale; and an awesome ghost-story it were, that made my flesh creep, and *Milisent* whispered in mine ear that she should sleep never a wink at after it.

"Eh!" saith *Farmer Benson*, and fetched an heavy sigh: "ghosts be ill matter of an house."

"Saw you e'er a ghost, *Farmer Benson*?" saith *Dudley Murthwaite*.

"Nay, lad," quoth he: "I've had too much good daylight work in my time to lie awake a-seeing ghosts when night cometh."

"Ah, but I've seen a ghost," saith *Austin Park*.

"Oh, where?" cried a dozen together.

"Why, it was but night afore last," saith he, "up by the old white-thorn that was strake of the lightning, come two years last Midsummer, just at yon reach o' the lake that comes up higher than the rest."

"Ay, ay," saith *Farmer Benson*: "and what like were it, *Master Austin*?"

"A woman all in white, with her head cut off," quoth he.

"Said she aught to thee?"

"Nay, I gave her no chance; I took to my heels," quoth he.

"Now, *Austin*, that should I ne'er have done," saith *Aunt Joyce*, who believes in ghosts never a whit. "I would have stood my ground, for I did never yet behold a ghost, and would dearly love to do it: and do but think how curious it should be to find out what she spake withal, that had her head cut off."

"*Mistress Joyce*, had you found you, as I did, close to a blasted tree, and been met of a white woman with no head, I'll lay you aught you will you'd never have run no faster," saith *Austin* in an injured tone.

"That should I *not*," quoth *Aunt Joyce* boldly. "I shall win my fortune at that game, *Austin*, if thou deny not thy debts of honour. Why, man o' life, what harm should a blasted tree do me? Had the lightning struck it that minute while I stood there, then might there have been some danger: but because the lightning struck it two years gone, how should it hurt me now? And as to a woman with no head, that would I tarry to believe till I had stripped off her white sheet and seen for myself."

"Eh, *Mistress Joyce*," cries old *Mistress Rigg*, "but sure you should never dare to touch a ghost?"

"There be not many things, save sin, *Mistress Rigg*, that I should not dare to do an' it liked me. I have run after a thief with a poker: ay, and I have handled a Popish catchpoll, in *Queen Mary's* days, that he never came near my house no more. And wherefore, I pray you tell me, should I be more feared of a spirit without a body than of a spirit within the body?—*Austin*, if thou meet the ghost again, prithee bid her come up to *Selwick* Hall and ask for *Joyce Morrell*, for I would give forty shillings to have a good talk with her. Only think, how much a ghost could tell a body!"

"Lack-a-day, *Mistress Joyce*, I'll neither make nor meddle with her!" cries *Austin*.

"Poor weak soul!" saith *Aunt Joyce*. Whereat many laughed.

So, after a while, sat we down to rear-supper; and at after that, gathered in small groups, twos and threes and the like, and talked: and I with *Isabel Meade*, and *Temperance Murthwaite*, and *Austin Park*, had some rare merriment touching divers matters. When all at once I heard *Aunt Joyce* say—

"Well, but what ill were there in asking questions of spirits, if they might visit the earth?"

"The ill for which *Adam* was turned forth of *Eden*," saith *Father*. "disobedience to a plain command of God. Look in the xviii chapter of *Deuteronomy*, and you shall see necromancy forbidden by name. That is, communication with such as be dead."

"But that were for religion, Sir *Aubrey*," saith Master *Coward*. "This, look you, were but matter of curiousness."

"That is to say, it was *Eva's* sin rather than *Adam's*," *Father* makes answer. "Surely, that which is forbid as solemn matter of religion, should be rather forbid as mere matter of curiousness."

"But was that aught more than a ceremonial law of the *Jews*, no longer binding upon *Christians*?" saith Sir *Robert*.

"Nay, then, turn you to *Paul's* Epistle to *Timothy*," quoth *Father*, "where among the doctrines taught by them that shall depart from the faith, he doth enumerate 'doctrines of devils,'—or, as the *Greek* hath it, of demons. Now these demons were but dead men, whom the *Pagans* held to be go-betweens for living men with their gods. So this, see you, is a two-edged sword, forbidding all communication with the dead, whether as saints to be invoked, or as visitants to be questioned."

"Nobody's like to question 'em save Mistress *Joyce*," saith Farmer *Benson*, of his husky voice, which alway soundeth as though he should have an ill rheum of his throat.

Aunt *Joyce* laughed. "Nay, I were but joking," quoth she: "but I warrant you, if I meet *Austin's* white woman without a head, I'll see if she be ghost or no."

"But what think you, Sir *Aubrey*—wherefore was such communication forbid?" saith Master *Murthwaite*.

"God wot," saith *Father*. "I am not of His council-chamber. My Master's plain word is enough for me."

"One might think that a warning from beyond the grave should have so solemn an effect on a sinner."

"Nay, we be told right contrary. 'If they hear not *Moses* and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rise from death again.' How much rather when One hath risen from the dead, and they have refused to hear Him?"

Then arose Dr *Meade*, that was discoursing with *Mynheer* of a corner, and prayers were had. After which a grace-cup, and then all took their leave, Master *Park* being last to go as to come. And just ere he was through the door, saith *Austin* to Aunt *Joyce*, a-laughing—

"You'll mind to let me know, Mistress *Joyce*, what the ghost saith to you. I can stand it second-hand, may-be."

"That's a jolly hearing, from one of the stronger sex to one of the weaker!" quoth she. "Well said, thou mocking companion: I will give thee to wit—a piece of my mind, if no more."

*Christmas-Day*, of course, all to church: and in the even sat down to supper seventy-six, all but ourselves poor men and women and childre. And two of the barons of beef, and six bowls of plum-porridge, and one hundred pies of divers kinds,—to say nought of lesser dishes, that *Milly* counted up to eighty. Then after, snap-dragon, whereat was much mirth; and singing of *Christmas* carols, and games with the childre. And all away looking mighty pleased.

Daft *Madge* would know of me if the angels lived o' plum-porridge. I told her I thought not so.

"It is like to be somewhat rare good," quoth she. "The Lord's so rich, look you,—main richer nor Sir *Aubrey*. If t' servant gives poor folk plum-porridge, what'll t' Master give?"

*Father* answered her, for he was close by—

"Fat things full of marrow, wines on the lees well refined."

"Eh, that sounds good!" saith she, a-licking of her lips. "And that's for t' hungry folk, Master?"

"It is only for hungry folk," saith he. "'Tis not thrown away on the full ones. 'Whosoever will, take,' saith the Lord, who gives the feast."

"Eh, then I shall get some!" saith she, a-laughing all o'er her face, as she doth when she is pleased at aught. "You'll be sure and let me know when 'tis, Master? I'll come, if 'tis snow up to t' knees all t' way."

"The Lord will be sure and let thee know, *Madge*, when 'tis ready," saith *Father*; for he hath oft said that little as poor *Madge* can conceive, he is assured she is one of God's childre.

"Oh, if 'tis *Him* to let me know, 't'll be all right," saith *Madge*, smiling and drawing of her cloak around her. "He'll not forget *Madge*—not He. He come down o' purpose to die for *me*, you know."

*Father* saith, as *Madge* trudged away in her clogs after old *Madge*, her grandmother—

"Ah, rich *Madge*—not poor! May-be thine shall be the most abundant entrance of any in this chamber."

I am at the end of my month, and as to-morrow I hand the book to *Helen*. But I dare not count up my two-pences, for I am feared they be so many.

Note 1. Complexion, at this date, signified temperament, not colour. The Middle Age physicians divided the complexions of mankind into four—the lymphatic, the sanguine, the nervous, and the bilious: and their treatment was always grounded on these considerations. Colour of skin, hair, and eyes, being considered symptomatic of complexion, the word was readily transferred from one to the other.

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## Chapter Seven.

### Aunt Joyce tackles a Ghost.

“’Twas but one little drop of sin  
We saw this morning enter in,  
And lo! at eventide the world is drowned.”  
Keble.

(In Helen’s handwriting.)

*Selwick Hall, January ye iv.*

Dear heart, but I ne’er thought our *Edith* should have filled so much paper! Yet it doth seem me she is more livelier at writing than at household duties. I have watched her pen a-flying of a night (for she can write twice as fast as I, she writing of the new *Italian* hand, and I but the old *English*) (Note 1) till I marvelled whate’er she found to say. And methinks she hath, likewise, a better memory than I, for I reckon I should have made some mighty blunder in all these long talks which she hath set down so pat.

I had no time to write afore to-day, nor much now: for o’ New Year’s Day had we all the childre of all the vicinage, and I were fair run off my feet, first a-making ready, and then a-playing games. Then was there a ’stowing away of such matter as should not be wanted again o’ Twelfth Night. Trust me, but after Twelfth Night we shall have some jolly work!

Dear heart! but how much hath happed since the last line I writ in this book, and ’tis but two months gone. I do see, as saith the wise man, that we verily wit not what a day may bring forth.

Our *Milly* is coming back something to her old self, though methinks she hath learned an hard lesson, and shall ne’er be so light and foolish as aforetime. I trust this is not unkindly to say, for in very deed I mean it not so. But more and more hear we of all sides touching this Master *Norris* (as Aunt *Joyce* saith is his true name), which doth plainly show him a right evil man, and that if our poor *Milly* had trusted to his fair words, she should soon have had cause to repent her bitterly thereof. Why, there is scarce a well-favoured maid in all *Derwentdale*, nor *Borrowdale*, that hath not token to show of him, and an heap of besugared flatteries for to tell. Eh, but what an ill world is this we live in!—and how thankful should young maids be that have a good home to shelter them in, and a loving father and mother to defend them from harm! Trust me, but I never knew how ill place was the world.

Nor did I ever truly conceive aforetime of Aunt *Joyce*. Methought that for her, being rich and well to do, the wheels of life had run rare smooth: and that ’twas but a short way to the bottom of her mind and heart. And all suddenly an hand uplifts the corner of a curtain that I had taken no note of, and lo! a mighty deep that I never guessed to be there. Is it thus with all folks, I do marvel?—and if we could look into the inwards of them that seem as though nought were in them, should we find great dreary caverns, or vast mines of wealth? Yet for all this is Aunt *Joyce* ever bright and cheery, and ready to do all kindly service for whoso it be that needeth it. And ’tis harder to carry an heavy burden that it shall not show under your cloak, than to heave it up on your shoulder. I did alway love Aunt *Joyce*, but never better, methinks, than sithence I have known somewhat more of her inner mind. Poor hasty spirits that we be, how do we misjudge other folk! But now I must tarry in my chronicling, for I hear *Anstace*’ voice below, and I reckon she is come to help in making ready for Twelfth Night.

*Selwick Hall, January ye viii.*

Well! Twelfth Night is o’er, and the most of things ’stowed away, and all come back to our common ways. Sixty-eight guests had we, grown folk and childre, and I shall not essay, as I see *Edith* hath done rarely, to set down all their names; only there were most of those that come on *Christmas* Eve, but not Dr *Meade* and his folks, he being bidden of my Lord *Dilston*. Much merriment was there a-drawing of king and queen, and it o’er, behold, *Dudley Murthwaite* was King, and *Mother* was Queen. So *Father* (which had drawn the Chamberlain) right courtlily hands *Mother* up to the throne, that was set at the further end of the great chamber, all laughing rarely to see how well ’twas done: and *Martha Rigg*, *Agnes Benson*, *Gillian Armstrong*, and our *Milly*, that had drawn the Maids of Honour, did dispose themselves behind her. Aunt *Joyce* was Mother of the Maids, and she said she would have a care to rule them with a rod of iron. So she armed her with the poker, and shook it at each one that tittered, till the most were a-holding of their sides with laughter. *Jack Lewthwaite* drew the Chancellor, and right well he carried him. Ere their Majesties abdicated, and the Court dispersed, had we rare mirth, for Aunt *Joyce* laid afore the throne a ’plaint of one of her maids for treason, which was *Gillian*, that could no way keep her countenance: and ’twas solemnly decreed of their Majesties, and ratified of the Chancellor, that the said prisoner be put in fetters, and made to drink poison: the which fetters were a long piece of silver lace that had come off a gown of *Mother*’s, and the poison a glass of syllabub, which Mr Chancellor brought to the prisoner, that screamed and begged for mercy, but had it not—and hard work had *Gillian* to beg for mercy, for she was laughing till she could scarce utter no words. Howbeit, this o’er, all we gathered around the fire, and played at divers sitting games. And as we were in the midst of “I love my love,” and had but just finished R,—afore *Margaret Benson*, that was next, could begin with S,—behold, a strange voice behind, yet no strange one, crieth out loud and cheery—

“I love my love with an S, because she is sweet; I hate her with S, because she is sulky: I took her to the sign of the



*Ship*, and treated her to sprats and seaweed; her name is *Sophonisba Suckabob*, and she comes from *San Sebastian*."

Well, we turned round all and looked on him that had spoke, but in good sooth not one of us knew the bright fresh face, until *Mother* cries out,—"*Ned! Ned*, my boy!" and then, I warrant you, there was some kissing and hand-shaking, ay, more than a little.

"Fleet ahoy!" saith *Ned*. "Haven't seen so many crafts in the old harbour, for never so long."

"Why, *Ned*, hast thou forgot 'tis Twelfth Night?" says *Milly*.

"So 'tis," quoth *Ned*. "Shall I dance you a hornpipe?"

So after all the greeting was done, *Ned* sat down next to *Mother*: but we gat no further a-loving of our loves that night, for all wanted to hear *Ned*, that is but now come back from the *Spanish* seas: and divers tales he told that were rare taking, and one or twain that did make my flesh creep: but truly his sea-talk is rare hard to conceive. When all at once saith *Ned*:—

"Have you a ghost cruising these parts?"

"Eh, *Ned*, hast thou seen her?" cries *Austin Park*.

"Who's her?" saith *Ned*. "I've seen a craft with a white hull and all sails up, in the copse nigh old *Nanny's*."

"Couldst thou make it thy conveniency to speak *English*, *Ned*?" saith *Father*. "That is the language we talk in *Derwentdale*."

*Ned* laughed, and saith, "I'll endeavour myself; but 'tis none so easy to drop it. Well, who or what is it?"

"'Tis a ghost," saith *Austin*; "and folks laughed at me when I said I had seen it: may-be they'll give o'er now."

"Why didst not send a buck-shot through her?" quoth *Ned*.

"Good lack! I had no arms," saith *Austin*: "and what good should come o' shooting a ghost?"

"Make you first sure she is a ghost," saith *Father*: "for it should be right little good that should come of shooting a woman."

This was all said that night; and we brake up at nine o' the clock, and away hied our guests.

But yestereven, as I was a-crossing of the hall, just after the dusk fell, what should I see but Aunt *Joyce*, clad in hood, cloak, and pattens, drawing back of the bolt from the garden door: and I ran to help her.

"Why, Aunt *Joyce*, whither go you so late?" said I. "But may-be I do ill to ask."

"Nay, thou dost not so, child," saith she: "and I will take thee into my secret, for I can trust thee. *Nell*, I am going to see the ghost."

"Aunt *Joyce*," was all I could utter.

"Ay," saith she, "I will: for my mind misgives me that this is no ghost, but a living woman: and a woman that it should be well had an other woman to speak unto her. Be not afeared, dear heart; I am not running afore I am sent. It was said to me last night, 'Go in this thy might.' And when the Lord sends men on His errands, He pays the charges."

"But if you should be hurt, *Aunt!*" cried I.

"Well, what so?" saith she. "He were a poor soldier that were afeared to be hurt in his King's battles. But if it be as I think, *Nell*, there is no fear thereof. And if there were, mine ease is of less moment than a sinner's soul. Nay, dear maid, take thine heart to thee (cheer up). There is more with me than all the constables in *Cumberland*. 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He,—in heaven, and in the earth, and in the seas, and in all deep places.' I am not afeared, *Nell*."

And away trudged she, without an other word. But I sat on thorns till, about seven o' the clock, she came into the great chamber, her hood and cloak doffed.

"Why, *Joyce*, I had lost thee," saith *Mother*, looking up brightly from her sewing.

"I would rather thou hadst lost me than the Lord, *Lettice*: and if thou hadst not, methinks He had found me wanting," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Now, dear hearts, list me. I have much trust in you, *Aubrey* and *Lettice*, or I had not dared to do as I have done this night. I have brought into your house a woman that is a sinner. Will you turn her forth of the doors to die in the snow without, or will you let her 'bide till she hath had time to behold Him that sitteth as guest at your banquet, and, I would hope, to wash His feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head?"

"O *Joyce*, let her 'bide!" crieth *Mother*, and the tears ran down her cheeks.

"Amen!" saith *Father*, gently.

"But who is she?" saith *Mother*, as if something fearfully.

"She is,"—Aunt *Joyce's* voice was very husky—"she is what our *Milisent* would have been, if the Lord had not stayed her right at the last minute."

So then I knew that *Blanche Lewthwaite* was found at last.

There were none in the chamber, as it happened, but *Father, Mother,* and me, when *Aunt* came in.

"And what hath she to say?" asks *Mother.*

"She will not talk of the past," saith Aunt *Joyce:* "and, God wot, I shall not ask her."

"Is she very 'shamed and sorrowful?"

"Never a whit. She is more angered than aught else."

"Angered!—with whom?"

"With *Providence,* I take it," quoth Aunt *Joyce,* something drily. "She counts a miracle should have been wrought for her to hinder her from sinning, and that since it were not, there can be no blame laid at her door."

"So hard as that!" saith *Mother.*

"May-be not all through," Aunt *Joyce* makes answer. "The crust seems thick at present: but there may be a soft spot deep down below. I shall work till I find it."

"Is she not softened toward thee?" asks *Father.*

"Me!" saith Aunt *Joyce,* with a bitter little laugh. "Why, so far as I can make out, I am but one step fairer than *Providence* in her eyes. I gat not much flattery this even, I can tell you—no more than I had of *Milly* a month gone. Nay, *Aubrey.* He that would save a sinner against his will must not expect thanks from him."

"Shall I go to her, *Joyce?*" saith *Mother,* and rose up.

"As thou wilt, *Lettice,*" saith Aunt *Joyce.* "Only, an' thou so dost, look not for any fair words save out of thine own mouth. She is in the green chamber. I locked her in."

"Hath she had to eat?" saith *Mother.*

"Ay; I saw to that ere I came below."

*Mother* went forth of the chamber.

"May I see her, Aunt *Joyce,*" said I, "or must I not?"

"Better not at this present, *Nell,*" she made answer. "But—I am not sure that it were not well for *Milly.*"

When *Mother* came down again, she saith in a despairing voice, and spreading forth her hands—

"O *Joyce,* she is as hard as a stone!"

"Ay," saith Aunt *Joyce,* quietly. "So, I reckon, was *Peter,* until the Lord turned and looked upon him. That melted him, *Lettice.* Leave us take *Blanche* to the Lord."

"Sin is the most hardening thing in the world, dear heart," saith *Father,* sadly.

So here is poor *Blanche,* locked of the green chamber, with Aunt *Joyce* for her waiting-maid, for none other will she have to enter—not even *Mother,* for her one talk with *Blanche* hath sore distressed her.

"Wait a while, *Lettice,*" saith Aunt *Joyce:* "I will bid thee when I reckon any good should come of it."

*Milisent* hath been told, and seemeth much touched therewith: but none of us have yet seen *Blanche.* Poor heart! may the good Lord have mercy upon her!

***Selwick Hall, January ye xii.***

*Mother,* and I with her, went up this morrow to *Mere Lea,* to do Mistress *Lewthwaite* to wit touching *Blanche.* We found her right busy a-making of pies, and *Alice* by her paring of apples. She gave us good welcome, and we sat us down, and talked a short while of other matter. Then saith *Mother:*—

"Suffer me to ask at you, Mistress *Lewthwaite,* if you have heard ever any news of *Blanche?*"

Mistress *Lewthwaite* shook her head sorrowfully.

"Nay, not we," saith she. "It should be a good day we did. Albeit, her father is sore angered: yet methinks if he did verily stand face to face with the child, he should not be so hard on her as he talks now."

"Then I hope the good day is coming," saith *Mother.* "For methinks, neighbour, we have heard somewhat."

Mistress *Lewthwaite* left her pastry of the board, and come up to *Mother.*

"Eh, Lady *Lettice*, what have you heard? Tell me quick, now!"

"My poor heart, I saw her last night."

"Where is the child?"

"With us, at *Selwick* Hall. *Joyce* found her, wandering about, and hiding in cospes, and she brought her in."

"And what hath happed, Lady *Lettice*?"

"We have not asked her."

"Not asked her!" saith Mistress *Lewthwaite*, in manifest amazement; and *Alice* looked up with the like.

"We know," saith *Mother*, "but such matter as it hath liked her to tell us: the which is, that she was wed to this gentleman of a *Popish* priest, which as you know is not good in law: and that after she had bidden with him but a fortnight, they quarrelled, and he left her."

"Ah, she ne'er had a good temper, hadn't *Blanche*," saith her mother. "Well, poor heart! I'll not quarrel with her. We're all sinners, I reckon. The lass may come home when she will, for all me; and I'll do mine utmost to peace her father. We haven't so much time o' this world, nor so much happiness, that we need wrangle and make matters worsen."

For Mistress *Lewthwaite* is herself a right easy-going woman: 'tis her father of whom *Blanche* hath her temper. But *Alice* saith to me, that sat right at the end of the board where she was a-work—

"All very well, methinks, for my fine mistress to come hither a-prinking and a-pranking of her, and looking to be took back as if nought had happened. If I had the word to say, she'd not come home in no hurry, I warrant you. She should lie on her bed as she'd made it."

"O *Alice*!" said I, "but sure, thou wilt be right glad to have *Blanche* back?"

"Shall I so?" saith she, and tossed her head. "Thank you for nothing, *Nell Louvaine*. I'm a decent maid that have alway carried me belike, and I go not about to say 'sister' to one that brought disgrace on her name."

"*Alice*, art thou about to play the *Pharisee*?" said I, for I was sore troubled. I had ever thought *Alice* right sorry after *Blanche*, and it did astonish me to hear such words of her.

"Let my fine Lady *Everett* play the publican first, then," quoth she.

I scarce wist what to say, yet I would have said more, but that *Mother* rose up to depart at this time. But I am so astonished at *Alice*. While so *Blanche* were lost, she did seem quite soft toward her; and now she is found, here is *Alice* grown hard as a board, and all of a minute, as it were. Had it been our *Milly* (which I do thank God from mine heart-root it is not) I think I would not have been thus towards her. I know I am but sinful and not to be trusted for the right, as much or more than other: but I do *think* I should not so do.

Yet is there one matter that I comprehend not, nor never shall, neither of *Milly* nor of any other. To think of a maid leaving of father and mother, and her home, and her brethren and sisters, to go away with a fine-spoken man that she had not known a month, all by reason he spake some flattering words—in good sooth, but 'tis a marvel unto me. Truly, I might conceive the same in case a maid were rare ill-usen at home—were her father ever harsh unto her, and her mother all day a-nagging at her—then, if the man should show him no mere flatterer, but a true friend, would I not stick to the days she had known him. And yet, as methinks, it should be a strange case wherein a true man should not go boldly and honestly to the maid's father, and ask her of him, with no hole-and-corner work. But to think of so leaving *our* father and mother, that never in all their lives did deny us any good thing that was meet for us, and that have loved us and cared for us all, from the day we were born unto this day—to go away from them with a strange flatterer—nay, this passeth me by many a mile.

### ***Selwick Hall, January ye xvi.***

This morrow, as I was sat a-work alone in the great chamber, come my Lady *Stafford*, with her broidery in her hand, and sat her down beside me. And ere many minutes were passed, saith she—

"*Helen*, I have been to see *Blanche*."

"And is she still so hard, my Lady?" said I.

"I should not call her mood hard," saith she. "I think she is very, very sorry, and would fain not have us see it. But," she paused a moment, and then went on, "it is the worldly sorrow which causeth death."

"Your Ladyship would say?"

"She is right sorry for my Lady *Everett*, for the great lady she thought to have been, and the grand life she looked to lead: but for *Blanche Lewthwaite* as a sinner before God, methinks she is not sorry at all."

"'Tis a sad case," said I.

My Lady *Stafford* gave me no answer, and when I looked up at her, I saw her dark eyes fastened on the white clouds which were floating softly across the blue, and her eyes so full that they all-to (nearly) ran o'er.

"*Helen*," she saith, "hast thou any idea what is sin?"

"Truly, Madam, I think so," I made answer.

"I marvel," she pursueth, "if there ever were man or woman yet, that could see it as God seeth it. It may be that unto Him all the evil that *Blanche* hath done—and 'tis an evil with many sides to it—is a lesser thing than the pride and unbelief which will not give her leave to own that she hath done it. And for what others have done—"

All suddenly, her Ladyship brake off, and hiding her face in her kerchief, she brake into such a passion of weeping tears as methought I had scarce seen in any woman aforetime.

"O my God, my God!" she sobbeth through her tears, "how true is it that 'man knows the beginnings of sin, but who boundeth the issues thereof!'" (Note 2.)

I felt that my Lady's trouble, the cause whereof was unknown to me, lay far beyond any words, specially of me: and I could but keep respectful silence till she grew calm. When so were, quoth she—

"Dost marvel at my tears, *Helen*?"

"In no wise, Madam," said I: "for I reckoned there were some cause for them, beyond my weak sight."

"Cause!" saith she—"ay, *Helen*, cause more than thou wist. Dost know that this *Leonard Norris*—the man that hath wrought all this mischief—and more beside than thou or I can tell—is my brother, of the father's side?"

"Madam!" cried I in amaze.

"Ay," saith she sorrowfully: "and that is not all, *Helen*, by very much. For our father was just such an other: and not only are the sins, but the leanings and temptations of the fathers, visited upon the children. And I thought, *Helen*, beyond that—of a quiet grave in unconsecrate ground, wherein, now nigh fifty years ago, they laid one that had not sinned against the light like to *Blanche Lewthwaite*, yet to whom the world was harder than it is like to be to her. She was lawfully wed, *Helen*, but she stood pledged to convent vows, and the Church cursed her and flung her forth as a loathsome thing. Her life for twelve years thereafter was a daily dying, whereto death came at last as a hope and a mercy. I reckon the angels drew not their white robes aside, lest her soiled feet should brush them as she passed up to the Judgment Bar. And methinks her sentence from the Judge should be no worse than one He gave in the days of His flesh—'Thy sins be forgiven thee: go in peace.' The Church cast her out, but not the Cross. There was no room for her in the churchyard: but methinks there was enough in the Sepulchre on *Golgotha*!"

Oh, but how sorry I felt for this poor soul! and I saw she was one whom her Ladyship had loved well.

"There was a time, *Helen*," she went on, "when it seemed to me uttermost misery that no prayers should be permitted for her soul. Think thou with what comfort I found in God's Word that none were needed for her. Ah, these *Papists* will tell you of the happiness of their priests' fatherly care, and the sweetness of absolution: but they tell you not of the agony of despair to them to whom absolution is denied, and for whom the Church and the priest have no words save curses. I have seen it, *Helen*. Well for them whom it drives straight to Him that is high above all Churches, and who hath mercy on whom He will have mercy. Praise be to His holy name, that the furthest bounds of men's forbearance touch not the 'uttermost' of God."

When my Lady thus spake, it came upon my mind all of a sudden, to ask at her somewhat the which had troubled me of long time. I marvel wherefore it should be, that it doth alway seem easier to carry one's knots and griefs unto them that be not the nearest and dearest, than unto them that be. Is it by reason that courtesy ordereth that they shall list the better, and not be so like to snub a body?—yet that can scarce be so with me, that am alway gently entreated both of *Father* and *Mother*. Or is it that one would not show ignorance or mistakings afore them one loves, nor have them hereafter cast in one's teeth, as might be if one were o'erheard of one's sist—Good lack! but methought I were bettered of saying unkindly things. I will stay me, not by reason that it should cost me two pence, but because I do desire to please God and do the right.

Well, so I said unto my Lady, "Madam, I pray you pardon me if I speak not well, but there is one place of Holy Writ that doth sore pose and trouble me. It is that of Saint *Paul*, which saith, that if they that were once enlightened shall fall away, there shall be no hope to renew them again. That doth alway seem to me so awful a word!—to think of one that had sinned longing for forgiveness, and yet must not have it—I cannot understand how it should be, when *Christ* liveth to save to the uttermost!"

"Nor any other," saith she. "Dear *Helen*, thou readest it wrong, as I believe many do. The Apostle saith not, there is no renewing to *pardon*: he saith, there is no renewing to *repentance*. With them that have sinned against light, the language of whose hearts is, 'I have loved idols, and after them I will go,'—these have no desire of remission. They do not wish to be forgiven. But these, dear maid, are not they that long for pardon and are willing to turn from sin. That is repentance. So long as a sinner can repent, so long can he receive pardon. The sinner that doth long for forgiveness which God can not or will not give him, is a monster was never found yet in this world or that which is to come."

Right comfortable did I think these words. I never should have dared (as *Milly* saith touching the 139th Psalm) to have turned o'er the two leaves together that I might not see this sixth chapter of *Hebrews*: yet did I never see it without a diseaseful creeping feeling, belike, coming o'er me. And I am sore afeared lest I may have come nigh, at times, to wishing that Saint *Paul* had not writ the same.

"Yet mark thou, *Helen*," again saith my Lady, "there is a difference betwixt remission of sin and remission of penalty. Every sinner should be glad enough to part with his punishment: but no sinner was ever yet willing to part with his sin

but under the promptings of God's Spirit. And that is but a sorry repentance which would fain keep the sin, if only it might without incurring penalty."

"Madam, you do cause sin to look very awful," said I.

"That is how God would have thee see it, *Helen*," saith she. "Remember, He hates sin not for His own sake only, but for thy sake. Ah, dear maid, when some sin, or some matter that perhaps scarce seems sin to thee, yet makes a cloud to rise up betwixt God and thee—when this shall creep into thy very bosom, and nestle himself there warm and close, and be unto thee as a precious jewel—remember, if so be, that 'it is better *for thee* to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than thou shouldst, having two hands, or two feet, be cast into everlasting fire.' He that said that, *Helen*, knew what Hell was."

***Selwick Hall, January ye xxi.***

*Blanche* is gone home at last. Aunt *Joyce* and I went thither this last night with her, her mother having wrung consent from her father that she should come. For all that was the scene distressful, for Master *Lewthwaite* kept not in divers sharp speeches, and *Blanche* (that is sore wanting in reverence to her elders) would answer back as she should not: but at the last Mistress *Lewthwaite* gat them peaced, and *Alice* and *Blanche* went off together. *Alice* behaved better than my fears. But, dear heart, to my thinking, how hard and proud is *Blanche*! Why, she would brazen it out that she hath done none ill of no kind. The good Lord open her eyes!

When we came out from *Mere Lea*, and were come down the garden path, Aunt *Joyce* stood a moment on the hill-side, her eyes lift up to the still stars.

"Good Lord!" then saith she, "how hard be we poor sinful men and women, each to other, and how much more forbearing art Thou against whom we have sinned! Make Thou Thy servants more like Thyself!"

And then away, with a quick foot, and never an other word spake she till we gat us home.

***Selwick Hall, January ye xxvii.***

When I come to read o'er that I have writ, I find I have said rare little touching *Ned*. And in very deed it is not that I meant to keep him out, for *Ned* is my very hero, and my true thought is that never yet were young man so brave and good, nor so well-favoured. I must say I would I could conceive his talk better: for 'tis all so stuffed with sea-words that I would fain have an interpreter. *Ned* laughs when I say this.

"Well," saith he, "'tis the strangest thing in the world you should not conceive me. 'Tis all along of you being maids, I reckon."

"Nay," say I, "'tis by reason we were ne'er at sea."

"Well, how any human creature can be a landlubber," saith *Ned*, "when he might have a good boat and a stiff capful o' wind, passeth me rarely."

"Why," quoth *Father*, that had listed us in silence till now, "if we were all sailors and mermen, *Ned*, how wouldst come by a sea-biscuit or a lump of salt meat? There should be none to sow nor reap, if the land were deserted."

"Oh ay, 'tis best some should love it," saith *Ned*. "But how they so should, that is it passeth me."

"'Tis a strange matter," saith *Father*, "that we men should be all of us unable to guess how other men can affect that we love not. I dare be bound that *Wat* should say what passed him was that any man which might dwell on the land should take to the sea."

"*Wat*!" saith *Ned*, curling of his lip. "I saw him, Sir, and spent two days in his company, when we touched at *London* some eight months gone. Why, he is—Nay, I wis not what he is like. All the popinjays in the South Seas be fools to him."

"Is he so fine, *Ned*?" asks *Milly*.

"Fine!" saith *Ned*. "Go to, I have some whither an inventory of his Lordship's garments, the which I set down for the mirth of you maids. I gat the true names of *Wat*, look you."

And he pulleth forth a great bundle of papers from his pocket, and after some search lighteth on the right.

"Now then, hearken, all of you," saith *Ned*. "*Imprimis*, on his head—when it is on, but as every minute off it cometh to every creature he meeteth, 'tis not much—a *French*-fashioned beaver, guarded of a set of gold buttons enamelled with black—cost, eight pound."

"For a hat!" cries *Milly*.

"Tarry a bit," saith *Ned*; "I am not in port yet by a thousand knots. Then in this hat was a white curled ostrich feather, six shillings. Below, a gown of tawny velvet, wherein were six yards, *London* measure, of four-and-twenty shillings the yard: and guarded with some make of fur (I forgat to ask him the name of that), two dozen skins, eight pence each: cost of this goodly gown, six pound, ten shillings, and four pence."

"Eh!" cried *Milly* and *Edith* together.

"Bide a bit!" saith *Ned*. "*Item*, a doublet, of black satin of sixteen shillings the yard, with points of three and sixpence

the dozen. *Item*, a pair of hose of popinjay green (they be well called popinjay) of thirty shillings. *Item*, cross-garters of scarlet—how's that?" quoth *Ned*, scratching his forehead with a pencil: "I must have forgot the price o' them. Boots o' red *Spanish* leather, nine shillings. Gloves of *Cordova*, well scented, ten pence. Gold rings of 's ears, three shilling the pair."

"Rings! Of his ears!" cries Cousin *Bess*, that was sat in the window at her sewing, as she mostly is of an afternoon. "And prithee, what cost the one of his nose?"

"He hasn't bought that yet," saith *Ned* drily.

"It'll come soon, I reckon," quoth she.

"Then, o'er all, a mighty gold chain, as thick as a cart-rope. But that, as he told me, was given to him: so 'tis not fair to put it of the price. Eh, good lack! I well-nigh forgot the sleeves—green velvet, slashed of mallard-colour satin; and guarded o' silver lace—three pound, eight shillings, and four pence."

"Hast made an end, *Ned*?" saith *Edith*.

"Well, I reckon I may cast anchor," saith *Ned*, looking o'er to the other side of his paper.

"Favour me with the total, *Ned*," quoth *Father*.

"Twenty-three pound, two and six pence, Sir, I make it," saith *Ned*. "I am not so sure *Wat* could. He saith figuring is only fit for shop-folk."

"Is thrift only fit for shop-folk too?" asks *Father*.

"I'll warrant you *Wat* thinks so, Sir," answers *Ned*.

"What have thy garments cost this last year, *Ned*?" pursueth *Father*.

"Eh, five pound would buy mine any year," quoth he.

"And so I reckon would ten mine," saith *Father*. "What be *Wat*'s wages now?—is he any thing bettered?"

"Sixteen pound the year, Sir, as he told me."

"I guess shop-folk should be something put to it to take twenty-three out of sixteen," quoth *Father*.

"And prithee, *Ned*, how many such suits hath my young gentleman in his wardrobe?"

"That cannot I say certainly, Sir: but I would guess six or seven," *Ned* makes answer. "But, dear heart! you wit not the half hath to come of that sixteen pound: beyond clothes, there be presents, many and rich (this last new year but one girdle of seven pound;) pomanders (perfumed balls, which served as scent-bottles), and boxes of orange comfits, and cups of tamarisk wood, and *aqua mirabilis*, and song books, and virginals (the predecessor of the piano) and viols (violins), and his portrait in little, and playing tables (backgammon), and speculation glasses (probably magnifying glasses), and cinnamon water, and sugar-candy, and fine *Venice* paper for his letters, and pouncet-boxes—"

"Take breath, *Ned*," saith *Father*. "How many letters doth *Wat* write by the year?"

"They be love-letters, on the *Venice* paper," quoth *Ned*. "In good sooth, I wis not, Sir: only I saw them flying hither and thither as thick as Mother *Carey*'s chickens."

"Is he troth-plight?" saith *Father*, very seriously.

"Not that I heard," *Ned* makes answer. "He had two or three strings to his bow, I guess. One a right handsome young lady, daughter unto my Lord of *Sheffield*, that had taken up with him the new fashion called *Euphuism*."

"Prithee interpret, *Ned*," saith *Father*, "for that passeth my weak head."

I saw *Milly* to blush, and cast down her eyes of her tapestry-work: and I guessed she wist what it were.

"'Tis a rare diversion, Sir, come up of late," answers *Ned*: "whereby, when a gentlewoman and a gentleman be in treaty of love,—or without the same, being but friends—they do agree to call each other by certain dainty and fantastical names: as the one shall be *Perfection*, and the other *Hardihood*: or, the one *Sweetness*, and the other *Fortitude*: and the like. I prayed *Wat* to show me how it were, or else had I wist no more than a baker how to reef a sail. The names whereby he and his lady do call each other be, she his *Excellency*, and he her *Courage*."

"Be these men and women grown?" quoth *Father*.

"Nay, sure!" cries Cousin *Bess*.

"Every one, Sir," saith *Ned*, a-laughing.

"And, poor souls! can they find nought better to do?" quoth *Father*.

"They have not yet, it seems," saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Are you ne'er mocking of us, think you?" saith Cousin *Bess* to *Ned*.

"Never a whit!" crieth he. "Eh, Cousin *Bess*, I could tell you queerer matters than that."

"Nay, I'll hear none, o' my good will," saith she. "*Paul* saith we be to think on whatsoever things be lovely: and I reckon he wasn't like to mean on a parcel o' big babes, playing at make-believe."

"They have nought else to do, it appears," quoth *Father*.

"Dear heart!" saith she. "Could they ne'er buy a bale of flannel, and make some doublets and petticoats for the poor? He must be a poor silly companion that shall call a woman *Excellency*, when she hath done nought all her life but to pluck roses and finger her gold chain. Where's her excellency, belike?"

"Things were ill enough in the Court of old," saith *Father*, "but it doth seem me we were scanty so brainless of old time as this. I shall send a letter to my cousin of *Oxenford* touching *Walter*. He must not be suffered to drift into—"

*Father* did not end his sentence. But methought I could guess reasonable well how it should have been finished.

Verily, I am troubled touching *Wat*, and will pray for him, that he may be preserved safe from the snares of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Oh, what a blessed place must Heaven be, seeing there shall be none of them!

One thing, howbeit, doth much comfort me,—and that is, that *Ned* is true and staunch as ever to the early training he had of *Father* and *Mother* out of God's Word. Some folk might think him careless and too fond of laughter, and fun, and the like: but I know *Ned*—of early days I was ever his secret fellow—and I am well assured his heart is right and true. He shall 'bide with us until Sir *Humphrey Gilbert* his next voyage out to the *Spanish* seas, but we know not yet when that shall be. He had intended to make the coast of *Virginia* this last time, but was beat back by the tempest. 'Tis said that when he goeth, his brother of the mother's side, Sir *Walter Raleigh*, shall go with him. This Sir *Walter*, saith *Ned*, is a young gentleman that hath but eight and twenty years, yet is already of much note in the Court. He hath a rare intelligence and a merry wit. Aunt *Joyce* was mightily taken by one tale that *Ned* told us of him,—how that, being at the house of some gentleman in the country, where the mistress of the house was mightily set up and precise, one morrow, this Sir *Walter*, that was a-donning (dressing) himself, did hear the said his precise and delicate hostess, without his door, to ask at her servants, "Be the pigs served?" No sooner had they met below, than saith Sir *Walter*, "Madam, be the pigs served?"

But my Lady, that moved not a muscle of her face, replied as calm as you will, "You know best, Sir, whether you have had your breakfast." Aunt *Joyce* did laugh o'er this, and said Sir *Walter* demerited to have as good given him as he brought.

"I do like," quoth she, "a woman that can stand up to a man!"

"I can credit it, *Joyce*," saith *Father*.

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Note 1. The English hand was the running hand of the old black letter, and was a very crabbed and tedious piece of work. The Italian hand, which came in about this time, has lasted until the present day, though its latest variety has lost much of the old clearness and beauty. It was at its best in the reign of James the First, of which period some specimens of writing have been preserved, exquisitely beautiful, and as legible as copper-plate. Most lovely is the youthful hand of his eldest daughter: the cacography of her later years is, alas! something horrible. Queen Elizabeth could write the Italian hand (and did it to perfection), but she has left on record that she did not like doing it.

Note 2. These were the last words of Francesco Spira, an Italian lawyer and a pervert, whose terrible death, in the agonies of remorse and despair, made a deep and lasting impression on the Protestants of England.

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## Chapter Eight.

### How Two went in at the Gate.

"All the foolish work  
Of fancy, and the bitter close of all."  
Tennyson.  
"On all the sweet smile falleth  
Of Him who loveth so,  
But to one the sweet voice calleth,  
'Arise, and let us go;  
They wait to welcome thee,  
This night, at Home, with Me.'"  
"B.M."

(In *Milisent's* handwriting.)

**Selwick Hall, February ye ii.**

This day was called of old time *Candlemas*, by reason of the great number of candles, saith *Father*, which were brent afore the altar at the Purification of Saint *Mary*. Being an holy day, all we to church this morrow, after the which I was avised to begin my chronicling.

And afore I set down anything else, 'tis meet I should say that I do now see plain how I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. I would not think now to tear forth those pages I writ this last *November*, though they be

such a record of folly and sin as few maids should need to set down. I would rather keep them, that I may see in future days all the ill that was once in *Millisent Louvaine*, and all the great mercy and goodness which the Lord my God did show me.

Oh, the bitter anger that was in mine heart that night toward dear Aunt *Joyce*!—who, next unto *Father* and *Mother*, hath been to me as an angel of God. For had she not stopped me in my madness, where and what had I been to-night? I can scarce bear to think on it. Perchance I feel it the more, sith I am ever put in mind thereof by the woefully changed face of poor *Blanche*—*Blanche*, but three months gone the merriest of us all, and now looking as though she should never know a day's merriment again. Her whole life seems ruined: and Dr *Bell*, the chirurgeon at *Keswick*, told *Mother* but yesterday that *Blanche* should not live long. She hath, said he, a leaning of her nature toward the consumption of the lungs, the which was greatly worsened by those days that she hid in the copse, fearing to come home, until Aunt *Joyce* went to her.

And to think that I might have been thus now—with nought but a wasted life to look back on, and nought to look forward to but a rapid and early death! And to know well, as I do know, that I have but mine own headstrong foolery to thank for the danger, and am far from having any wisdom of mine to thank for the rescue. Verily, I should be the humblest of women, all the days of my life.

Oh, when will young maids learn, without needing to have it brent into them of hot irons, that they which have dwelt forty or sixty years in this world be like to know more about its ways than they that have lived but twenty; or that their own fathers and mothers, which have loved and cared for them since they lay in the cradle, be not like to wreck their happiness, even for a while, without they have good cause! Of force, I know 'tis not every maid hath such a father and mother as we—thank God for the same!—but I do think, nevertheless, there be few mothers that be good women at all, which should not be willing to have their daughters bring their sorrows and joys to them, rather than pour them into the ear of the first man that will flatter them. I have learned, from Aunt *Joyce*, that there is oft a deal more in folk than other folk reckon, and that if we come not on the soft spot in a woman's heart, 'tis very commonly by reason that we dig not deep enough. Howbeit, Aunt *Joyce* saith there be women that have no hearts. The good Lord keep them out of my path, if His will be!

***Selwick Hall, February ye v.***

This morrow, we maids were sat a-work in the great chamber, where was Aunt *Joyce* a-work likewise, and *Mother* coming in and out on her occasions. *Father* was there, but he was wrapped in a great book that lay afore him. I cannot well mind how we gat on the matter, but Aunt *Joyce* 'gan speak of the blunders that men do commonly make when they speak of women.

"Why," saith she, "we might be an other sort of animal altogether, instead of the one half of themselves. Do but look you what I have heard men to say in my life. A woman's first desire is to be wed; that's not true but of some women, and they be the least worthy of the sex. A woman can never keep a secret: that's not true but of some. A woman can never take a joke: that's as big a falsehood as *Westminster Abbey*. A woman cannot understand reason and logic: that's as big an one as all *England*. Any woman can keep a house or manage a babe: heyday, can she so? I know better. Poor loons, what should they say if we made as great blunders touching them? And an other thing I will tell you which hath oft-times diverted me: 'tis the queer ways whereby a man will look to win favour of a woman. Nine men of every ten will suppose they shall be liked of a woman for telling her (in substance) that she is as good as if she had not been one. Now, that should set the man that did it out of my grace for ever and ever."

"How mean you, *Aunt*, an' it like you?" saith *Nell*.

"Why, look you here," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "But this last week, said I to Master *Coward*, touching somewhat he had said, 'But,' said I, 'that were not just.' Quoth he, 'How, my mistress!—you a woman, and love justice?' Again: there was once a companion would fain have won me to wed him. When I said 'Nay,' (and meant it), quoth he, 'Oh, a maid doth never say yea at the first.' And I do believe that both these thought to flatter me. If they had but known how I longed to shake them! For look you what the words meant. A woman is never just: a woman is never sincere. And the dolts reckon it shall please us to know that they take us for such fools! Verily, I would give a pretty penny but to make them conceive that the scrap of flattery which they do offer to my particular is utterly swamped in the vast affront which they give to my sex in the general. But you shall rarely see a man to guess that. Moreover, there be two other points. Mark you how a man shall serve a woman, if he come to know that she hath the tongues (knows the classical languages). Doth he take it as he should with an other man? Never a whit. He treats the matter as though an horse should read *English*, or a cat play the spinnet. What right hath he to account my brains so much worse than his (I being the same creature as he) that I cannot learn aught he can? 'So mean-brained a thing as a woman to know as much as any man!' I grant you, he shall not say such words: but he shall say words that mean it. And then, forsooth, he shall reckon he hath paid me a compliment! I trow no woman should have brains as dull as that. And do tell me, belike, why a man that can talk right good sense to his fellows, shall no sooner turn him around to a woman, than he shall begin to chatter the veriest nonsense? It doth seem me, that a man never thinks of any woman but the lowest quality. He counts her loving, if you will; but alway foolish, frothy, witless. He'll take every one of you for that make of woman, till he find the contrary. Oh, these men! these men!"

"Ah!" saith *Father*. "I feel myself one of the inferior sex."

"*Aubrey*, what business hast thou hearkening?" quoth she. "I thought thou wert lost in yonder big book."

"I found myself again, some minutes gone," saith *Father*. "But thou wist, 'tis an old saw that listeners do never hear any good of themselves."

"I didn't mean thee, man!" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Present company always excepted."

"Methought I was reckoned absent company," saith *Father*, with a twinkle in his eyes, and lifting his big book from



the table. "Howbeit, I am not too proud to learn."

"Even from a woman?" quoth Aunt *Joyce*. "Thou art the pearl of men, if so be."

*Father* laughed, and carried off his book, pausing at the door to observe—"There is some truth in much thou hast said, *Joyce*."

"Lack-a-day, what an acknowledgment from a man!" cries Aunt *Joyce*. "Yet 'tis fenced round, look you. 'There is some truth in much' I have said. Ah, go thy ways, my good *Aubrey*; thou art the best man ever I knew: but, alack! thou art a man, after all."

"Why, Aunt *Joyce*," saith *Edith*, who was laughing rarely, "what should we do, think you, if there were no men?"

"I would do some way, thou shouldst see," saith Aunt *Joyce*, sturdily.

And so she let the matter drop; or should so have done, but *Nell* saith—

"I reckon we all, both men and women, have in us a touch of our father, old *Adam*!"

"And our mother, old *Eva*," said I.

"You say well, childre," quoth Aunt *Joyce*: "and she that hath the biggest touch of any I know is a certain old woman of *Oxfordshire*, by name *Joyce Morrell*."

Up springeth *Edith*, and giveth Aunt *Joyce* a great hug.

"She is the best, sweetest, dearest old woman (if so be) ever I knew," saith she. "I except not even *Mother*, for I count not her an old woman."

Aunt *Joyce* laughed, and paid *Edith* back her hug with usury.

Then, when *Edith* was set down again to her work, Aunt *Joyce* saith—

"*Anstace* was wont to say—my *Anstace*, not yours, my maids—that she which did commonly put herself in the lowest place should the seldomest find her out of her reckoning."

#### ***Selwick Hall, February the ix.***

Come Dr *Bell* this morrow to let us blood, as is always done of the spring-time. I do never love these blood-letting days, sith for a se'nnight after I do feel weak as water. But I reckon it must needs be, to keep away fever and plague and such like, the which should be worsen than blood-letting a deal. All we were blooded, down to *Adam*; and Dr *Bell* rode away, by sixteen shillings the richer man, which is a deal for a chirurgeon to earn but of one morrow. Aunt *Joyce* saith she marvelleth if in time to come physicians cannot discover some herb or the like that shall purify folks' blood without having it run out of them like water from a tap. I would, if so be, that they might make haste and find the same.

*Father* hath writ to his cousin my Lord of *Oxenford*, praying him to give leave for *Wat* to visit us at home. 'Tis four years sithence he were here; and *Father* hath been wont to say that shall be a rare well-writ letter which shall (in common cases) do half the good of a talk face to face. I can see he is somewhat diseaseful touching *Wat*, lest he should slide into ill ways.

We do hear of old *Nanny*, that cometh by nows and thens for waste victuals, that daft *Madge* is something sick. Her grandmother reckons she caught an ill rheum that even of *Christmas* Day when she were here: but *Madge* herself will strongly deny the same, saying (poor maid!) that she never could take nought ill at *Selwick* Hall, for never nought but good (saith she) came to her there. *Mother* would go to visit her, but she hath an evil rheum herself, and *Father* saith she must tarry at home this sharp frost: so Aunt *Joyce* and I be to go this afternoon, and carry her a basket of comfortable things.

#### ***Selwick Hall, February ye x.***

A rare basket that was *Mother* packed yester-morrow for daft *Madge*. First went in a piece of beef, and then a goodly string of salt ling (for *Lent* is nigh at hand (Note 1)), a little bottle of cinnamon water, divers pots of conserves and honey, a roll of butter, a half-dozen of eggs (which at this present are ill to come by, for the hens will scarce lay this frost weather); and two of the new foreign fruit called oranges (first introduced in 1568), which have been of late brought from abroad, and *Ned* did bring unto *Mother* a little basket of them.

We had an ill walk, for there hath been frost after snow, and the roads be slippy as they were greased with butter. Howbeit, we come at last safe to *Madge's* door, and there found daft *Madge* in a great chair afore the fire, propped up of pillows, and old *Madge* her grandmother sat a-sewing, with her horn-glasses across her nose, and by her old *Isaac Crewdson*, that is daft *Madge* her grandfather of the other side. She smiled all o'er her face when she saw us, and did feebly clap her hands, as she is wont to do when rare pleased.

"Good morrow, *Madge*!" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "See thou, my Lady *Lettice* hath sent thee a basket of good things, to strengthen thee up a bit."

*Madge* took Aunt *Joyce's* hand, and kissed it.

"They'll be good, but your faces be better," saith she.

Old *Madge* gat her up, and bustled about, unpacking of the basket, and crying out o' pleasure as she came to each thing and told what it were. But daft *Madge* seemed not much to care what were therein, though she was ever wont dearly to love sweets, there being (I reckon) so few pleasures she had wit for. Only she sat still, gazing from Aunt *Joyce* to me, and smiling on us.

"What art thinking, *Madge*?" saith Aunt *Joyce*.

For, natural (idiot) though she be, *Madge* is alway thinking. 'Tis very nigh as though there were a soul within her which tried hard to see through the smoked glass of her poor brains. Nay, I take it, so there is.

"I were thinking," saith she, "a-looking on your faces, what like it'll be to see His Face."

*Madge* hath rarely any name for God. It is mostly "He."

"Wouldst love to see it, *Madge*?" saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Shall," quoth she, "right soon. He sent me word, Mistress *Joyce*, yestereven."

"Ay," saith old *Isaac*, "she reckons she's going."

"Wilt be glad, *Madge*?" saith Aunt *Joyce*, softly.

"Glad!" she makes answer. "Eh, Mistress *Joyce*—glad! Why, 'twill be better than plum-porridge!"

Poor *Madge*!—she took the best symbol she had wit for.

"Ay, my lass, it'll be better nor aught down here," saith old *Isaac*. "Plum-porridge and feather beds'll be nought to what they've gotten up yonder.—You see, Mistress *Joyce*, we mun tell her by what she knows, poor maid!"

"Ay, thou sayest well, *Isaac*," Aunt *Joyce* made reply. "*Madge*, thy mother's up yonder."

"I know!" she saith, a-smiling. "She'll come to th' gate when I knock. He'll sure send her to meet me. She'll know 'tis me, ye ken. It'd never do if some other maid gave my name, and got let in by mistake for me. He'll send somebody as knows me to see I get in right. Don't ye see, that's why we keep a-going one at once? Somebody mun be always there that'll ken th' new ones."

"I reckon the Lord will ken them, *Madge*," saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Oh ay, He'll ken 'em, sure enough," saith *Madge*. "But then, ye see, they'd feel lonely like if they waited to see any body they knew till they got right up to th' fur end: and th' angels 'd be stoppin' 'em and wanting to make sure all were right. That wouldn't be pleasant. So He'll send one o' them as knows 'em, and then th' angels 'll be satisfied, and not be stoppin' of 'em."

Aunt *Joyce* did not smile at poor *Madge*'s queer notions. She saith at times that God Himself teaches them that men cannot teach. And at after, quoth she, that it were but *Madge* her way of saying, "He careth for you."

"Dost thou think she is going, *Isaac*?" saith Aunt *Joyce*. For old *Isaac* is an herb-gatherer, or were while he could; and he wist a deal of physic.

"Now, *Gaffer*, thou'lt never say nay!" cries *Madge* faintly, as though it should trouble her sore if he thought she would live through it.

"I'll say nought o' th' sort, *Madge*," said *Isaac*. "Ay, Mistress *Joyce*. She's been coming to the Lord this ever so long: and now, I take it, she's going to Him."

"That's right!" saith *Madge*, with a comforted look, and laying of her head back on her pillows. "It would be sore to get right up to th' gate, and then an angel as one didn't know just put his head forth, and say, 'Th' Master says 'tis too soon, *Madge*: thou must not come in yet. Thou'lt have to walk a bit outside.' Eh, but I wouldn't like yon!"

"He'll not leave thee outside, I reckon," saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Eh, I hope not!" quoth *Madge*, as regretfully. "I do want to see Him so. I'd like to see if He looks rested like after all He bare for a poor daft maid. And I want to know if them bad places is all healed up in His hands and feet, and hurt Him no more now. I'd like to see for myself, ye ken."

"Ay, *Madge*, they're healed long ago," saith *Isaac*.

"Well, I count so," saith she, "for 'tis a parcel o' *Sundays* since first time thou told me of 'em: still, I'd like to see for myself."

"Thou'lt see for thyself," saith *Isaac*. "Th' Lord's just th' same up yonder that He were down here."

"Well, I reckon so," quoth *Madge*, in a tone of wonder. "Amn't I th' same maid up at th' Hall as I am here?"

"Ay, but I mean He's as good as ever He were," *Isaac* makes answer. "He were right good, He were, to yon poor gaumering (silly) *Thomas*,—eh, but he were a troublesome chap, was *Thomas*! He said he wouldn't believe it were th' Lord without he stuck his hand right into th' bad place of His side. He were a hard one to deal wi', was yon *Thomas*."

"Did He let him stick it in?" saith *Madge*, opening her eyes.

"Yea, He told him to come and stick't in, if he could not believe without: but he mun have been a dizard (foolish man), that he couldn't—that's what I think," quoth old *Isaac*.

"Was he daft?" saith *Madge*.

"Well, nay, I reckon not," saith he.

"I'll tell ye how it were," saith she. "His soul was daft—that's it—right th' inside of him, ye ken."

"Ay, I reckon thou'rt about right," quoth *Isaac*.

"Well, I wouldn't have wanted that," saith she. "I'd have wist by His face and the way He said 'Good morrow, *Thomas!*' I'd never have wanted to hurt Him more to see whether it were Him. So He'd rather be hurt than leave *Thomas* a-wondering! Well—it were just like Him."

"He's better than men be, *Madge*," saith Aunt *Joyce*, tenderly.

"That's none so much to say, Mistress *Joyce*," saith *Madge*. "Men's bad uns. And some's rare bad uns. So's women, belike. I'd liever ha' th' door betwixt."

*Madge* hath alway had a strange fantasy to shut the half-door betwixt her and them she loveth not. There be very few she will let come withinside. I reckon them that may might be counted of her fingers.

"Well, *Madge*, there shall be no need to shut to the door in Heaven," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "The gates be never shut by day; and there is no night there."

"They've no night! Eh, that's best thing ever you told me yet!" quoth *Madge*. "I canna 'bide th' dark. It'll be right bonnie, it will!"

Softly Aunt *Joyce* made answer. "'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the Land that is very far off.'"

*Madge's* head came up from the pillow. "Eh, that's grand! And that's Him?"

"Ay, my maid."

"Ay, that's like," saith she. "It couldn't be nobody else. And Him that could make th' roses and lilies mun be good to look at. 'Tisn't always so now: but I reckon they've things tidy up yon. They'll fit like, ye ken. But, Mistress *Joyce*, do ye tell me, will us be any wiser up yon?"

I saw the water in Aunt *Joyce's* eyes, as she arose; and she bent down and kissed *Madge* on the brow.

"Dear heart," quoth she, "thou shalt know Him then as well as He knows thee. Is that plenty, *Madge*?"

"I reckon 'tis a bit o' t'other side," saith *Madge*, with her eyes gleaming. But when I came to kiss her the next minute, quoth she—"Mistress *Milisent*, saw ye e'er Mistress *Joyce* when she had doffed her?"

"Ay, *Madge*," said I, marvelling what notion was now in her poor brain.

"And," saith she, "be there any wings a-growing out of her shoulders? Do tell me. I'd like to know how big they were by now."

"Nay, *Madge*; I never saw any."

"No did ye?" quoth she, in a disappointed tone. "I thought they'd have been middling grown by now. But may-be He keeps th' wings till we've got yon? Ay, I reckon that's it. She'll have 'em all right, some day."

And *Madge* seemed satisfied.

### ***Selwick Hall, February ye xvi.***

Yester-morn, Dr *Bell* being at church, *Mother* was avised to ask him, if it might stand with his conveniency, to look in on *Madge* the next time he rideth that way, and see if aught might be done for her. He saith in answer that he should be a-riding to *Thirlmere* early this morrow, and would so do: and this even, on his way home, he came in hither to tell *Mother* his thought thereon. 'Tis even as we feared, for he saith there is no doubt that *Madge* is dying, nor shall she overlive many days. But right sorry were we to hear him say that he did marvel if she or *Blanche Lewthwaite* should go the first.

"Why, Doctor!" saith *Mother*, "I never reckoned *Blanche* so far gone as that."

"May-be not when you saw her, Lady *Lettice*," saith he. "But—women be so perverse! Why, the poor wretch might have lived till this summer next following, or even (though I scarce think it) have tided o'er another winter, but she must needs take it into her foolish head to rush forth into the garden, to say a last word to somebody, a frosty bitter even some ten days back, with never so much as a kerchief tied o'er her head; and now is she laid of her bed, as was the only thing like, and may scarce breathe with the inflammation of her lungs. She *may* win through, but verily I look not for it."

"Poor heart! I will go and see her," saith *Mother*.

"Ay, do so," saith he. "Poor foolish soul!—as foolish in regard of her health as of her happiness."

This even, I being the first in our chamber, was but making ready my gown with a clean partlet (ruff) for to-morrow, when *Mother* come in.

"*Milly*," she saith, "I shall go (if the Lord will) to see *Blanche* to-morrow, and I would have thee go withal."

I guess *Mother* saw that I did somewhat shrink from the thought. In truth, though I have seen *Blanche* in church, and know how she looketh, yet I have never yet spoke with her sithence she came home, and I feel fearful, as though I were going into a chamber where was somewhat might hurt me.

"My *Milisent*," saith *Mother*—and that is what she calls me at her tenderest—"I would not hurt thee but for thine own good. And I know, dear heart, that few matters do more good than for a sinner to be shown that whereto he might have come, if the Lord had not hedged up his way with thorns. 'Tis not alway—I might say 'tis not often—that we be permitted to see whither the way should have led that the Father would not have us to take. And, my dear heart, thou art of thy nature so like thy foolish mother, that I can judge well what should be good for thee."

"Nay, *Mother*, dear heart! I pray you, call not yourself names," said I, kissing her hand.

"I shall be of my nature foolish, *Milly*, whether I do so call myself or no," saith *Mother*, laughing.

"And truly, the older I grow, the more foolish I think myself in my young days."

"Shall I so do, *Mother*, when I am come to your years?" said I, also laughing.

"I hope so, *Milly*," saith she. "I am afeared, if no, thy wisdom shall then be small."

***Selwick Hall, February ye xvii.***

I have seen *Blanche Lewthwaite*, and I do feel to-night as though I should never laugh again. Verily, O my God, the way of the transgressors is hard!

She lies of her bed, scarce able to speak, and that but of an hoarse whisper. Dr *Bell* hath given order that she shall not be suffered to talk but to make known her wants or to relieve her mind, though folk may talk to her so long as they weary her not. We came in, brought of *Alice*, and *Mother* sat down by the bed, while I sat in the window with *Alice*.

*Blanche* looked up at *Mother* when she spake some kindly words unto her.

"I am going, Lady *Lettice*!" was the first thing she said.

"I do trust, dear heart, if the Lord will, Dr *Bell*'s skill may yet avail for thee," saith *Mother*. "But if not, *Blanche*—"

*Blanche* interrupted her impatiently, with a question whereof the tone, yet more than the words, made my blood run cold.

"Whither am I going?"

"Dear *Blanche*," said *Mother*, "the Lord *Jesus Christ* is as good and as able to-day as ever He were."

There was a little impatient movement of her head.

"Too late!"

"Never too late for Him," saith *Mother*.

"Too late for me," *Blanche* made answer. "You mind the text—last *Sunday*. I loved idols—after them I *would* go!"

She spoke with terrible pauses, caused by that hard, labouring breath.

*Mother* answered, as I knew, from the Word of God.

"'Yet return again to me,' saith the Lord."

"I cannot return. I never came."

"Then 'come unto Me, all ye that are weary and laden.' 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

*Blanche* made no answer. She only lay still, her eyes fixed on *Mother*, which did essay for to show her by God's Word that she might yet be saved if she so would. Methought when *Mother* stayed, and rose to kiss her as she came thence, that surely *Blanche* could want no more. Her only word to *Mother* was—

"Thanks."

Then she beckoned to me, and I came and kissed her. *Mother* was gone to speak with Mistress *Lewthwaite*, and *Alice* withal. *Blanche* and I were alone.

"Close!" she said: and I bent mine ear to her lips. "Very kind—Lady *Lettice*. But—too late."

"O *Blanche!*" I was beginning: but her thin weak hand on mine arm stayed further speech.

"Hush! *Milisent*—thank God—thou art not as I. Thank God—and keep clean. Too late for me. Good-bye."

"O *Blanche, Blanche!*" I sobbed through my tears. The look in her eyes was dreadful to me. "The Lord would fain have thee saved, and wherefore dost thou say 'too late'?"

"I want it not," she whispered.

"*Blanche,*" I cried in horror. "What canst thou mean? Not want to be saved from Hell! Not want to go to Heaven!"

"From Hell—ay. But not—to go to Heaven."

"But there is none other place!" cried I.

"I know. Would there were!"

I believe I stood and gazed on her in amaze. I could not think what were her meaning, and I marvelled if she were not feather-brained (wandering, light-headed) somewhat.

"God is in Heaven," she said. "I do not want God. Nor He me."

I could not tell what to say. I was too horrified.

"There was a time," saith *Blanche*, in that dreadful whisper, which seemed me hoarser than ever, "He would—have saved me—then. But I would not. Now—too late. Thanks! Go—good-bye."

And then *Mother* called me.

I think that hoarse whisper will ring in mine ears, and those awful eyes will haunt me, till the day I die. And this might have been my portion!

No word of all this said I to *Mother*. As Aunt *Joyce* saith, she picks up everything with her heart, and *Father* hath always bidden us maids to spare her such trouble as we may—which same he ever doth himself. But I found my Lady *Stafford* in the little chamber, and I threw me down on the floor at her feet, and gave my tears leave to have their way. My Lady always seemeth to conceive any in trouble, and she worketh not at you to comfort you afore you be ready to be comforted. She only stroked mine head once or twice, as though to show me that she felt for me: until I pushed back my tears, and could look up and tell her what it were that troubled me.

"What ought I to have said, my Lady?" quoth I.

"No words of thine, *Milisent,*" she made answer. "That valley of the shadow is below the sound of any comfort of men. The words that will reach down there are the words of God. And not always they."

"But—O my Lady, think you the poor soul can be right—that it is too late for her?"

"There is only One that can answer thee that question," she saith. "Let us cry mightily unto Him. So long as there is life, there may be hope. There be on whom even in this world the Lord seems to have shut His door. But I think they be commonly hardened sinners, that have resisted His good Spirit through years of sinning. There is no unforgivable sin save that hard unbelief which will not be forgiven. Dear *Milisent*, let us remember His word, that if two of us shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done. And He willeth not the death of a sinner."

We made that compact: and ever sithence mine heart hath been, as it were, crying out to God for poor *Blanche*. I cannot tell if it be foolish to feel thus or no, but it doth seem as though I were verily guilty touching her; as though the saving of me had been the loss of her. O Lord God, have mercy upon her!

***Selwick Hall, February ye xxii.***

This cold even were we maids and *Ned* bidden to a gathering at Master *Murthwaite's*, it being *Temperance* her birthday, and she is now two and twenty years of age. We had meant for to call on our way at *Mere Lea*, to ask how was *Blanche*, but we were so late of starting (I need not blame any) that there was no time left, and we had to foot it at a good pace. Master *Murthwaite* dwells about half a mile on this side of *Keswick*, so we had a middling good walk. There come, we found *Gillian Armstrong* and her brethren, but none from *Mere Lea*. *Gillian* said her mother had been thither yester-morn, when she reckoned *Blanche* to be something better: and they were begun to hope (though Dr *Bell* would not yet say so much) that she might tide o'er her malady. A pleasant even was it, but quiet: for Master *Murthwaite* is a strong *Puritan* (as folk do now begin to call them that be strict in religion,) and loveth not no manner of noisy mirth: nor do I think any of us were o'er inclined to vex him in that matter. I was not, leastwise. We brake up about eight of the clock, or a little past, and set forth of our way home. Not many yards, howbeit, were we gone, when a sound struck on our ears that made my blood run chill. From the old church at *Keswick* came the low deep toll of the passing bell.

"One,—two!"—then a pause. A woman.

There were only two women, so far as I knew, that it was like to be. I counted every stroke with my breath held. Would it pause at the nineteen which should point to daft *Madge*, or go on to the twenty-one which should mean *Blanche Lewthwaite*?

"Eighteen—nineteen—twenty—twenty-one!"

Then the bell stopped.

"O *Ned*, it is *Blanche*!" cries *Edith*.

"Ay, I reckon so," saith *Ned*, sadly.

We hurried on then to the end of the lane which leads up to *Mere Lea*. Looking up at the house, whereof the upper windows can be seen, we saw all dark and closed up: and in *Blanche's* window, where of late the light had burned day and night, there was now only pitch darkness. She needed no lights now: for she was either in the blessed City where they need no light of the sun, or else cast forth into the blackness of darkness for ever. Oh, which should it be?

"*Milisent!*" said a low, sorrowful voice beside me; and mine hand clasped *Robin Lewthwaite's*.

"When was it, *Robin*?"

"Two hours gone," he saith, mournfully.

"*Robin*," I could not help whispering, "said she aught comfortable at the last?"

"She never spake at all for the last six hours," he made answer. "But the last word she did say was—the publican's prayer, *Milly*."

"Then there is hope!" I thought, but I said it not to *Robin*.

So we came home and told the sorrowful tidings.

### ***Selwick Hall, February ye xxv.***

I was out in the garden this morrow, picking of snowdrops to lay round *Blanche's* coffin. My back was to the gate, when all suddenly I heard Dr *Bell's* voice say—" *Milisent*, is that thou?"

I rose up and ran to the gate, where he sat on his horse.

"Well, *Milly*," saith he, "the shutters are up at *Mere Lea*."

"Ay, we know it, Doctor," said I, sadly.

"Poor maid!" saith he. "A life flung away! And it might have been so different!"

I said nought, for the tears burned under mine eyelids, and there was a lump in my throat that let me from speech.

"I would thou wouldst say, *Milly*," goeth on Dr *Bell*, "to my Lady and Mistress *Joyce*, that daft *Madge* (as methinks) shall not pass the day, and she hath a rare fantasy to see Mistress *Joyce* once more. See if it may be compassed. Good morrow."

I went in forthwith and sought Aunt *Joyce*, which spake no word, but went that instant moment and tied on her hood and cloak: and so did I mine.

'Twas nigh ten o' the clock when we reached old *Madge's* hut.

We found daft *Madge* in her bed, and seemingly asleep. But old *Madge* said 'twas rather a kind of heaviness, whence she would rouse if any spake to her.

Aunt *Joyce* leaned over her and kissed her brow.

"Eh, 'tis Mistress *Joyce*!" saith *Madge*, feebly, as she oped her eyes. "That's good. He's let me have *all* I wanted."

"Art comfortable, *Madge*?"

"Close to th' gate. I'm lookin' to see 't open and *Mother* come out. Willn't she be pleased?"

Aunt *Joyce* wiped her eyes, but said nought.

"Say yon again, Mistress *Joyce*," saith *Madge*.

"What, my dear heart?"

"Why, *you*," saith *Madge*. "Over seeing th' King. Dinna ye ken?"

"Eh, Mistress *Joyce*, but ye ha' set her up some wi' that," saith old *Madge*. "She's talked o' nought else sin', scarce."

Aunt *Joyce* said it once more. "'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the Land that is very far off.'"

"'Tis none so fur off now," quoth *Madge*. "I've gotten a many miles nearer sin' you were hither."

"I think thou hast, *Madge*," saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Ay. An' 'tis a good place," saith she. "'Tis a good place here, where ye can just lie and watch th' gate. They'll come out, they bonnie folk, and fetch me in anon: and *Mother's* safe sure to be one."

"Ah, *Madge*! Thou wist whither thou goest," saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Why, for sure!" saith she. "He's none like to send me nowhere else but where He is. Dun ye think I'd die for somebody I didn't want?"

She saith not much else, but seemed as though she sank back into that heavy way she had afore. But at last, when we were about to depart, she roused up again a moment.

"God be wi' ye both," said she. "I'm going th' longer journey, but there's t' better home at t' end. May-be I shall come to th' gate to meet you. Mind you dunnot miss, Mistress *Milly*. Mistress *Joyce*, she's safe."

"I will try not to miss, *Madge*," I answered through my tears, "God helping me."

"He'll help ye if ye want helpin'," saith *Madge*.

"Only He'll none carry you if ye willn't come. Dunna throw away good gold for dead leaves Mistress *Milly*. God be wi' ye!"

We left her there—"watching the gate."

***Selwick Hall, February ye xxvi.***

This morrow, as I came down the stairs, what should I see but Aunt *Joyce*, a-shaking the snow from her cloak and pulling off her pattens.

"Why, *Aunt!*" cried I. "Have you been forth thus early?"

Aunt *Joyce* turned on me a very solemn face.

"*Milly*," saith she, "*Madge* is in at the gate."

"O *Aunt!* have you seen her die?"

"I have seen her rise to life," she made answer. "Child, the Lord grant to thee and me such a death as hers! It seemed as though, right at the last moment, the mist that had veiled it all her earth-time cleared from the poor brain, and the light poured in on her like a flood. 'The King in His beauty! The King in His beauty!' were the last words she spake, but in such a voice of triumph and gladness as I never heard from her afore. O *Milly*, my darling child! how vast the difference between the being 'saved so as by fire,' and the abundant entrance of the good and faithful servant! Let us not rest short of it."

And methought, as I followed Aunt *Joyce* into the breakfast-chamber, that God helping me, I would not.

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Note 1. For many years after the Reformation the use of fish was made compulsory in Lent, from the wish to benefit the fish trade. A licence to eat flesh in Lent (obtained from the Queen, not the Pope) cost 40 shillings in 1599.

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## Chapter Nine.

### Walter Learns to Say No.

"Betray mean terror of ridicule,—thou shalt find fools enough to mock thee:—

"But answer thou their laughter with contempt, and the scoffers shall lick thy feet."

Martin Farquhar Tupper.

(In *Edith's* handwriting.)

***Selwick Hall, March the ii.***

Never, methinks, saw I any so changed as our *Milly* by the illness and death of poor *Blanche*. From being the merriest of all us, methinks she is become well-nigh the saddest. I count it shall pass in time, but she is not like *Milisent* at this present. All we, indeed, have much felt the same: but none like her. I never did reckon her so much to love *Blanche*.

I have marvelled divers times of late, what did bring *Robin Lewthwaite* here so oft; and I did somewhat in mine own mind, rhyme his name with *Milisent's*, for all (as I find on looking) my damsel hath set down never a time he came. The which, as methinks, is somewhat significant. So I was little astonished this afternoon to be asked of *Robin*, as we two were in the garden, if I reckoned *Milisent* had any care touching him.

"Thou wist, *Edith*," saith he, "I did alway love her: but when yon rogue came in the way betwixt that did end all by the beguilement of our poor *Blanche*, I well-nigh gave up all hope, for methought she were fair enchanted by him."

"I think she so were, for a time, *Robin*," said I, "until she saw verily what manner of man he were: and that it were not truly he that she had loved, but the man she had accounted him."

"Well," saith *Robin*, "I would like to be the man she accounted him. Thinkest there is any chance?"

"Thou wist I can but guess," I made answer, "for *Milisent* is very close of that matter, though she be right open on other: but I see no reason, *Robin*, wherefore thou shouldst not win her favour, and I do ensure thee I wish thee well therein."

"*Edith*, thou art an angel!" crieth he out: and squeezed mine hand till I wished him the other side the Border.

"Nay!" said I, a-laughing: "what then is *Milly*?"

"Oh, aught thou wilt," saith he, also laughing, "that is sweet, and fair, and delightsome. Dost know, *Edith*, our *Nym* goeth about to be a soldier? He shall leave us this next month."

"A soldier!" cried I: for in very deed *Nym* and a soldier were two matters that ran not together to my thoughts. Howbeit, I was not sorry to hear that *Nym* should leave this vicinage, and thereby cease tormenting of our *Helen*. The way he gazeth on her all the sermon-time in church should make me fit to poison him, were I she, and desired not (as I know she doth not) that he should be a-running after me. But, *Nym* a soldier! I could as soon have looked to see *Moses* play the virginals. Why, he is feared of his own shadow, very nigh: and is worsen for ghosts than even *Austin Park*. I do trust, if we need any defence here in *Derwentdale*, either the Queen's Majesty shall not send *Nym* to guard us, or else that his men shall have stouter hearts than he. An hare were as good as *Nym Lewthwaite*.

Sithence I writ what goeth afore, have we all been rare gladdened by *Walter's* coming, which was just when the dusk had fallen. He looketh right well of his face, and is grown higher, and right well-favoured: but, eh me, so fine! I felt well-nigh inclined to lout (courtesy) me low unto this magnificent gentleman, rather than take him by the hand and kiss him. *Ned* saith—

"The Queen's Highness' barge ahoy!—all lined and padded o' velvet!—and in the midst the estate (the royal canopy) of cloth of gold! Off with your caps, my hearties!"

*Walter* laughed, and took it very well. Saith Aunt *Joyce*, when he come to her—

"*Wat*, how much art thou worth by the yard?"

"Ten thousand pound, *Aunt*," saith he, boldly, and laughing.

"Ha!" saith she, somewhat dry. "I trust 'tis safe withinside, for I see it not without."

#### ***Selwick Hall, March ye iv.***

Yesterday, being *Sunday*, was nought said touching *Wat* and his ways: only all to church, of course, at matins and evensong, but this day no sermons. This morrow, after breakfast, as we arose from the table, saith *Father*:—

"*Walter*, my lad, thou and I must have some talk."

"An' it like you, Sir," saith *Wat*.

"Wouldst thou choose it rather without other ears?"

"Not any way, I thank you, Sir."

"Then," quoth *Father*, drawing of a chair afore the fire, "we may tarry as we be."

*Walter* sat him down in the chimney-corner; *Mother*, with her sewing, on the other side the fire; Aunt *Joyce* in the place she best loveth, in the window. Cousin *Bess* and *Mynheer* were gone on their occasions. *Ned* and we three maids were in divers parts of the chamber; *Ned* carving of a wooden boat for *Anstace* her little lad, and we at our sewing.

"Wilt tell me, *Wat*," saith *Father*, "what years thou hast?"

"Why, Sir," quoth he, "I reckon you know that something better than I; but I have always been given to wit that the year of my birth was Mdlvii." (1557.)

"The which, sith thou wert born in *July*, makes thee now of two and twenty years," *Father* makes answer.

"I believe so much, Sir," saith *Walter*, that looked somewhat diverted at this beginning.

"And thy wage at this time, from my Lord of *Oxenford*, is sixteen pound by the year?" (Note 1.)

"It is so, Sir," quoth *Wat*.

"And what reckonest thy costs to be?"

"In good sooth, Sir, I have not reckoned," saith he.

"Go to—make a guess."

*Wat* did seem diseased thereat, and fiddled with his chain. At the last (*Father* keeping silence) he saith, looking up, with a flush of his brow—

"To speak truth, Sir, I dare not."



"Right, my lad," saith *Father*. "Speak the truth, and let come of it what will. But, in very deed, we must come to it, *Wat*. This matter is like those wounds that 'tis no good to heal ere they be probed. Nor knew I ever a chirurgeon to use the probe without hurting of his patient. Howbeit, *Wat*, I will not hurt thee more than is need. Tell me, dost thou think that all thy costs, of whatsoever kind, should go into two hundred pound by the year?"

The red flush on *Wat's* brow grew deeper.

"I am afeared not, Sir," he made answer, of a low voice.

"Should they go into three?" *Wat* hesitated, but seemed more diseased (uncomfortable) than ever.

"Should four overlap them?"

*Wat* brake forth.

"*Father*, I would you would scold me—I cannot stand it! I should feel an hard whipping by far less than your terrible gentleness. I know I have been a downright fool, and I have known it all the time: but what is a man to do? The fellows laugh at you if you do not as all the rest. Then they come to one every day, with, 'Here, *Louvaine*, lend me a sovereign,'—and 'Look you, *Louvaine*, pay this bill for me,'—and they should reckon you the shabbiest companion ever lived, if you did it not, or if, having done it, you should ask them for it again."

"*Wat!*" saith Aunt *Joyce* from the window.

"What so, *Aunt?*" quoth he.

"Stand up a minute, and let me look at thee," saith she.

*Walter* did so, but with a look as though he marvelled what Aunt *Joyce* would be at.

"I would judge from thy face," quoth she, "if thou art the right lad come, or they have changed thee in *London* town. Our *Walter* used to have his father's eyes and his mother's mouth. Well, I suppose thou art: but I should scantily have guessed it from thy talk."

"*Walter,*" softly saith *Mother*, "thy father should never have so dealt when he were of thy years."

"Lack-a-daisy! I would have thought the world was turning round," quoth Aunt *Joyce*, "had I ever heard such a speech of *Aubrey* at any years whatsoever."

*Father* listed this with some diversion, as methought from the set of his lips.

"Well, I am not as good as *Father,*" saith *Wat*.

"Amen!" quoth Aunt *Joyce*.

"But, *Aunt*, you are hard on a man. See you not, all the fellows think you a coward if you dare not spend freely and act boldly? Ay, and a miser belike."

"Is it worseser to be thought a coward than to be one?" saith *Father*.

"Who be 'all the fellows'?" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "My Lord of *Burleigh* and my Lord *Hunsdon* and Sir *Francis Walsingham*, I'll warrant you."

"Now, *Aunt!*" saith *Walter*. "Not grave old men like they! My Lord of *Oxenford*, that is best-dressed man of all the Court, and spendeth an hundred pound by the year in gloves and perfumes only—"

"Eh, *Wat!*" cries *Helen*: and *Mother*,—" *Walter*, my dear boy!"

"'Tis truth, I do ensure you," saith he: "and Sir *Walter Raleigh*, one of the first wits in all *Europe*: and young *Blount*, that is high in the Queen's Majesty's favour: and my young Lord of *Essex*, unto whom she showeth good countenance. 'Tis not possible to lower one's self in the eyes of such men as these—and assuredly I should were I less free-handed."

"My word, *Wat*, but thou hast fallen amongst an ill pack of hounds!" saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Then it is possible, or at least more possible, to lower thyself in our eyes, *Wat?*" saith *Father*.

"*Father*, you make me to feel 'shamed of myself!" crieth *Wat*. "Yet, think you, so should they when I were among them, if I should hold back from these very deeds."

"Then is there no difference, my son," asks *Father*, still as gentle as ever, "betwixt being 'shamed for doing the right, and for doing the wrong?"

"But—pardon me, Sir—you are not in it!" saith *Walter*. "Do but think, what it should feel to be counted singular, and as a speckled bird, unlike all around."

"Well!" saith Aunt *Joyce*, fervently, "I am five and fifty years of age this morrow; and have in my time done many a foolish deed: but I do thank Heaven that I was never so left to mine own folly as to feel any ambition to make one of a row of buttons!"

I laughed—I could not choose.

“You are a woman, *Aunt*,” saith *Wat*. “’Tis different with you.”

“I pay you good thanks, Master *Walter Louvaine*,” quoth she, “for the finest compliment was ever paid me yet. I am a woman (wherefore I thank God), and therefore (this young gentleman being testimony) have more bravery of soul than a man. For that is what thy words come to, Master *Wat*; though I reckon thou didst not weigh them afore utterance.—Now, *Aubrey*, what art thou about to do with this lad?”

“I fear there is but one thing to do,” saith *Father*, and he fetched an heavy sigh. “But let us reach the inwards of the matter first. I reckon, *Walter*, thou hast many debts outstanding?”

“I am afeared so, Sir,” saith *Wat*,—which, to do him credit, did look heartily ashamed of himself.

“To what sum shall they reach, thinkest?”

*Wat* fiddled with his chain, and fidgetted on his seat, and *Father* had need of some patience (which he showed rarely) ere he gat at the full figures. It did then appear that our young gallant should have debts outstanding to the amount of nigh two thousand pounds.

“But, *Wat*,” saith *Helen*, looking sore puzzled, “how *couldst* thou spend two thousand pounds when thou hadst but sixty-two in these four years?”

“Maidens understand not the pledging of credit,” saith *Ned*. “See thou, *Nell*: I am a shop-keeper, and sell silk gowns; and thou wouldst have one that should cost an angel—”

“Eh, *Ned*!” crieth she, and all we laughed.

“Thou shalt not buy a silk gown under six angels at the very least. Leastwise, not clear silk: it should be all full of gum.”

“Go to!” saith *Ned*. “Six angels, then—sixty if thou wilt. (Dear heart, what costly matter women be! I’ll don my wife in camlet.) Well, in thy purse is but two angels. How then shalt thou get thy gown?”

“Why, how can I? I must do without it,” saith she.

“Most sweet *Helen*; sure thou earnest straight out of the Garden of *Eden*! Dear heart, folks steer not in that quarter now o’ days. Thou comest to me for the gown, and I set down thy name in my books, that thou owest me six angels: and away goest thou with the silk, and turnest forth o’ *Sunday* as fine as a fiddler.”

“Well—and then?” saith she.

“Then, with *Christmas* in cometh my bill: and thou must pay the same.”

“But if I have no money?”

“Then I lose six angels.”

“*Father*, is that honest?” saith *Helen*.

“If thou hadst no reason to think thou shouldst have the money by *Christmas*, certainly not, my maid,” he made answer.

“Not honest, Sir!” saith *Wat*.

“Is it so?” quoth *Father*.

“Oh, look you, words mean different in the Court,” crieth Aunt *Joyce*, “from what they do in *Derwent-dale* and at *Minster Lovel*. If we pay not our debts here, we go to prison; and folks do but say, Served him right! But if they pay them not there, why, the poor tailor and jeweller must feed their starving childre on the sight of my Lord of *Essex*’ gold lace, and the smell of my Lord of *Oxenford* his perfumes. Do but think, what a rare supper they shall have!”

“Now, hearken, *Walter*,” saith *Father*. “I must have thee draw up a list of all thy debts, what sum, for what purpose, and to whom owing: likewise a list of all debts due to thee.”

“But you would not ask for loans back, Sir?” cries *Wat*.

“That depends on whom they were lent to,” answers *Father*. “If to a poor man that can scarce pay his way, no. But if to my cousin of *Oxenford* and such like gallants that have plenty wherewith to pay, then ay.”

“They would think it so mean, Sir!” saith *Walter*, diseasefully.

“Let them so do,” saith *Father*. “I shall sleep quite as well.”

“But really, Sir, I could not remember all.”

“Then set down what thou canst remember.”

*Walter* looked as if he would liefer do aught else.

"And, my son," saith *Father*, so gently that it was right tender, "I must take thee away from the Court."

"Sir!" crieth *Walter*, in a voice of very despair.

"I can see thou art not he that can stand temptation. I had hoped otherwise. But 'tis plain that this temptation, at the least, hath been too much for thee."

*Wat's* face was as though his whole life should be ruined if so were.

"Come, *Wat*, take heart o' grace!" cries *Ned*. "I wouldn't cruise in those muddy waters if thou shouldst pay me two thousand pound to do the same. Think but of men scenting themselves—with aught but a stiff sea-breeze. Pish! And as to dancing, cap in hand, afore a woman, and calling her thine *Excellency*, or thy *Floweriness*, or thy Some-Sort-of-Foolery, why, I'd as lief strike to a *Spanish* galleon, very nigh. When I want a maid to wed me, an' I ever do—at this present I don't—I shall walk straight up to her like a man, and say, 'Mistress *Cicely* (or whatso she be named), I love you; will you wed me?' And if she cannot see an honest man's love, or will not take it, without all that flummery, why, she isn't worth a pail o' sea-water: and I can get along without her, and I will."

"Hurrah for *Ned*!" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "'Tis a comfort to find we have one man in the family."

"I trust we may have two, in time," quoth *Father*. "*Wat*, my lad, I know this comes hard: and as I count thee not wicked, but weak, I would fain help thee all I may. But thou canst not be suffered to forget that my fortune is but three hundred pound by the year; and I have yet three daughters to portion. I could not pay thy debts without calling in that for which thou hast pledged my credit—for it is mine, *Wat*, rather than thine, seeing thine own were thus slender."

"But, Sir!" crieth *Wat*, "that were punishing you for mine extravagance. I never dreamed of that!"

"Come, he is opening his eyes a bit at last," saith Aunt *Joyce* to me, that was next her.

"May-be, *Wat*," saith *Father*, with a kindly smile, "it had been better if thou hadst dreamed thereof a little sooner. I think, my boy, it will be punishment enough for one of thy nature but to 'bide at home, and to see the straits whereto thou hast put them that love thee best."

"Punishment!" saith *Wat*, in a low, 'shamed voice. "Yes, *Father*, the worst you could devise."

"Well, then we will say no more," saith *Father*. "Only draw up those lists, *Walter*, and let me have them quickly."

*Father* then left the chamber: and *Wat* threw him down at *Mother's* knee.

"O *Mother*, *Mother*, if I had but thought sooner!" crieth he. "If I could but have stood out when they laughed at me!—for that, in very deed, were the point. I did begin with keeping within my wage: and then all they mocked and flouted me, and told me no youth of any spirit should do so: and—and I gave way. Oh, if I had but held on!"

*Mother* softly stroked *Wat's* gleaming fair hair, that is so like hers.

"My boy!" she saith, "didst thou ask for God's strength, or try to hold on in thine own?"

*Walter* made no answer in words, but methought I saw the water stand in his eyes.

When *Mother* and *Wat* were both gone forth, Aunt *Joyce* saith,— "I cannot verily tell how it is that folk should have a fantasy that 'tis a shame to be 'feared of doing ill, and no shame at all to be 'feared of being laughed at. Why, one day when I were at home, there was little *Jack Bracher* a-stealing apples in mine orchard: and *Hewitt* (that is Aunt *Joyce's* chief gardener) caught him and brought him to me. *Jack*, he sobbed and thrust his knuckles into his eyes, and said it were all the other lads. 'But what did the other lads to thee?' quoth I. 'Oh, they dared me!' crieth he. 'They said I durst not take 'em: and so I had to do it.' Now, heard you ever such stuff in your born days? Why, they might have dared me till this time next year, afore ever I had turned thief for their daring."

"But then, *Aunt*, you see," saith *Ned*, a twinkle in his eyes, "you are but a woman. That alters the case."

"Just so, *Ned*," quoth Aunt *Joyce*, the fun in her eyes as in his: "I am one of the weaker sex, I know."

"Now, I'll tell you," saith *Ned*, "how they essayed it with me, when I first joined my ship. They dared me—my mates, wot you—to go up to the masthead, afore I had been aboard a day. 'Now, look you here, mates,' says I. 'When the Admiral bids me, I'll scale every mast in the ship; and if I break my neck, I shall but have done my duty. But I'll do nought because I'm dared, and so that you know.' Well, believe me who will, but they cheered me as if I had taken a galleon laden with ducats. And I've been their white son (favourite) ever since."

"Of course!" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "They alway do. 'Tis men which have no true courage that dare others: and when they come on one that hath, they hold him the greater hero because 'tis not in themselves to do the like. *Ned*, lad, thou art thy father's son. I know not how *Wat* gat changed."

"Well, *Aunt*, I hope I am," saith *Ned*. "I would liefer copy *Father* than any man ever I knew."

"Hold thou there, and thou shalt make a fair copy," saith Aunt *Joyce*.

We wrought a while in silence, when Aunt *Joyce* saith—

"Sure, if men's eyes were not blinded by the sin of their nature, they should perceive the sheer folly of fearing the lesser thing, and yet daring the greater. 'Feared of the laughter of fools, that is but as the crackling of thorns under

the pot: and not 'feared of the wrath of Him that liveth for ever and ever—which is able, when He hath killed, to destroy body and soul in Hell. Oh the folly and blindness of human nature!"

**Selwick Hall, March ye vii.**

Was ever any creature so good as this dear Aunt *Joyce* of ours? This morrow, when all were gone on their occasions saving her and *Father*, and *Nell* and me, up cometh she to *Father*, that was sat with a book of his hand, and saith—

"*Aubrey!*"

*Father* laid down his book, and looked up on her.

"Thou wert so good as to tell us three mornings gone," saith she, "that thine income was three hundred pound by the year. Right interesting it were, for I never knew the figure aforetime."

"Well?" saith *Father*, laughing.

"But I hope," continueth she, "thou didst not forget (what thou didst know aforetime) that mine is two thousand."

"My dear *Joyce!*" saith *Father*, and held forth his hand. "My true sister! I will not pretend to lack knowledge of thy meaning. Thou wouldst have me draw on thee for help to pay *Walter's* debts—"

"Nay, not so," saith she, "for I would pay them all out. Look thou, to do the same at once should inconvenience me but a trifle, and to do it at twice, nothing at all."

"But, dear *Joyce*, I cannot," quoth he. "Nay, not for thy sake—I know thou wouldst little allow such a plea—but for *Walter's* own. To do thus should be something to ease myself, at the cost of a precious lesson that might last him his whole life."

"I take thy meaning," saith she, "yet I cannot sleep at ease if I do not somewhat. Give me leave to help a little, if no more. Might not that be done, yet leave *Wat* his lesson?"

"Well, dear heart, this I promise thee," saith *Father*, "that in case we go a-begging, we will come first to the *Manor House* at *Minster Lovel*."

"After which you shall get no farther," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "But I want more than that, *Aubrey*. I would not of my good will tarry to help till thou and *Lettice* be gone a-begging. I can give the maids a gown-piece by now and then, of course, and so ease my mind enough to get an half-hour's nap: but what am I to do for a night's rest?"

*Father* laughed. "Come, a word in thine ear," saith he.

Aunt *Joyce* bent her head down, but then pursed up her lips as though she were but half satisfied at last.

"Will that not serve?" saith *Father*, smiling on her.

"Ay, so far as it goeth," she made answer: "yet it is but an if, *Aubrey?*"

"Life is a chain of ifs, dear *Joyce*," saith he.

"Truth," saith she, and stood a moment as if meditating. "Well," saith she at last, "'half a loaf is better than no bread at all,' so I reckon I must be content with what I have. But if I send thee an whole flock of sheep one day, and to *Lettice* the next an hundred ells of velvet, prithee be not astonished."

*Father* laughed, and said nought of that sort should ever astonish him, for he knew Aunt *Joyce* by far too well.

**Selwick Hall, March ye ix.**

We were sat this morrow all in the little chamber at work, and I somewhat marvelled what was ado with *Mother*, for smiles kept ever and anon flitting across her face, as though she were mighty diverted with the flax she was spinning: and I guessed her thoughts should be occupying somewhat that was of mirthful sort. At last saith Aunt *Joyce*:—

"*Lettice*, what is thy mind a-laughing at? I have kept count, and thou hast smiled eleven times this half-hour. Come, give us a share, good fellow."

*Mother* laughed right out then, and saith—

"Why, *Joyce*, I knew not I was thus observed of a spy. Howbeit, what made me smile, that shall you know. Who is here to list me?"

All the women of the house were there but *Milisent*; of the men none save *Ned*.

"*Aubrey* hath had demand made of him for our *Milly*," saith *Mother*.

"Heave he!" cries *Ned*. "Who wants her?"

"Good lack, lad, hast no eyes in thine head?" quoth Aunt *Joyce*. "*Robin Lewthwaite*, of course. I can always tell when young folks be after that game."

"Eh deary me!" cries Cousin *Bess*. "Why, I ne'er counted one of our lasses old enough to be wed. How doth time slip by, for sure!"

"I scarce looked for *Milly* to go the first," saith Mistress *Martin*.

I reckon she thought *Nell* should have come afore, for she is six years elder than *Milly*: and so she might, would she have taken *Nym Lewthwaite*, for *Father* and *Mother* were so rare good as leave her choose. But I would not have taken *Nym*, so I cannot marvel at *Helen*.

"You see, *Aunt*," saith *Ned*, answering Aunt *Joyce*, "I am not yet up to the game."

"And what wilt choose by, when thou art?" saith Aunt *Joyce*, with a little laugh. "I know a young man that chose his wife for her comely eyebrows: and an other (save the mark!) by her *French* hood. Had I had no better cause than that last, I would have bought me a *French* hood as fair, if I had need to send to *Paternoster* Row (Note 2) for it, and feasted mine eye thereon. It should not have talked when I desired quietness, nor have threaped (scolded) at me when I did aught pleased it not."

"That speech is rare like a man, *Joyce*," saith my Lady *Stafford*.

"Dear heart, *Dulcie*, dost think I count all women angels, by reason I am one myself?" quoth Aunt *Joyce*. "I know better, forsooth."

"Methinks, *Aunt*, I shall follow your example," saith *Ned*, winking on me, that was beside him. "Women be such ill matter, I'll sheer off from 'em."

"Well, lad, thou mayest do a deal worser," saith Aunt *Joyce*: "yet am I more afeared of *Wat* than thee."

"Is *Wat* the more like to wed a *French* hood?" saith *Ned*.

"I reckon so much," saith she, "or a box of perfume, or some such rubbish. Eh dear, this world! *Ned*, 'tis a queer place: and the longer thou livest the queerer shalt thou find it."

"'Tis a very pleasant place, *Aunt*, by your leave," said I.

"Thou art not yet seventeen, *Edith*," saith she: "and thou hast not seen into all the dusty corners, nor been tangled in the spiders' webs.—Well, *Lettice*, I reckon *Aubrey* gave consent?"

"Oh ay," saith *Mother*, "in case *Milisent* were agreeable."

"And were *Milisent* agreeable?" asks my Lady *Stafford*.

"I think so much," made answer *Mother*, and smiled.

"None save a blind bat should have asked that," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "But thou hast worn blinkers, *Dulcie*, ever sith I knew thee. Eh, lack-a-daisy! but that is fifty year gone, or not far thence."

"Three lacking," quoth my Lady *Stafford*.

"I'll tell you what, we be growing old women!" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "*Ned* and *Edith*, ye ungracious loons, what do ye a-laughing?"

"I cry you mercy, *Aunt*, I could not help it," said I, when I might speak: "you said it as though you had discovered the same but that instant minute."

"Well, I had," saith she. "And so shall you, afore you come to sixty years: or if not, woe betide you."

"Dear heart, *Aunt*, there is a long road betwixt sixteen and sixty!" cried I, yet laughing.

"There is, *Edith*," right grave, Aunt *Joyce* makes answer. "A long stretch of road: and may-be steep hills, child, and heavy moss, and swollen rivers to ford, and snowstorms to breast on the wild moors. Ah, how little ye young things know! I reckon most folk should count my life an easy one, beside other: but I would not live it again, an' I might choose. Wouldst thou, *Dulcie*?"

"Oh dear, no!" cries my Lady *Stafford*.

"And thou, *Grisse*?"

Mistress *Martin* shook her head.

"And thou, *Lettice*?"

*Mother* hesitated a little. "Some part, I might," she saith.

"Ay, some part: we could all pick out that," returns Aunt *Joyce*. "What sayest thou, *Bess*?"

"What, to turn back, and begin all o'er again?" quoth Cousin *Bess*. "Nay, Mistress *Joyce*, I'm none such a dizard as that. I reckon *Ned* shall tell you, when a sailor is coming round the corner in sight of home, 'tis not often he shall desire to sail forth back again."

"Why, we reckon that as ill as may be," saith *Ned*, "not to be able to make your port, and forced to put to sea again."

"And when the sea hath been stormy," saith Aunt *Joyce*, "and the port is your own home, and you can see the light gleaming through the windows?"

"Why, it were well-nigh enough to make an old salt cry," saith *Ned*.

"Ay," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Nay—I would not live it again. Yet my life hath not been an hard one—only a little lonely and trying. *Dulcie*, here, hath known far sorer sorrows than I. Yet I shall be glad to get home, and lay by my travelling-gear."

"But thou hast had sorrow, dear *Joyce*," saith my Lady *Stafford* gently.

"Did any woman ever reach fifty without it?" Aunt *Joyce* makes answer. "Ay, I have had my sorrows, like other women—and one sorer than ever any knew. May-be, *Dulcie*, if the roads were smoother and the rivers shallower to ford, we should not be so glad when we gat safe home."

"And so He leadeth them unto the haven where they would be," softly saith Mistress *Martin*.

"Ay, it makes all the difference who leads us when we pass through the waters," answereth Aunt *Joyce*. "I mind *Anstace* once saying that. Most folks (said she) were content to go down, trusting to very shallow sticks—to the world, that brake under them like a reed; or to the strength of their own hearts, that had scantily the pith of a rush. But let us get hold with a good grip of *Christ's* hand, and then the water may carry us off our feet if it will. It can never sweep us down the stream. It must spend all his force on the Rock of our shelter, before it can reach us. 'In the great water-floods they shall not come nigh him.'"

"May the good Lord keep us all!" saith *Mother*, looking tenderly on us.

"Amen!" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Children, the biting cold and the rough walking shall be little matter to them that have reached home."

### ***Selwick Hall, March ye xiii.***

"*Walter*," saith *Father* this even, "I have had a letter from my Lord of *Oxenford*."

"You have so, Sir?" quoth he. "But not an answer to yours?"

"Ay, an answer to mine, having come down express with the Queen's Majesty's despatches unto my Lord *Dacre* of the North."

"But, *Aubrey*, that is quick work!" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Why, I reckon it cannot be over nine days sith thine were writ."

"Nor is it, *Joyce*," saith *Father*. "but look thou, I had rare opportunities, since mine went with certain letters of my Lord *Dilston* unto Sir *Francis Walsingham*."

"Well, I never heard no such a thing!" crieth she. "To send a letter to *London* from *Cumberland*, and have back an answer in nine days!"

"'Tis uncommon rapid, surely," saith *Father*. "Well, *Walter*, my boy—for thine eyes ask the question, though thy tongue be still—my Lord of *Oxenford* hath loosed thee from thine obligations, yet he speaks very kindly of thee, as of a servant (Note 3) whom he is right sorry to lose."

"You told him, *Father*,"—and *Wat* brake off short.

"I told him, my lad," saith *Father*, laying of his hand upon *Walter's* shoulder, "that I did desire to have thee to dwell at home a season: and moreover that I heard divers matters touching the Court ways, which little liked me."

"Was that all, *Aubrey*?" asks Aunt *Joyce*.

"Touching the cause thereof? Ay."

Then *Walter* breaks forth, with that sudden, eager way he hath, which Aunt *Joyce* saith is from *Mother*.

"*Father*, I have not deserved such kindness from you! But I do desire to say one thing—that I can see now it is better I were thence, though it was sore trouble to me at the first: and (God helping me) I will endeavour myself to deserve better in the future than I have done in the past."

*Father* held forth his hand, and *Wat* put his in it.

"God helping thee, my son," saith he gravely. "I do in very deed trust the same. Yet not without it, *Walter*!"

Somewhat like an hour thereafter, when Aunt *Joyce* and I were alone, she saith all suddenly, without a word of her thoughts aforetime—

"Ay, the lad is his father's son, after all. If he only could learn to spell *Nay*!"

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Note 1. The reader is requested to remember that these sums must be multiplied by fifteen, to arrive at the equivalentents in the present day.

Note 2. Paternoster Row was the Regent Street of Elizabeth's reign.

Note 3. The word servant was much more loosely used in the sixteenth century than at present. Any lady or gentleman, however well born and educated, in receipt of a salary from an employer, was termed a servant. The Queen's Maids of Honour were in service, and their stipends were termed wages.

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## Chapter Ten.

### In Deep Places.

"So I go on, not knowing—  
I would not, if I might.  
I would rather walk in the dark with God  
Than go alone in the light:  
I would rather walk with Him by faith  
Than go alone by sight."  
Philip Bliss.

(In Edith's handwriting.)

### Selwick Hall, March the xvii.

Helen's birthday. She is this morrow of the age of seven-and-twenty years, being eldest of all us save *Anstace*. *Alice Lewthwaite* counts it mighty late to tarry unwed, but I do misdoubt of mine own mind if *Helen* ever shall wed with any.

From *Father* she had gift of a new prayer-book, with a chain to hang at her girdle: and from *Mother* a comely fan of ostrich feathers, with a mirror therein set; likewise with a silver chain to hang from the girdle. Aunt *Joyce* shut into her hand, in greeting of her, five gold *Spanish* ducats,—a handsome gift, by my troth! But 'tis ever Aunt *Joyce's* way to make goodly gifts. My Lady *Stafford* did give a pair of blue sleeves, (Note 1) broidered in silver, whereon I have seen her working these weeks past. Mistress *Martin*, a pair of lovesome white silk stockings (Note 2). Sir *Robert*, a silver pouncet-box (a kind of vinaigrette) filled with scent. *Anstace*, a broidered girdle of black silk; and *Hal*, a comfit-box with a little gilt spoon. *Milisent*, two dozen of silver buttons; and I, a book of the *Psalms*, the which I wist *Helen* desired to have (cost me sixteen pence). *Ned* diverted us all by making her present of a popinjay (parrot), the which he brought with him, and did set in care of *Faith Murthwaite* till *Nell's* birthday came. And either *Faith* or *Ned* had well trained the same, for no sooner came the green cover off his cage than up goeth his foot to his head, with—

"Good morrow, Mistress *Nell*, and much happiness to you!"

All we were mighty taken (amused) with this creature, and I count *Ned* had no cause to doubt if *Helen* were pleased or no. Last came *Walter*, which bare in his hand a right pretty box of walnut-wood, lined of red taffeta, and all manner of cunning divisions therein. Saith he—

"*Helen*, dear heart, I would fain have had a better gift to offer thee, but being in the conditions I am, I thought it not right for me to spend one penny even on a gift. Howbeit, I have not spared labour nor thought, and I trust thou wilt accept mine offering, valueless though it be, for in very deed it cometh with no lesser love than the rest."

"Why, *Wat*, dear heart!" crieth *Nell*, her cheeks all flushing, "dost think that which cost money, should be to me so much as half the value of thine handiwork, that had cost thee thought and toil! Nay, verily! thou couldst have given me nought, hadst thou spent forty pound, that should have been more pleasant unto me. Trust me, thy box shall be one of my best treasures so long as I do live, and I give thee hearty thanks therefor."

*Walter* looked right pleased, and saith he, "Well, in very deed I feared thou shouldst count it worth nought, for even the piece of taffeta to line the same I asked of *Mother*."

"Nay, verily, not so!" saith she, and kissed him.

To say *Wat* were last, howbeit, I writ not well, for I forgat *Mynheer*, and Cousin *Bess*, the which I should not.

Cousin *Bess* marcheth up to *Nell* with—"Well, my maid, thou hast this morrow many goodlier gifts than mine, yet not one more useful. 'Tis plain and solid, like me." And forth she holdeth a parcel which, being oped, did disclose a right warm thick hood of black serge, lined with flannel and dowlas, mighty comfortable-looking. *Mynheer* cometh up with a courtesy and a scrape that should have beseeemed a noble of the realm, and saith he—

"Mistress *Helena Van Louvaine*—for that is your true name, as I am assured of certainty—I, a *Dutchman*, have the great honour and pleasure to offer unto you, a *Dutch* vrouw, a most precious relic of your country, being a stool for your feet, made of willow-wood that groweth by the great dyke which keepeth off from *Holland* the waters of the sea. 'Tis true, you be of the *Nether-Land*, and this cometh of the *Hollow-Land*—for such do the names mean. Howbeit, do me the favour, *Domina mea*, to accept this token at the hands of your obeissant *paedagogus*, that should have had much pleasure in learning you the *Latin* tongue, had it been the pleasure of your excellent elders. Alack that it were not so! for I am assured your scholarship should have been rare, and your attention thereto of the closest."

*Nell* kept her countenance (which was more than *Ned* or *Milly* could do), and thanked *Mynheer* right well, ensuring him that she should essay to make herself worthy of the great honour of coming of *Dutch* parentage.

Saith *Father* drily, "There is time yet, *Mynheer*."

"For what?" saith he. "To learn Mistress *Helena* the *Latin*? Excellent Sir, you rejoice me. When shall we begin, Mistress *Helena*?—this morrow?"

*Helen* laughed now, and quoth she,—“I thank you much, *Mynheer*, though I am ’feared you reckon mine understanding higher than it demerit: yet I fear there shall scantily be opportunity this morrow. I have divers dishes to cook that shall be cold for this even, and a deal of flannel-work to do.”

“Ah, the dishes and the flannel, they are mine abhorrence!” saith *Mynheer*. “They stand alway in the road of the learning.”

“Nay, mine old *paedagogus*!” crieth *Ned*. “I reckon the dishes are little your abhorrence at supper-time, nor the flannel of a cold night, when it taketh the form of blankets. ’Tis right well to uphold the learning, yet without *Nell*’s cates and flannel, your *Latin* should come ill off.”

“The body is ever in the way of the soul!” saith *Mynheer*. “Were we souls without bodies, what need had we of the puddings and the flannels?”

“Or the *Latin*,” sticketh in *Ned*, mischievously.

*Mynheer* wagged his head at *Ned*.

“*Edward Van Louvaine*, thou wist better.”

“Few folks but know better than they do, *Mynheer*,” saith *Ned*. “Yet think you there shall be lexicons needed to talk with King *David* or the Apostle *Paul* hereafter?”

“I trow not,” saith *Father*.

“Dear heart, Master *Stuyvesant*,” cries Cousin *Bess*, “but sure the curse of *Babel* was an ill thing all o’er! You would seem to count it had a silver side to it.”

“It had a golden side, my mistress,” made he answer. “Had all men ever spoken but one tongue, the *paedagogus* should scarce be needed, and half the delights of learning had disappeared from the earth.”

“Eh, lack-a-day!—but how different can folks look at matters!” saith Cousin *Bess*. “Why, I have alway thought it should be a rare jolly thing when all strange tongues were done away (as I reckon they shall hereafter), and all folks spake but plain *English*.”

“Art so sure it should be *English*, *Bess*?” saith *Father*, smiling. “What an’ it were *Italian* or *Greek*?”

“Good lack, that could never be!” crieth she. “Why, do but think the trouble all men should have.”

“Somebody must have it,” quoth he. “I take it, what so were the tongue, all nations but one should have to learn it.”

“I’ll not credit it, Sir *Aubrey*,” crieth *Bess*, as she trotteth off to the kitchen. “It is like to be *English* that shall become the common tongue of the earth: it can’t be no otherwise!”

*Mynheer* seemed wonderful taken with this fantasy of Cousin *Bess*.

“How strange a thought that!” saith Aunt *Joyce*.

“*Bess* is in good company,” answereth *Father*. “’Tis right the reasoning of Saint *Cyril*, when he maketh argument that the Temple of God, wherein the Man of Sin shall sit (as *Paul* saith), cannot signify the *Christian* Church. But wherefore, good Sir? say you. Oh, saith he, because ‘God forbid it should be this temple wherein we now are!’”

“Well, it is a marvel to me,” quoth Aunt *Joyce*, “that some folks seem to have no brains!”

“Is it so great a marvel?” saith *Father*.

“But they have no wit!” saith she. “Why, here yestereven was *Caitlin*, telling me the sun had put the fire out—she’d let it go out, the lazy tyke as she is!—Then said I, ‘But how so, *Caitlin*, when there hath been no sun?’ (You wist how hard it rained all day.) ‘Ha!’ saith she—and gazed into the black grate, as though it should have helped her to an other excuse. Which to all appearance it did, for in a minute quoth my wiseacre,—‘Then an’ it like you, Mistress, it was the light.’”

“A lack of power to perceive the relation betwixt cause and effect,” saith *Father*, drily, “A lack of common sense!” saith Aunt *Joyce*.

“The uncommonest thing that is,” quoth *Father*.

“But wherefore should the sun put the fire out?” saith Sir *Robert*.

“Nay, I’ll let alone the whys and the wherefores,” quoth she. “It doth, and that is enough for me.”

*Father* seemed something diverted in himself, but he said nought more.

All the morrow were we busy in the kitchen, and the afternoon a-work: but in the even come all the young folks to keep *Nell*’s birthday—to wit, the *Lewthwaites*, the *Armstrongs*, the *Murthwaites*, the *Parks*, and so forth. Of course *Robin* had no eyes nor ears for aught but *Milisent*. And for all Master *Ned* may say of his being so rare heart-free, I did



think he might have talked lesser with *Faith Murthwaite* had it liked him so to do. I said so unto him at after, but all I gat of my noble admiral was "Avast there!" the which I took to mean that he did desire me to hold my peace. *Wat* was rare courtly amongst all us, and had much praise of all the maidens. Me-wondered if *Gillian Armstrong* meant not to set her cap at him. But I do misdoubt mine own self if any such rustical maids as be here shall be like to serve *Walter's* turn. I would fain hear more of this daughter of my Lord of *Sheffield*, that was his *Excellency*, but I am not well assured if I did well to ask at him or no.

***Selwick Hall, March ye xx.***

'Tis agreed that Aunt *Joyce*, in the stead of making an end of her visit when the six months shall close, shall tarry with us until Sir *Robert* and his gentlewomen shall travel southward, the which shall be in an other three weeks' time thereafter. They look therefore to set forth in company as about the twentieth of *April*. I am rare glad (and so methinks be we all) to keep Aunt *Joyce* a trifle longer. She is like a fresh breeze blowing through the house, and when she is away, as *Ned* saith, we are becalmed. Indeed, I would by my good will have her here always.

"Now, *Aunt*," said I, "you shall have time to write your thoughts in the Chronicle, the which shall end with this month, as 'twas agreed."

"Time!" quoth she. "And how many pages, my sweet scrivener?"

"Trust me, but I'll leave you plenty," said I. "Your part shall be a deal better worth the reading."

"Go to, Mistress *Edith*!" saith she. "'All the proof of a pudding is in the eating.'"

"I am sure of that pudding," saith *Milisent*.

"These rash young women!" maketh answer Aunt *Joyce*. "When thou hast lived fifty or sixty years in this world, my good maid, thou wilt be a trifle less sure of most things. None be so sure that a box is white of all sides as they that have seen but one. When thou comest to the second, and findest it painted grey, thou wilt not be so ready to swear that the third may not be red."

"But we can be sure of some things, at any years, *Aunt*," saith *Milly*.

"Canst thou so?" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Ah, child, thou hast not yet been down into many deep places. So long as a goat pulls not at his tether, he may think the whole world lieth afore him when he hath but half-a-dozen yards. Let him come to pull, and he will find how short it is. There be places, *Milly*, where a man may get to, that he can be sure of nothing in all the universe save God. And thou shalt not travel far, neither, to come to the end of that cord."

"O Aunt *Joyce*, I do never love to hear such talk as that!" saith *Milly*. "It causeth one feel so poor and mean."

"Then it causeth thee feel what thou art," saith she. "'Tis good for a man to find, at times, how little he can do."

"It may be good, but 'tis mighty displeasent," quoth *Milisent*.

"'Tis very well when it be no worse than displeasent," Aunt *Joyce* makes answer. "I thought of places, *Milly*, which were not displeasent, but awful—where the human soul feels nigh to being shut up in the blackness of darkness for ever. Thou wist little of such things yet. But most souls which be permitted to soar high aloft be made likewise to descend deep down. *David* went deep enough—may-be deeper than any other save *Christ*. Look you, he was appointed to write the *Psalter*. Throughout all the ages coming, of his words was the Church to serve her when she should come into deep places. There must be somewhat therein for every *Christian* soul, and every *Jewish* belike, ere *Christ* came. And to do that, I reckon *David* had need to go very deep down. He that shall help a man to climb forth of a well must know whereto the water reacheth, and on which side the steps be. List him—'Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord!' 'I am come into deep places, where the floods overflow me.'"

"But, *Aunt*," said I, yet was I something feared to say it, "was not that hard on *David*? It scarce seems just that he should have to go through all those cruel troubles for our good."

"Ah, *Edith*," saith she, "the Lord payeth His bills in gold of *Ophir*. I warrant you *David* felt his deep places sore trying. But ask thou at him, when ye meet, if he would have missed them. He shall see clearer then when he shall wake up after His likeness, and shall be satisfied with it."

"What sort of deep places mean you, *Aunt*?" saith *Helen*, looking on her somewhat earnestly.

"Thou dost well to ask, *Nell*," quoth she, "for there be divers sorts of depths. There be mind depths, the which are at times, as *Milly* saith, displeasent: at other times not displeasent. But there be soul depths for the which displeasent is no word. When the Lord seems to shut every door in thy face and to leave thee shut up in a well, where thou canst not breathe, and when thou seest no escape, and when thou criest and shoutest, He shutteth out thy prayer: when thine heaven above thee is as brass, and thine earth below thee iron: when it seems as if no God were, either to hear thee or to do for thee—that is a deep pit to get in, *Helen*, and not a pleasant one."

"Aunt *Joyce*! can such a feeling be—at the least to one that feareth God?"

"Ay, it can, *Nelly*!" saith Aunt *Joyce*, solemnly, yet with much tenderness. "And when thou comest into such a slough as that, may God have mercy upon thee!"

And methought, looking in Aunt *Joyce's* eyes, that at some past time of her life she had been in right such an one.

"It sounds awful!" saith *Milisent*, under her breath.

"It may be," saith Aunt *Joyce*, looking from the window, and after a fashion as though she spake to herself rather than to us, "that there be some souls whom the Lord suffers not to pass through such quagmires. May-be He only leads the strongest souls into the deepest places. I say not that there be not deeps beyond any I know. Yet I know of sloughs wherein I had been lost and smothered, had He not held mine hand tight, and watched that the dark waters washed not over mine head too far for life. That word, 'the fellowship of His passions,' hath a long tether. For He went down to Hell."

"But, *Aunt*, would you say that meant the place of lost souls?" saith *Helen*.

"I am wholesomely 'feared of laying down the law, *Nell*," saith Aunt *Joyce*, "touching such matters as I can but see through a glass darkly. What He means, He knoweth. But the place of departed spirits can it scarce fail to be."

"Aunt *Joyce*," saith *Helen*, laying down her work, "I trust it is not ill in me to say thus, but in very deed I do alway feel 'feared of what shall be after death. If we might but know where we shall be, and with whom, and what we shall have to do—it all looks so dark!"

"Had it been good for us, we should have known," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "And two points we do know. 'With *Christ*,' and 'far better.' Is that not enough for those that are His friends?"

"If it were not so, I would have told you," saith my Lady *Stafford*.

"But not *how*, Madam, an' it please you?" asks *Helen*.

"If there were not room; if there were not happiness."

"I take it," saith Aunt *Joyce*, "if there were not all that for which my nature doth crave. But, mark you, my renewed nature."

"Then surely we must know our friends again?" saith *Helen*.

"He was a queer fellow that first questioned that," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "If I be not to know *Anstace Morrell*, I am well assured I shall not know her sister *Joyce*!"

"But thereby hangeth a dreadful question, *Joyce*!" answereth my Lady *Stafford*. "If we must needs know the souls that be found, how about them that be missed?"

Aunt *Joyce* was silent for a moment. Then saith she—

"The goat doth but hurt himself, *Dulcie*, to pull too hard at the tether. Neither thou nor I can turn over the pages of the Book of Life. It may be that we shall both find souls whom we thought to miss. May-be, in the very last moment of life, the Lord may save souls that have been greatly prayed for, though they that be left behind never wit it till they join the company above. We poor blindlings must leave that in His hands unto whom all hearts be open, and who willeth not the death of any sinner. 'As His majesty is, so is His mercy.' Of this one thing am I sure, that no soul shall be found in Hell which should have rather chosen Heaven. They shall go 'to their own place:' the place they are fit for, and the place they choose."

"But how can we forget them?" she replieth.

"If we are to forget them," saith Aunt *Joyce*, "the Lord will know how to compass it. I have reached the end of my tether, *Dulcie*; and to pull thereat doth alway hurt me. I will step back, by thy leave."

As I listed the two voices, both something touched, methought it should be one soul in especial of whom both were thinking, and I guessed that were Mr *Leonard Norris*.

"And yet," saith my Lady *Stafford*, "that thought hath its perilous side, *Joyce*. 'Tis so easy for a man to think he shall be saved at the last minute, howsoe'er he live."

"Be there any thoughts that have not a perilous side?" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "As for that, *Dulcie*, my rule is, to be as easy as ever I can in my charitable hopes for other folk; and as hard as ever I can on this old woman *Joyce*, that I do find such rare hard work to pull of the right road. I cannot help other folks' lives: but I can see to it that I make mine own calling sure. That is the safe side, I reckon."

"The safe side, ay: but men mostly love to walk on the smooth side."

"Why, so do I," quoth Aunt *Joyce*: "but I would be on the side that shall come forth smooth at the end."

"Ah, if all would but think of that!" saith my Lady, and she fetched a sigh.

"We should all soon be in Heaven," Aunt *Joyce* made answer. "But thou art right, *Dulcie*. He that shall leave to look to his chart till the last hour of his journey is like to reach home very weary and worn, if he come at all. He that will go straight on, and reckoneth to get home after some fashion, is not like to knock at the gate ere it be shut up. The easiest matter in all the world is to miss Heaven."

***Selwick Hall, March ye xxv.***

This morrow, *Milisent* was avised to ask at *Walter*, in a tone somewhat satirical, if he wist how his *Excellency* did.

"Nay, *Milly*, mind me not of my follies, prithee," quoth he, flushing.

"Never cast a man's past ill-deeds in his face, *Milly*," softly saith *Mother*. "His conscience (if it be awake) shall mind him of them oft enough."

"I reckon she shall have forgotten by now how to spell his name," saith *Father*. "There be many such at Court."

"Yet they have hearts in the Court, trow?" saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"A few," quoth *Father*. "But they mostly come forth thereof. For one like my Lady of *Surrey*—(*Lettice* will conceive me)—there is many a Lady of *Richmond*."

"Oh, surely not, *Aubrey*!" crieth *Mother*, earnestly.

"True, dear heart," answereth he. "Let but a woman enter the Court—any Court—and verily it should seem to change her heart to stone."

"Now, son of *Adam*!" saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Well, daughter of *Eva*?" *Father* makes answer.

"Casting the blame on the women," saith she. "Right so did *Adam*, and all his sons have trod of his steps."

"I thought she deserved it," saith *Father*.

"She deserved it a deal less than he!" quoth Aunt *Joyce*, in an heat. "He sinned with his eyes open, and she was deceived of the serpent."

"Look you, she blamed the serpent, belike," saith Sir *Robert*, laughing.

"I take it, she was an epitome in little of all future women, as *Adam* of all men to come," saith *Father*. "But, *Joyce*, methinks *Paul* scarce beareth thee out."

"I have heard folks to say *Paul* was not a woman's friend," saith Sir *Robert*.

"That's not true," quoth Aunt *Joyce*.

"Why, how so, my mistress?" Sir *Robert* makes merry answer. "He bade them keep silence in the churches, and be subject to the men, and not to teach: was that over courteous, think you?"

"Call me a *Frenchman*, if I stand that!" crieth Aunt *Joyce*. "Sir *Robert Stafford*, be so good as listen to me."

"So I do, with both mine ears, I do ensure you," saith he, laughing.

"Now shall we meet with our demerits!" saith *Father*. "I pity thee not o'er much, *Robin*, for thou hast pulled it on thine own head."

"My head will stand it," quoth Sir *Robert*. "Now then, Mistress *Joyce*, prithee go to."

Then quoth she, standing afore him—"I know well you can find me places diverse where *Paul* did bid wives that they should obey their husbands; and therein hold I with *Paul*. But I do defy you in this company to find me so much as one place wherein he biddeth women to obey men. And as for teaching, in his Epistle unto *Titus*, he plainly commandeth that the aged women shall teach the young ones. Moreover, I pray you, had not *Philip* the evangelist four virgin daughters, which did prophesy—to wit, preach? And did not *Priscilla*, no whit less than *Aquila*, instruct *Apollos*?"

"Mistress *Joyce*, the Queen's Bench lost an eloquent advocate in you."

"That's a man all over!" quoth Aunt *Joyce*, with a little stamp of her foot. "When he cannot answer a woman's reasoning, trust him to pay her a compliment, and reckon that shall serve her turn, poor fool, a deal better than the other."

Sir *Robert* laughed as though he were rarely diverted.

"*Dulcie* may do your bidding an' she list," saith Aunt *Joyce*, "but trust me, so shall not I."

"Mistress *Joyce*, therein will I trust you as fully as may be," saith he, yet laughing. "Yet, I pray you, satisfy my curious fantasy, and tell me wherein you count *Paul* a friend to the women?"

"By reason that he told them plainly they were happier unwed," saith Aunt *Joyce*: "and find me an other man that so reckoneth. Mark you, he saith not better, nor holier, nor wiser; but happier. That is it which most men will deny."

"Doth it not in any wise depend on the woman?" saith Sir *Robert*, with a comical set of his lips. "It depends on the man, a sight more," saith she.

"But, my mistress, bethink you of the saw—'A man is what a woman makes him.'"

"Oh, is he so?" crieth Aunt *Joyce*, in scorn. "She's a deal more what he makes her. 'A good *Jack*, a good *Gill*!' Saws cut two ways, Sir *Robert*."

"Six of one, and half-a-dozen of the other," saith *Father*.

"*Lettice*, come thou and aid me," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "Here be two men set on one poor woman."

"Nay, I am under obedience, *Joyce*," saith *Mother*, laughing.

"Forsooth, so thou art!" quoth she. "*Bess*, give me thine help."

"I am beholden to you, Mistress *Joyce*," saith Cousin *Bess*, "but I love not to meddle in no frays of other folk. I were always learned that women were the meaner sort o' th' twain."

"Go thy ways, thou renegade!" saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Come, *Joyce*, shall I aid thee?" quoth *Father*.

"Nay, thou hypocrite, I'll not have thee," saith she. "Thou shouldst serve me as the wooden horse did the Trojans." And she added some *Latin* words, the which I wist not. (Note 3.)

"*Femme qui parle Latin  
Ne vient jamais à bonne fin.*"

saith Sir *Robert* under his voice.

"That is because you like to have it all to yourselves," saith Aunt *Joyce*, turning upon him. "There be *few* men would not fainer have a woman foolish than learned. Tell me wherefore?"

"I dispute the major," quoth he, and shaked his head.

"Then I'll tell you," pursueth she. "Because—to give you *French* for your *French*—'*Parmi les aveugles, les borgnes sont rois.*' You love to keep atop of us; and it standeth to reason that the lower down we are the less toil shall you have in climbing."

"Endless genealogies, which breed doubts more than godly edifying," saith *Father*. "Are we not landed in somewhat like them?"

"Well, Sir *Robert*, I'll forgive you!" saith Aunt *Joyce*, and held forth her hand. "But mark you, I am right and you are wrong, for all that."

Sir *Robert* lifted Aunt *Joyce*'s hand to his lips, with ever so much fun in his eyes, though his mouth were as grave as a whole bench of judges.

"My mistress," said he, "I have been wed long enough to have learned never to gainsay a gentlewoman."

"Nay, *Dulcie* never learned you that!" saith Aunt *Joyce*. "I know her better. Your daughters may have done, belike."

Sir *Robert* did but laugh, and so ended the matter.

### ***Selwick Hall, March the xxx.***

So here I am come to the last day of our Chronicle—to-morrow being *Sunday*, when methinks it unseemly to write therein, without it were some godly meditations that should come more meeter from an elder pen than mine. To-morrow even I shall give the book into the hands of Aunt *Joyce*, that she may read the same, and write her own thoughts thereon: and thereafter shall *Father* and *Mother* and *Anstace* read it. There be yet fifteen leaves left of the book, and metrusted Aunt *Joyce* shall fill them every one: for it standeth with reason that her thoughts should be better worth than of young maids like us.

I wis not well if I have been wise on the last page or no, as *Father* *did* seem diverted to hear me to say I would fain be. I am something afeared that I come nearer *Milisent* her reckoning, and have been wise on none. But I dare say that *Helen* hath fulfilled her hope, and been wise on all. Leastwise, Aunt *Joyce* her wisdom, as I cast no doubt, shall make up for our shortcomings.

I cannot but feel a little sorry to lay down my pen, and as though I would fain keep adding another line, not to have done. Wherefore is it, I marvel, that all last things (without they be somewhat displeasing) be so sorrowful? Though it be a thing that you scarce care aught for, yet to think that you be doing it for the very last time of all, shall cause you feel right melancholical.

Well! last times must come, I count. So farewell, my good red book: and when the Queen's Majesty come to read thee (as *Milly* would have it) may Her Majesty be greatly diverted therewith; and when *Father* and *Mother*, may they pardon (as I reckon they shall) all faults and failings thereof, and in particular, should they find such, any displeasance done to themselves, more especially of that their loving and duteous daughter, that writes her name *Editha Louvaine*.

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Note 1. At this time separate articles from the dress, and fastened in when worn, according to taste.

Note 2. Silk stockings. New and costly things, being about two guineas the pair.

Note 3. "*Timeo Danaos, ac dona ferentes.*"

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## Chapter Eleven.

### The Joy of Harvest.

“Now that Thy mercies on my head  
The oil of joy for mourning pour,  
Not as I will my steps be led,  
But as Thou wilt for evermore.”  
Anna L. Waring.

(In *Joyce Morrell's* handwriting.)

***Selwick Hall, April ye second.***

Some ten years gone, when I was tarrying hither, I had set round my waist a leather thong, at the other end whereof was a very small damsel, by name *Edith*. “Gee up, horse!” quoth she: “gee up, I say!” and accordingly in all obeisance I did gee up, and danced and pranced (like an old dolt as I am) at the pleasure of that my driver. It seems me that Mistress *Edith* hath said “Gee up!” yet once again, and given the old brown mare a cut of her whip. I therefore have no choice but to prance: and if any into whose hands this book may fall hereafter shall reckon me a silly old woman, I hereby do them to wit that their account tallieth to one farthing with the adding of *Joyce Morrell*.

I have read over the writings of these my cousins: and as I am commanded to write my thoughts on that matter, I must say that methinks but one of them hath done as she laid out to do. That *Nell* hath been wise on every page will I not deny; at the least, if not, they be right few. But I reckon *Edith* hath been wise on more than the last (though not on all) and hath thus done better than she looked for: while as to *Milly*, she hath been wise on none of her first writing, and on all of her second. Verily, when I came to read that record of *February*, I might scarce credit that *Milisent* was she that writ.

Ah, these young maids! how do they cause an elder woman to live o'er her life again! To look thereat in one light, it seemeth me as a century had passed sithence I were as they: and yet turn to an other, and it is but yestereven since I was smoothing *Anstace's* pillow, and making tansy puddings for my father, and walking along the garden, in a dream of bliss that was never to be, with one I will not name, but who shall never pass along those garden walks with me, never any more.

And dost thou think it sorrow, young *Edith*, rosebud but just breaking into bloom, to clasp the hand of aught and say unto it, “Farewell, Last Time!” I shall not gainsay thee. All young things have such moods, half melancholical, half delightful, and I know when I was as much given to them as ever thou art. But there be sorrows to which there is no last time that you may know,—no clasping of loving hands, no tender farewell: only the awful waking to find that you have dreamed a dream, and the utter blank of life that cometh after. Our worst sufferings are not the crushing pain for which all around comfort you and smoothe your pillow, and try one physic after an other that shall may-be give you ease. They are those for which none essayeth to comfort you, and you could not bear it if they did. No voice save His that knoweth our frame can speak comfort then, and oft-times not His even can speak hope.

Ay, and they that account other folk cheery and hopeful,—as I see from these writings that these maids do of me,—what wit they of the inner conflict, and the dreary plains of despair we have by times to cross? It may be that she which crieth sore and telleth out all her griefs, hath far less a burden to carry than she which bolts the door of her heart o'er it, so that the world reckoneth her to have no griefs at all. In good sooth, I have found *Anstace* right when she said the only safe confidant for most was *Jesu Christ*.

Well! It is ever best to let by-gones be by-gones. Only there be seasons when they will not be gone, but insist on coming back and abiding with you for a while. And one of those seasons is come to me this eve, after reading of this Chronicle.

Ay, *Joyce Morrell*, thou art but a poor weak soul, and that none knoweth better than thyself. Let the world reckon thee such, and welcome. And in very deed I would fain have *Christ* so to reckon me, for then should He take me in His arms with the little lambs, in the stead of leaving me to trot on alongside with the strong unwearied sheep.

Yes, they call a woman's heart weak that will go on loving, through evil report and good report,—through the deep snows of long absence, and the howling storms of no love to meet it, and the black gulfs of utter unworthiness.

Be it so. I confess them all. But I go on hoping against all hope, and when even hope seems as though it died within me, I go on loving still.

Was it for any love or loveliness of mine that God loved me?

O my hope once so bright, my treasure that was mine once, my love that might have been! Every morrow and every night I pray God to bring thee back from that far country whither thou art gone,—home to the Father's house. If I may find thee on the road home, well, so much the sweeter for me. But if not, let us only meet in the house of the Father, and I ask no more.

I know thou hast loved many, with that alloyed metal thou dignifiest by the name. But with the pure gold of a true heart that God calls love, none hath ever loved thee as I have,—may-be none hath ever loved thee but me.

God knoweth,—thee and me. God careth. God will provide. Enough, O fainting heart! Get thee back into the clefts of the Rock that is higher than thou. Rest, and be still.

***Selwick Hall, April ye iii.***

I could write no more last night. It was better to cast one's self on the sand (as *Ned* saith men do in the great Desert of *Araby*) and leave the tempest sweep o'er one's head. I come back now to the life of every day—that quiet humdrum life (as *Milly* hath it) which is so displeasing to young eager natures, and matcheth so well with them that be growing old and come to feel the need of rest. And after all said, Mistress *Milisent*; a man should live a sorry life and a troublous, if it had in it no humdrum days. Human nature could not bear perpetual sorrow, and as little (in this dispensation at the least) should it stand unceasing joy.

I fell a-thinking this morrow, how little folks do wit of that which lieth a-head. Now, if I were to prophesy (that am no prophet, neither a prophet's daughter) what should befall these young things my cousins twenty years hereafter, then would I say that it should find *Ned* captain of some goodly vessel, and husband of *Faith Murthwaite* (and may he have no worse fate befall him!)—and *Wat*, a country gentleman (but I trust not wed to *Gillian Armstrong*): and *Nell*, a comely maiden ministering lovingly unto her father and mother: and *Milisent* dwelling at *Mere Lea* with *Robin Lewthwaite*: and *Edith*—nay, I will leave the fashioning of her way to the Lord, for I see not whither it lieth. And very like (an' it be His will I live thus long) when the time cometh, I shall see may-be not so much as one that hath fulfilled the purpose I did chalk out for them. Ay, but the Lord's chalking shall be a deal better than *Joyce Morrell's*. I reckon my lines should be all awry.

For how little hath happened that ever I looked for aforetime! *Dulcie Fenton*, that went to look as though it should be a sin in her to laugh, had she beheld ought to laugh at, hath blossomed out into an happy, comfortable matron, with two fair daughters, and an husband that (for a man) is rare good unto her: and *Lettice Eden*—come, *Anstace* is to read this, so will I leave *Lettice* to conceive for herself what should have followed. Both she and *Aubrey* shall read well enough betwixt the lines. And *Joyce Morrell*, that thought once to be—what she is not—is an humdrum old maid, I trust a bit useful as to cooking and stitchery and the like, and on whom God hath put a mighty charge of His gold and goods to minister for Him,—but nought nearer than cousins to give her love, though that do they most rarely, and God bless their hearts therefor. My best treasures be in the good Land—all save one, that the Good Shepherd is yet looking for over the wild hills: nor hath my life been an unhappy one, but for that one blank which is there day and night, and shall be till the Good Shepherd call me by my name to come and rejoice with Him over the finding of His sheep that is lost. O Lord, make no long tarrying! Yea, make no tarrying, O my God!

***Selwick Hall, April ye v.***

*Ned* hath spoke out at last, like the honest man he is, and done *Aubrey* to wit of his desire to wed with *Faith Murthwaite*. She is a good maid, and I cast no doubt shall make a good wife. Scarce so comely as her sister *Temperance*, may-be, yet she liketh me the better: and not by no means so fair as *Gillian Armstrong*, which liketh me not at all. I would with all mine heart that I could put a spoke in that lass's wheel the which she rolleth toward our *Walter*: yet this know I, that if you shall give an hint to a young man that he were best not to wed with a certain maid, mine head to a porridge-pot but he shall go and fall o' love with her, out of pure contrariety. Men be such dolts! And, worse yet, they will not be ruled by the women, that have all the wit going.

Master *Murthwaite*, though he say little, as his wont is, is nevertheless, as I can see, pleased enough (and Mistress *Murthwaite* a deal more, and openly) that his lass should have caught our *Ned*. And truly our *Ned* is no ill catch, for he feareth God, and hath a deal of his father in him, than which I can write no better commendation. *Wat* is more like *Lettice*.

Ay me, but is it no strange matter that the last thing ever a man (or woman) doth seem able to understand, is that 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' *That*: not an other thing. Yet for one that honestly essayeth to sow that which he would reap, an hundred shall sow darnel and look confidently to reap fine wheat. They sow that they have no desire to reap, and ope their dull eyes in amazement when that cometh up which they have sown.

How do men pass their lives in endeavours to deceive God! Because they be ready to take His gold for tinsel, they reckon He shall leave their tinsel pass for gold.

Yea, and too oft we know not indeed what we sow.—Here be seeds; what, I wis not. Drop them into the earth—they shall come up somewhat.—Then, when they come up briars and thistles, we stand and gape on them.—Dear heart, who had thought they should be so? I looked for primroses and violets.—Did you so, friend? But had you not been wiser to ask at the Husbandman, who wot that you did not?—Good lack! but I thought me wise enough.—Ay so: that do we all and alway. Good Lord, who art the Only Wise, shake our conceits of our own wisdom!

Lack-a-daisy, but how easy is it to fall of a rut in thy journeying! Here was I but to write my thoughts touching these maids' writings, and after reading the same, I am fallen of their rut, and am going on to keep the Chronicle as though I were one of them. Of a truth, there is somewhat captivating therein: and *Edith* saith she shall continue, for her own diversion, to keep a privy Chronicle. So be it. Methinks, as matter of understanding and natural turn thereto, she is fittest of the three. *Nell* saith she found it no easy matter, and should never think so to do: while *Milisent*, as I guess, shall for a while to come be something too much busied living her chronicle, to write it. For me, I did once essay to do the same; but it went not, as I mind, beyond a week or so. Either there were so much to do there was no time to write it; or so little that there was nought to write. I well-nigh would now that I had kept it up. For sure such changes in public matters as have fallen in my life shall the world not see many times o'er again. When I was born, in Mdxv (1525), was King *Harry* the Eight young and well-liked of all men, and no living soul so much as dreamed of all the troubles thereafter to ensue. Then came the tumult that fell of the matter of the King's divorce. (All 'long of a man's obstinateness, for was not my sometime Lord Cardinal (Wolsey) wont to say that rather than miss the one half of his will, he would endanger the one half of his kingdom? Right the man is that. A woman should know how to bend herself to circumstances.) Then came the troubles o'er Queen *Anne*, that had her head cut off (and by my troth, I misdoubted alway if she did deserve the same); and then of the divorce of the Lady *Anne* of *Cleve* (that no *Gospeller* did ever think to deserve the same); and then of Queen *Katherine*, whose head was cut off belike—eh me, what troublous times were then! Verily, looking back, they seem worse than at the time they did. For when things be, there be mixed with all the troubles little matters that be easy and even delightsome: but to look back, one doth

forget all them, and think only of the great affairs. And all the time, along with this, kept pace that great ado of religion which fell out in the purifying of the Church men call the Reformation. (Though, of a truth, the *Papists* have of late took up a cry that afore the Reformation the Church of *England* was not, and did only then spring into being. As good say I was not *Joyce Morrell* this morrow until I washed my face.) Then, when King *Harry* died—and it was none too soon for this poor realm—came the goodly days of our young *Josiah* King *Edward*, which were the true reforming of the Church; that which went afore were rather playing at reform. Men's passions were too much mixed up with it. But after the blue sky returned the tempest. Ay me, those five years of Queen *Mary*, what they be to look back on! Howbeit, matters were worsen in the shires and down south than up hither. Old Bishop *Tunstall* was best of all the *Papist* Bishops, for though he flustered much (and as some thought, to save himself from suspicion of them in power), yet he did little more. I well-nigh gat mine head into a noose, for it ne'er was my way to carry my flag furled, and Father *Slatter*, that was then priest at *Minster Lovel*, as I know, had my name set of his list of persons suspect. Once come the catchpoll to mine house,—I wis not on what business, for, poor man! he tarried not to tell me when I come at him with the red-hot poker. I never wist a man yet, would stand a red-hot poker with a woman behind it that meant it for him. Master Catchpoll were wise enough to see that the penny is well spent that saveth a groat, and he gave me leave to see little more of him than his flying skirts and the nails of his boots—and his hat, that he left behind of his hurry, the which I sent down to my mistress his wife with mine hearty commendations, and hope he had catched no cold. I reckon he preferred the risk of that to the surety of catching a red-hot poker. But that giving me warning of what might follow—as a taste of a dish whereof more should be anon laid on my trencher—up-stairs went I, and made up my little bundle, and the next night that ever was, away came I of an horse behind old *Dickon*, that had been sewer ever since *Father* and *Mother* were wed, then five-and-thirty years gone, and Father *Slatter* might whistle for me, as I reckon he did when he heard it. It were an hard journey and a cold, for it were winter, but the snow was our true friend in covering all tracks, and at long last came I safe hither, in the middle of the night, and astonished *Aubrey* and *Lettice* more than a little by casting of snowballs at their chamber window. At the last come the casement undone, and *Aubrey's* voice saith—

"Is there any in trouble?"

"Here is a poor maid, by name *Joyce Morrell*," said I, "that will be in trouble ere long if thou leave her out in this snowstorm."

Good lack, but was there no ado when my voice were known! The hall fire embers were stirren up, and fresh logs cast thereon, and in ten minutes was I sat afore it of a great chair, with all the blankets in *Cumberland* around and over me, and a steaming hot posset-bowl of mine hand.

It was a mile or so too far, I reckon, for Father *Slatter* to trudge after me, and if he had come, I'd have serven him of the poker, or twain if need be. I guess he should have loved rather to flounder back through the snow.

So, by the good hand of my God upon me, came I safe through the reign of Queen *Mary*; and when Queen *Elizabeth* came in (whom God long preserve, unto the comfort of His Church and the welfare of *England*!) had I not much ado to win back my lands and goods. Truth to tell, I gat not all back, but what I lost was a cheap bargain where life lay in the other scale. And enough is as good as a feast, any day.

So here lie I now at anchor, becalmed on the high seas. (If that emblem hang not together, *Ned* must amend it when he cometh unto it.) The day is neither bright nor dark, but it is a day known to the Lord, and I have faith to believe that at eventide it shall be light. I can trust and wait.

(*In Edith's handwriting.*)

#### ***Minster Lovel Manor House, August the xxviii, Mdxci (1591).***

When I come, this morrow, to search for my Diurnal Book, the which for aught I knew I had brought with me from home, what should I find but our old Chronicle, which I must have catched up in mistake for the same? And looking therein, I was enticed to read divers pages, and then I fell a-thinking that as it had so happed, it might be well, seeing a space was yet left, that I should set down for the childre, whose it shall some day be, what had come to pass since. They were the pages Aunt *Joyce* writ that I read: and seeing that of them therein named, two have reached Home already, and the rest of us be eleven years further on the journey, it shall doubtless make the story more completer to add these lines.

*Father*, and *Mother*, and Aunt *Joyce*, be all yet alive; the Lord be heartily thanked therefor! But *Father's* hair is now of the hue of the snow, though *Mother* hath scantily any silver amongst the gold; and Aunt *Joyce* well-nigh matcheth *Father*. *Hal* and *Anstace* be as they were, with more childre round them. *Robin* and *Milisent* dwell at *Mere Lea*, with a goodly parcel belike; and *Helen* (that Aunt *Joyce* counted should be an old maid) is wife unto *Dudley Murthwaite*, and dwelleth by *Skiddaw Force*. *Wat* is at *Kendal*, grown a good man and wise, more like to *Father* than ever we dared hope: but his wife is not *Gillian Armstrong*, nor any of the maids of this part, but *Frances Radcliffe*, niece to my Lord *Dilston* that was, and cousin unto Mistress *Jane* and Mistress *Cicely*. They have four boys and three maids: but *Nell* hath only one daughter, that is named *Lettice* for *Mother*.

And *Ned* is not. We prayed the Lord to bring him safe from that last voyage to *Virginia* that ever Sir *Humphrey Gilbert* took; and He set him safe enough, but in better keeping than ours. For from that voyage came safe to *Falmouth* all the ships save one, and that was the Admiral's own. They had crossed the *Atlantic* through an awful storm, and the last seen of the Admiral was on the ix of *September*, Mdlxxxiii (1583), by them in the *Hind*: and when they saw him he was sat of the stern of his vessel, with his Bible open of his knees: and he was plainly heard to say,—“Courage, my men! Heaven is as near by water as by land.” Then the mist closed again o'er the fleet, and they saw him no more. On the xxii of *September* the fleet reached *Falmouth*: but when, and where, and how, Sir *Humphrey Gilbert* and our *Ned* went down, He knoweth unto whom the night is as clear as the day, and we shall know when the sea giveth up her dead.

His young widow, our dear sister *Faith*, dwelleth with us at *Selwick* Hall: and so doth their one child, little *Aubrey*, the darling of us all. I cannot choose but think never were two such sweetings as *Aubrey* and his cousin *Lettice Murthwaite*.

I am *Edith Louvaine* yet. I know now that I was counted fairest of the sisters, and they looked for me to wed with confidence. I am not so fair now, and I shall never wed. Had things turned out other than they have, I will not say I might not have done it. There is no blame to any—not even to myself. It was of God’s ordering, and least of all could I think to blame that. It is only—and I see no shame to tell it—that the man who was my one love never loved me, and is happy in the love of a better than I. Be it so: I am content. I had no love-story,—only a memory that is known to none but me, though it will never give mine heart leave to open his gates to any love again. Enough of that. It is all the better for our dear *Father* and *Mother* that they have one daughter left to them.

At the time we writ this Chronicle, when I were scarce seventeen years of age, I mind I had a fantasy running through my brain that I was born for greatness. Methinks it came in part of a certain eager restless spirit that did long to be a-doing, and such little matters as do commonly fall to women’s lot seemed mean and worthless in mine eyes. But in part (if I must needs confess my folly) I do believe it sprang of a tale I had heard of *Mother*, touching Queen *Katherine*, the last wife to King *Harry* that was, of whom some *Egyptian* (gypsy) had prophesied, in her cradle, that she was born for a crown: and ever after she heard the same, the child (as she then were) was used to scorn common works, and when bidden to her task, was wont to say,—“My hands were made to touch crowns and sceptres, not spindles and neelds,” (needles). Well, this tale (that *Mother* told us for our diversion when we were little maids—for she, being *Kendal* born, did hear much touching the Lady *Maud Parr* and her childre, that dwelt in *Kendal* Castle) this tale, I say, caught great hold of my fantasy. Mistress *Kate Parr* came to be a queen, according to her previsions of greatness: and wherefore should not *Editha Louvaine*? Truly, there was but little reason in the fantasy, seeing no *Egyptian* had ever prophesied of me (should that be of any account, which *Father* will ne’er allow), nor could the Queen’s Majesty make me a queen by wedding of me: but methinks pride and fantasy stick not much at logic. So I clung in my silly heart to the thought that I was born to be great, and was capable to do great things, would they but come in my way.

And now I have reached the age of seven and twenty, and they have not come in my way, nor seem like to do. The only conquest I am like to achieve is that over mine own spirit, which *Scripture* reckoneth better than taking of a city: and the sole entrance into majesty and glory that ever I can look for, is to be presented faultless before the presence of God with exceeding joy. Ah, *Editha Louvaine*! hast thou any cause for being downcast at the exchange?

In good sooth, this notion of mine (that I can smile at now) showeth one thing, to wit, the deal of note that childre be apt to take of little matters that should seem nought to their elders. I can ne’er conceive the light and careless fashion wherein some women go about to breed up a child. To me the training of a human soul for the life immortal seems the most terrible piece of responsibility in the whole world.

And now there is one story left that I must finish, and it is of the other that hath got Home.

It was five years gone, and a short season after *Helen’s* marriage. *Mother* was something diseased, as I think, touching me, for she said I was pale, and had lost mine appetite (and my sleep belike, though she wist it not).

’Twas thought that the winters at home were somewhat too severe for mine health, and ’twas settled that for the winter then coming, I should tarry with Aunt *Joyce*. It was easy to compass the matter, for at that time was *Wat* of a journey to *London* on his occasions, and he brought me, early in *October*, as far as *Minster Lovel*. As for getting back, that was left to see to when time should be convenient. *Father* gave me his blessing, and three nobles spending money, and bade me bring back home a pair of rosier cheeks, saying he should not grudge to pay the bill: and *Mother* shed some tears o’er me, and packed up for me much good gear of her own spinning and knitting, and all bade me farewell right lovingly. I o’erheard Cousin *Bess* say to *Mother* that the sun should scant seem to shine till I came back: the which dear *Mother* did heartily echo, saying she wist not at all what had come o’er me, but it was her good hope that a southward winter should make me as an other maid.

Well! I could have told her what she wist not, for I was then but new come out of the discovering that what women commonly reckon the flower of a woman’s life was not for me, and that I must be content to crown mine head with the common herb of the field. But I held my peace, and none wist it but Aunt *Joyce*: for in her presence had I not been a day when I found that her eyes had read me through. As we sat by the fire at even, our two selves, quoth she all suddenly, without an other word afore it—

“There be alway some dark valleys in a woman’s life, *Edith*.”

“I reckon so, *Aunt*,” said I, essaying to speak lightly.

“Ay, and each one is apt to think she hath no company. But there be always footsteps on the road afore us, child. Nearest of all be His footsteps that knelt that dark night in *Gethsemane*, with no human comforting in His agony. There hath never been any sorrow like to His sorrow, though each one of us is given to suppose there is none like her own. Poor little *Edith*! didst reckon thy face should be any riddle to me—me, that have been on the road afore thee these forty years?”

I could not help it. That gentle touch unlocked the sealed fountain, and I knelt down by Aunt *Joyce*, and threw mine arms around her, and poured out mine heart like water, with mine head upon her knees. She held me to her with one arm, but not a word said she till my tears were stayed, and I could lift mine head again.

“That will do thee good, child,” saith she. “’Tis what thy body and mind alike were needing. (And truly, mine heart, as methought, hath never felt quite so sore and bound from that day.) I know all about it, *Edith*. I saw it these two years gone, when I was with you at *Selwick*. And I began to fear, even then, that there was a dark valley on the road afore thee, though not so dark as mine. Ah, dear heart, it is sore matter to find thy shrine deserted of the idol: yet not half



so sore as to see the idol lie broken at thy feet, and to know thenceforward that it was nought but a lump of common clay. No god—only a lump of clay, that thy foolish heart had thought to be one! Well! all that lieth behind, and the sooner thou canst turn away and go on thy journey, the better. But for what lieth afore, *Edith*, look onward and look upward. Heaven will be the brighter because earth was darker than thou hadst looked for. *Christ* will be the dearer Friend, because the dearest human friend hath failed thine hope. It is not the traveller that hath been borne through flowers and sunshine on the soft cushions of a litter, that is the gladdest to see the lights of home.”

“It is nobody’s fault,” I could not help whispering.

“I know, dear heart!” she saith. “Thine idol is not broken. Thank God for it. Thou mayest think of him yet as a true man, able to hold up his head in the sunlight, with no cause to be ’shamed of the love which stole into thine heart ere thou hadst wist it. Alas for them to whom the fairest thought which even hope can compass, is the thought of the prodigal in the far country, weary at long last of the husks which the swine do eat, and turning with yearning in his eyes toward the hills which lie betwixt him and the Father. O *Edith*, thank God that He hath spared thee such a sorrow as that!”

It was about six weeks after that even, when one wet morrow, as I was aiding Aunt *Joyce* to turn the apples in her store-chamber, and gather into a basket such as lacked use, that *Barbara*, the cook-maid, come in with her hands o’er flour, to say—

“Mistress, here at the base door is a poor blind man, begging for broken victuals. Would you have me give him that beef-bone you set aside for broth?”

“A blind man?” saith Aunt *Joyce*. “Then shall he not go empty. I am coming down, *Bab*, and will look to him myself. Bring him out of the rain to the kitchen fire, and if he have a dog that leadeth him, find the poor animal some scraps. —Now, *Edith*, bring thy basket, and I will take mine.”

“He hath no dog, Mistress,” saith *Bab*; “’twas a lad that brought him.”

“Then the lad may have an apple,” saith Aunt *Joyce*, “which the dog should scantily shake his tail for. Go and bring them in, *Bab*; I shall be after thee presently.”

So down came we into the kitchen, where was sat the blind man and the lad. We set down our baskets, and I gave the lad an apple at a sign from Aunt *Joyce*, which went toward the blind man and ’gan ask him if he were of those parts.

He was a comely man of (I would judge) betwixt sixty and seventy years, and had a long white beard. He essayed to rise when Aunt *Joyce* spake.

“Nay, sit still, friend,” saith she: “I dare reckon thou art weary.”

“Ay,” saith he in a sad tone: “weary of life and all things that be in it.”

“Ay so?” quoth she. “And how, then, of thine hope for the life beyond, where they never rest, yet are never weary?”

“Mistress,” saith he, “the sinner that hath been pardoned a debt of ten thousand talents may have peace, but can scarce dare rise to hope.”

“I am alway fain when a man reckoneth his debt heavy,” saith Aunt *Joyce*. “We be mostly so earnest to persuade ourselves that we owe no farthing beyond an hundred pence.”

“I could never persuade myself of that,” saith he, shaking his white head. “I have plunged too deep in the mire to have any chance to doubt the conditions of my clothing.”

It struck me that his manner of speech was something beyond a common beggar, and I could not but marvel if he had seen better days.

“And what askest, friend?” saith Aunt *Joyce*, winch turned away from him and busied herself with casting small twigs on the fire.

“A few waste victuals, if it like you, Mistress. They will be better than I deserve.”

“And if it like me not?” saith Aunt *Joyce*, suddenly, turning back to him, and methought there was a little trembling in her voice.

“Then,” saith he, “I will trouble you no further.”

“Then,” saith she, to mine amaze, “I tell thee plainly I will not give them to such a sinner as thou hast been, by thine own confession.”

“Be it so,” he saith quietly, bowing his white head. “I cry you mercy for having troubled you, and I wish you a good morrow.”

“That shalt thou never,” came from Aunt *Joyce*, in a voice which was not hers. “Didst thou count I was blind? *Leonard*, *Leonard!*”

And she clasped his hands in hers, and drew him back to the fireside.

“Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.

For this my love was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.' My God, I thank Thee!"

And then, out of the white hair and the blind blue eyes, slowly came back to me the face of that handsome gentleman which had so near beguiled our *Milisent* to her undoing, and had wrought such ill in *Derwentdale*.

"*Joyce!*" he saith, in a greatly agitated voice. "I would never have come hither, had I reckoned thou shouldst wit me."

"Thou wert out of thy reckoning, then," she answereth. "I tell thee, as I told *Dulcie* years ago, that were I low laid in my grave, I should hear thy step upon the mould above me."

"I came," he saith, "but to hear thy voice once afore I die. Look upon thy face can I never more. But I thought to hear the voice of the only woman which ever loved me in very truth, and unto whom my wrong-doing is the heaviest sin in all my black calendar."

"Pardoned sin should not be heavy," saith she.

"Nay," quoth Mr *Norris*, "but it is the heaviest of all."

"Come in, *Leonard*," saith Aunt *Joyce*, tenderly.

"Nay, my merciful *Joyce*, let me not trouble thee," saith he, "for if thou canst not see it in my face, I know in mine heart that I am struck for death."

"I have seen it," she made answer. "And thou shalt spend thy last days no whither but in the Manor House at *Minster Lovel*, nor with any other nurse nor sister than *Joyce Morrell*. *Leonard*, for forty years I have prayed for this day. Dash not the cup from my lips ere I have well tasted its sweetness."

I caught a low murmur from Mr *Norris*' lips, "Passing the love of women!" Then he held out his hand, and Aunt *Joyce* drew it upon her arm and led him into her privy parlour.

I left them alone till she called me. To that interview there should be no third save God.

Nor was it much that I heard at after. Some dread accident had happed him, at after which his sight had departed, and his hair had gone white in a few weeks. He had counted himself so changed that none should know him. I doubt if he should not have been hid safe enough from any eyes save hers.

He lived about three months thereafter. Never in all my life saw I man that spake of his past life with more loathing and contrition. Even in death, raptures of thanksgiving had he none. He could not, as it seemed, rise above an humble trust that God would be as good as His word, and that for *Christ's* sake he that had confessed his sins and forsaken them should find mercy.

He alway said that it was one word of Aunt *Joyce* that had given him even so much hope. She had said to him, that day in the copse, after she had sent away *Milisent* and me,—“I shall never give thee up, *Leonard*. I shall never cease praying for thee, till I know thou art beyond all prayer.”

"It was those prayers, *Joyce*, that brought me back," he said. "After mine accident, I had been borne into a cot by the way-side, where as I lay abed in the back chamber, I could not but hear the goodman every day read the *Scriptures* to his household. Those *Scriptures* seethed in mine heart, and thy prayers were alway with me. It was as though they fitted one into the other. I thought thou hadst prayed me into that cot, for I might have been carried into some godless house where no such thing should have chanced me. But ever and anon, mixed with God's Word, I heard thy words, and thy voice seemed as if it called to me,—'Come back! come back!' I thought, if there were so much love and mercy in thee, there must be some left in God."

The night that Mr *Norris* was buried in the churchyard of *Minster Lovel*, as we sat again our two selves by the fireside, Aunt *Joyce* saith to me, or may-be to herself—

"I should think I may go now."

"Whither, *Aunt?*" said I.

"Home, *Edith*," she made answer. "Home—to *Leonard* and *Anstace*, and to *Christ*. The work that was set me is done. 'Nunc dimittis, Domine!'"

"Dear Aunt *Joyce*," said I, "I want you for ever so long yet."

"If thou verily do, *Edith*," saith she, "I shall have to tarry. And surely, she that hath borne forty years' travel in the darkness, can stand a few days' more journeying in the light. I know that when the right time cometh, my Father will not forget me. The children may by times feel eager to reach home, but the Father's heart longeth the most to have them all safe under His shelter."

And very gravely she added—"They that were ready went in with Him to the wedding: and the gate was shut up."

**The End.**

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