VARIOUS

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Содержание

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CLARA HARLAND

BY G. G. FOSTER

CHAPTER I

I am no visionary – no dreamer; and yet my life has been a ceaseless struggle between the realities of everyday care, and a myriad of shadowy phantoms which ever haunt me. In the crowded and thronged city; in the green walks and sunny forests of my native hills; on the broad and boundless prairie, carpeted with velvet flowers; on the blue and dreamy sea – it is the same. I look around, and perceive men and women moving mechanically about me; I even take part in their proceedings, and seem to float along the tardy current upon which they swim, and become a part – an insignificant portion – of the dull and stagnant scene; and yet, often and often, in the busiest moment, when commonplace has its strongest hold upon me, and I feel actually interested in the ordinary pursuits of my fellow-beings, of a sudden, a great curtain seems to fall around, and enclose me on every side; and, instead of the staid and sober visages of the throng, vague and shadowy faces gleam around me, and magnificent eyes, bright and dreamy, glance and flash before me like the figures on a phantasmagoria. In such moments, there comes over me a happy consciousness that *this* is the reality and all else a dull and painful dream, from which I have escaped as by a great effort. The dreamy faces are familiar to me, and their large, spiritual eyes encounter mine with glances of pleasant recognition. My heart is glad within me that it has found again its friends and old companions, and the mental outline of the common world, faintly drawn by memory, becomes more and more dim and indistinct, like the surface of the earth to one who soars upward in a balloon, and is at length blended with the gray shadows of forgotten thought, which disturb me no more. But anon some rude and jarring discord, from the world below, pierces upward to my ear, and the air becomes suddenly dark and dreary, and dusty, and I fall heavily to earth again.

As years steal by, these fits of delightful abstraction become rarer and rarer. My visions seem to have lost their substantiality; and even when they do revisit me, they are thin and transparent, and no longer hide the real world from my sight – yet they hold strange power over me; and when they come upon my soul, although they do not all conceal the real, yet they concentrate upon some casual object there, and impart to it a spirituality of aspect and quality which straightway embalms it in my heart. Thus do I invest the faces of friends with a holiness and fervor of devotion which belongs not to them; and when I have wreaked the treasures of my soul upon objects thus elevated above their real quality, I find what a false vision I have been worshiping – its higher qualities mingle again with my own thoughts, whence they emanated, and the real object stands before me, low, dull, and insipid as the thousands of similar ones by which it is surrounded. Thus do I, enamored of qualities and perfections which exist only in my own thought, continually cheat and delude myself into the belief that a congenial spirit has been found, when some trivial incident breaks the spell – the charms I loved glide back to my own soul, and the charmer, unconscious of change in himself, wonders what has wrought so sudden an alteration in me. Then come heart-burnings and self-reproaches against those I have foolishly loved, of treachery, hypocrisy, and ingratitude, which they cannot understand, and over which I mourn and weep.

I had a friend once – not long ago, for the turf is still fresh over his gentle breast – whose soul was fashioned like my own, save that he was all softness, and wanted the hardness and commonplace which events and years have given to me. For a long and delightful season we held sweet converse together; and, although he was much younger than I, yet was there no restraint or concealment between us. Every throb of his heart, almost every evolution of his brain, found an echo in me. I was his mirror – a fountain in which he contemplated himself. From *him* I never dreamed of treachery, or selfishness, or ingratitude – and he alone did not deceive me. He never gave me pain but once – and who shall tell the agony of that hour, when his hand ceased to return the pressure of my eager fingers, and the dark curtain of death shut out the light of his dear eyes from my soul! Yet, after the anguish was over, and I had laid him in the fragrant earth, amongst the roots of happy flowers, where the

limpid brook murmurs its soft and never-ending requiem, and the birds come every night to dream and sleep amid the overhanging branches, although my mortal sense was all too dull to realize his presence, yet in my *soul* I felt that he was still with me. No midnight breeze came sighing through the dewy moonlight, or brought the exhalations of the stars upon its wings, that did not speak to me of him; and ever when I prayed, I knew that he was near me, mingling, as of old, his soul with mine.

Poets may sing of love, and romantic youths may dream they realize the soft delusion; strong hearts may swear they break and wither away with unrequited passion, and keen brains may be turned by the maddening glances of woman's eyes; but all these to me seem weak and common emotions when compared with the intenseness of man's friendship – that pure, devoted identification with each other which two congenial souls experience when the alloy of no sexual or animal passion mingles with the devotion of the spirit. I could go through fiery ordeals, or submit with patience to the keenest tortures, both of mind or body, so that I felt the sustaining presence of one real friend; while, if alone, my heart shrinks from the contest, and retires dismayed upon itself.

But my poor friend was in love, and *his* love was as pervading and absorbing as the fragrance of a flower, or the light of a star. The woman he had chosen for his idol – the shrine at which his pure devotions of heart and soul were offered – was a gay and beautiful Creole from New Orleans, who, with her mother, and a young gentleman who appeared in the capacity of friend, spent the summer months in the North. They stopped at the Carlton, where my friend was boarding, and the acquaintance had been formed quite accidentally. The lady was beautiful, bewitching, and very tender; and, without stopping to inquire as to the consequences, or to assure himself that he had the least chance of success, Medwin fell desperately and hopelessly in love in a few days. I was soon made aware of the state of the case, for he had no secrets from me; and, foreseeing that he might very easily have deceived himself entirely in taking for granted that the young lady's affections were not pre-engaged, I begged him to be cautious, and not throw away his regards upon an object, perhaps, unattainable – perhaps even unworthy of them. I represented to him that ladies in the South were usually not very long in falling in love; and it was altogether probable that Clara Harland was already engaged to the gentleman who had accompanied her and her mother, and who was evidently a favored acquaintance. Charles, however, infatuated with his passion, was deaf to my remonstrances, and the very next day sought and obtained an interview, in which he declared his passion, and was made happy by the beautiful Creole. She, however, cautioned him to be on his guard, as her companion had for some time been a suitor for her hand, and was a great favorite with her mother, who had frequently and earnestly urged her to accept his attentions. The fair girl avowed, with flashing eyes, that she loved him not, and had never loved before she met with Medwin. "How," she exclaimed with unwonted energy, "can dear mamma suppose that I shall ever become enamored of that coarse, ferocious, unintellectual man? He has not a generous or delicate sympathy in his nature, and is as rude in heart and feeling as in manner. Beware, however, my dear Charles," continued she, with earnestness, "of Mr. Allington. He is a bold, bad man, whom habits and associations have made haughty, imperious, cold-blooded, and cruel; and I tremble for you when he shall learn what has this day passed between us. Beware of him, for *my* sake; and, oh! promise me, dearest Charles, that, whatever may be the consequence of what we now have done, you will never fight with him."

Charles smiled, and pressed her hand. "Do not alarm yourself, dearest," said he, "I love you too well to rashly expose myself to danger. I have ever entertained a just horror of the inhuman and barbarous practice at which you hint; and beside," continued he, earnestly, fixing his eyes upon her face with such tenderness that the blood rushed unconsciously to her temples beneath that dear gaze, "since your words of hope and love to me to-day, existence possesses new value in my eyes. Be assured I shall not rashly peril it."

They parted with kind looks and a timid pressure of the hands. Medwin firmly resolved, let what would happen, to keep his promise to his beautiful Creole; and Clara, convinced that, although she had been bred and educated in the midst of a community where not to fight was of itself dishonorable,

she should be *entirely* satisfied with what the world, or even her own mother should say, about his cowardice and want of honor. Poor girl! she had sadly miscalculated both the effects of the act she had advised, and the strength of her own resolution.

In a few days Mrs. Harland suddenly announced her determination of returning to New Orleans, and Clara sadly and tremblingly prepared herself to take leave of her lover. He came – was told by her of her mother's resolution to depart, which she was at no loss in tracing to the advice of Allington – and was made alive and happy again by Charles assuring her that he himself should start for New Orleans, although by another route, on the very day she departed.

"Oh, now I know that you do love me, indeed!" said the beautiful girl, while she pressed her lover's head to her dainty bosom, and, kissing his forehead, ran out of the room.

CHAPTER II

"Well, these d – d Yankees *are* all a pack of cowards, after all, and I will never defend them again," said a young Creole, as he met Mr. Allington one morning, at the Merchants' Exchange in New Orleans. "Not fight, and after being challenged on account of as lovely a woman as Clara Harland! Why, what the devil did he take the trouble of following you all the way from New York for, if he didn't mean to *fight* you?"

"Oh, nonsense! my dear St. Maur," replied Allington, "you don't understand the laws of honor, as they are construed at the North. There, my dear fellow, every thing is regulated by law; and if a fellow treads on your corns, slanders you behind your back, or steals your mistress, the only remedy is 'an action for damages,' and, perhaps, a paragraph in a newspaper."

"But what says she herself to the cowardly fellow's refusal to fight you? I suppose that now, of course, she will think no more of the puppy, and return to Allington and first love."

"I know not – for I have not seen her these four days. But if this beggarly attorney's clerk document is to be believed," continued Allington, pulling a letter from his pocket, "she herself expressly commanded him not to fight."

"Oh, do let us hear it!" cried St. Maur, and half a dozen young bloods without vests, and with shirt-bosoms falling over their waistbands nearly to the knee. "Do let us hear, by all means, what the white-livered fellow has to say for himself."

"No," replied Allington, hesitatingly; "that I think would be dishonorable; although – I – don't know – the d – d fellow wouldn't fight, and so I am not certain that I am not released – there, St. Maur, what the devil are you at?"

But St. Maur had snatched the missile from Allington's half-extended hand, and mounting one of the little marble julep-tables, and supporting himself against a massive granite pillar that ran from the ground-floor to the base of the dome, he began reading, while the company, now increased to half a hundred morning loungers, pressed eagerly round to hear. As my poor friend is dead, and there are none whose feelings can now be wounded by its publication, here is the letter.

> "Sir, – Hours of an agonized struggle, in comparison with which mere *death* would have been an infinite relief, have nerved me for the task of telling you, calmly and deliberately, that I take back my acceptance of your challenge. When I received it, I was forgetful of my sacred promise, and acted only from the impulse of the moment. Had your friend staid an instant, the matter should then have been explained. As it is, I am positively compelled, much as my heart revolts at it, to drag a lady into my explanation. *She*, (I need not write her name,) bound me by a solemn and most sacred promise – to violate which would be dishonor – that I *would not* fight you. I must and will keep my word, although I have seen enough of public opinion, during the few days of my sojourn here, to know that by doing so I am covering myself with a load of infamy which I may find it impossible to bear.
>
> "But enough; my course is taken, and I must abide the consequences, whatever they may be. I, therefore, sir, have to beg pardon, both of yourself and your friend, for the trouble this affair has already occasioned you.
>
> "This letter is directed to you without the knowledge or consent of the gentleman who was to have acted as my friend on the occasion; and he must, therefore, be held responsible for nothing.

"Yours respectfully."

"A very pretty piece of argument and logic, eloquently urged, withal!" said St. Maur, as he coolly folded the letter, and leaping upon the floor, restored it to its owner.

"Hush!" said Allington, as he hastily deposited the letter in his pocket, "there he is. Can he have been a witness to St. Maur's folly, in reading the letter?"

All eyes turned instinctively to the further pillar in the large room, against which was leaning my poor friend, his face perfectly livid, and in an attitude as if he had fallen against the granite column for support. Several of the young Creoles approached the place where he stood; but there was something terrible in his aspect which made them start back, and quietly turn into the great passage leading to the street.

Medwin had recovered, if he had fainted, (which seemed probable,) and his eye now glared like fire.

St. Maur, however, approached him.

"So, my good Yankee friend," said he, bowing in affected politeness, "you did not like to risk Allington here with a pistol at twelve paces from your body, eh? You are very right, Mr. Wooden Nutmeg; it would not be safe!"

"Beware!" uttered Medwin, in such a deep and thrilling voice, that the Creole nearly jumped off the floor; but, before he could make a step backward, Medwin's open hand struck him a smart blow on the cheek.

"Ten thousand hell-fires," exclaimed the astonished Frenchman, leaping back and almost tumbling over Allington, in his amazement. "What does he mean? I will have your heart's blood, sir, for this."

Medwin said nothing, but quietly handed the discomfited bully his card, which, however, Allington snatched away.

"What, St. Maur," cried he, would you fight a coward – a published poltroon? You know you dare not do it."

"Let me alone," cried the infuriated Frenchman. "He has struck me, and I will have his heart's blood. *Sacre nomme de Dieu!*" screamed he, forgetting his usual polished manner along with his English, and leaping about like a madman. "*Donnez moi son gage!*"

"Not now, I tell you, not now. Come along and I will satisfy you in ten minutes that you cannot fight that *coward*," emphasizing the last word, so that Medwin could not fail to hear.

"Mr. Allington," said Medwin, coming forward into the middle of the group, now reduced to some dozen persons – for an altercation is not of such rarity as to create any particular excitement there – "after the base and dishonorable use you have this day permitted to be made of a private letter, I am sincerely glad that circumstances rendered it impossible for me to treat you as a gentleman; but as to this person, (pointing to St. Maur,) I can easily satisfy him that he will run no risk of losing his reputation by honoring me with his notice. I have the honor to refer Monsieur St. Maur to Mr. – , now at the St. Charles, whose character for honor is too well known throughout the country to be disputed." And, bowing low, Medwin left the room.

"Well, now this is a pretty scrape," said St. Maur, subsiding at once; "and I don't see how I can avoid fighting him. He is not such a cockroach!" and the Frenchman turned a little pale, despite his yellow skin.

"Nonsense," replied Allington, "you shall do no such thing. In the first place, I can't spare you; and in the next, if we can irretrievably disgrace Medwin, so that he may be shunned by everybody, I do not think the weak head of my Clara can withstand the storm; and she will gradually learn to despise him, too. So take no further notice of this matter; for a blow from a published coward carries no more disgrace with it than a bite from a dog, or a kick from an ass. You must help me out with my plans, too, in behalf of my charming heiress, and I'll be sure to remember you in my will. Let's take a julep."

For three days Medwin waited in an agony of impatience to hear from St. Maur, but not a word came – and he began to despair. Everywhere he went he was regarded with significant glances, and pointed at, while a disdainful whisper ran round the room, in which he could always distinguish the words, "white-livered Yankee," "coward," or some equally obnoxious epithet. He saw the cruel

game that was playing against him. He had forgotten that, in refusing to fight with Allington, he had rendered it perfectly safe for every whipster in the community to insult him; and he now became suddenly aware that he had involved himself in a dilemma from which it was impossible for him to escape.

In the midst of these reflections – while life had become intolerable, and infamy and disgrace dogged his steps like a shadow – he never entertained a doubt of Clara's love and constancy, and looked forward to the time when he might claim her as his bride, and, amid the milder and manlier associations of his youth, regain that calmness and self-respect which he had here so strangely lost. His position was, in truth, a most wretched one. Opposed to the barbarous practice of dueling, circumstances and his own loss of self-control had forced him to *accept* a challenge, and then recall that acceptance, and to offer an insult to a stranger, for the express purpose of drawing out another.

Upon the day after his refusal to fight with Allington, he had called at Mr. Harland's, but was told that Clara had been taken suddenly ill, and could not be seen. This was a new and deeper anxiety, added to his already overburdened spirit; and he really had begun to be deserted of hope, and to contemplate a speedy relief from the pains of existence. Nothing but the confidence which he reposed upon Clara's love, rendered the bright sunshine an endurable blessing to the sadly distempered youth. But he could not see her. Day after day he called, and always the same cold, formal reply – "Miss Harland was yet very ill, but in no danger, and could not be spoken with." Could he but see her for an instant – could he touch her hand, or meet her smile, or drink in the sweet music of her voice, he would feel his heart nerved against every disaster, and would wait in patience; but all, all alone, amid lowering brows, or sneering faces, which ever glowered like phantoms about him – whether in reality, as he walked the streets, or in dreams, as he tossed upon his pillow – it was too much. His heart seemed to be on fire.

It was in this frame of mind, with reason tortured to her utmost power of endurance, and insanity peeping into that soul which might so soon become her own, that Medwin, while walking up the Shell-Road, and looking wistfully at the muddy canal, which swam away sluggishly on one hand, while the green and stagnant swamp stretched interminably upon the other, that he was startled by the rapid approach of a carriage, and the sound of gay and noisy mirth. He looked up. The brilliant equipage of Mrs. Harland was hurrying by, and he had barely time to distinguish Clara, looking as fresh and blooming as a newly flowered rose, and laughing and chatting in a lively and even boisterous manner with – Mr. Allington!

She leaned over the carriage-side as they whirled along, and, for an instant, her eyes met those of her bewildered lover.

CHAPTER III

Alas! poor, silly Clara! How dared you thus rudely tamper with a soul of such exquisite and refined fire, that it constantly trembled and fluttered around its earthly shrine, like the flame of burning essence, as if doubtful whether to blaze or go out forever! Oh! shallow-hearted woman! what a wide and glorious world of bright hopes and angel aspirations – of beautiful thoughts and unutterable dreamings – in all of which thou wert a part – hast thou crushed even as the foolish child grinds the gay butterfly to powder between his fingers. And art thou, indeed, so heartless a *coward*, that, because men's tongues have dared to wag against the beloved of thy soul, thou durst not own him thenceforth, and hast cast him off forever! Murmur not, oh, woman! that thou art made the sport and plaything for rakes and libertines to beguile a weary hour withal. Search thine own heart; and, in that deep and dark recess, where lurk the demons of thy destiny – pride, vanity, frowardness – behold reflected the blackness and the *justice* of thy fate! Who setteth his whole soul upon a flower, and findeth its fragrance at last to be a deadly poison, if he escape from its contact, placeth no more flowers in his bosom. In vain they woo him with their beauteous eyes and breath of perfume. He heeds them not, or, at best, plucks them disdainfully, to gaze upon in listless indifference for a moment, and then cast them behind him, to be crushed beneath the stranger's heel.

Clara's heart smote her to the quick as she caught that wild glance of her lover, and saw the haggard ghost that looked out from those hollow eyes. She screamed slightly, and sunk back in the carriage as pale as marble. Allington and her mother exchanged glances, and were silent, while the young man made a motion, as if he would support her in his arms, and the carriage was turned homeward, and the horses urged to their utmost speed. Clara made no resistance to the attentions of Allington, and it was doubtful whether she was conscious – so pale, and cold, and pulseless were her beautiful cheeks and temples; but a tremulous quivering of the upper lip told of a storm that raged within.

By the time she arrived at home Clara had recovered herself completely, and, pushing aside the arm of Allington, almost rudely, she sprang upon the *banquette* and into the house; and, turning upon him a look of lively indignation, darted up stairs to her chamber. Here she was quickly rejoined by her mother, whose obtuse apprehension had at length discovered that something was wrong, and who now came to offer her maternal consolations.

"Mother!" exclaimed Clara, the moment she entered the room, "I am a wretch. It was I who compelled Medwin to promise me, upon his honor as a man, that he would not fight Allington; and now that all the world has frowned upon him, *I*, too, have turned recreant, and cast him off. Mother, speak to me no word of command or remonstrance. I will never see Mr. Allington again; and I will this very hour go to Medwin, and throw myself on my knees before him. Yes, we shall be happy!"

"My child, you are excited just now, and I beg you to wait until morning. We will then talk the matter over calmly; and if you cannot really be happy without Mr. Medwin, why, my child, I will not urge you further. Come, dear girl, go to bed now, and to-morrow you will be yourself again."

With gentle and soothing care – for the *mother* was now all aroused in the callous heart of this worldly woman, and bent every accent and every motion into grace and kindness – Mrs. Harland at length succeeded in calming the excitement of her child, and inducing her to consent to wait until the next morning, when, if she wished, her mother said, Medwin should be sent for. "I am sure, my child," she said, as she kissed her and bid her good-night, "I have acted for the best, and have nothing but your happiness in view."

And now she was alone; and leaving her bed, she leaned against the window, while the shadowy curtain of evening, which falls in that climate suddenly down from the sky, shut out the day, and seemed, at the same moment, to shut the light from her heart. Then, with rapid steps, her little feet paced the luxurious carpet of her apartment, while her heart beat loudly and still more rapidly in her

bosom. Again she tried to rest, but the taper which she had lighted threw such ghastly shadows upon the walls, which seemed to wave and beckon her, that she leaped from the bed in agony, and almost screamed outright. Hours passed slowly and sadly, and the short, sharp ringing of the watchman's club upon the pavement beneath her window, mingled with the chimes of the old cathedral clock as it struck midnight – and still the poor frightened girl could neither sleep nor compose herself. Once, indeed, she had fallen into a kind of slumber, curtained with such horrid dreams as made it torture instead of rest. She saw her lover with his bright eye turned sweetly upon her, as of old, and his beautiful locks resting upon her shoulder, while she held his hand upon her throbbing heart, and he whispered dear words and precious sighs into her willing ear. But anon the paleness of death stole over that manly brow – the lips fell apart, white and ghastly, and the noble form fell down at her feet, a stiffened corse. She shrieked aloud in her agony, and awoke. The moon had risen, and was throwing a broad and brilliant stream of light into the apartment, and the busy breeze, fresh from the fragrant sea, whispered its musical noises through the waving curtains of her couch.

At length the white blaze of the moon went out, and the misty morn looked dim and sad over the sleeping city. Throwing a cloak about her, Clara hurried down the stairs, and, opening the door softly, found herself in the street, at an hour she had never before been there. What a strange and dreary aspect every thing seemed to wear! The windows of the houses, as she passed, were all closed, and no one could be seen but dozens of loitering negroes returning from market, or here and there some industrious landlady with a small basket of vegetables on her arm, and closely veiled, hurrying along as if to escape observation, followed by a servant with the day's provisions in a large basket, which she carried steadily upon her head. Every one who met her turned and stared curiously; and as she hurried over the long crossing of Canal street, and threaded her way between the hacks that had already taken their station, she felt that rude eyes, and ruder sneers were upon her. She paused not for an instant, however, but redoubled her speed until she reached the private entrance to the St. Charles, where, leaning for a moment against a column, she beckoned a woman from the saloon of the baths into the vestibule, and, putting a piece of money into her hand, whispered, "Find out the chamber of Mr. Medwin. He is very sick, and a dear friend of mine – I must see him immediately."

The woman disappeared up the stairs leading to the "office" of the hotel, and, returning in a moment, made a sign for Clara to follow.

As they approached, a noise and bustle were apparent at the further end of the corridor, and several servants were hurrying in and out, as if some sudden accident had occurred. Clara's guide pointed out Medwin's room, and she rushed in – feeling certain in her heart that her lover was dying.

He lay stiff and stark upon the sofa, with a few white froth bubbles gathered upon his lips, and a letter clasped tightly in his hand. It seemed that he was not yet dead, for a physician, who had been hastily summoned, was attempting to force open his mouth, as if to administer a restorative to the dying man. As Clara approached, he stared in astonishment, but she heeded him not, and exclaiming, "Oh, Charles, what frightful dream is this!" threw herself on her knees before him.

Life rallied for an instant, and he opened those wild, fearful eyes. Oh! what a world of wretchedness and despair was in that glance! He knew her; and conquering, with a convulsive effort, the agony which was withering up the last drops of life, caught her to his heart, exclaiming,

"Clara, thou art forgiven! I am *not* a coward; for I can even die and leave thee thus. Farewell! be happy!"

All was over. My poor friend had fought his last battle, and his antagonist and conqueror was Death. That pure and noble spirit, with all its wild and restless fever-dreams, "sleeps well" amid the beautiful solitudes of Cypress Grove Cemetery – the *home of the stranger*– where so many proud and buoyant hearts crumble beneath the golden air, new filled with odorous dew. And I wait patiently, yet sadly, for the hour which is to restore me to the friend of my bosom.

THE ANCIENT AND THE MODERN MUSE

BY LYMAN LONG

The Muse, in times more ancient, made
The grove's thick gloom her dwelling-place,
And, queen-like, her proud sceptre swayed
O'er a submiss and trembling race.

When stirred her breath the sleeping trees,
Awe-struck, with fearful feet they trod,
And when her voice swelled on the breeze,
Adoring bowed, as to a God!

Her wildly murmured strains they caught,
As echoes from the spirit-world,
Till reeled the brain, to frenzy wrought,
With mixt amaze and rapture whirled!

Thus stern, retired, she swayed the earth,
Till, as new dawned an age of gold,
A happier era led her forth
To dwell with men, like gods of old.

To dwell with us – to roam no more!
Ours is this golden age of bliss!
She comes with blessings rich in store;
And, like a sister, whispers peace.

Not now with awe-inspiring air,
But gentle as the meek-eyed dove,
And clad in smiles that angels wear,
And with an aspect full of love.

She greets us at our fire-sides, when
Sweet looks to accents sweet respond,
And breathing soft her tender strain,
More closely knits the silken bond.

Unmingled joy her smiles afford,
Where meet the mirthful, social throng,
As, gathered round the festive board,
Our healths she pledges in a song.

She meets us in our private walks,

'Mid groves that fairy glens embower,
When Morning gems her purple locks,
Or Vesper rules the silent hour.

Her hand, upon the beech's rind,
Marks well, for fair Belinda's eyes,
(Else vainly murmured to the wind,)
Thy flame, young Damon, and thy sighs.

Stern Toil, beneath her gentle sway,
Well pleased, unbends his rugged brow —
With Bloomfield chants the rustic lay,
Or guides with Burns the daisied plough.

Her form appears the bow of peace,
Upon the clouds that darken life,
Now bidding Sorrow's tears to cease,
And staying now the hand of Strife.

She smiles on me, no bard inspired,
But wand'rer o'er life's arid waste,
Who, fainting, halting, parched and tired,
One cordial, nectared drop would taste.

Companion of the pure in heart,
She tunes the lyre to David's flame,
And rapt, as mortal scenes depart,
She hymns the heaven from whence she came!

THERESA, OR GENIUS AND WOMANHOOD

A TALE OF DOMESTIC LIFE

BY MRS. JANE TAYLOR WORTHINGTON

CHAPTER I

What sad experience may be thine to bear
Through coming years;
For womanhood hath weariness and care,
And anxious tears;
And they may all be thine, to brand the brow
That in its childish beauty sleepeth now.

Theresa Germaine was a child some six years of age when I saw her first, nearly twenty-five years ago. It is a long time to look back on; but I well remember the bright, winning face, and cordial manners of the little lady, when she would come to the parsonage and enliven our tranquil hearts by her gay, spontaneous glee. She was full of life and buoyancy; there was even then a sort of sparkling rapture about her existence, a keen susceptibility of enjoyment, and an intense sympathy with those she loved, which bespoke her, from the first, no ordinary being. Ah, me! I have lived to see all that fade away, and to feel grateful when the dust was laid on the brow I had kissed so often in an old man's fondness – but let that pass. I must write calmly, or tears will blind me; and I have undertaken the task of recording Theresa's experience, not to tell how well we loved her, but to strive, however feebly and imperfectly, to lay bare some of the peculiarities of genius, when found in sad combination with a woman's lot.

There was little marked or unusual in Theresa's outward life; her visible griefs were such as come to all, but the history of her inner being – the true and unseen life – was one of extremes. It was her fate to feel every thing vividly; and her joys and troubles were fully realized by the impassioned depth of her nature; and if, in my loving remembrances, I dwell somewhat bitterly on the portion society gave one who richly deserved its homage, and singularly needed its indulgences; if I portray too warmly the censure and neglect that made her path so full of trial, let me not be misunderstood. I would give no sanction to the hasty disregard of appearances which is the besetting sin of exalted and independent intellect. Under all circumstances it is an unwise experiment to transgress established rules; and in a woman, however rarely she may be gifted, it is a rash and hazardous thing to defy public opinion. Wearying and frivolous as many of society's conventionalities are, there is much wisdom in them; they are indispensible links in the chain binding together "all sorts of people," and she who breaks them knowingly, sins against one of her greatest safeguards.

Theresa's father, a man of good birth and great acquirements, but ruined fortunes, had come to reside in our village about five years before the commencement of this story. She was then his only child, his elder treasures having been laid, one after another, in distant graves. Her mother was a tranquil, quiet woman, and still retained the traces of a beauty which must once have been remarkable. She was a person of placid temper and mediocre mind, but wavering in judgment, and not in the least calculated to control the impetuosity, or guide the enthusiasm of her ardent and reckless child. This Mr. Germaine seemed acutely to feel; and I could read his fears in the fixed gaze of prophetic anxiety which he would often rivet on the varying countenance of his happy and unconscious daughter. His health was already gradually declining, and he evidently dreaded the future, when his favorite should be left in many respects guardianless amid the world's temptations. In my capacity as pastor, I was a frequent visiter at the little cottage, where, in subdued resignation he was patiently wearing out his life; and we at length acquired that mental intimacy which men are apt to feel when they have spoken together of life's highest aims and holiest hopes. I was many years his senior – for it is with the tremulous hand of old age that I write these lines, and I felt sincere and admiring sympathy for one who, through various perplexities and misfortunes, still retained serenity and peace.

We were sitting together one starlight evening, in the small vine-draperied porch of his simple dwelling. Mrs. Germaine was occupied with household duties, and Theresa, after having asked us both a thousand unanswerable questions, had reluctantly obeyed her mother's summons to retire to rest.

"I cannot describe to you," said my companion, "the fear with which I anticipate the hereafter for that child; she is one whose blended characteristics are rare, and her fate can have no medium. Were she a boy, and possessed of those traits, I should have no dread, for with such energies as are even now visible in her temperament, circumstances can be almost controlled, but it is a dangerous thing for her own happiness, for a woman to be thus endowed."

"I think you are too desponding," was my reply; "it appears to me that talent is necessarily in a great degree its own reward; and though it is the fashion to talk and write much of the griefs of intellect, I believe human sorrow is more equally divided than we acknowledge, and that the joys resulting from high gifts far overbalance their trials."

"It may be so generally," Mr. Germaine answered, "but my experience and observation have impressed me differently. I never knew, personally, but one woman of genius, and she was a mournful instance of the truth of my convictions, and of the fatal folly of striving to pass beyond the brazen walls with which prejudice has encompassed womanhood. She was young, fair, and flattered, and fascinating above any comparison I can think of. Of course, she was aware of her capabilities – for ignorance in such cases is not possible, and naturally self-confident, she grew impatient for praise and power. Her affections, unfortunately, were warm and enduring; but she sacrificed them, to promote her desire for distinction, and unable, though so superior, to escape the heart-thraldom, which is the destiny of her sex, she died at last, more of disappointment than disease, with her boundless aspirations all unfulfilled. I fancy I can trace in Theresa many points of resemblance to her I have mentioned – for I knew her in early childhood. Solicitude on this subject is the only anxiety I cannot patiently conquer, and which makes the prospect of parting painful." He paused for a moment, and then, as if to turn his reflections from their depressing course, he said, "I have been reading to-day some extracts from Mrs. Hemans' works. As I grow older and more thoughtful, such things touch me deeply, and I experience a constantly increasing interest in the products of female talent. There is an intensity of sentiment, a pure tenderness of heart about such writings generally, which, in my present tranquil state of mind, are in harmony with my heavenward reflections, and the ideal spirit pervading them, soothes my imagination. In my restless and hopeful years I sought literary recreation from far different sources, but now that I feel myself a pilgrim, and stand surrounded by shadows on the verge of an unknown hereafter, I prize inexpressibly these glimpses of paradise which are God's precious gift to every true and intellectual woman."

It was thus my friend often spoke, for it was a theme on which he always delighted to dwell. I have never seen any one whose reverence for woman's gifts was so strong, and who appreciated with such sincerity the moral loveliness of her perfected nature. It was about this time that the birth of a second daughter added a new tie to Mr. Germaine's life; and the event saddened him more than I believed any earthly event could have done. The feeling was probably a natural one, but it grieved me to see how he strove to crush every impulse of tenderness toward the little one he must leave so soon.

It would have been well for Theresa had her father lived to view the ripening of the faculties whose blossoming he already traced with the prophetic gaze of parental affection; but she was destined to tread her path alone, and to know in their wide extent both the triumphs and the penalties of superiority. She was seven years of age when her father died, leaving herself and her sister to their mother's care. I need not relate here the many interesting interviews between Mr. Germaine and myself, which were more and more touching as his departure drew near. With an earnestness unutterably impressive, he implored my watchful solicitude for his eldest daughter, entreating me to afford her that guidance from experience, which she must inevitably need.

"Be gentle with her," he said, "but not too indulgent; she will require strictness of management, for with such impetuosity of nature her judgment must often err. She is too young as yet for me to

be able to foresee the particular bent her character will assume, but I entreat you to be her candid friend and firm adviser when she will assuredly want both."

On the trying scenes of that period I will not longer linger; for there is something unutterably solemn in the tranquil passing away of a good man's soul, something that hallows to our thoughts even the fear-fraught moment of dissolution from which mere mortality instinctively shrinks. Yet it is a sad thing when so much worth and wisdom leaves the earth forever; and to those who realize the inestimable advantages and useful influences of a high example, it is a mournful sight to look on the closing sunset of one who evidenced the beautiful union between holiness and humanity.

CHAPTER II

Spirit-like fair forms are pressing
'Round her now,
With their angel hands caressing
Her pale brow.

Words of solace they are chanting,
Sweet and clear,
That evermore will now be haunting
Her life here.

I visited the cottage frequently, and for several months after Mr. Germaine's death, it was the scene of no ordinary grief. Mrs. Germaine bore her bereavement patiently – for it was an event she had long anticipated with womanly meekness and resignation; but she mourned most deeply – for it is a great mistake to think commonplace persons deficient in vividness of feeling. I believe their emotions are as keen, and generally more enduring, than those of more decided minds, from the very fact of their possessing few self-resources to divert the course of affliction. Be this as it may, Mrs. Germaine was soon, in all that was apparent, the quiet and anxious mother she had always been; and if she suffered still, it was in the silence of a heart that had no language for its sorrows. Far wilder and more vehement was the passionate and unresisted tide of Theresa's suffering; and for many weeks she refused all the consolation that could be offered to a child of her age. She would sit by my side and converse of her father, with an admiration for his virtues, and an appreciation of his character far beyond what I had supposed she could comprehend.

This violent emotion necessarily exhausted itself, as a heavy cloud weeps itself away; but for a long time she was painfully dejected, and her face lost its childishness of expression, and wore a look of appealing, unspeakable melancholy I never remarked on any other countenance. It was the "settled shadow of an inward strife," the outward impress of a mind suddenly aroused to a knowledge of trial, and never again to sleep in unconsciousnes; and often in after years, the same inexpressible look darkened her brow through the tumult of conflicting impulses, and amid the war of triumph and pain.

I have said that Mr. Germaine's pecuniary circumstances were limited; but for some time previous to his illness, he had, at the expense of many a personal comfort, laid by a sum sufficient to procure for Theresa all the advantages of an accomplished education. His wife had frequently remonstrated against the innumerable little privations he voluntarily endured for this favorite purpose, for she attached more value to physical than mental gratifications, and could scarcely sympathize with his disinterested solicitude for his daughter's intellectual culture. It had been a great happiness to him to trace the gradual development of her intelligence, and to direct her simple studies; and it had been one of his last requests that I would in this respect occupy his place until she should be old enough to require other superintendence. His love was one of hope and trust, and he had diligently sown the seed, though he knew he never might behold its ripening.

For two months I made no attempt to alter the current of her thoughts, believing it better to allow her sensibilities to exhaust themselves without interruption. When she grew calmer, I proposed that she should come every morning to the parsonage to resume her daily studies; and, as I had hoped and anticipated, she eagerly acceded to the arrangement. And thus commenced the cultivation of a mind, whose early maturity bore a rich harvest of recompense; and thus dawned that loving anxiety for my pupil's welfare which realized many of my life's younger wishes, and lent so sunny and living an interest to my solitary and remembering years.

It was with some difficulty and after much remonstrance that I induced Theresa's application to the graver branches of acquirement, which, with my old-fashioned ideas of education, I considered indispensable even to a woman. At last, I believe, it was only through affection for me that she yielded her taste, and consented to devote her mind to such acquisitions. Her inclinations were all for what was beautiful or imaginative; she early loved whatever touched her feelings or awoke the vivid impressions of her young fancy; and I found some trouble in curbing within rational limits her natural and fascinating prepossessions. As she grew older, and passed what she deemed the drudgery of learning, and drew nearer, with rapid steps, to Thought's promised land of compensation, we constantly read and conversed together. We dwelt on the inspired pages of the poets, I, with old age's returning love for the romantic, and increasing reverence for the true, and she, with the intense, bewildered delight of a spirit that hoped all things, and a simple faith that trusted the future would brightly fulfill all the fairest prospects which poetry could portray.

Her disposition was sanguine to an extreme, with the happy faculty of believing what she hoped; and she possessed in a remarkable degree the power of expressing and defining her ideas and emotions, and rendering them visible by words. She never paused for an expression, or selected an injudicious one; and her fluency was the result of a mingled vividness and clearness of intellect, blended with artist-skill, and all the fervor of dawning and dreaming womanhood.

Her affections were spontaneous and impassioned, at once impulsive and enduring, and, like all enthusiasts, she was frequently governed by prejudice. Her little sister was a child of rare beauty and gentleness, and was Theresa's perfect idol. She was perpetually contriving pleasant surprises for her favorite; and it was her delight to wreath flowers around Amy's golden curls, and to add a thousand fantastic decorations to her delicate and seraphic loveliness. They would have made an exquisite picture, those two sisters, so different in age and character; the one so fair, with childhood's silent and fragile beauty, the other glowing with life and premature thought, already testing the "rapture of the strife," and revealing in the intense gaze of her dark, restless eyes, the world of gleaming visions within whose enchantment she lived.

It was when my pupil had reached her fourteenth year, that, in obedience to her father's written directions, she prepared to leave our tranquil home, to enter the school of the convent, near the city of – . I know not why Mr. Germaine wished her placed there, for he was himself a Protestant, but the advantages of instruction were at that time tempting. Probably, in dwelling on them, he overlooked the risk of placing his daughter where the unnumbered graces of mind and manner veil another creed, and make it alluring, and where the imaginative and gorgeous pomp of a different faith were to be placed in their most attractive colors before her unsuspecting eyes. It was with many a misgiving, many a secret fear, that I anticipated Theresa's removal from my watchfulness; and I warned her with the most sincere affection, against the temptations of various kinds which she would probably encounter in her new abode. Early in the autumn we were to part with her, and the sweet summer, with its wealth of fruit and flowers was now around us, and our village, in its garlands of blossoms, looked its loveliest.

CHAPTER III

O! were it thus! had we, indeed, the gift,
Though human, our humanity to chain;
Could we in truth our restless spirits lift,
And never feel the weight of earth again,
Then would I leave the sorrows I bewail,
To clasp the cross, the cloister, and the veil.

Some weeks previous to the time at which my last chapter terminates, I had received a letter from an old friend, requesting me to inform him if any dwelling in our vicinity was for sale, as he was anxious to leave the city, and bring his family to a quieter home. I answered his inquiries satisfactorily, and now daily expected him to arrive, and make final arrangements for his removal.

He came at last, bringing with him his only son, a boy somewhat older than Theresa. Gerald Brandon was pale and feeble from recent illness, and I persuaded his father to leave him with me, until his new residence was prepared to receive its inmates. He gladly assented, and accordingly returned to town, while Gerald remained at the parsonage. The next two months were among the happiest my memory recalls; and they were the last untroubled ones Theresa passed in her secluded home. From their threshold she glided to a new life – to that conflict of will and purpose, that tempest of impulse and disappointment which finally subdued her spirit and wearied out her existence. But as yet all was serene and full of promise; and the golden hues of her sunny dreams invested our simple pleasures with varied and poetic interest. My young guest was a gentle, reflective boy of more than ordinary capabilities, but enfeebled by ill-health, and a victim to the lassitude which frequently follows protracted bodily suffering. He was too placid and pensive for his age, and his mind, though refined and harmonious, had nothing of that restless, energetic brilliancy which sparkled through Theresa's thoughts. He, however, eagerly participated in her accustomed studies, and contributed his share to our literary recreations. I sometimes looked on the two with that involuntary wish for the power of prophecy which so often rises upon us, and which in great mercy we are denied, and would frequently strive to shadow forth the destiny of beings who were now reveling in the brief, bright interval between childhood and the world. Beautiful era! time of star and flower, when the "young moon is on the horizon's verge," and the young heart, lovelier still, seems on the brink of rapture, and hallows existence with its own unshadowed and seraphic light. We have cause to be grateful that this episode is transient, that reality contradicts its hopes, for could its illusions last, who would pause to think of heaven, with so much of enchanting fulfillment around us here.

It was with instinctive pride that I felt my favorite's mental superiority to her companion, and noticed the genuine admiration with which Gerald acknowledged it. He was astonished at her variety of acquirement, her daring originality of opinion, and her unstudied readiness of expression. He was gratified, and it may be, flattered, by the disinterested solicitude she evinced for his enjoyment, and the readiness with which she discarded any scheme of amusement in which his health prevented his participation. There is a period in youth when the affections feel as a strong necessity, the desire for sympathy, when love is yet a stranger, and friendship is as intense as passion. Dearer than any after friend, is the one who first fills this yearning vacancy; and though as time wears on, and separation follows, that tie may be broken never to be re-knit, there is a halo around it still, and it is made almost holy by the blended tints of hope and trust, and tenderness, that, with reflected light, shine back upon its memory.

It was the evening before Theresa's departure, and we were all assembled at the cottage. It was impossible to feel very sad, where the majority were so eager and fraught with hope, and yet

the mother's countenance was full of anxiety for her child. Little Amy sat on her sister's knee, and Theresa, in her graphic language, was relating some romantic history of her own invention, while Mrs. Germaine and myself spoke of her. The parent's solicitude was altogether physical; she feared only that Theresa would be sick, or that she would encounter some of the thousand accidents and evils, whose spectres haunt us upon the eve of a first separation. I thought it kinder to be silent as to my own very different misgivings, and to dwell only on the encouraging part of the prospect. There might be nothing to dread, after all, and it was possibly only our unwillingness to part with Theresa, that thus assumed to itself the tormenting shape of inquietude.

During our conversation, which was carried on in an under tone, little Amy had fallen asleep, and after carefully placing her on the couch, and kissing the fair face of the slumberer, that shone like a faultless picture from its frame of golden curls, Theresa adjourned with Gerald to the porch. It was a perfect evening, and the rays of the full moon illumined the little portico, throwing on its floor, in fanciful mosaic, the fantastic shadows of the vines which draperied the pillars, and lighting up with its spiritual radiance, the earnest countenances of the youthful friends. Gerald looked more than usually pale in the blanching beams, and Theresa's gaze was sad and tearful.

"You will forget us all, Theresa," said the boy; "you will find elsewhere gayer and dearer companions; you will be praised and flattered, and it will be several years before you will be stationary here again."

"Do you remember the book we read together but a few days since?" she answered, "and which says there is no such thing as forgetting possible to the mind?"

"Well, but at least you may grow indifferent," persisted Gerald, already betraying manhood's perverseness in suspicion, "at least you may grow indifferent, and that is even worse than forgetfulness."

"Far worse," answered Theresa, "I would rather a thousand times be wholly forgotten, than know that the heart which loved me had grown cold and careless. But, Gerald, you are my first friend, the only one of my own age I have ever known, and how can I lose the recollection of all we have thought and hoped together? And then I shall be too constantly occupied to form other ties, for I intend to study incessantly, and to return here all, mentally, that my friends can wish me."

"Are you not that already; I, for one, do not desire you to change."

"You will alter your flattering opinion, *mon ami*, if I can by application realize the bright pictures my ambition paints. I shall be so much happier when I have tested myself; for now, all is untried, the present is restless, and the future perplexing. It is so difficult for me to curb my impatience, to remember that our progressive path must be trodden step by step, it may be, through thorns and temptations. Patience is the golden rule of talent, the indispensable companion of success; for the 'worm may patiently creep to the height where the mountain-eagle has rested.' The hardest task for genius to learn is, through toiling, to hope on, and though baffled, never to despond."

Her face flushed with her own eagerness as she spoke, and Gerald looked on her with mingled admiration and want of comprehension, and something of that pity with which boyhood is prone to regard the wildness of girlish aspirations. It was with hopes and tears united, that Theresa bade me farewell; and as I turned away to seek my quiet home, the old feeling of desolation and loneliness, which interest in my favorite had long dissipated, returned upon me with its depressing weight. Our walk to the parsonage was taken in unbroken silence, for Gerald, like myself, was busy with the future – to him a smiling world of compensation and promise, to me, the silent land of fears and shadows. A whole year was to elapse before Theresa's return to us, and in the interval she engaged to write every week, either to her mother or myself.

For more than an hour that evening I sat beside my window, looking on the serene prospect around me, and endeavoring to lay something of that external stillness to the restlessness of my disturbing fancies. All around was spiritualized by the moonlight; the trees on the lawn threw long shadows on the grass, and far away, in their mysterious and majestic silence, stood the eternal

mountains; like gigantic watchers, they kept their vigil over the placid scene beneath – the vigil of untold centuries. Cloudless, unsympathizing, changeless, they had no part in the busy drama of human experience their loftiness overlooked, and now they loomed with shadowy outline, through the sanctifying light, habitants alike of earth and sky.

I anticipated tidings from Theresa with that interest which slight occurrences lend a life whose stirring events are few.

To me, she engaged to record her thoughts and impressions as they came, and to be to me what, under similar circumstances *she* would have been, whose sweet face for a few years brightened my life, and who now sleeps, in her childish beauty, by her mother's side.

THERESA'S FIRST LETTER

"You will have learned from my letter to my mother, my kind friend, all the little details of my journey and safe arrival at my destination. I felt as if some of my visions of romance were realized, when this beautifully adorned place, in its strange and solemn stillness, stood before me. All the grounds surrounding the convent-buildings are highly cultivated and tastefully improved, presenting a vivid contrast between the wild luxuriance of nature, and the formal, artificial life within these cold, stern walls. Several of the nuns, with downcast eyes and thoughtful steps, were taking their monotonous exercise in the paths through the shrubbery; and shall I confess that I looked with mingled doubt and envy upon those dark-robed figures – doubt, if the restlessness of humanity *can* thus be curbed into repose, and envy of that uninterrupted peace, if, indeed, it may be gained. Strange seem this existence of sacrifice, this voluntary abandonment of life's aims and more extended duties, this repelling, crushing routine of penance and ceremony, with which, in the very midst of activity, and in the bloom of energy, vain mortals strive to put off the inevitable fetters of mortality. Doubtless, many, from long habit, have grown familiar with this vegetative, unbroken seclusion, and accustomed to struggle with tenderness, and conquer impulse, have ceased to feel affection, and rarely recall the friends of their busier days – sad consummation of womanhood's least enviable lot.

"But I believe it is, in all sincerity, from self-delusion, not from deception, that these women, many of them in the freshness of youth, separate themselves from the wide privileges of their sex, and contract their hearts into the exclusive and narrow bounds of a convent's charities. What mental conflicts must have been theirs, before, from the alluring gloss of expectation, they could turn to embrace a career like this. Some, perhaps, believed the possibility of winning tranquillity by shutting out the temptation of the world, believed that dust might be spiritualized, and the mind, debarred from its natural tendencies, taught to dream only of heaven. Others have sought the cloister as a refuge for hearts that loved too well, and memories all too faithful. God help such! – for this is no place to forget. And it may be, that after years of painful self-control and depressing experience, some here have gradually attained the conviction that their efforts are vain, their yearnings not here to be fulfilled – what, then, must solitude be to them but an enduring sorrow? It is too late to retrieve the past – the fatal vows have been spoken – those frowning walls are impassable – and the dark folds of that solemn veil are evermore between the penitents and human sympathy. Never may their footsteps tread the free earth again, save within those still and mocking limits; never will the bright, rewarding world of social ties dawn upon their languid gaze, though, alas! its beauty will flash upon

> their thoughts, through the loneliness of the silent cell, perhaps even amid penance and prayer. I look with profound, inexpressible interest on these sisters, in their ungraceful, but romance-hallowed costume, and wish, as I watch them, that I could read something of what the past has been to each, and trace the various motives that led to this irrevocable fate. This monotonous life has all the glow of novelty for me; and I ponder with inexhaustible interest, and blended reverence and pity on the hidden moral conflict, continually occurring among beings who strive to taste angels' pleasures while escaping human duties, and are reminded of the folly of such attempts, by the perpetual presence of temptation, and all the self-reproach, regret, and disappointment which, Heaven be thanked! the angels never feel. I can scarcely tell, as yet, how I shall like learning here. My studies have always been such a pleasure to me, with you, that it appears strange to associate them with strangers. I am resolved to devote much time to drawing and miniature painting, for which you know I had always a *penchant*, and in the course of a month or two I shall commence the study of German. What a world of pleasure is before me. Will you not love me better, if I return to you an artist, brim full of German legends? All that I hope and aspire to, leads to that question – will these acquisitions render me more beloved?"

"Theresa is too ambitious, too restless," said Gerald, as he finished the perusal of this letter, "she will only render herself discontented and conspicuous by this wild, idle desire for superiority."

I felt somewhat provoked at his querulous words, for in my partial eyes Theresa seldom erred, and I knew this solicitude for mental progress, though as yet vague and undirected, was inseparable from her active and energetic intellect. But Gerald's opinions were common ones with his sex, and he coldly censured when away from their attractions, the very traits of character which, when present, involuntarily fascinated his imagination. And this is an ingratitude which almost inevitably falls to the share of a gifted woman. Unfortunately, genius does not shield its possessor from defects of character; and her very superiority in raising her above the level of the many, renders her failings more evident, and those who are forced mentally to admire, are frequently the first morally to condemn. The following are extracts from Theresa's letters, written at various intervals during the first year of her residence at the convent; and they will perhaps serve to reveal something of the rapid development of her mind, with the self-forgetfulness and ambition so peculiarly blended in her nature. She is the only one I have ever seen who possessed extreme enthusiasm without selfishness, and the strong desire to excel, without envy. There was a harmony in her being as rare as it was winning; and while many instances of her childish generosity and spontaneous disinterestedness rise on my memory, I feel almost bitterness at the recollection of how unworthily her pure heart was appreciated, and how sad was the recompense of all she suffered.

"I am happy, my kind friend, happier than I believed it possible for me to be, when away from those I love. But I study incessantly, and in acquiring and hoping, I have no time left for regret. When I recall you, it is not repiningly, but with a thousand desires for your approval, and increased anxiety to become all you can wish. You will, perhaps, consider this vanity; but, indeed, that would be unjust, for it is in all humility, with a painful consciousness of my own deficiencies that I strive so eagerly to grow wiser and better. Surely it is not vanity, to yearn to merit tenderness!.. You ask if I have made any new friends. No; and I can scarcely tell why. There are several here whose appearance has interested me – and you know how rapturously I admire personal attractions; but I feel a reserve I can neither conquer nor explain. Friendship seems to me too holy and enduring to be lightly bestowed, and yet I desire with inexpressible earnestness, to find some one of my own age who would love and comprehend me – some mind in whose mirror I could trace an image of my own. I have gained something like a fulfillment of this wish in Gerald; but he is naturally less enthusiastic than I am, and of course cannot enter into the fervor of my expectations. He thinks them vain an idle – and so, in truth, they may be; but only their irrevocable disappointment will ever convince *me* of their

folly… I have been painting a great deal, beside my regular exercises, for my own amusement; I take such delight in testing my power to reflect the visible charm of beauty, and in endeavoring, however faintly, to idealize humanity. Among other efforts, I have finished a miniature of one of the young sisters here, whose sad, placid face, seemed to sketch itself upon my memory. Of course, the likeness was drawn without her knowledge – she has put away from her thoughts all such vanities. I often look on the picture, which is scarcely more tranquil than the original; and I wish I could speak a word of welcome sympathy to one who is so young, and yet so sorrowful. I was much touched, a few days since, by accidentally witnessing an interview between this nun, whose convent name is Cecelia, and her sister. It seems that she had taken the vows in opposition to the wishes and counsel of all her friends, having forsaken a widowed mother and an only sister for spiritual solitude and the cloister. I was copying an exquisite engraving of the Madonna, which adorns the apartment allotted to visiters, when a young lady entered, and desired to see her sister. The nun came, but not beyond the grating which bounds one side of the room. Those bars – signs of the heart's prison – were between beings who from infancy had been undivided, whose pleasures and pains through life had been inseparable, and who were now severed by a barrier impassable as the grave. They contrasted strongly, these two sisters, so nearly the same age, so different in their hopes for the future. The guest wept constantly, and her words, spoken in a loud tone, were broken by bursts of grief; but the other was composed, almost to coldness – there was no evidence of distress on her marble cheek, and her large, gray eyes, were quiet in their gaze. She had evidently learned to curb emotion and regret – the past for her was a sealed book, with all its remembrances; she was a woman without her sex's loveliest impulses – a sister without tenderness, a daughter without gratitude. They parted, as they had met, each unconvinced, each grieving for the other – the visiter returned to her holy filial duties, the devotee to her loneliness. My friend, on which of these sisters do the angels in heaven look down most rejoicingly? This scene made me sorrowful, as every thing does which destroys an illusion. I had entertained such romantic ideas of life in the cloister, it seemed so tempting to me in its rest, its spirituality; and now I realize that we have no right to such rest, that it is not ours to shrink from the duties, to shun the penalties, to crush the affections of humanity – and my visions of lonely happiness have passed away *pour toujours*. If ever I could be induced to forsake a world that now appears to me so rich in promise; if ever I am numbered among the tried in spirit, and broken in heart, some active solace must be mine, not this fearful leisure for thought and remembrance. My lot is to be a restless one; and whatever else the future may hold for me, I know, in the spirit of prophecy, it will bestow nothing of repose… You tell me my little sister grows every day more lovely. I can readily believe it. There is something very fascinating in the style of her childish beauty, something that appeals to tenderness and seeks for love – and she is always the reality that prompts my dreams of angels. Is it not unwise, my friend, to hold the gift of personal beauty of little value, when it thus involuntarily commands affection, and can win the world's charity for many faults?"

I know not if these disjointed scraps have interest for others, but I have recorded them, because to me they recall the young writer's glowing enthusiasm, and evince the confident hopefulness which is one of the most common traits of mental excellence. Without being vain, she had yet no fears for herself, no doubt of the successful exercise of the powers whose stirring presence she felt. All that seemed necessary to her was opportunity; and she possessed the faith our good God gives to youth, and whose passing away is one of the sorrows of age.

The time appointed for her return home had now arrived, and her mother's anxiety to see her was scarcely greater than my own. In the meanwhile, Mr. Brandon's new residence – the handsomest in our vicinity – had been completed, and his family was permanently located among us. His domestic circle consisted of Gerald, a daughter, about Theresa's age, and a maiden lady, the sister of his wife, who, since Mrs. Brandon's death, had done the household honors. Gerald had been, from the first, a constant visiter at the parsonage, and he now participated in our solicitude to welcome our darling back. About sunset, on the day of Theresa's return, I directed my steps toward the cottage, and I

was but halfway to my destination, when I saw her coming to meet me. I could never be mistaken in her light, rapid walk, whose movements were full of grace. Not for many a long, sad year, had a reception so affectionate as hers been given me; and her greeting brought tears to my old eyes, and called up painful memories to my heart. In appearance she had greatly improved; her slight figure had rounded into more womanly proportions, and her motions were full of the wild, unstudied gracefulness that had always characterized her. There was about her a fascination I cannot explain, a something independent of externals – a witchery to be felt but not defined. Perhaps it was the visible influence of mental gifts, the reflection of that purity of heart and mind which impressed itself on all her words and actions.

Let it not, however, be imagined, that because in my fond remembrance I have lingered long upon Theresa's many virtues, I was ignorant of her faults. They were those inseparable from her temperament; an impetuosity which frequently misled her judgment, and a confidence in her own beliefs, a reliance on her own will, that nothing but an appeal to her affections could ever subdue. She was an instance of that sad truth, that our defects shape our destinies; that one failing may exert over our lot a more potent influence than many excellencies, and may mar the brilliancy of our moral picture by a single shadow, that shall darken it all. In after life, when trial and suffering pressed wearily upon her, all her griefs might have been traced back to the influence of faults, which in her childhood were not sufficiently developed to seem of consequence, or to merit rebuke. To us she was so loving and complying, that the less favorable traits of her nature were lost to our eyes in the brightness of her better endowments. Like all poetic persons, she had various fancies and caprices; but hers were all pure in purpose, and imparted a charm to her restless being. Even her tenderness had its fantasies, and lavished itself wastefully without thought or reason. Her attachment to her sister was remarkable in its tone, blending anxiety with its profound and impassioned tide. She would speak to me of Amy, of her childish loveliness, her gentle disposition, her appealing trustfulness, until tears would start to her eyes, and the future seemed painfully distant to one whose onward gaze had painted it with fulfillments. There was nothing sweet and lovable in life that she did not connect with Amy's hereafter. Alas! it was well for her she could not foresee that future happiness was to be won by the sacrifice of her own.

During Theresa's stay in our village, the young Brandons and herself were often together – and Gerald's admiration had evidently lost nothing from separation. His health had improved, though he still looked pale and delicate; but this physical languor lent refinement to his appearance, and excited Theresa's warmest sympathy. It would have been strange, were not the occurrence so common, that we should not have anticipated the probable consequences of such intercourse between Gerald and Theresa, but always accustomed to consider them in contrast with ourselves, as mere children, we forgot theirs was the very age for enduring impressions, the era in existence whose memories live longest. It was not until long afterward that I realized our error, and then, alas! it was too late to save the repose of a heart which possessed in fatal strength, woman's sad faculty of loving. The period soon came round for Theresa to return to her studies; and, to my surprise, her grief at the second separation was much more violent than at the first. I did not note, in my simplicity, the cause of this vehemence; I never suspected that a new tie, undefined, but powerful, was binding her being, that in the depths of a spirit whose earnestness I have never seen equaled, there had sprung up an affection never to pass away, and one dangerously enhanced by the imaginative tendency of her nature. That she had won over Gerald a profound and fascinating influence, was evident; she was to him a dream of intellectual beauty, and her presence idealized his life. He connected her instinctively with all his high hopes, his visionary schemes; but I feel, in recalling his admiration, that, from its very character, it was not likely to be permanent. There was too little in it of the actual world, too much of the mental; it was more the homage of mind, than the tribute of affection; rather the irrepressible appreciation of genius, than the spontaneous effusion of love. His expressions of regret at separation were warm and tender; but it is probable the young friends were both ignorant of the nature of their feelings. They

parted tearfully, as a brother and sister would have said farewell; and the next few months, with their throng of sweet remembrances, fostered the growth of emotions very unlike, in truth, but equally kind and hopeful. And now there came a long interval of melancholy tranquillity in my life, for it was not until two years afterward that our darling returned. Her letters during the interval were frequent, and her ambition to excel deepened daily in intensity.

"One year more," she wrote, "and this routine of application will be over, I shall come to you no longer a child, but fitted, I trust, for a congenial companion. What bright pictures my fancy draws for that time! Surely the future is a land of surpassing beauty, if but one half its radiant hopes be realized."

"I have no patience with Theresa's visionary fancies," said Gerald, petulently, as he glanced over this letter, "I really believe she prizes books and pictures, and her idle dreams, more than the hearts that love her."

I have lingered long over this recording of a childhood that lent my loneliness many pleasures; and I must trace more rapidly and briefly the sadder portion of my recollections. Over the next two years let us pass in silence; they saw the last shining of pleasure upon Theresa's experience; they were the resting-place between her young hopefulness and the perplexing cares and disappointments of her energetic and unsatisfied womanhood. Never afterward did life appear to her so rapturous a gift, and intellectual superiority so enchanting, but the hereafter grew silent with its promises, and her spirit weary with its cares.

It was not until some months afterward that the journal I am about to quote fell into my hands; but I copy some of its fragments, to portray its writer's feelings. Ah, me! such trustful hearts as hers are those experience depresses soonest.

"How happy I have been this summer! I believe those who have spent their childhood in seclusion, and formed their first associations from the lovely creations of nature, love home better than persons *can* do, who have been always encompassed by the excitements and artificial enjoyments of society. These lose individual consciousness amid the throng of recollections; they cannot trace the progress of their being, nor retain the self-portraying vividness of memory. I am sure that no dweller in cities can feel as I do, when I return to this tranquil village; I can almost imagine I have stepped back into my childhood. Yet, loving this place as I do, I am still anxious to leave it; home, and especially a quiet one, is no place for great successes. Too much of the childish past hangs over it, and discourages exertion, and those who have loved us best and earliest, know least of what we are capable. Every day intercourse fetters judgment, and thought lives in the domestic circle with sealed lips. My kind friends do not comprehend my wishes or emotions; my mother deems them folly, and Gerald, instead of sympathy, tenders me only doubts and fears. But I repel silently such depressing influence; surely the motto of youth should be, *aide-toi*, *et Dieu t'aidera*… I have been reading that tearful book, the Diary of an Ennuyé. What a vivid picture it presents of mental and physical suffering, too intense to be wholly conquered, yet half subdued by the strong power of a thoughtful will. Such depictings of sorrow must be exaggerated, there cannot be so much of grief in a world where hope still liveth… I have been amusing myself this morning by scribbling verses, and as I gradually became absorbed in my employment, I felt I would willingly relinquish half the future in store for me, could I win a poet's fame. I have been endeavoring to determine which is the most desirable, the celebrity of a poet or a painter. Perhaps the distinction an artist obtains satisfies the mind more wholly, and it must be a more universal thing, than that of a writer. He appeals to the senses; his work is the visible presence of what is immaterial, the palpable creation of a thought. He gazes on his production, until his being revels in the witchery of his own reality; and the ideal that had haunted his spirit so long, smiles and blesses him from that glowing canvas. But the poet, he who from the well of thought hath drawn forth such golden truths; who heareth within his heart the echo of whatever is beautiful around him; he who is the interpreter of nature, and translateth into burning words whatsoever things are pure and lovely, ah! he liveth alone with his glorious images, and from his brilliant world of dream and vision, he walks abroad uncomprehended, a solitary being.

Yet he, too, has his reward, though seldom the present one of popular approval; time is requisite for the appreciation of his imaginings; he would not, if he could, profane them by the breath of popular criticism. *His* place is far away from common sight – a dwelling in pleasant thoughts; he is enthroned amid happy memories and early hopes; he is associated in our minds with forms of grace, and faces of beauty – with the light of stars, and the fragrance of flowers; with the pale hours of gloom his enchantments have chased away, and the green graves his heavenward words have hallowed. Which fame would I choose? Alas! for my craving nature, neither – but both!"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.