YONGE CHARLOTTE MARY

THE TWO GUARDIANS

Charlotte Yonge

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Yonge C.

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Содержание

Charlotte M. Yonge
The Two Guardians / or, Home in This World

PREFACE

In putting forth another work, the Author is anxious to say a few words on the design of these stories; not with a view to obviate criticism, but in hopes of pointing to the moral, which has been thought not sufficiently evident, perhaps because it has been desired to convey, rather than directly inculcate it.

Throughout these tales the plan has been to present a picture of ordinary life, with its small daily events, its pleasures, and its trials, so as to draw out its capabilities of being turned to the best account. Great events, such as befall only a few, are thus excluded, and in the hope of helping to present a clue, by example, to the perplexities of daily life, the incidents, which render a story exciting, have been sacrificed, and the attempt has been to make the interest of the books depend on character painting.

Each has been written with the wish to illustrate some principle which may be called the key note. "Abbeychurch" is intended to show the need of self-control and the evil of conceit in different manifestations; according to the various characters, "Scenes and Characters" was meant to exemplify the effects of being guided by mere feeling, set in contrast with strict adherence to duty. In "Henrietta's Wish" the opposition is between wilfulness and submission—filial submission as required, in the young people, and that of which it is a commencement as well as a type, as instanced in Mrs. Frederick Langford. The design of the "Castle Builders" is to show the instability and dissatisfaction of mind occasioned by the want of a practical, obedient course of daily life; with an especial view to the consequences of not seeking strength and assistance in the appointed means of grace.

And as the very opposite to Emmeline's feeble character, the heroine of the present story is intended to set forth the manner in which a Christian may contend with and conquer this world, living in it but not of it, and rendering it a means of self-renunciation. It is therefore purposely that the end presents no great event, and leaves Marian unrecompensed save by the effects her consistent well doing has produced on her companions. Any other compensation would render her self-sacrifice incomplete, and make her no longer invisibly above the world.

October 14th, 1852.

CHAPTER I

"With fearless pride I say
That she is healthful, fleet, and strong
And down the rocks will leap along,
Like rivulets in May."

WORDSWORTH.

Along a beautiful Devonshire lane, with banks of rock overhung by tall bowery hedges, rode a lively and merry pair, now laughing and talking, now summoning by call or whistle the spaniel that ran by their side, or careered through the fields within the hedge.

The younger was a maiden of about twelve years old, in a long black and white plaid riding-skirt, over a pink gingham frock, and her dark hair hidden beneath a little cap furnished with a long green veil, which was allowed to stream behind her in the wind, instead of affording the intended shelter to a complexion already a shade or two darkened by the summer sun, but with little colour in the cheeks; and what there was, only the pale pink glow like a wild rose, called up for the moment by warmth and exercise, and soon to pass away. Still there was no appearance of want of health; the skin was of a clear, soft, fresh shade of brown; the large dark eyes, in spite of all their depth of melancholy softness, had the wild, untamed animation of a mountaineer; the face and form were full of free life and vigour, as she sat erect and perfectly at ease on her spirited little bay pony, which at times seemed so lively that it might have been matter of surprise to a stranger that so young a horsewoman should be trusted on its back.

Her companion was a youth some ten or eleven years her senior, possessing a handsome set of regular features, with a good deal of family likeness to hers; dark eyes and hair, and a figure which, though slight, was rather too tall to look suitable to the small, stout, strong pony which carried him and his numerous equipments, consisting of a long rod-case, a fishing-basket and landing-net, in accordance with the lines of artificial flies wreathed round his straw hat, and the various oddly contrived pockets of his grey shooting-coat.

In the distance at the end of the lane there appeared two walking figures. "Mrs. Wortley!" exclaimed the young lady.

"No, surely not out so soon!" was the answer. "She is in the depth of lessons."

"No, but Edmund, it is, look, and Agnes too! There, Ranger has better eyes than you; he is racing to them."

"Well, I acknowledge my mistake," said Edmund, drawing up his rein as they came upon the pair,—a pleasing lady, and a pretty blue-eyed girl of fourteen. "I did not believe my eyes, Mrs. Wortley, though Marian tried to persuade me. I thought you were always reading Italian at this time in the morning, Agnes".

"And I thought you were reading Phædrus with Gerald," said Mrs. Wortley.

"Ay," said Agnes, "we did not know what to make of you coming up the lane; you with your lance there, like the Red Cross Knight himself, and Marian with her palfry for Una."

"The knight must have borrowed the dwarf's ass," said Edmund, laughing, and putting his lance in rest.

"And where have you been, then, at this portentous time of day, Agnes?" asked Marian.

"We heard a report of Betty Lapthorn's child having another fit," said Agnes, "and set off to see; but it turned out to be a false alarm. And now we are going up to the Manor House to ask Lady Arundel if she has any arrowroot for it, for ours is all used up."

"Shall we find her at leisure?" added Mrs. Wortley.

"Yes," said Marian. "Gerald has finished his lessons by this time. Mamma thought it would be too far for him to go with us, and besides he frightens the fish."

"Which you are in too good training to do, Marian," said Mrs. Wortley.

"And how is your papa to-day?"

"Oh, it is a good day," said Marian: "he was up before we set off."

"Down stairs? For perhaps we had better not go now, just after he is tired with coming down," said Mrs. Wortley. "Now, Mr. Arundel, you will tell me honestly, and this arrowroot will do just as well another time; or if Marian will carry home the message—"

"Well," said Edmund, smiling, "to give you a proof of my sincerity, I think you had better perhaps go rather later in the day. My uncle very unnecessarily hurried himself, thinking that he was keeping me waiting to help him down stairs, and I thought he seemed rather tired; but he will be very glad to see you in the afternoon. Indeed, he would be very glad now, only you asked me as a question of prudence."

"Don't make civil speeches at the end to spoil just such a reply as I wanted," said Mrs. Wortley. "I am afraid you do not think Sir Edmund much better since you were last at home."

Edmund shook his head. "If he has not lost ground, it is well," said he, "and I think at least there is less pain."

"Well, I will not keep you any longer," said Mrs. Wortley; "good-bye, and good sport to you."

And with a wave of the hand on rode the two cousins, Edmund and Marian Arundel.

"What an excellent thing it is for the village that those Wortleys are come!" said Edmund.

"Yes; now that mamma cannot attend much to the school and poor people, I don't know what we should do without them. How different it was in old Mr. May's time! I hope we shall get the Church set to rights now, when papa is well enough to attend to it."

"It is high time, certainly," said Edmund; "our Church is almost a disgrace to us, especially with the Arundel aisle, to show what our ancestors did."

"No, not quite to us," said Marian; "you know papa would have done it all long ago, if the idea had not vexed poor old Mr. May so much. But Ranger! Ranger! where is Ranger, Edmund?"

Edmund whistled, and presently, with whirring, rushing wing, there flew over the hedge beside them a covey of partridges, followed by Ranger's eager bark. Marian's pony started, danced, and capered; Edmund watched her with considerable anxiety, but she reined it in with a steady, dexterous, though not a strong hand, kept her seat well, and rode on in triumph, while Edmund exclaimed, "Capital, Marian!" Then looking back, "What a shot that was!" he added in a sort of parenthesis, continuing, "I am proud, Mayflower is not a bit too much for you now, though I think we must have given her up if you had had another tumble."

"Oh, no, no, I do so delight in Mayflower, pretty creature!" said Marian, patting her neck. "I like to feel that the creature I ride is alive—not an old slug, like that animal which you are upon, Edmund."

"That is decidedly ungrateful of you, Marian, when you learnt to ride upon this identical slug, and owe the safety of your neck to its quiet propensities. Now take care down this stony hill; hold her up well—that is right."

Care was certainly needed as they descended the steep hill side; the road, or rather pathway, cut out between high, steep, limestone rocks, and here and there even bare of earth. Any one but a native would have trembled at such a descent but though the cousins paid attention to their progress, they had no doubts or alarms. At the bottom a clear sparkling stream traversed the road, where, for the convenience of foot passengers, a huge flat stone had been thrown across from one high bank to the other, so as to form a romantic bridge. Marian, however, did not avail herself of it, but rode gallantly through the shallow water, only looking back at it to observe to Edmund, "We must make a sketch of that some day or other."

"I am afraid we cannot get far enough off," said Edmund, "to make a good drawing of it. Too many things go to the making of the picturesque."

"Yes, I know, but that is what I never can understand. I see by woeful experience that what is pretty in itself will not make a pretty drawing, and everyone says so; but I never could find out why."

"Perhaps because we cannot represent it adequately."

"Yes, but there is another puzzle; you sometimes see an exact representation, which is not really a picture at all. Don't you know that thing that the man who came to the door did of our house,—the trees all green, and the sky all blue, and the moors all purple?"

"As like as it can stare; yes, I know."

"Well, why does that not satisfy us? why is it not a picture?"

"Because it stares, I suppose. Why does not that picture of my aunt at Mrs. Week's cottage satisfy you as well as the chalk sketch in the dining-room?"

"Because it has none of herself—her spirit."

"Well, I should say that nature has a self and a spirit which must be caught, or else the Chinese would be the greatest artists on the face of the earth."

"Yes, but why does an archway, or two trees standing up so as to enclose the landscape, or—or any of those things that do to put in the foreground, why do they enable you to make a picture, to catch this self and spirit."

"Make the phial to enclose the genie," said Edmund. "Abstruse questions, Marian; but perhaps it is because they contract the space, so as to bring it more to the level of our capacity, make it less grand, and more what we can get into keeping. To be sure, he would be a presumptuous man who tried to make an exact likeness of that," he added, as they reached the top of the hill, and found themselves on an open common, with here and there a mass of rock peeping up, but for the most part covered with purple heath and short furze, through which Ranger coursed, barking joyously. The view was splendid, on one side the moors rising one behind the other, till they faded in grey distance, each crowned with a fantastic pile of rocks, one in the form of a castle, another of a cathedral, another of a huge crouching lion, all known to the two cousins by name, and owned as familiar friends. On the other side, between two hills, each surmounted by its own rocky crest, lay nestled in woods the grey Church tower and cottages of the village of Fern Torr; and far away stretched the rich landscape of field, wood, and pasture, ending at length in the blue line of horizon, where sky and sea seemed to join.

"Beautiful! how clear!" was all Marian's exclamation, though she drew up her horse and gazed with eager eyes, and a deep feeling of the loveliness of the scene, but with scarcely a remark. There was something in the sight which made her heart too full for words.

After a time of delighted contemplation, Ranger was summoned from a close investigation of a rabbit-hole, and turning into a cart track, the cousins rode down the side of the hill, where presently appeared an orchard full of gnarled old apple trees, covered with fruit of all shades of red, yellow, and green. A little further on were the large stone barns, and picturesque looking house, which enclosed a farm-yard strewn with heaps of straw, in which pigs, poultry, and red cows were enjoying themselves. The gate was opened by a wild-looking cow-boy, who very respectfully touched his cap; and at the house door appeared a nice elderly looking old fashioned farmer's wife, who came forward to meet them with bright looks of cordiality, and kindly greetings to Master Edmund and Miss Marian.

"Thank you, thank you, Mrs. Cornthwayte," said Edmund, as he held Marian's pony; "we are come to ask if you will give our ponies stable room for a couple of hours, while we go fishing up the river."

"O yes, certainly, sir, but won't you come in a little while and rest? it is a long walk for Miss Marian."

They did comply with her invitation so far as to enter the large clean kitchen; the kitchen for show, that is to say, with the sanded floor, the bunch of evergreens in the covered kitchen-range, the

dark old fashioned clock, the bright range of crockery, and well polished oaken table; and there, while Marian laid aside her riding-skirt, the good woman commenced her anxious inquiries for Sir Edmund.

"Pretty much the same as usual, thank you," said Edmund.

"No better, then, sir? Ah! I was afraid how it was; it is so long since I have seen him at church, and he used to come sometimes last summer: and my husband said when he saw him last week about the rent, he was so fallen away that he would hardly have known him."

"It has been a very long illness," said Edmund.

"Yes, sir; I do wish we could see him about among us again, speaking as cheerful as he used."

"Why he is very cheerful now, Mrs. Cornthwayte," said Edmund. "No one who only heard him talk would guess how much he has to suffer."

Mrs. Cornthwayte shook her head with a sort of gesture of compassionate admiration, and presently added,

"But do you think he gets better on the whole, Master Edmund? Do the doctors say there is much likelihood of his being well again, and coming among us?"

Edmund looked down and did not reply very readily. "I am afraid we must not hope for that; we must be satisfied as long as he does not lose ground, and I certainly think he has had less pain of late."

A little more conversation passed between Edmund and the good wife, and a few words from Marian; after which they set off across one or two fields towards the place of their destination, Marian carrying her little sketching-basket in silence for some distance, until she suddenly exclaimed, "Edmund, is papa really getting worse?"

"Why should you think so, Marian?"

"I don't know, only from what you say when people inquire after him; and sometimes when I come to think about it, I believe he can do less than last year. He gets up later, and does not go out so often, and now you say he will never get quite well, and I always thought he would."

"No, I am afraid there is no likelihood of that, Marian: the doctors say he may be much better, but never quite well."

"But do you think he is better?"

"He has had less suffering of late, certainly, and so far we must be thankful; but, as you say, Marian, I am afraid he is weaker than last time I was at home, and I thought him much altered when I came. Still I do not think him materially worse, and I believe I might have thought him improved, if I had been here all the winter."

Marian became silent again, for her disposition was not to express her feelings readily, and besides, she was young enough to be able to put aside anxiety which, perhaps, she did not fully comprehend. It was the ordinary state of things for her father to be unwell, and his illness scarcely weighed upon her spirits, especially on a holiday and day of pleasure like the present; for though she often shared Edmund's walks and rides, a long expedition like this was an unusual treat.

After traversing several fields, they entered a winding path through a copse, which, descending a steep hill side, conducted them at length to the verge of a clear stream, which danced over or round the numerous rocks which obstructed its passage, making a pleasant, rippling sound. Here and there under the overhanging trees were deep quiet pools, where the water, of clear transparent brown color, contained numbers of little trout, the object of Edmund's pursuit. But more frequently the water splashed, dashed, and brawled along its rocky way, at the bottom of the narrow wooded ravine in which the valley ended. It was indeed a beautiful scene, with the sun glancing on the green of the trees and the bright sparkling water; and Marian could scarcely restrain her exclamations of delight, out of consideration for the silence required by her cousin's sport. She helped him to put his rod together, and arrange his reel, with the dexterity of one who well understood the matter; and then sat down under a fern-covered rock with a book in her hand, whilst he commenced his fishing. As he slowly proceeded up the stream, she changed her place so as to follow him at a distance; now and then making expeditions into the wood at the side of the hill to study some remarkable rock, some

tree of peculiar form, or to gather a handsome fern-leaf, or nodding fox-glove with its purple bells. Or the little sketch-book came out, and she caught the form of the rock with a few strokes of bold outline and firm shading, with more power over her soft pencil than is usual at her age, though her foliage was not of the most perfect description. Her own occupations did not, however, prevent her from observing all her cousin's proceedings; she knew whenever he captured a trout, she was at hand to offer help when his hook, was caught in a bramble, and took full and complete interest in the sport.

At last, after a successful fishing up the glen, they arrived at a place where the ravine was suddenly closed in by a perpendicular rock of about twenty feet in height, down which the water fell with its full proportion of foam and spray, forming a cascade which Marian thought "magnificent,"—Edmund, "very pretty."

"Edmund, I am afraid the Lake country has spoilt you for Devonshire. I wish they had never sent your regiment to the north!"

"That would not prevent the falls in Westmoreland from being twice the height of this."

"It would prevent you from saying that here it is not as beautiful as any thing can be."

"And nothing short of that will satisfy you. You had better stand in a narrow pass, and challenge every passer-by to battle in defence of the beauty of Fern Torr."

"I don't care about every body; but you, Edmund, ought to be more dutiful to your own home."

"You are exclusive, Marian; but come," and he stuck his rod into the ground, "let us have some of your sandwiches."

"Not till you confess that you like Fern Torr better than all the fine places that you ever saw."

"Liking with all one's heart is one thing, admiring above all others is another, as you will find when you have seen more of the world, Marian."

"I am sure I shall never think so."

While this contest was going on, Marian had unpacked some sandwiches and biscuits, and they sat down to eat them with the appetite due to such a walk. Then came a conversation, in which Marian submitted to hear something of the beauties of the Lakes, in the shape of a comment on the "Bridal of Triermain," which she had brought with her; next an attempt at sketching the cascade, in which Edmund was successful enough to make Marian much discontented with her own performance, and declare that she was tired of sitting still, and had a great mind to try to climb up the rocks by the side of the fall. She was light, active, and well able to scramble, and with a little help here and there from her cousin's strong hand, the top was merrily gained; and springing along from rock to rock, they traced the windings of the stream even to the end of the copse and the opening of the moor. It was a great achievement for Marian, for even Edmund had only once been this way before when out shooting. She would fain have mounted to the top of a peak which bounded her view, but being assured that she would only find Alps on Alps arise, she submitted to Edmund's judgment, and consented to retrace her steps, through wood and wild, to Mrs. Cornthwayte's, where they found a feast prepared for them of saffron buns, Devonshire cream, and cyder. Then mounting their steeds, and releasing Ranger from durance in the stable, they rode homewards for about three miles, when they entered the village in the valley at the foot of the steep rocky hill, from which it was named Fern Torr. Excepting the bare rugged summit, this hill was well covered with wood, and opposite to it rose more gently another elevation, divided into fields and meadows. The little old Church, with its square tower, and the neat vicarage beside it, were the only buildings above the rank of cottages, of which some twenty stood irregularly ranged in their gardens and orchards, along the banks of the bright little stream which bounded the road, at present scarcely large enough to afford swimming space for the numerous ducks that paddled in it; but the width of its stony bed, and the large span of the one-arched bridge that traversed it, showing what was its breadth and strength in the winter floods.

A little beyond this bridge was a wicket gate, leading to a path up the wooded height; and Edmund at this moment seeing a boy in a stable jacket, asked Marian if he should not let him lead the ponies round by the drive, while they walked up the steps. She readily agreed, and Edmund helping

her to dismount, they took their way up the path, which after a very short interval led to a steep flight of steps, cut out in the face of the limestone rock, and ascending through ferns, mountain-ash, and rhododendrons for about fifty or sixty feet, when it was concluded by what might be called either a broad terrace or narrow lawn, upon which stood a house irregularly built of the rough stone of the country, and covered with luxuriant myrtles and magnolias. Immediately behind, the ground again rose so precipitously, that scarcely could coign of vantage be won for the garden, on a succession of narrow shelves or ledges, which had a peculiarly beautiful effect, adorned, as they were, with gay flowers, and looking, as Edmund was wont to say, as gorgeous and as deficient in perspective as an old piece of tapestry.

"There is papa out of doors," exclaimed Marian, as she emerged upon the lawn, and ran eagerly up to a Bath chair, in which was seated a gentleman whose face and form showed too certain tokens of long and wasting illness. He held out his hand to her, saying, "Well, Marian, good sport, I hope, and no more tumbles from Mayflower."

"Marian sits like a heroine," said Edmund, coming up; "I am glad to see you out."

"It is such a fine evening that I was tempted to come and see the magnolia that you have all been boasting of: and really it is worth seeing. Those white blossoms are magnificent."

"But where is mamma?" asked Marian.

"Carried off by Gerald, to say whether he may have a superannuated sea kale pot for some purpose best known to himself, in his desert island. They will be here again in another minute. There, thank you, Edmund, that is enough," he added, as his nephew drew his chair out of a streak of sunshine which had just come over him. "Now, how far have you been? I hope you have seen the cascade, Marian?"

"O yes, papa, and scrambled up the side of it too. I had no idea of any thing so beautiful," said Marian. "The spray was so white and glancing. Oh! I wish I could tell you one half of the beauty of it."

"I remember well the delight of the first discovery of it," said Sir Edmund, "when I was a mere boy, and found my way there by chance, as I was shooting. I came up the glen, and suddenly found myself in the midst of this beautiful glade, with the waterfall glancing white in the sun."

"I wish we could transplant it," said Edmund; "but after all, perhaps its being so remote and inaccessible is one of its great charms. Ah! young monkey, is it you?" added he, as Gerald, a merry bright-eyed boy of seven years old, came rushing from behind and commenced a romping attack upon him. "Take care, not such a disturbance close to papa."

"O mamma, we have had the most delightful day!" cried Marian, springing to the side of her mother, who now came forward from the kitchen garden, and whose fair and gentle, but careworn, anxious face, lighted up with a bright sweet smile, as she observed the glow on her daughter's usually pale cheek, and the light that danced in her dark brown eye.

"I'm glad you have had such a pleasant day, my dear," said she. "It is very kind in Edmund to be troubled with such a wild goose."

"Wild geese are very good things in their way," said Edmund; "water and land, precipice and moor, 'tis all the same to them."

"And when will you take me, Edmund?" asked Gerald.

"When you have learnt to comport yourself with as much discretion as Marian, master," said Edmund, sitting down on the grass, and rolling the kicking, struggling boy over and over, while Marian stood by her papa, showing him her sketches, and delighted by hearing him recognize the different spots. "How can you remember them so well, papa," said she, "when it is so very long since you saw them?"

"That is the very reason," he answered, "we do not so much dwell on what is constantly before us as when we have long lost sight of it. To be confined to the house for a few years is an excellent receipt for appreciating nature."

"Yes, because it must make you wish for it so much," said Marian sadly.

"Not exactly," said her father. "You cannot guess the pleasure it has often given me to recall those scenes, and to hear you talk of them; just as your mamma likes to hear of Oakworthy."

"Certainly," said Lady Arundel. "I have remembered much at poor old Oakworthy that I never thought of remarking at the time I was there.

Even flaws in the glass, and cracks in the ceiling have returned upon me, and especially since the house has been pulled down."

"I cannot think how the natives of an old house can wilfully destroy all their old associations, their heirloooms," said Edmund.

"Sometimes they have none," said his aunt.

"Ay," said Sir Edmund, "when Gerald brings home a fine wife from far away, see what she will say to all our dark passages and corner cupboards, and steps up and steps down."

"Oh! I shall not be able to bear her if she does not like them," cried Marian.

"I suppose that was the case with Mrs. Lyddell," added Sir Edmund, "that she discovered the deficiencies of the old house, as well as brought wherewith to remedy them. He does not look like a man given to change."

"He has no such feeling for association as these people," said Lady Arundel, pointing to Edmund and Marian; "he felt his position, in the country raised by her fortune, and was glad to use any means of adding to his consequence."

"I should like to see more of them. I wish we could ask them to stay here," said Sir Edmund, with something like a sigh. "But come, had we not better go in? The hungry fishers look quite ready for tea."

CHAPTER II

"And now I set thee down to try
How thou canst walk alone."

Lyra Innocentium.

Scarcely eight months had passed since the last recorded conversation, when Marian, in a dress of deep mourning, was slowly pacing the garden paths, her eyes fixed on the ground, and an expression of thoughtful sadness on her face. Heavy indeed had been the strokes that had fallen upon her. Before the last summer had closed, the long sufferings of her father had been terminated by one of the violent attacks, which had often been expected to be fatal. Nor was this all that she had to mourn. With winter had come severe colds and coughs; Lady Arundel was seized with an inflammation of the chest, her constitution had been much enfeebled by watching, anxiety, and grief, and in a very few days her children were orphans.

It was the day following the funeral. Mrs. Wortley was staying in the house, as were also the two guardians of the young Sir Gerald Arundel and his sister. These were Mr. Lyddell, a relation of Lady Arundel; and our former acquaintance, Edmund Arundel, in whom, young as he was, his uncle had placed full confidence. He had in fact been entirely brought up by Sir Edmund, and knew no other home than Fern Torr, having been sent thither an orphan in earliest childhood. His uncle and aunt had supplied the place of parents, and had been well rewarded for all they had done for him, by his consistent well doing and completely filial affection for them.

Marian was startled from her musings by his voice close at hand, saying, "All alone, Marian?"

"Gerald is with Jemmy Wortley, somewhere," she replied, "and I begged Mrs. Wortley and Agnes to go down the village and leave me alone. I have been very busy all the morning, and my head feels quite confused with thoughts!"

"I am glad to have found you," said Edmund. "I have seen so little of you since I have been here."

"Yes, you have been always with Mr. Lyddell. When does he go?"

"To-morrow morning."

"And you stay longer, I hope?"

"Only till Monday; I wish it was possible to stay longer, but it is something to have a Sunday to spend here."

"And then I am afraid it will be a long time before we see you again."

"I hope not; if you are in London, it will be always easier to meet."

"In London! Ah! that reminds me I wanted to ask you what I am to say to Selina Marchmont. I have a very kind letter from her, asking us to come to stay with her directly, and hoping that it may be arranged for us to live with them."

"Ah! I have a letter from her husband to the same effect," said Edmund.

"It really is very kind and friendly in them."

"Exceedingly," said Marian. "Will you read her letter, and tell me how I am to answer her!"

"As to the visit, that depends upon what you like to do yourself. I should think that you would prefer staying with the Wortleys, since they are so kind as to receive you."

"You don't mean," exclaimed Marian, eagerly, "staying with them for ever!"

Edmund shook his head. "No, Marian, I fear that cannot be."

"Then it is as I feared," sighed Marian. "I wonder how it is that I have thought so much about myself; but it would come into my head, what was to become of us, and I was very much afraid

of living with the Lyddells; but still there was a little glimmering of hope that you might be able to manage to leave us with the Wortleys."

"I heartily wish I could," said Edmund, "but it is out of my power. My uncle—"

"Surely papa did not wish us to live with the Lyddells?" cried Marian.

"I do not think he contemplated your living any where but at home."

"But the Vicarage is more like home than any other place could ever be," pleaded Marian, "and papa did not like the Lyddells nearly so well as the Wortleys."

"We must abide by his arrangements, rather than our own notions of his wishes," said Edmund. "Indeed, I know that he thought Mr. Lyddell a very sensible man."

"Then poor Gerald is to grow up away from his own home, and never see the dear old moors! But if we cannot stay here, I had rather be with Selina. She is so fond of Gerald, and she knows what home was, and she knew and loved—them. And we should not meet so many strangers. Only think what numbers of Lyddells there are! Boys to make Gerald rude, and girls, and a governess—all strangers. And they go to London!" concluded poor Marian, reaching the climax of her terrors. "O Edmund, can you do nothing for us?"

"You certainly do not embellish matters in anticipation. You will find them very different from what you expect—even London itself, which, by the by, you would have to endure even if you were with Selina, whom I suspect to be rather too fine and fashionable a lady for such a homely little Devonshire girl."

"That Mrs. Lyddell will be. She is a very gay person, and they have quantities of company. O Edmund!"

"The quantities of company," replied her cousin, "will interfere with you far less in your schoolroom with the Miss Lyddells, than alone with my Lady Marchmont, where, at your unrecognized age, you would be in rather an awkward situation."

"Or I could go to Torquay, to old Aunt Jessie?"

"Aunt Jessie would not be much obliged for the proposal of giving her such a charge."

"But I should take care of her, and make her life less dismal and lonely."

"That may be very well some years hence, when you are your own mistress: but at present I believe the trouble and change of habits which having you with her would occasion, would not be compensated by all your attention and kindness. Have you written to her yet?"

"No, I do not know how, and I hoped it was one of the letters that you undertook for me."

"I think I ought not to relieve you of that. Aunt Jessie is your nearest relation; I am sure this has been a great blow to her, and that it has cost her much effort to write to you herself. You must not turn her letter over to me, like a mere complimentary condolence."

"Very well," said Marian, with a sigh, "though I cannot guess what I shall say. And about Selina?"

"You had better write and tell her how you are situated, and I will do the same to Lord Marchmont."

"And when must we go to the Lyddells? I thought he meant more than mere civility, when he spoke of Oakworthy this morning, at breakfast."

"He spoke of taking you back to London immediately, but I persuaded him to wait till they go into Wiltshire, so you need not be rooted up from Fern Torr just yet."

"Thank you, that is a great reprieve."

"And do not make up your mind beforehand to be unhappy at Oakworthy. Very likely you will take root there, and wonder you ever shrank from being transplanted to your new home."

"Never! never! it is cruel to say that any place but this can be like home! And you, Edmund, what shall you do, where shall you go, when you have leave of absence?"

"I shall never ask for it," said he with an effort, while his eye fell on the window of the room which had been his own for so many years, and the thought crossed him, "Mine no more." It had

been his home, as fully as that of his two cousins, but now it was nothing to him; and while they had each other to cling to, he stood in the world a lonely man.

Marian perceived his emotion, but rather than seem to notice it, she assumed a sort of gaiety. "I'll tell you, Edmund. You shall marry a very nice wife, and take some delightful little house somewhere hereabouts, and we will come and stay with you till Gerald is of age."

"Which he will be long before I have either house or wife," said Edmund, in the same tone, "but mind, Marian, it is a bargain, unless you grow so fond of the Lyddells as to retract."

"Impossible."

"Well, I will not strengthen your prejudices by contending with them."

"Prejudice! to say that I can never be as happy anywhere as at my own dear home! To say that I cannot bear strangers!"

"If they were to remain strangers for all the years that you are likely to spend with them, there might be something in that. But I see you cannot bear to be told that you can ever be happy again, so I will not say so any more, especially as I must finish my letters."

"And I will try to write mine," said Marian with a sigh, as she reached the door, and went up to take off her bonnet.

Edmund lingered for a moment in the hall, and there was met by Mrs. Wortley, who said she was glad to see that he had been out, for he was looking pale and harassed. "I did not go out for any pleasant purpose," said he. "I had to pronounce sentence on poor Marian."

"Is it finally settled?" said Mrs. Wortley. "We still had hopes of keeping her."

"Sir Gerald and Miss Arundel are of too much distinction in Mr. Lyddell's eyes to be left to their best friends," said Edmund. "It was hard to persuade him not to take possession directly, on the plea of change being good for their spirits."

"It is very kind of you to put off the evil day," said Mrs. Wortley; "it will be a grievous parting for poor Agnes."

"A grievous business for every one," said Edmund.

"How? Do not you think well of Mr. and Mrs. Lyddell?"

"I know my uncle never thought of these poor children's living with them. He thought Mr. Lyddell a good man of business, but neither he nor my aunt ever dreamed of such a home for them."

"Would they have preferred Lady Marchmont's? Marian is very fond of her, and was much gratified by a very nice affectionate letter that she received this morning."

"Yes, but I am glad she is out of the question. It is offering a great deal both on her part and her husband's to take charge of these two, but it would never do. She is almost a child herself,—a bride and beauty under twenty,—excessively admired, very likely to have her head turned. No, it would be too absurd. All her kindness, amiability, desire to make Marian her friend and companion, would only serve to do harm."

"Yes, you are right; yet I cannot help half wishing it could be, if it was only to save poor Marian her terrors of going among strangers."

"I know exactly how it will be," said Edmund. "She will shut herself up in a double proof case of shyness and reserve. They will never understand her, nor she them."

"But that cannot go on for ever."

"No; and perhaps it might be better if it could."

"Well, but do you really know anything against them? He seems inclined to be very kind and considerate."

"Electioneering courtesy," said Edmund. "But now you begin to question me, I cannot say that my—my mistrust shall I call it—or aversion? is much better founded than the prejudices I have been scolding poor Marian for. Perhaps it is only that I am jealous of them, and cannot think any one out of Fern Torr worthy to bring up my uncle's children. All I know of them is, that Mrs. Lyddell was heiress to a rich banker, she goes out a good deal in London, and the only time that I met her I

thought her clever and agreeable. In their own county I believe she is just what a popular member's wife should be—I don't mean popular in the sense of radical. I think I have heard too something about the eldest son not turning out well; but altogether, you see, I have not grounds enough to justify any opposition to their desire of having the children."

"How are they as to Church principles?"

"That I really cannot tell. I should think they troubled themselves very little about the matter, and would only dislike any thing strong either way. If my aunt had but been able to make some arrangement! No doubt it was upon her mind when she asked so often for me!"

"Yes, but there is this comfort," said Mrs. Wortley, seeing him much troubled, "that she did not seem to make herself anxious and restless on their account. She trusted them, and so may we."

"Yes, that is all that one can come to," said Edmund, sighing deeply. "But Gerald! One pities Marian the most now, but it is a more serious matter for him."

"Gerald will be more in your power than his sister," said Mrs. Wortley.

"As if that was much comfort," said Edmund, half smiling, then again sighing, "when even for my own concerns I miss my uncle's advice at every turn. And probably I may have to go on foreign service next year."

"Then he will be at school."

"Yes. He was not to have gone till he was ten years old, but I shall try to hasten it now. He must go with his sister to Oakworthy though, for to begin without him there would be complete desolation in her eyes."

Here the conversation was concluded by Marian's coming down to write her painfully composed letters. That to her cousin, Lady Marchmont, who, as Selina Grenville, had been a frequent and favourite visitor at the manor, ran glibly enough off the pen, and the two or three quiet tears that blotted the paper, fell from a feeling of affection rather than of regret; but the letter to old Mrs. Jessie Arundel, her great aunt, and one or two others which Edmund had desired her to write, were works of time. Marian's feelings were seldom freely expressed even to those whom she loved best, and to write down expressions of grief, affection, or gratitude, as a matter of course, was positively repugnant to her.

The great work was not finished till late, and then came in Gerald and Agnes, and the tea drinking among themselves was rendered cheerful by Agnes' anticipations of pleasure in their going the next day to the parsonage for a long visit. Gerald began to play with her, and soon got into quite high spirits, and Marian herself had smiled, nay, almost laughed, before the gentlemen came in from the dining room, when the presence of Mr. Lyddell cast over her a cloud of dull dread and silence, so that she did not through the rest of the evening raise her head three inches from her book.

Yet as Mrs. Wortley had said, Mr. Lyddell was evidently inclined to be kind to her and her brother. He patted Gerald on the head as he wished him good night, and said good-naturedly to Marian that she must be great friends with his girls, Caroline and Clara.

Marian tried to look civil, but could not find an answer both sincere and polite, and Mrs. Wortley, speaking for her, asked if they were nearly of the same age as she was.

"Well, I can't exactly tell," said Mr. Lyddell. "I should think she was between them. You are thirteen, aren't you, Marian? Well, Caroline may be a couple of years older, and Clara—I know her birthday was the other day, for I had to make her a present,—but how old she was I can't exactly recollect, whether it was twelve or thirteen. So you see you will not want for companions at Oakworthy, and you will be as happy there as your poor mamma used to be in the old house. Many was the laugh she has had there with my poor sister, and now they are both gone—well, there, I did not mean to overset you,—but—"

Marian could not bear it. She could talk of her mother to Mrs. Wortley, Agnes, or Edmund, with complete composure, but she could not bear Mr. Lyddell's hearty voice trying, as she thought, at sentiment, and forcing the subject upon her, and without a word or a look she hurried out of the

room, and did not come back all the evening. Agnes followed her, and pitied her, and thought Mr. Lyddell should have said nothing of the kind, and sat down over the fire with her in her own room to read hymns.

The next day Mr. Lyddell left Fern Torr, and Marian was so glad to gee him depart as to be able to endure much better his invitations to Oakworthy. That same day Marian and Gerald went to the parsonage, and Edmund, after spending a quiet Sunday at Fern Torr, bade them farewell on the Monday morning.

CHAPTER III

"Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine 'may tread' my nurseryfloor."

COWPER.

The way of life at Fern Torr parsonage was so quiet as to afford few subjects for narration. Mrs. Wortley was a gentle, sensible person, very fond of Marian and Gerald, both for their own sake and their mother's, and to be with her was to them as like being at home as anything could be. Agnes was quite wrapped up in her friend, whom she pitied so heartily, and was to lose so soon. She had known no troubles except through Marian, she reverenced Marian's griefs, and in her respect for them was inclined to spoil her not a little. Then, through nothing against the Lyddells had ever been said to Agnes, she had caught all Marian's prejudiced dislike to them, and sometimes in lively exaggeration, sometimes in grave condolence, talked of them "as these horrid people."

Marian felt every day was precious as it passed, and the time seemed to her far less than two months, when one day there arrived a letter from Mrs. Lyddell to announce that the family were about to leave London, and in the course of a week Mr. Lyddell would come to fetch her and Gerald to Oakworthy.

The letter was kindly expressed, but this was lost upon Marian in the pain its purport gave her, and the difficulty of composing an answer. She chose her smallest sheet of writing-paper with the deepest black edge, wrote as widely as she could, and used the longest words, but with all Mrs. Wortley's suggestions, she could not eke out what she had to say beyond the first page. She would not even send her love to her cousins, for she said she could have no particular affection for them, and to express any pleasure in the prospect of seeing so many strangers would be an actual untruth.

What a week was that which followed! Marian loved her home with that enthusiasm which especially belongs to the inhabitants of mountainous districts, and still more acutely did she feel the separation from all that reminded her of her parents. If she had not had Gerald to go with her she did not know how she could have borne it, but Gerald, her own beautiful brother, with his chestnut curls, dark bright eyes, sweet temper, and great cleverness and goodness, he must be a comfort to her wherever she was. Gerald was one of those children who seem to have a peculiar atmosphere of bright grace and goodness around them, who make beautiful earnest sayings in their simplicity which are treasured up by their friends, who, while regarding them with joy and something like veneration, watch them likewise with fear and trembling. Thus had his mother looked upon Gerald, and thus in some degree did Mrs. Wortley; but Marian had nothing but pride, joy, and confidence in him, unalloyed save now and then by the secret, half superstitious fear that such goodness might mark him for early death.

By Marian's own especial desire, she went to almost every cottage to take leave, but all she could do was to stand with her head averted and her lips compressed, while Mrs. Wortley spoke for her. Her next task was to look over the boxes and drawers at the manor house, in case it should be let; for no one else could be trusted to decide what hoards of highly prized trifles should be locked up, and what must be thrown away. She alone could choose the little keepsakes to be given to old servants and village friends, and she must select what she would take to Oakworthy.

She stood lingering before each picture, viewing the old familiar furniture with loving eyes, and sighing at the thought that strangers would alter the arrangements, look carelessly or critically on her father's portrait, think her wild garden a collection of weeds, and root up the flowering fern which Edmund had helped her to transplant. She went into her own room, and felt almost ready to

hate the person who might occupy it; she lay down on the bed, and looking up at the same branch of lime tree, and the same piece of sky which had met her eyes every morning, she mused there till she was roused by hearing Gerald's voice very loud in the nursery. Hastening thither, she found him insisting that his collection of stones and spars was much too precious to mend the roads with, as their maid Saunders proposed, and Agnes settling the matter satisfactorily by offering to take them to adorn a certain den in the vicarage garden with. The ponies were to be turned out to grass, the rabbits were bestowed on James Wortley, and Ranger was to be kept at the vicarage till Edmund could come and fetch him, together with his books, which Marian had to look out, and she found it a service of difficulty, since "Edmund Gerald" could scarcely be said to answer the purpose of a proper name in the Arundel family.

The last day at home arrived, the eve of S. James. Marian went to prepare her class at the weekly school, resolved to do just as usual to the last. She had to read them the conversation on S. James's Day in "Fasts and Festivals," but she could hardly get through with it, the separation between early friends reminded her so much of herself and Agnes, and then the comparison of the two roads, one in burning and scorching sunshine, the other in the cool fresh shade, almost overset her, for though she could not tell why, she chose to be persuaded that the first must be hers. But they both ended in the same place. She felt tears coming into her eyes, but she kept them down, and went on reading in a steady monotonous voice, as if the meaning was nothing to her; she asked the children questions in a dry, grave, matter-of-fact way, as if she had not the slightest interest in them or in the subject, though her heart was full of affection to the dullest and roughest among them, and when she went away, her nod, and "well, good morning," to the school mistress were several shades further from warmth than usual.

All the way back from the school she was eagerly telling Agnes exactly the point where she left each child in her class, and begging her to say the kind things which she meant to have said to Grace Knight, the mistress.

Agnes laughed and said, "I hope she will take my word for it all. Why could you not speak to her? At least I thought you were not afraid of her."

"I don't know," said Marian. "I thought I could, but it is very odd. You see, Agnes, how it is; the more I care, the more I can't speak, and I can't help it."

"Well, don't be unhappy about it," said Agnes. "I know what you mean, and am ready to take you as you are, and if other people don't, it is their own fault."

Agnes was rather too fond of Marian to be exactly right here, for it was not at all a good thing that she should be encouraged in a reserve which led her not always to do as she would be done by.

The two girls came in, lingered in each other's rooms while they dressed, and at last were called down stairs by Mrs. Wortley, who was ready to finish with them the last chapter of the book they had been reading aloud together. Gerald sat in the window, his friend Jemmy hanging over him, and the two together composing a marvellous battlepiece, in which Gerald drew horses, men, cannon, and arrows, and Jemmy, like a small Homer, suggested the various frightful wounds they should be receiving, and the attitudes in which they should fall. The general, with a tremendous Turkish sabre, an immense cocked hat, and a horse with very stiff legs, was just being represented receiving an unfortunate-looking prisoner, considerably spotted with vermillion paint, when a sound of wheels was heard, and both boys starting up, exclaimed, "Here he comes!"

He, as Marian knew full well, was Mr. Lyddell; and a chilliness came over her as he entered, tall, broad, ruddy, treading heavily, and speaking loudly: and Gerald pressed close to her, squeezing her hand so tight that she could hardly withdraw it to shake hands with her guardian. With one hand he held her cold reluctant fingers, with the other gave Gerald's head a patronizing pat. "Well, my dears, how d'ye do? quite well? and ready to start with me to-morrow? That is right. Caroline and Clara have had their heads full of nothing but you this long time—only wanted to have come with me."

Here Marian succeeded in drawing back her hand, and retreated to the window; Gerald was creeping after her, but Mr. Lyddell laid hold of his chin, and drew him back, saying. "What, shy, my man? we shall cure you at Oakworthy My boys will give you no peace if they see you getting into your sister's pocket."

Gerald disengaged himself, and made a rapid retreat. It was a long time before he again appeared, and when Mrs. the housekeeper at the Manor House, came down in the course of the evening to say good-bye, she said, "And ma'am, where do you think I found that dear child, Sir Gerald, not two hours ago?" She wiped away a gush of tears, and went on. "I thought I heard a noise in the drilling room, and went to see, and there, ma'am, was the dear little fellow lying on the floor, the bare boards, for the carpet is taken up, you know, Miss Marian, before his papa's picture, crying and sobbing as if his heart would break. But as soon as I opened the door, and he saw me, he snatched up his hat, and jumped out at the open window, which he had come in by, I suppose, for I never heard him open the door."

Marian, after her usual fashion, had no reply, but it was pleasant to her to think of what had taken place, since Gerald had not in general shown much concern at the leaving home.

They all met at breakfast next morning; Marian, was firmly determined against crying, and by dint of squeezing up her lips, and not uttering a word, succeeded in keeping her resolution; but poor Agnes could eat no breakfast, and did nothing but cry, till Mr. Lyddell, by saying that her tears were a great honour both to herself and Marian, entirely checked them.

"I hope," said Mr. Wortley, "that Mrs. Lyddell will not be very strict in inquiring into the quantity of Marian's idle correspondence. The friends there mean to console themselves with multitudes of letters."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said Mr. Lyddell. "Old friends for ever! So mind, Marian, I mean to be very angry if you forget to write to Miss Wortley."

"Thank you," said Marian, knowing that she was saying something silly, and trying to smile.

"Come, then," said Mr. Lyddell, "thank your friends once more for their kindness, and let us be going."

Thanks from Marian were out of the question, and she tried to get out of hearing of the sentences beginning, "I am sure we shall always be sensible," "Nothing could be kinder," which her guardian was pouring out. She moved with Agnes to the door: the summer sky was deeply blue, without a cloud, the fresh green branches of the trees stood up against it as if bathed in light, the flower beds were glowing with gay blossoms, Gerald and Jemmy were playing with Ranger under the verandah, and the Church bells rang cheerfully for morning service, but alas! at the gate was the carriage, Saunders sitting sobbing on the outside, and David Chapple, Mr. Wortley's man, standing on one leg on the step talking to her. Near at hand was the gardener from the Manor House, waiting with his hands full of Miss Arundel's favourite flowers, and there stood old Betty Lapthorn and her grandchild, Gerald's nurse who had married, and the old man to whom the children had so often carried the remains of their dinner; all the school children too, and Grace in the middle of them, waiting for the last view of Miss Arundel and little Sir Gerald.

Mr. Lyddell finished his acknowledgments, and Marian and her brother received an embrace and good-bye from their friends, David jumped down and shut the door, Saunders sobbed aloud, there was another good-bye from each of the Wortleys, and a hearty response from Gerald, Mr. Lyddell called out, "All right," and away they went.

On went the carriage, past the Church, with its open door and pealing bell, the rocky steps up to the Manor House, nestled in the shrubs, the well known trees, the herds of longhorned, red cattle, the grey stone cottages, and the women and tiny children at the doors, the ford through the sparkling shallow brook, the hill with the great limestone quarry, the kiln so like a castle, the river and its bridge of one narrow, high pitched, ivy grown arch, the great rod rock, remembered as having been the limit of papa's last drive, the farm house in the winding valley beyond, with its sloping orchard and home

field, the last building in the parish. They drove through the little market town, slowly wound up the heights beyond, looked down into the broad, beautiful space where the river Exe winds its blue course amid wood, field, and castled hill, descended, losing sight of the last of the Torrs, glanced at Exeter and its Cathedral, arrived at the station, and there, while waiting hand in hand on the platform, gazing at the carriage, and starting at each puff, snort, cough, and shriek of the engines, Marian and Gerald did indeed feel themselves severed from the home of their childhood.

It was not till the afternoon that they left the railroad, and then they had a two hours' drive through a country which Marian found very unlike her own: the bleak, bare downs of Wiltshire, low green hills rising endlessly one after the other, the white road visible far away before them, the chalk pits white and cold, a few whitey brown ponds now and then, and at long intervals a farm house, looking as if it had been set down there by mistake, and did not like it, carts full of chalk, and flocks of sheep the chief moving objects they met, and not many of them.

Marian sighed, yawned, and looked at Gerald many a time before they at length came to a small, very neat-looking town, where the houses stood far back from the street, and had broad clean pavement in front of them. "This is Oakworthy," said Mr. Lyddell, and Marian looked with interest. The church was just outside the town, white, and clean looking, like everything else, and with a spire. That was all she could see, for they drove on by the side of a long park wall, enclosing a fir plantation. The gate of a pretty lodge was thrown back, and they entered upon a gravelled carriage-road, which, after some windings, led to a large house, built of white brick, regular and substantial. They stopped under the portico at the door, and Mr. Lyddell, as he handed Marian out of the carriage, exclaimed, "Welcome to Oakworthy Park!"

It seemed to Marian that there was a whole crowd waiting for her in the hall, and she had received at least three kisses before she had time to look around her, and perceive that this formidable troop consisted of a tall, fresh-coloured lady, two girls, and two little boys. Each of the girls eagerly grasped one of her hands, and drew her into the drawing-room, exclaiming, "I am glad you are come!" Here were two more strangers, youths of the age at which their juniors call them men, and their seniors, boys. They did not trouble the guests with any particular demonstrations of welcome, only shaking hands with them carelessly, and after another moment or two Marian found herself sitting on a chair, very stiffly and upright, while Gerald stood about two feet from her, afraid of a second accusation of getting into her pocket, looking down, and twisting the handles of her basket.

"Lionel, Johnny," said Mrs. Lyddell, "have you nothing to say to your cousin? Come here, my dear, and tell me, were you very sorry to leave Fern Torr?"

Gerald coloured and looked at his sister, who replied by a hesitating, faltering, "Yes, very."

"Ah! yes, I see," said Mrs. Lyddell, "but you will soon be at home here. It shall not be my fault or your cousins' if you are not,—eh, Caroline?"

"Indeed it shall not," returned Caroline, again taking Marian's hand, at first pressing it cordially, but letting it go on feeling the limp, passive fingers, which were too shy and frightened to return the pressure.

Mr. Lyddell came in, and while his wife was engaged in speaking to him, Marian had time to make her observations, for the chilling embarrassment of her manner had repelled the attentions of her cousins. Though she had never seen them before, she knew enough about them to be able to fit the names to the persons she saw before her, and make a few conjectures as to how she would like them.

That youth in the odd-looking, rough, shapeless coat, yet with a certain expensive, fashionable air about the rest of his dress, who stood leaning against the chimney-piece in a nonchalant attitude, was her eldest cousin, Elliot Lyddell. The other, a great contrast in appearance, small, slender, and pale, with near-sighted spectacles over his weak, light grey eyes, dressed with scrupulous precision and quietness, who had retreated to the other end of the room and taken up a book, was Walter. The elder girl, Caroline, was about fifteen, a very pleasing likeness of her mother, with a brilliant complexion, bright blue eyes, and a remarkably lively and pleasant smile, which Marian was so much

taken with, that she wished she could have found something to say, but the dress and air both gave her the appearance of being older than Agnes, and thus made Marian feel as if she was a great way above and beyond her. The other sister had a fair, pretty face, much more childish, with beautiful glossy light hair, and something sweet and gentle in her expression, and Marian felt warmly towards her because she was her mother's god-child, and bore the same name.

The younger boys, Lionel and John, were nice-looking little fellows of nine and seven. They had drawn towards Walter, gazing all the time at Gerald, and all parties were rejoiced when Mrs. Lyddell, after a few more attempts at conversation, proposed to take the guests to their rooms.

With a light, quick step, she led the way up two staircases and a long passage, to a good-sized, comfortable room intended for Marian, while Gerald's was just opposite. With a civil welcome to Saunders, kind hopes that Marian would make herself at home, and information that dinner would he ready at seven, she left the room, and Saunders proceeded with the young lady's toilette. Gerald stood gazing from the window at the trees and little glimpse of the town in the distance. He said little, and seemed rather forlorn till leave was given him to unpack some goods which he could not easily damage. Just as Marian was dressed, there was a knock at the door, and without waiting for an answer, Caroline and Clara entered, the former saying, "I hope you find everything comfortable: you see we make you quite at home, and stand on no ceremony."

It was pleasantly said, but Marian only gave a constrained smile, and answered, "Thank you," in such an awkward, cold way, that Caroline was thrown back. Her sister, only conscious of freedom from the restraints of the drawing-room, began exclaiming in short sentences, "O what a pretty basket! so you have out your work already! what a lovely pattern! how quick you have been in dressing! we came to see how you were getting on. O what is this pretty box? do let me see."

"A work-box," said Marian, by no means disposed to turn out all the small treasures it contained for Clara's inspection.—Caroline perceived this, and said with a little reproof to Clara,

"You curious child! Perhaps Marian would like to come and see the schoolroom before going down."

"Oh, yes," said Clara; "you must come. You have not seen Miss Morley yet,—our governess, —poor, unfortunate, faithful Morley, as we always call her."

This manner of mentioning the governess, and before Saunders too, greatly surprised Marian, and she felt little inclination to face another stranger; but she could think of no valid objection, and allowed herself and Gerald to be conducted down one of the flights of stairs into a passage less decorated than the rest of the house. Clara threw open a door, calling out, "Here they are!" and Marian found herself in the presence of a little, nicely dressed lady, who looked very little older than Caroline, and had a very good-natured face. Coming forward with a smile, she said, "Miss Arundel, I believe. I hope you are quite well, and not tired. Sir Gerald, how d'ye do? We shall be good friends, I am sure."

Gerald shook hands, and Marian thought she ought to do so too; but it had not been her first impulse, and it was too late, so she only made a stiff bend of head and knee. Clara, happily unconscious of the embarrassment with which Marian had infected Caroline, went on talking fast and freely:

"So, you see, this is the schoolroom. There is Caroline's desk, and here is mine; and we have made room for you here. I suppose you have a desk. And here are all our books, and our chiffonnière; Caroline has one side and I the other. Oh, I must show you my last birthday presents. Ah! aren't we lucky to have got such a nice view of the terrace and the portico from here! We can always see the people coming to dinner, and when the gentlemen go out riding, it is such fun, and—"

"My dear Clara," interposed Miss Morley, seeing Marian's bewildered looks, "your cousin is not used to such a chatterbox. I assure you, Miss Arundel, that Clara has been quite wild for the last week with the prospect of seeing you. I have actually not known what to do with her."

Marian gave one of her awkward smiles, and said nothing.

"You left Devonshire this morning, I think?" said Miss Morley.

"Yes, we did."

"Fern Torr is in a very beautiful part of the country, is it not?"

"Yes, very."

They were getting on at this rate when Mrs. Lyddell came in, and took Marian and Gerald down to the drawing-room with her, as it was almost dinner time. No sooner had the door closed behind them, than governess and pupils at once exclaimed, "How pale!" "how shy!" "how awkward!"

"I dare say that is only shyness," said Caroline, "but I must say I never saw anything so stiff and chilly."

"Yes, that she is," said Clara, "but it's only shyness; I am sure she is a dear girl. But how white she is! I thought she would have been pretty, because they say the Arundels are all so handsome."

"She has fine eyes," said Miss Motley; "and that dear little Sir Gerald, I am sure we shall all be in love with him."

"Well, I hope we may get on better in time," said Caroline, taking up a book, and settling herself in a most luxurious attitude in spite of the unaccommodating furniture of the schoolroom.

Marian recovered a little at dinner, and was not quite so monosyllabic in her replies. Her netting was a great resource when she went into the drawing-room after dinner, and she began to feel a little less rigid and confused, made some progress in acquaintance with Clara, and when she went to bed was not without hopes of, in time, liking both her and Caroline very much.

CHAPTER IV

"A place where others are at home,
But all are strange to me."

Lyra Innocentium.

Marian began the next morning by wondering what a Sunday at Oakworthy would be like, but she was glad the formidable first meeting was over, and greeted Gerald cheerfully when he came into the room.

After a few minutes a bell rang, and Marian, thinking it must be for family prayers, hastened into the passage, wondering at herself for not having asked last night where she was to go. She was glad to meet Caroline coming out of her room, and after quickly exchanging a "good morning," she said, "Was that the bell for prayers?"

"No, it was for the servants' breakfast," said Caroline "and for ours in the schoolroom too."

"But don't you have prayers in the morning?" said Gerald,

"No," answered Caroline gravely.

"Why not," the little boy was beginning but Marian pressed his hand to check him, shocked herself, and sorry for Caroline's sake that the question had been asked.

Caroline spoke rather hurriedly, "I wish we could, but you see papa is out so often, and there are so many people staying here sometimes: and in London, papa is so late at the House—it is very unlucky, but it would not do, it is all so irregular."

"What?" said Clara, hopping down stairs behind them. "O, about prayers!

We have not had any in the school room since Miss Cameron's time."

"Miss Cameron used to read a chapter and pray with us afterwards," said Caroline; "but when she was gone, mamma said she did not like the book she used."

"Besides, it was three quarters out of her own head, and that wasn't fair, for she used to go on such a monstrous time," said Clara.

"Hush, Clara," said her sister, "and mamma has never found a book she does think quite fit."

"There's the Prayer Book," said Gerald.

"O that is only for Church," said Clara, opening the schoolroom door; "O she is not here! Later than ever. Well, Marian, what do you think of her?"

"Of whom?" asked Marian.

"Of poor unfortunate faithful Morley," said Clara.

"You call her so after Queen Anne?"

"Yes," said Caroline, "and you will see how well the name suits her when you are fully initiated."

"But does she like it?"

"Like it?" and Clara fell into a violent fit of laughing, calling out to Lionel, who just then came in, "Here is Marian asking if we call Miss Morley 'poor unfortunate' whenever we speak to her."

"She is coming," said Lionel, and Clara sunk her boisterous laughter into a titter, evident enough to occasion Miss Morley to ask what made them so merry, but the only answer she received was from Lionel, "Something funny," and then both he and Clara burst out again into laughter, his open, and hers smothered.

Marian looked amazed. "Ah! you are not used to such ways," said the governess; "Clara and Lionel are sometimes sad creatures."

Breakfast took a very long time, and before it was quite over, Mrs. Lyddell came in, spoke in her rapid, good-natured tone to Marian and Gerald, and remarked rather sharply to Miss Morley that she

thought they grew later and later every Sunday. Nevertheless, no one went on at all the faster after she was gone. Miss Morley continued her talk with Caroline and Clara about some young friends of theirs in London, and Lionel and Johnny went on playing tricks with their bread and butter, accompanied by a sort of secret teasing of Clara. Nothing brought them absolutely to a conclusion till one of the servants appeared in order to take away the things, and unceremoniously bore away John's last piece of bread and cup of tea.

Johnny looked up at the man and made a face at him; Miss Morley shook her head, and Caroline said, "How can you be so naughty, Johnny? it serves you quite right, and I only wish it happened every morning."

"Come, Gerald, and see the ponies," said Lionel.

"My dears," said Miss Morley, "you know your mamma never likes you to go out before Church especially to the stables; you only get hot, and you make us late with waiting for you."

"Nobody asked you to wait for us," said John. "Come, Gerald."

"No, I see Sir Gerald is a good little boy, and is coming steadily with us," said Miss Morley.

"Yes, Gerald, do," said Marian.

"There will be plenty of time by and by," said Gerald, sitting down again.

"O very well," said John. "Well, if you won't, I will; I want to see Elliot's colt come in from exercising, and he will be sure to be there himself now."

Lionel and Johnny ran off, Caroline looked distressed, and went out into the passage leaving the door open. Walter was coming along it, and as she met him, she said, "Walter, the boys are off to the stable again; we shall have just such a fuss as we had last Sunday if you cannot stop them. Is Elliot there again?"

"I am afraid he is," said Walter.

"Then there is no chance!" said Caroline, retreating; but at that moment Lionel and John came clattering down from their own distant abode at the top of the house. "Who likes to walk with me through, the plantations to Church?" said Walter; "I was coming to ask if you liked to show that way to Gerald."

Lionel and John, who had a real respect for Walter, thought it best to keep silence on their disobedient designs, and accept the kind offer. Gerald gladly joined them, and off they set. Miss Morley, Caroline, and Clara, had all gone different ways, and Marian remained, leaning her forehead against the window, thinking what her own dear Sunday-school class were doing at Fern Torr, and feeling very disconsolate. She had stood in this manner for some minutes when Clara came to tell her it was time to prepare for Church, followed her to her room, and contrived to make more remarks on her dress than Marian could have thought could possibly have been bestowed on a plain black crape bonnet and mantle.

Through all the rather long walk, Clara still kept close to her, telling who every one was, and talking incessantly, till she felt almost confused, and longed for the quietness of the church. Mr. Lyddell's pew was a high, square box, curtained round, with a table and a stove, so that she hardly felt as if she was in church, and she was surprised not to see Elliot Lyddell there.

They had to walk quickly back after the service, dine hurriedly, and then set off again for the afternoon service. Miss Morley sighed, and said that the second long hot walk almost killed her, and she went so slowly that the schoolroom party all came in late. They found no one in the pew but Mrs. Lyndell and Walter, and Marian once more sighed and wondered.

On coming home, Miss Morley went in to rest, but as it was now cool and pleasant, her pupils stayed out a little longer to show the park and garden. They were very desirous of making the Arundels admire all they saw, and Lionel and John were continually asking, "Have you anything like that at Fern Torr?"

Gerald, jealous for the honor of home, was magnificent in his descriptions, and unconscious that he was talking rhodomontade. According to him, his park took in a whole mountain, his house

was quite as large and much handsomer than Mr. Lyddell's, the garden was like the hanging gardens of Babylon, and greenhouses were never wanted there, for "all sorts of things" would grow in the open air. His cousins were so amazed that they would hardly attend to Marian's explanations, and thought her description of the myrtle, which reached to the top of the house, as fabulous as his hanging gardens.

"And, Marian, what do you think of this place?" asked Clara.

After some pressing, the following reply was extracted:—"It is so shut in with fir-trees, but I suppose you want them to hide the town, and there is nothing to see if they were away."

"O Marian!" said Caroline, "when we showed you the beautiful view over the high gate."

"But there was no hill, and no wood, and no water."

"Did you not see Oakworthy Hill?"

"That tame green thing!" said Marian.

"The truth is," said Johnny, "that she likes it the best all the time, only she won't own it."

"Nonsense, Johnny," replied Lionel, "every one likes their own home best, and I like Marian for not pretending to be polite and nonsensical."

"And I tell you," said Gerald, "that you never saw anything so good as my Manor house in your whole life."

Here they went in, and Marian gently said to Gerald as they came into her room, "I wish you would not say *my*, Gerald, it seems like boasting. My park—my house—"

Gerald hung his head, and the colour came deeply into his cheeks.

"Marian," said he, "you know how I wish it wasn't mine now," and the tears were in his eyes. "But they boast over me, and they ought not, for I'm Sir—"

"Oh! hush, Gerald. You used never to like to hear yourself called so, because it put you in mind —. Yes, I know they boast; but this is not the way to stop them, it only makes them go on; and what does it signify to you? it does not make this place really better than home."

"Yes, but I want them to know it."

"But you should not want to set yourself up above them. If you don't answer, and, let them say what nonsense they please, it would be the best way, and the right way, and so you would humble yourself, which is what we must all do Gerald."

Gerald was silenced, but looked dissatisfied; however, there was no more time to talk, for Clara came to say that tea was almost ready, and Marian rang for Saunders. Gerald looked as if he was meditating when first they sat down to tea, and after some little time he abruptly began, "I don't like your church at all. It is just like a room, and nobody makes any noise."

"Nobody makes any noise," repeated Caroline, smiling; "is that Fern Torr fashion?"

"I do not mean exactly a noise," said Gerald, "but people read their verse of the psalm, and say Amen, and all that, quite loud. They don't leave it all to the clerk in his odd voice."

Lionel mimicked the clerk so drolly, that in spite of "Don't, my dear," and "O! Lionel," nobody could help laughing; and Johnny added an imitation of the clerk at their church in London. After the mirth was over, Gerald went on, "Why does not every one say Amen here?"

"Like so many charity children," said Lionel, with a nasal drawl.

"No, indeed!" cried Gerald, indignantly; "Edmund does it, and everybody."

"Everybody! as if you could tell, who never went to church in your life, except at that little poky place," said Johnny,

Gerald's colour rose, but Marian's eye met his, and he remembered what she had said, and answered quietly, "I don't know whether Fern Torr is poky, but it is a place where people are taught to behave well."

"Capital, Gerald, excellent!" cried Caroline, laughing heartily, "that is a hit, Lionel, for you!" while Gerald looked round him, amazed at the applause with which his speech, made in all simplicity, was received.

As soon as tea was over, Miss Morley called Lionel and John to repeat the Catechism, and added doubtfully, "Perhaps Sir Gerald would rather wait for next Sunday."

"O no, thank you," said Marian, "we always say it."

"You need not, Marian," said Caroline, "we never do, only it would be so troublesome for the boys to have to learn it at school."

"I should like to say it if Miss Morley has no objection," said Marian.

"Oh! yes, certainly," was the answer. "See, Lionel, there is an example for you."

Marian and Gerald stood upright, with their hands behind them, just as they had stood every Sunday since they could speak; Lionel was astride on the music stool, spinning round and round, and Johnny balancing himself with one leg on the floor, and one hand on the window sill. When the first question was asked, the grave voice that replied, "Edmund Gerald," was drowned in a loud shout—

"Jack Lyddell, Jack Lyddell,
Shall play on the fiddle"—

evidently an old worn out joke, brought to life again in the hope of making the grave cousins laugh, instead of which they stood aghast. Miss Morley only said imploringly, "Now, Johnny, my dear boy, *do*," and proceeded to the next question. Throughout the two boys were careless and painfully irreverent, and the governess, annoyed and ashamed, hurried on as fast as she could, in order to put an end to the unpleasant scene. When it was over she greatly admired the correctness of Gerald's answers, seeming to think it extraordinary that he should not have made a single mistake; whereas Marian would have been surprised if he had. Gerald whispered to his sister as they went down to the drawing-room, "Would it not be fun to see what Mr. Wortley would say to Lionel and Johnny, if he had them in his class?"

On Monday, Marian and Gerald began to fall into the habits of the place, and to learn the ways of their cousins, though it was many years before they could be said really to understand them.

Of their guardian himself, they found they should see very little, for their four schoolroom companions, his own children, had but little intercourse with him. Sometimes, indeed, Johnny, who enjoyed the privileges of the youngest, would make a descent upon him, and obtain some pleasure or some present, or at least a game of play; and sometimes Lionel fell into great disgrace, and was brought to him for reproof, but Caroline and Clara only saw him now and then in the evening, and never seemed to look to him as the friend and approver that Marian thought all fathers were. As to Miss Morley, she had only spoken twice to him since she had been in the house.

Mrs. Lyddell seemed supreme in everything at home. She was quick, active, and clever, an excellent manager, nor was she otherwise than very kind in word and deed; and Marian could by no means understand the cause of the mixture of dread and repugnance with which she regarded her. Perhaps it was, that though not harsh, her manner wanted gentleness; her tones were not soft, and she would cut off answers before they were half finished. Her bright, clear, cold, blue eye had little of sympathy in it, and every look and tone showed that she expected implicit obedience, to commands, which were far from unpleasant in themselves, though rendered ungracious by the want of softness and mildness with which they were given. Marian often wondered, apart from the principle, how her cousins, and even Miss Morley, could venture to disregard orders given in that decided manner; but she soon perceived that they trusted to Mrs. Lyddell's multifarious occupations, which kept her from knowing all their proceedings with exactness, and left them a good deal at liberty.

Marian was disposed to like Miss Morley, with her gentle voice and kind manner, but she was much surprised at her letting things go on among her pupils, which she must have known to be wrong in themselves, as well as against express commands of Mrs. Lyddell. Once or twice when she heard her talking to Clara, she said to herself, "Would not mamma say that was silly?" but at any rate it

was a great thing to have a person of whom she was not in the least shy or afraid, and who set her quite at her ease in the schoolroom.

The first business on Monday morning, after the little boys had gone off for two hours to a tutor, was an examination into Marian's attainments, beginning with French and Italian reading and translation, in which she acquitted herself very well till Mrs. Lyddell came in, and put her in such a state of trepidation that she no longer knew what she was about. In truth, Marian's education had been rather irregular in consequence of her father's illness, and its effect had been to give her a general cultivation of mind, and appreciation of excellence, to train her to do her best, and fed an eagerness for information, but without instructing her in that routine of knowledge for which Mrs. Lyddell and Miss Morley looked. She was not ready in answering questions, even upon what she knew perfectly well; she had no tables of names and dates at finger's ends, and when she saw that every one thought her backward and ignorant, the feeling that she was not doing justice to her mamma's teaching added to her confusion, her mistakes and puzzles increased, and at last she was almost ready to cry. At that moment Caroline said, "Mamma, you have not seen Marian's drawings yet. Do fetch them, Marian."

The drawings served in some degree to save Marian in the opinion; at least, of Miss Morley: for an artist-like hand and eye were almost an inheritance in the Arundel family, and teaching her had been a great amusement to Sir Edmund. Miss Morley and Caroline thought her drawings wonderful; but Mrs. Lyddell, who had never learnt to draw, was, as Marian quickly perceived, unable to distinguish the merits from the faults, and was only commending them in order to reassure her. Her music was the next subject of inquiry, and here again she did not shine, for practising had been out of the question during the last two years of her father's life; but as she could not bear to offer this as an excuse, she only said she knew she could hardly play at all, but she hoped to improve. To her great relief, Mrs. Lyddell did not stay to listen to her performance, but went away, leaving her to Miss Morley, who found something to commend in her taste and touch.

When the business of learning actually commenced, Marian grew more prosperous; for she had the good custom of giving her whole attention, and learnt therefore fast and correctly. Her exercise was very well done; her arithmetic, in which Edmund had helped her, was almost beyond Miss Morley's knowledge; and she was quite at home in the history they were reading aloud. Moreover, when they came to talk of what they had read, it proved that Marian was well acquainted with many books which were still only names to Caroline; and when Gerald came in with his books, his reference to her showed that she knew as much Latin as he did.

They dined in the schoolroom at half-past one, then took a walk on the long, dull, white road, and came back at a little past four; after which the girls had each to practise for an hour, to look over some lessons for the next day, and to dress; but all the rest of their time was at their own disposal. There was to be a dinner-party that evening, and Clara advised her not to dress till after tea. "For we don't go down till after dinner," said she, "and I don't like to miss seeing the people come. Gerald, you had better get ready, though, for you boys always go down before."

"Must I?" said Gerald.

"O yes, that we must!" said Lionel; "and you will see how Johnny there likes to be petted by all the old ladies, and called their pretty dear."

Johnny rushed upon his brother, and there was a skirmish between them, during which Miss Morley vainly exclaimed by turns, "Now Lionel!" and "Now Johnny!" It ended by John's beginning to cry, Lionel laughing at him, and declaring that he had done nothing to hurt him, and both walking off rather sullenly to dress for the evening. Gerald was bent on the same errand; and no sooner was he gone than Miss Morley, Caroline, and Clara all broke out into loud praises of him. He was so docile, he shut the door so gently, he seemed so very clever. He had quite won Miss Morley's heart by running back to the schoolroom to fetch her parasol for her when she found she had left it behind; Caroline admired him for being so merry and playful without rudeness, and Clara chimed in with them both. All expressed wonder at not finding him a spoiled child; and this, though the praises gratified Marian

greatly, rather offended her in her secret soul; and she wondered too that Caroline and Clara seemed disposed to make the very worst of their own little brothers, so as to set off Gerald's perfections by force of contrast.

Mrs. Lyddell came in while they were still talking. She was beautifully dressed, and looked very handsome, and, in Marian's eyes, very formidable; but she sat down and joined heartily in the praises of Gerald, till Marian thought, "What could they have expected poor Gerald to be, if they are so amazed at finding him the dear good little fellow he is!" It was in fact true that he was an agreeable surprise, for as an only son—a great treasure—and coming so early to his title, he was exactly the child whom all would have presumed most likely to be spoiled; and his ready obedience struck the Lyddells as no less unusual than those habits in which he had been trained, in consequence of the necessity of stillness during Sir Edmund's long illness. It was more natural to him to shut the door quietly than to bang it, to speak than to shout, and to amuse himself tranquilly in the house than to make a great uproar. He was courteous, too, and obliging; and though Lionel and Johnny were in consequence inclined to regard him as a "carpet knight so trim," the ladies fully appreciated these good qualities. Mrs. Lyddell perhaps made the more of her satisfaction, because she was conscious of not liking his sister's stiff, formal, frightened manners.

Mrs. Lyddell waited till the boys came from dressing, and took them all three down with her. Clara sat down in the window-seat to watch the arrivals, as soon as she had recovered from her amazement at hearing that Marian had not been in a house with a dinner-party since Gerald was born. "Is it possible!" she went on saying, and then bursting into a laugh, till Caroline said sharply, "How can you be so silly, Clara! you know the reason perfectly well."

"But it is so odd," continued Clara. "Why, we are never a week without a party, and sometimes two!"

"Hush," said Caroline, "or I shall never finish my Italian."

The little boys came up to tea; Gerald would not make much answer when Clara asked if the ladies had talked to him, but Johnny looked cross, and Lionel reported "it was because his nose was put out of joint." Coming up to Marian, to whom he seemed to have taken a fancy, Lionel further explained confidentially how all the ladies made a fuss with Johnny, and admired his yellow curls, and called him the rose-bud, and all sorts of stuff; and how Johnny liked to go down in his fine crimson velvet, and show off, and have all his nonsense praised, "And the pretty dear is so jealous," said Lionel, "that he can't bear any one to say one word to poor me—oh no!"

"Why, do you wish for them to do so?" said Marian.

"Oh no, not I—I never did; and I'm glad I'm grown too big and ugly for them. I always get as near Elliot as I can and try to hear if they are saying any thing about the hunt; and the ladies never trouble their heads about what is good for any thing, so they never talk to me."

"That is no great compliment to Gerald," said Marian.

"Ah! you'll soon see. If there is any fun in him, they will soon cast him off; but now he is new, and he has not found them out yet, and they *do* dearly like to say Sir Gerald; so Johnny is regularly thrown out, and that is what makes him look sulky."

"Well, but it is using him very ill to desert him for Gerald," said Marian.

"Oh, they won't desert him. They like mamma's good dinners too well for that; only Johnny can't bear any one else to be taken notice of. Trust the county member's son for their making much of him."

"But that applies to you too, Lionel."

"Ay, and I could soon get their civility if I cared for it," said Lionel grandly. "But I know well enough what it is worth. Why, there is Walter, who is the best of us all—nobody cares one straw for him, except Caroline and—"

"And you?" asked Marian.

"Why—why—yes, if he was not so much of a parson already."

"Oh, Lionel!" said Marian, shocked; and he turned it rather hastily into "I mean, he is not up to any thing; he does not shoot, and he does not care for dogs, or horses; nothing but books for ever."

A summons to the tea-table put an end to Lionel's communications, which had so amazed Marian that she could do nothing but ponder on them all the time that Clara would leave her in quiet.

The going into the drawing-room was to her a most awful affair; and Saunders seemed to be very anxious about it, brushing and settling her hair, and arranging the plain black frock, as if she would never have done; seeming, too, not a little worried by Clara, who chose to look on at all her proceedings. At last it was over Marian wished Gerald good night, and descended with her two cousins and Miss Morley. Caroline and Clara were in blue, Miss Morley in white; and as they entered just opposite to a long pier glass, Marian thought that with her white face, straight dark hair, and deep mourning dress, she looked like a blot between them, and wished to shrink out of sight, instead of being conspicuous in blackness.

The ladies came in a few minutes after, and Caroline and Clara went forward, shaking hands, smiling, and replying in a way which was by no means forward, and with ease that to Marian was marvellous. If people would but be kind enough not to look at her! But Mrs. Lyddell was a great deal too civil for that too come to pass, and presently Marian was called and introduced to two ladies. She was seated between them, and they began talking to her in a patronising manner; telling her they remembered her dear mamma at her age; saying that they had seen her brother, and congratulating her on having two such delightful companions as the Miss Lyddells. Then they asked about Devonshire; and as Marian's cold short replies let every subject fall to the ground in a moment, they proceeded to inquire whether she could play. Truth required her to confess that she could, a very little; and then they begged to hear her. Poor Marian! this was too much. She felt as if she was in a horrible mist, and drawing up her head as she always did in embarrassment, she repeated, "Indeed, indeed I cannot!" protestations which her tormentors would not believe, and which grew every moment more ungracious, as, to augment her distress, she saw that Mrs. Lyddell was observing her. At the moment when she was looking most upright and rigid, Caroline came to her relief. The same request had just been made to her, and she came to propose to Marian to join in the one thing she knew she could play—a duet which she had that morning been practising with Clara. It was very kind, and Marian knew it; for Caroline had said that she never liked that duet, and was heartily tired of it; but all the acknowledgement her strange bashfulness would allow her to make was a grateful look, and a whisper, "Oh, thank you!"

Afterwards one of the young lively visitors sang, and Marian, who had never heard much music, was quite delighted; her stiff company-face relaxed, a tear came to her eyes, and she sat with parted lips, forgetting all her fears and all the party till the singing was over, and Caroline touched her, and told her it was bed-time. Marian wondered to see how well Caroline and Clara managed to escape without being observed; but she marvelled at their going to bed so much as if it was a thing of course to have no "good night" from father or mother. When they were outside the door, in the hall, Marian, her heart still full of the music, could not help exclaiming, "How beautiful!"

"What? Miss Bernard's singing?" said Clara. "I declare, Caroline, Marian was very nearly crying! I saw you were, Marian."

"She does sing very nicely," said Caroline, "but that song does not suit her voice. It is too high."

"And she makes faces," said Clara, "she strains her throat; and she has such great fingers—I could never cry at Miss Bernard's singing, I am sure."

Marian did not like this. "Good night," said she, abruptly.

"You are not vexed, are you?" said Clara, kindly. "I did not think you would mind my noticing your crying. Don't be angry, Marian."

"Oh, no, I am not at all angry," said Marian, trying to speak with ease, but she did not succeed well. Her "good nights," had in them a tone as if she was annoyed, as in fact she was; though not at all in the way Clara supposed. She did not care for the notice of her tears, but she said to herself,

"This is what Edmund calls destroying the illusion. If they would but have let me go to bed with the spell of that song resting on me!"

She sighed with a feeling of relief and yet of weariness as she came into her own room, and found Saunders there. Saunders looked rather melancholy, but said nothing for the first two or three minutes; then as she combed Marian's hair straight over her face, she began, "I hope you enjoyed yourself, Miss Marian?"

"Oh, Saunders," said Marian, "I'm very tired; I don't think I shall ever enjoy myself anywhere but at home."

"Ah—hem—ah," coughed Saunders, solemnly; then, after waiting for some observation from Marian, and hearing only a long yawn and a sigh, she went on. "Prettily different is this place from home."

"Indeed it is," said Marian, from her heart.

"Such finery as I never thought to see below stairs, Miss Marian. I am sure the Manor House was a pattern to all the country round for comfort for the servants, and I should know something about it; but here—such a number of them, such eating and drinking all day long, and the very kitchen maids in such bonnets and flowers on Sundays, as would perfectly have shocked Mrs. White. And they are so ignorant. Fancy, Miss Marian, that fine gentleman the butler declaring he could not understand me, and that I spoke with a foreign accent! I speak French indeed!"

"But, Saunders," said Marian, rather diverted, "you do speak Devonshire a little."

"Well, Miss Marian, perhaps I may; I only know 'tisn't for them to boast, for they speak so funny I can't hardly make them out; and with my own ears I have heard that same Mr. Perkins himself calling you Miss Harundel. But that is not all. Why, not half of them ever go to church on a Sunday; and as to Mrs. Mitten, the housekeeper, not a bit does she care whether they do or not; and no wonder, when Mr. Lyddell himself never goes in the afternoon, and has gentlemen to speak to him. And then down at the stables—'tis a pretty set of drinking, good-for-nothing fellows there. I hope from my heart Sir Gerald won't be for getting down there among them; but they say Master Lionel and Master John are always there. And that Mr. Elliot—"

In this manner Saunders discoursed all the while she was putting Marian to bed. Both she and her young lady wore doing what had much better have been let alone. Saunders had no business to carry complaints and gossip, Marian ought not to have listened to them; but the truth was that Saunders was an old attached confidential servant, who had come to Oakworthy, more because she could not bear to let her young master and mistress go entirely alone and unfriended among strangers, than because it would be prudent to save a little more before becoming Mrs. David Chapple. Fern Torr was absolute perfection in her eyes; and had the household at Oakworthy been of superior excellence, she would have found fault with everything in which it differed from the Manor House. Her heart was full; and to Miss Marian, her young lady, a Fern Torrite, a Devonian like herself, she must needs pour it out, where she had no other friend. On the other hand, Saunders was still in Marian's eyes a superior person—an authority—one whom she could never dream of keeping in order, or restraining; and here a friend, a counsellor, the only person, except Gerald, who had known the dear home.

So a foundation was laid for confidences from Saunders, which were not likely to improve Marian's contentment. When she had bidden her maid good night, and sat thinking before she knelt down to say her prayers, she felt bewildered; her head seemed giddy with the strangeness of this new world; she knew not what in it was right and what was wrong; all that she knew was, that she felt lonely and dreary, and as if it could never be home. Her heart seemed to reach out for her mother's embrace and support, and then Marian sank down on her knees, rested her face on her arms, and while the tears began to flow, she murmured, "OUR FATHER, Which art in heaven."

Soon after, her weary head was on her pillow, and the dim grey light of the summer night showed the quiet peace and calmness that had settled on her sleeping face.

CHAPTER V

"That is not home where, day by day,
I wear the busy hours away."

In a short time, Marian had settled into her place at Oak Worthy, lost some part of her shyness towards the inhabitants, and arrived at the terms which seemed likely to continue between her and her cousins.

There was much that was very excellent about Caroline Lyddell; she had warm feeling, an amiable and obliging disposition, and great sweetness of temper; and when first Marian arrived she intended to do all in her power to make her at home, and be like a sister to her. But she did not understand reserve; and before Marian had got over her first shyness and awkwardness, Caroline felt herself repulsed, and ceased to make demonstrations of affection which met with no better response. Marian made none on her side; and so the two cousins remained very obliging and courteous to each other, but nothing more.

Clara had begun by making herself Marian's inseparable companion in rather a teasing manner, caressing her continually, and always wanting to do whatever she was doing; but as novelty was the great charm in Clara's eyes, and as she met with no very warm return to her endearments, all this soon wore off; and though she always came to Marian whenever she had any bit of news to tell,—though she often confided to her little complaints of the boys or Miss Morley,—this was no great compliment, for she would have done the same to anything that had ears. Her talk was no longer, as it had been at first, exclusively for Marian; and this wag rather a relief, for it was not at all like the talk Marian was used to with Agnes or with Edmund.

Young and unformed as Marian was, it would be hard to believe how much, without knowing it, she missed the intercourse with superior minds, to which she had been accustomed. It was just as her eye was dissatisfied with the round green chalk hills, instead of the rocks and streams of her own dear home; or as she felt weary of the straight, formal walks she now took, instead of her dear old rambles,

"Over bank and over brae,
Where the copsewood is the greenest,
Where the fountain glistens sheenest,
Where the lady-fern grows strongest,
Where the morning dew lies longest."

Edmund's high spirits, Agnes' playful glee,—how delightful they were! and though Marian often laughed now, it was not as she had laughed at home. Then, too, she grew shy of making remarks, or asking questions, when Clara had nothing to say but "How odd!" or Miss Morley would give some matter-of-fact answer, generally either quite beside the point, or else what Marian know before. Caroline understood what she meant, and would take up the subject, but not always in a satisfactory manner; for she and Marian always seemed to have quite opposite ways of viewing every thing. Each felt that the other had more serious thoughts and principles than most of those around them, but yet their likings and dislikings were very different in the matter of books. "Anna Ross" was almost the only one of Caroline's favourites that Marian cordially liked; and this, as Caroline suspected, might he owing to a certain analogy between Anna's situation and her own, by no means flattering to the Lyddell family. It was wonderful how many were the disparities of tastes, views, and opinions between them; but the root of these differences seemed undiscoverable, since Marian would not or

could not argue, replied to all objections with a dry, short, "I don't know," and adhered unalterably to her own way of thinking.

Miss Morley settled the matter by pronouncing that Sir Edmund and Lady Arundel must have been very narrow-minded people; and this judgment was so admired by Caroline and Clara, that it was sure to be brought forward as conclusive, whenever Marian was the subject of conversation. At last Lionel broke in one day, "Stuff! Marian is a good, sensible, downright girl, and it is my belief that all that you mean by narrow-mindedness is that she cares for what is right, and nothing else."

"How much you know about it, Lionel!" said Clara, laughing; but Caroline answered in earnest, "There is reason in what you say, Lionel—Marian does care for what is right; but the question is, whether her views of it are not narrow?"

"The narrower the better, say I," said Lionel, as he plaited his whip-lash.

"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life," came into Caroline's head, and she stood thoughtful. Clara exclaimed,

"Well done, Lionel! I wonder what he'll say next to defend his dear Marian."

"I know what I mean well enough," said Lionel. "I suppose you call it being broad-minded to trace your drawings through against the window, when mamma goes on telling you not. Better have her narrow mind, say I."

"Then why don't you," said Clara, "instead of going down to the stables for ever with that man of Elliot's that mamma said you were never to speak to?"

Lionel whisked his whip-lash before Clara's eyes, so as to make her wink. "I did not say I was good myself;" said he; "I said Marian was." And he ran out of the room.

Clara laughed at Lionel's admiration of Marian, which had begun to be a joke in the schoolroom; but Caroline, as she practised her music, thought a good deal over the conversation. "Is a narrow mind really a fear of doing wrong?" was a question she asked herself several times; and then she thought of all the things she had heard called narrow-minded and scrupulous in Marian or others, but she soon found herself lost in a mist, and wished she could talk it over with her former governess, Miss Cameron. As to what Lionel had said about the drawing, she was conscious she was very wrong; her mamma had called it an idle practice to trace the outline through against the glass, and had forbidden it; but a difficulty had soon brought her back to the window-pane, exclaiming, "Just for this one thing, I am sure mamma would not object."

"If Miss Cameron had been here, it would not have happened," said Caroline to herself with a sigh, and for a few days she kept away from the window; but another difficulty occurred, again she yielded to the temptation, and whoa she heard her mother's step in the passage, hurried back to her desk with guilty precipitation. A few days after, Clara was actually caught in the fact by Mrs. Lyddell, and then Miss Morley began making an excuse, evidently quite as much out of kindness to herself as to her pupil. Marian looked up in surprise, with a wondering, inquiring expression in her eyes. They were cast down the instant the governess turned towards her; but Miss Morley always felt abashed, by meeting that look of astonishment, which awoke in her a sensation of self-reproach such as she had seldom known before.

Miss Morley was a little afraid of Marian's eyes, though not of her in any other respect; nor did she like her much better than Caroline did, though she gave her much less trouble than any of her other pupils, except Caroline. Those questions and observations puzzled her, and she thought the poor child had been reading books beyond her years—it was such a great disadvantage to be an only daughter. Besides, she really believed Marian Arundel had no affection for any one,—no warmth of feeling; she would ten times prefer a less diligent and more troublesome pupil, in whom she could take some interest, and who showed some affection, to one so steady and correct in behaviour, without the frank openness of heart which was so delightful. To make up, however, for this general want of liking for poor Marian, on the other hand, every one was fond of Gerald. His behaviour in the schoolroom was so very nice and good, and out of doors his climbing, running, and riding were no less admired

by his contemporaries. Now and then, indeed, a dispute arose between him and the other two boys, when Gerald criticised, and declared that "Edmund and everybody" thought as he did; or when he would try to outdo the sporting exploits reported of Elliot, by Edmund's shooting at Fern Torr. One day there was a very serious quarrel, Gerald having taken up the cause of an unfortunate frog, which Lionel and Johnny were proposing to hunt, by rolling their marbles at it.

Gerald declared they should not, that frogs were harmless, innocent creatures, and that Edmund and everybody liked them. This only made Lionel and Johnny more determined; partly from the absurdity of Gerald's appeal, and partly for the sake of mischief; and Gerald was overpowered, unable to save his protégé, and obliged to witness its cruel death. He burst into tears, and then, came the accusation of crying for a frog. Poor little boy, he burst away from his tormentors, and never stopped till, he was safe in his sister's room pouring out his grief to her and Saunders (for it was her dressing-time), and comforted by their sympathising horror and pity.

Saunders said it gave her a turn, and Marian's feelings were much of the same nature. She could not have thought it of Lionel. He was, indeed, reckless and unruly; by reputation *the* naughty one of the set; but Marian had often thought that much of Johnny's misbehaviour was unjustly charged on him, and there was an honesty about him, together with a cordiality towards herself, which made her like him. And that he should have been wantonly cruel!

She comforted Gerald as well as she could, and they went back to the schoolroom together. Lionel, as he often did, brought her a knot in a piece of string to be untied; she felt almost ready to shrink from him, as capable of such a deed, and gave it back to him after untying it, without a word. Lionel stood leaning against the shutter looking at her for some minutes, while she fetched her books, and sat down to learn her lessons. Tea came in; and while there was something of a bustle, and all the others were talking, and engaged in different ways, Lionel crossed over to her and said in a low voice, "So Gerald has made you angry with me?"

"No; but Lionel, I could not have thought you would have done such a thing."

"'Twas only a frog," said Lionel; "besides, I only did it to tease Gerald."

"I do not see that that makes it any better," said Marian, gravely.

"Why, Gerald was so ridiculous, to say Edmund and everybody liked frogs; but I didn't—I only mean that, if he had not made a fuss, I would never have hurt the frog, and I did not mean to kill it as it was; so never mind, Marian. I'll tell you what, Marian," added he, sinking his voice, "I'd rather Caroline and Clara, and poor unfortunate into the bargain, scolded me till they were black in the face, than that you looked at me as you did just now."

"Did I?" said Marian, rather alarmed. "I am sure I did not know I looked anyhow."

"Didn't you, though? It is just the way you look at poor unfortunate when she sports her humbug."

"Hush, Lionel! this will never do. You know you ought not to talk in that way," said Marian, rising to put an end to the conversation.

"But we have made it up?" said Lionel, holding her dress.

"Yes, yes," said Marian hastily, and with full forgiveness in look and tone. As she took her place at the tea-table, she wondered within herself what was the matter with her eyes to cause such remarks, and still more why she could not help liking Lionel so much the best of her cousins, in spite of all the naughtiness of word and deed, which shocked her so much.

The nest day she was walking in the garden with Clara, when Gerald came running up, with an entreaty that she would come and have a game at cricket with him and Lionel. Clara exclaimed, laughed, and stared in amazement.

"She plays famously," said Gerald; "she, and Agnes, and I, beat all the other Wortleys one day last summer. Come, Marian, don't say no; we have not had a game for a very long time."

"Who is playing?" asked Marian.

"Only Lionel and me; Johnny is out with Mrs. Lyddell Come, we want you very much indeed; there's a good girl."

To Clara's astonishment and Lionel's admiration, Marian complied; and though, of course, no great cricketer, her skill was sufficient to make her a prodigy in their eyes. But the game was brought to a sudden conclusion by Miss Morley, who, seeing them from the window, came out very much shocked, and gave the girls a lecture on decorum, which Marian felt almost as an insult.

When they went in, Gerald told Saunders the whole adventure; and she, who at Fern Torr had been inclined to the same opinion as Miss Morley, and had often sighed and declared it to be unlike young ladies when Marian and Agnes had played, now agreed with him that it was very hard on Miss Marian not to have a little exercise, lamented that she should always be cooped up in the schoolroom, and declared that there could be no harm in playing with such a little boy as Master Lionel.

The most unpleasant result was, that Miss Morley and the cousins took an impression that Agnes Wortley must be a vulgar romp, and were inclined to think her an unsuitable friend for Marian. Their curiosity was excited by the frequent letters between the two friends. Marian always read those which she received with the utmost eagerness, hardly ever telling any part of their contents, but keeping them to be enjoyed with Gerald in her own room; and half her leisure moments were employed in filling fat, black-edged envelopes, which were sent off at least as often as once a week.

"I wonder what she says about us!" said Clara, one day.

"I don't think it would suit you," said Caroline; "I should not think she painted us *couleur de rose*."

"Except Lionel," said Clara, "if their admiration is mutual. But, by the by, Miss Morley, why do you not desire to see her letters? You always look at mine."

"She is not quite in the same situation," said Miss Morley.

"But could not you?" continued Clara. "It would be very entertaining only to look for once."

"And I think it would be only proper," said Caroline. "Who knows what she may say of us to these dear friends of hers?"

The subject was not allowed to drop; the girls' curiosity led them to find numerous reasons why their cousin's correspondence should not pass without examination, and Miss Morley found she must either endure their importunity, or yield to it. She was driven to choose the part of the oppressor; and one day, when Clara had been tormenting her more than usual, she addressed Marian, who was folding up a letter. "I think," said she, speaking in a timid, deprecating tone—"I think, Marian, if you please, it might be as well, perhaps, if I were sometimes to look over your letters; it has always been the custom here."

Then; was no encouragement to proceed in the look of blank amazement with which Marian replied, "Edmund Arundel and Mr. Lyddell both approve of my writing to Agnes Wortley."

"Ah!" interposed Clara; "but did they mean that your letters should never be looked over?"

"I heard nothing about it," said Marian.

"Miss Cameron always looked over mine," said Caroline.

"I will ask Mr. Lyddell himself as soon as he comes home," said Marian, determinedly.

There was a pause, but Caroline and Clara did not look satisfied. Miss Morley knew they would leave her no peace if she desisted, and she went on,—"I wish I could sometimes see a proof of willingness to yield."

Marian was out of patience, and putting her letter into the desk, locked it up; and Caroline laughingly remarked, "Really, there must be some treason in that letter!" If the observation had been taken as it was meant, all would have been well; but Marian bit her lip with an air that convinced the sisters that Caroline had hit the mark; and their glances stimulated Miss Morley to say, as decidedly as she could, "Marian, your present conduct convinces me that it is desirable that I should see that letter."

Marian's dark eyes gave one indignant flash, as she proudly drew up her head, opened her desk, laid her letter on the table before Miss Morley, and slowly walked out of the room; but as soon as

she had shut the door, she ran at full speed along the passage to her own room, where, throwing herself on the bed, she gave way to a fit of violent weeping, and sobs which shook her whole frame. Proud, passionate feelings at first almost choked her, and soon these were followed by a flood of the bitter tears of loneliness and bereavement. "Who would have dared insult her thus, had her father and mother been living?" and for a minute her agony for their loss was more intense than it had ever been. Gradually, "the turbid waters brightening as they ran," became soothing, as she dwelt on the sweet, holy memory of her parents, and wholesome as she mourned over her fit of pride and anger. But for what were they accountable, whose selfish weakness and thoughtless curiosity had caused the orphan's tears to flow?

Caroline had not seen those flashing eyes without an instant perception of the injustice of the accusation. Her half-jesting speech had led the matter much further than she had intended; and alarmed at the consequences, she ran after her cousin to entreat her pardon; but Marian, unconscious of all save the tumult within herself, hurried on too fast to be overtaken, and just as Caroline reached her door, had shut it fast, and drawn the bolt, and a gentle knock and low call of "Marian, dear Marian," were lost in the first burst of sobs. Caroline, baffled and offended, turned away with feelings even more painful than hers; and too proud to repeat the call, walked up and down, waiting till the door should be opened, to assure her cousin that nothing should induce her to touch the letter, and to beg her forgiveness; but as minutes passed away in silence, she grew tired of waiting, thought Marian sullen and passionate, and at length, returned to the schoolroom. As soon as she entered, Clara exclaimed, "O Caroline, only think, how odd—"

"I don't want to hear anything about it," said Caroline, sitting down to the piano; "I wish we had never thought of it."

She began, playing with all her might, but gradually she abated her vehemence, as she caught a few sounds of a conversation between Clara and Miss Morley. At last she turned round, asking, "What? who is his godfather?"

"Mr. Arundel, 'Edmund and every body,' you know," answered Clara. "I never heard anything like it. Only fancy his hearing that boy say his catechism!"

"What? I don't understand," said Caroline; "Mr. Arundel and Gerald! Nonsense! He can't be his godfather. Mamma said he was only four-and-twenty, and Gerald is almost nine."

"Here is Marian's authority for it," said Clara; "and certainly those Arundels are a curious family."

"Mr. Arundel is the next heir, is he not?" inquired Miss Morley.

"Yes," said Caroline; "I heard mamma telling old Mrs. Graves the whole story. His father and mother both died when he was very young, and Sir Edmund brought him up entirely, and every one looked upon him as the heir till Gerald was born; and a groat disappointment it must have been, for now he has next to nothing. But they all were just as fond of each other as before; and it does seem very strange that Sir Edmund should have made him their guardian, at his age, when there was Lord Marchmont, who is their cousin, too."

"I dare say," said Clara, as if a most brilliant thought had struck her, "I dare say there is a family compact, such as one reads of in books, that he is to marry Marian."

"My dear Clara!" said Miss Morley laughing, "How should such a notion come into your little head?"

"Now see if it is not so!" said Clara; "I do believe she is in love with him already, and he is coming to see her."

"Is he?" cried Caroline, "I am very curious to sec him. Mamma says he is very handsome, and quite a distinguished looking person. When does he come?"

"You had better read," said Clara; "I can tell you that there are wonderful things in the letter."

Curiosity again asserted its power, and Caroline yielded. The letter had been opened, and it would not signify if one more person looked at it. She took it, and read eagerly and stealthily, starting at every sound.

"My dear Agnes—I hope you and Jemmy are getting on well in your solitude without the schoolboys. Tell Charles, when you write, that a gentleman staying here caught a trout last week that weighed three pounds, but I believe that those which are caught in these rivers taste of mud, and are not nearly so good as our own. I was very much afraid that Gerald would go to school this summer, but now Mrs. Lyddell has heard that it was settled that he should not go till he was ten, and it is arranged for him to stay till next year, when I hope he will be happier than Charles was at first. You asked after his drawing, so I have put in the last scrap I met with, and in case you should not be able to find out what it is meant for, I must inform you that it is the dog springing on the young Buecleuch. The other day he sent Edmund a letter in hieroglyphics, with pictures instead of nouns, and Edmund answered it in the same way with funny little clever drawings throughout. His regiment is going abroad nest spring, he thinks, to the Cape, but he has promised to come and see us first, and thinks of going home to see about his things. Thank Mrs. Wortley for being so kind as to scold me for not dating my letters. I shall not be likely to forget the date of this on September 30th, for Mr. Lyddell has just paid me my first quarter's allowance, and I am frightened to think how large it is; ten pounds a quarter only for my dress, and I am to have more when I am seventeen. So matters can go on more as they used in the parish. Will you be so kind as to pay this quarter's schooling for Amy Lapthorn and Honor Weeks and Mary Daw, and find out what clothes they want, and if Susan Grey has not a new bonnet, give her one, and a flannel petticoat for old Betty, and if any body else wants anything else let me know, and pay up for all the children that dear mamma used to put into the penny club, and send me word what it comes to, and I will send the money when Edmund comes to pay his visit. I suppose the apples are gathered by this time; you cannot think how I miss the golden and red piles under the trees, and the droning of the old cyder press. And do those beautiful Red Admiral butterflies come in the crowds they did last year to the heaps of apples in our orchard? Do you remember how we counted five that all came and sat on your pink frock while we were watching them?

"Will Mr. Wortley be kind enough to tell me of some book of questions on the Catechism, more advanced than the one he gave me? I suppose we ought to go on with the Catechism, till we are confirmed, and so Gerald and I always go through a section every Sunday, taking the book by turns, and he knows our old one perfectly. He is so good and steady about it that I quite wonder, considering that there is no authority to keep him up to it, but he is very anxious to stand a good examination when his godfather comes, and Edmund is sure to ask hard questions. And Gerald has never missed since we have been here, getting up in time to come and read the Psalms with me before breakfast, and really I think that is exceedingly good of him; but I have come to the end of my paper, so good-bye.

"Your affectionate

"MARIAN C. ARUNDEL."

Caroline's cheeks glowed as she read, both with shame at her own proceedings, and with respect for her narrow-minded cousin; but she had no opportunity for making remarks, for just as she had finished the letter, and folded it up again, the boys were heard coming in. The first thing Gerald said was, "So Marian has not sent her letter; I will run down with it, or it will be too late."

"It is not sealed," said Clara.

"Clara looks as if she had been peeping," said Johnny.

"I should like to see any one peep into Marian's letters," said Gerald, taking it up, and carrying it away with him.

Lionel stood with his eyes fixed on Clara. "I do believe it is true then!" said he, laying hold of Clara's arm; "I have a great mind to say I'll never speak to you again, Clara. Peeping into people's letters.

Why, you ought to be hooted through the town!"

The boys looked nearly ready to put the hooting into effect, but Clara answered angrily, "Peeping! I have been doing no such thing! Don't be so rude, Lionel."

"That is humbug," said Lionel; "you have been looking impudently, if you have not been peeping slyly."

"Lionel, you are a very naughty boy indeed!" said Clara, almost crying;

"I have done just as Miss Morley and Caroline have been doing; Miss Morley always looks over–"

"Let who will do it," said Lionel, "it is an impudent, ungentlemanlike thing, that you all ought to be ashamed of. I declare papa shall hear of it."

"Lionel, do you know what you are saying?" said Caroline.

"This is sadly naughty!" feebly murmured Miss Morley.

"Lionel, mamma will be very angry," said Clara.

"I don't care," said Lionel loudly and vehemently; "I know that you all ought to be ashamed of yourselves, every one of you. Why, if you were boys you would never hold up your heads again; but girls can do anything, and that is the reason they have no shame."

"Hush! Lionel, dear Lionel!" said Caroline, coming to him persuasively, but he shook her off:

"I want none of your *dears*," said he; "ask Marian's pardon, not mine."

He turned his back, and took up a book. The girls dared say no more to him; Miss Morley very nearly cried as she thought how impossible it was for women to manage great boys. She ought to complain of his rudeness, but the explanation of what gave rise to it was impossible, and so, poor woman, she thought herself too good-natured.

Gerald, in the meantime, had gone to his sister's room, where he called hastily on finding the door fastened. She opened it, and he eagerly asked what was the matter.

"Never mind," said Marian; "thank you for remembering my letter. Will you fetch the sealing wax out of–"

"Well, but what is the matter?"

"Nothing that signifies; never mind."

"But I do mind, I can't bear for you to cry. You know I can't, so don't begin again," added he, as his affectionate tones made her lip quiver, and her eyes fill with tears.

"But, Gerald, pray get the wax, or–. But no, no," added she hurriedly, "do not, I will not touch it, till–"

"Till when?" asked Gerald; "I wish you would tell me how they have been vexing you. I am sure they hare, for they all looked guilty. Poor Marian!" He put his arm round her neck, and drew her cheek to his. Who could withstand such a brother? Marian whispered. "Only—but don't make a fuss—only Miss Morley made me show her my letter."

He started from her, and broke forth into a torrent of indignation; and it was not quickly that she succeeded in getting him to listen to her entreaties that he would not tell any one.

"What do you mean to do?" said he. "O I will write such a letter to Edmund, in hopes she will ask to see it. But she won't venture on mine.

Shall I tell Edmund?"

"No, no, Gerald, you do nothing; pray don't say anything. I will speak to Mr. Lyddell, for it was he who gave me leave."

"And I hope he will give poor unfortunate a good rowing. Won't it be fun?"

"Now, Gerald, pray don't say such things, or I shall be sorry I told you. I dare say she thought it was right."

"Stuff and nonsense! Right indeed! I hope Mr. Lyddell will give it to her well!"

"If I may not write without having my letters read, I am sure I shall never be able to write at all!"

"And when shall you speak? Luckily there is no company to-night, and I hope I shall be there to hear."

"No, you will not; I shall wait till you are gone to bed, for I am sure Lionel and Johnny ought to know nothing about it. I believe I had better not have told you; but, Gerald, you are all I have, and I can't help telling you everything."

"Of course, Marian, so you ought, for let them laugh at me as they will, I always tell you everything. And won't it be nice when I am grown up, and we can get away from them all, and live at home together, and I go out shooting every day, and you and Ranger stand at the top of the steps to watch me? For Ranger will be too old to go out shooting by that time."

In the midst of this picture of rural felicity, Saunders came to tell Marian that it was time to dress.

When she returned to the schoolroom, Caroline would have given anything not to have read the letter; she was too sure that there was nothing wrong in it, and she could not show the trust in her cousin which would have enabled her to speak freely, and say she was very sorry for her speech and meant nothing by it; nor did she wish to revive the subject before Lionel, whose indignation would be still more unpleasant in Marian's own presence. She therefore said nothing, and on the other hand Marian felt awkward and constrained; Lionel was secretly ashamed of his own improper behaviour to Miss Morley, and well knowing that he should never dare to perform his threat of telling his father, put on a surly kind of demeanour, quite as uncivil to Marian as to anyone else; and but that Clara never minded anything, and that Johnny knew and cared little about the matter, their tea that evening would have been wonderfully unsociable. Gerald had not much to say, but the bent of his thoughts was evident enough when his ever-busy pencil produced the sketch of a cat pricking her paw by patting a hedgehog rolled up in a ball.

Neither Miss Morley nor her pupils ever expected to hear more of the letter, for they knew perfectly well that what Lionel had said was but a threat, for the appeal direct to Mr. or Mrs. Lyddell was a thing never thought of at Oakworthy. Marian had, however, made up her mind; her anxiety overpowered her shyness; she knew that Mr. Lyddell was the proper person, and perhaps the fact was that she was less afraid of him than of his wife. So, though she resisted all the glances cast at her by Gerald, whenever he thought he saw a good opportunity for her, and waited till all the three little boys had gone to bed, she by no means gave up her purpose. It was time for her too, to wish good night; and while her heart beat fast, she said, "Mr. Lyddell, you gave me leave to write to Agnes Wortley. Was it on condition of my letters being looked over?"

"Who meddles with your letters?" said Mr. Lyddell, much surprised.

Caroline, having helped to get her governess into the scrape, thought it but fair to say what she could for her, and answered, "Miss Morley thought that you and mamma would wish it."

"By no means," said Mr. Lyddell, turning to Marian, "I have the highest opinion of Mr. and Mrs. Wortley, the very highest; I wish your correspondence to be perfectly free."

"Thank you," said Marian. "Good night!" and away she went, to tell Gerald how it had passed; and he, who had been lying awake in expectation, was much disappointed to hear no more than this.

As soon as she was gone, Mrs. Lyddell exclaimed, "What could have given Miss Morley reason to think that her letters were to be inspected?

Really, Miss Morley must have some courage! I should be sorry to be the person to make the request."

"Ah! Marian was very angry indeed," said Clara; "quite in a passion."

"Very proper," said Mr. Lyddell. "A spirited thing. She is a girl of sense."

Mrs. Lyddell let the matter drop with the girls, but going to the schoolroom, she inquired into it more fully, and found that by poor unfortunate faithful Morley's own account, she had allowed herself to be made the tool of the curiosity of Caroline and Clara. She spoke severely, and Miss Morley had displeasure to endure, which was considerably more disagreeable than all Clara's importunities could have been.

However, the next morning it appeared as if the whole affair was forgotten by all parties; Marian win just as usual, and so were her cousins; but, in secret, Caroline felt guilty, and held her in higher estimation since she had seen the contents of the letter, which, as she could perceive, Marian might well be doubly unwilling to show; she wished that Marian would but be as open to her as she was to Agnes, but this unfortunate business seemed like another great bar to their ever being really intimate, and she did not know how to surmount it.

These reflections were shortly after driven out of Caroline's head by a severe fit of toothache, which for three days made her unfit for anything but to sit by the fire reading idle books. Mrs. Lyddell proposed to take her to Salisbury to consult a dentist, and Lionel was supposed likewise to require inspection. Then, turning to Marian, Mrs. Lyddell said, "This is not the pleasantest kind of expedition, but perhaps you may like to see Salisbury, and I think your bonnet wants renewing."

"Thank you," said Marian, pleased with the Invitation. "I shall be very glad to go; I believe my teeth ought to be looked at. The dentist at Exeter said last winter that they were crowded and ought to be watched."

"Very well," said Mrs. Lyddell, "we will see what Mr. Polkinghorn says."

"Polkinghorn," said Marian, as Mrs. Lyddell left the room; "that is a Devonshire name."

"You are very welcome to him, I am sure," said Caroline; "I wish the trade was abolished."

"What cowards girls are!" said Lionel.

"Let us see how boys behave before we say anything against girls," was Marian's answer.

"Shan't you scream?" said Lionel.

"Of course she will not," said Caroline, "unless with joy at meeting a Devonshire man."

Marian laughed, and Lionel began an exhilarating story about an unfortunate who was strapped to the dentist's chair, dragged nine times round the room, and finally had his jaw broken.

Marian enjoyed her drive to Salisbury, though it added to her contempt for Wiltshire scenery, by showing her more and more of desolate down. She watched the tall Cathedral spire from far in the distance, peering up among the hills like a picture more than a reality, and she admired the green meadows and quiet vale where the town stands. Poor Caroline was taken up with dreadful anticipations of Mr. Pokingtooth, as Lionel called him, and when arrived at his clamber of torture, hung back, so as to allow Marian to be the first victim. The result of the examination was, that it would be better; though not absolutely necessary, that a certain double tooth should be extracted, and Mr. Polkinghorn, left the room in search of an instrument.

"So you think it ought to go?" sighed Marian.

"I should say so," said Mrs. Lyddell, "but you may decide for yourself."

Marian covered her face with her hands, and considered. The dentist returned; she laid back her head and opened her mouth, and the tooth was drawn. Caroline and Lionel escaped more easily, and they left the dentist's. Mrs. Lyddell said something in commendation of Marian's courage, and asked if she would like to see the Cathedral, an offer which she gladly accepted, expecting to go to the service, as the bells now began to ring; but she was disappointed, for Mrs. Lyddell said, "Ah! I had forgotten the hour. We must do our commissions first, and be at the Cathedral before the doors are shut." Marian did not venture to express her wishes, but she thought of the days when attending

the Cathedral service had been the crowning pleasure of a drive to Exeter, and in dwelling on the recollection, she spent the attention which Mrs. Lyddell expected her to bestow on her new bonnet.

Their business did not occupy them very long, and they entered the Cathedral before the anthem was over; but Marian felt that it was not fitting to loiter about the nave while worship was going on within the choir; and the uncomfortable feeling occupied her so much, that she could hardly look at the fair clustered columns and graceful arches, and seemed scarcely to know or care for the gallant William Longsword, when led to the side of his mail-clad, cross-legged effigy. The deep notes of the organ, which delighted Caroline, gave her a sense of shame; and even when the service was over, and they entered the choir, these thoughts had not so passed away as to enable her to give full admiration to the exquisite leafy capitals and taper arcades of the Lady Chapel. Perhaps, too, there was a little perverseness in her inability to think that this Cathedral surpassed that of Exeter.

She thanked Mrs. Lyddell rather stiffly, as she thought to herself, "I did not reckon upon this!" and they set out on their homeward drive. Caroline looked thoughtful, and did not say much, Lionel fell asleep, and Mrs. Lyddell, after a few not very successful attempts at talking to Marian, took out her bills, and began to look over them and to reckon. Marian sat looking out of the window, lost in a vision of the hills, woods, and streams of Fern Torr, which lasted till they had reached home.

Such an expedition was so uncommon an event in the lives of the inhabitants of the schoolroom, that those who stayed at home were as excited about it as those who went, and a full and particular account was expected of all they had seen and all they had done. Caroline and Lionel both seemed to think Marian a perfect miracle of courage in voluntarily consenting to lose a tooth.

"And I am sure," said Caroline as they sat at tea, "I cannot now understand what made you have it done."

"To oblige a countryman," said Marian laughing.

"Well, but what was your real reason?" persisted Caroline.

"Mrs. Lyddell thought it best, and so did the dentist," said Marian.

"O," said Caroline, "he only said so because it was his trade."

"Then how could Mrs. Lyddell depend on him?" said Marian, gravely.

"Dentists never are to be depended on," said Caroline; "they only try to fill their own pockets like other people."

"You forget," said Lionel, "Devonshire men are not like other people."

"O yes, I beg their pardon," said Caroline, while every one laughed except Gerald; who thought the praise only their due.

"But why did you have it done?" said Clara, returning to the charge; "I am sure I never would."

"Yes, but Marian is not you," said Lionel.

"You would have disobeyed no one," said Caroline.

"I do not know," said Marian, thinking of one whom she would have disobeyed by showing weakness.

"Then did you think it wrong not to have that tooth drawn?" said Caroline.

"I do not know."

"Did you think it right to have it done?"

"I do not know, unless that I did not like it."

"Do you mean to say that not liking a thing makes it right?" exclaimed Clara.

"Very often," said Marian.

"Miss Morley, now is not that Popish?" cried Clara.

"Perhaps your cousin can explain herself," said Miss Morley.

"Yes, do," said Caroline, "you must tell us what you mean."

"I don't know," was Marian's first answer; but while uttering the reply, the real reason arranged itself in words; and finding she must speak clearly, she said, "Self-denial is always best, and in a doubtful case, the most disagreeable is always the safest."

Miss Morley said that Marian was right in many instances, but that this was not a universal rule, and so the conversation ended.

CHAPTER VI

"O Brignal banks are fresh and fair,
And Greta woods are green;
I'd rather rove with Edmund there,
Than reign our English queen."

ROKEBY.

Winter came, and with it the time fixed for that farewell visit from Edmund Arundel, to which Marian and Gerald had long looked forward. Marian was becoming very anxious for it on Gerald's account, for she was beginning to feel that he was not quite the same child as when he first arrived at Oakworthy. He was less under control, less readily obedient to Miss Morley, less inclined to quote Edmund upon all occasions, more sensible of his own consequence, and more apt to visit that forbidden ground, the stables.

She longed for Edmund's coming, trusting to him to set everything right, and to explain to her the marvels of this strange new world.

Several gentlemen were staying in the house, and there was to be a dinner party on the day when he was expected, so that she thought the best chance of seeing him would be to stay in the garden with Gerald, while the others took their walk, so that she might be at hand on his arrival. Clara, though by no means wanted, chose to stay also, and the two girls walked up and down the terrace together.

"It is so very odd," said Clara "that you should care about such a great old cousin."

"He is only twenty-four," answered Marian.

"But he must have been grown up ever since you remember."

"Yes, but he is so kind. He used to carry us about and play with us when we were quite little children, and since I have been older he has made me almost a companion. He taught me to ride, and trained my bay pony, my beautiful Mayflower, and read with me, and helped me in my music and drawing."

"That is more than Elliot would do for us, if he could," said Clara. "It is very dull to have no one to care about our lessons, but to be shut up in the schoolroom for ever with poor unfortunate."

Marian did not choose to say how fully she assented to this complaint, but happiness had opened her heart, and she went on,—"I have had so many delightful walks with him through the beautiful wood full of rocks, and out upon the moor. O, Clara, you cannot think what it is to sit upon one of those rocks, all covered with moss and lichen, and the ferns growing in every cleft and cranny, and the beautiful little ivy-leafed campanula wreathing itself about the moss, and such a soft, free, delicious air blowing all around. And Edmund and I used to take out a book, and read and sketch so delightfully there!"

"Do you know, Marian," said Clara mysteriously, "I have heard some one say—I will not tell you who—that it is a wonder that Mr. Arundel is so fond of you, of Gerald, at least, for if it was not for him, he would have had Fern Torr, and have been Sir Edmund."

"But why should he not be fond of Gerald?"

"Really, Marian, you are a very funny person in some things," exclaimed Clara. "To think of your not being able to guess that!"

Here Mrs. Lyddell interrupted them by calling from the window to ask why they were staying in the garden?

"We were waiting to see Mr. Arundel, mamma," answered Clara.

"I think," said Mrs. Lyddell, "that as I am going out, it is not quite *the thing* for you young ladies to wait to receive a gentleman in my absence. You had better overtake the others. Marian will see Mr. Arundel in the evening."

"How cross!" exclaimed Clara, as soon as they were out of hearing. "Now we have to go along that horrid, stupid path that poor unfortunate is so fond of! If mamma had to go there herself, she would know what a nuisance it is!"

Marian was silent, because she was too much annoyed to speak properly of Mrs. Lyddell, whose interference seemed to her a needless piece of unkindness. At home she would have thought it strange not to hasten to greet cousin Edmund, and she feared he would think she neglected him, yet she could not, in Clara's presence, leave a message for him with her brother. Gerald begged her to remain, but she replied, with, a short, blunt "I can't," and set off with Clara, feeling provoked with everybody. In process of time she recovered candour enough to acknowledge to herself that Mrs. Lyddell was right as far as Clara was concerned, but the struggle kept her silent, her cousin thought her sulky, and the walk was not agreeable.

Gerald did not as usual attend her toilette, but as she passed along the passage on her way to the schoolroom, she heard sounds in the hall so like home that her heart bounded, Gerald's voice and Edmund's in reply! She could not help opening the door which separated the grand staircase from the schoolroom passage, the voice sounded plainer, she looked over the balusters, and saw—yes, actually saw Edmund, the top of his black head was just below her. Should she call? Should she run half-way down stairs, and just exchange one greeting unrestrainedly? But no; her heart beat so fast as to take away her breath, and that gave her time for recollection: Mrs. Lyddell might not think it proper, it would be meeting him in an underhand way, and that would never do!

Marian turned back, shut the door of communication, and in the next moment was in the schoolroom. When Gerald came up to tea, he was in the wildest spirit; making fun, romping with Lionel and John, and putting everything in such an uproar that it was quite a relief when the time came for going down to the drawing-room.

Now, Marian's great fear was that the gentlemen would be cruel enough to stay in the dining-room till after half-past nine, when she would be obliged to go to bed. She could hardly speak to anybody, she shrank away, as near the door as she dared, and half sprang up every time it opened, then sat down ashamed of herself, and disappointed to see only the servants with coffee and tea.

At last, the fatal time had all but come, when the black figures of the gentlemen entered one after the other, Marian scarcely venturing to look at them, and overpowered with a double access of fright and shyness, which chained her to her seat, and her eyes to the ground. But now—Edmund's hand was grasping hers, Edmund was by her side, his voice was saying, "Well, Marian, how are you?"

She looked up at him for one moment, then on the ground again, without speaking.

"Oakworthy has put no colour in your cheeks," said he. "Are you quite well?"

"Quite, thank you," said she, almost as shortly and coldly as if she had been answering Mrs. Lyddell.

"When did you hear from home?"

"Yesterday," said she, speaking more readily. "Agnes always writes once a week. When do you go there?"

"Next week, when I leave this place."

"You come from the Marchmonts, don't you?"

"Yes, Selina sends you her love, and all manner of kind messages. She hopes to see you in London after Easter."

"O dear! There is Mrs. Lyddell looking at me, and I see Caroline is gone! Good night, Edmund."

"So soon? I hoped to have seen more of you to-day; I came early on purpose."

"I thought so, but they would not let me stay at home."

"I understand. Don't squeeze up your lips and look woeful. I knew how it was. Good night."

Marian walked slowly up stairs, sighing as she went, and looked into Gerald's room. He was awake, and called out, "Well, Marian, are you not glad he has come?"

"O yes, very," returned Marian, in a tone of little gladness; "I hope you will be very happy with him."

"Why not you?"

"It will be all disappointment," she answered in a choking voice, as, sheltered by the darkness, she knelt down by Gerald's bed, and burst into tears. "It will all be like to-day."

"No, it shall not!" cried Gerald; "I will tell Edmund all about it, and he shall send them all to the right about! I can't think why you did not tell Mrs. Lyddell that you always stay at home for Edmund."

"Miss Arundel," said Saunders, at the door, "do you know that it is half an hour later than usual?"

The next morning Marian awoke with brighter spirits. It was possible that she might accomplish one walk with him, and Gerald was sure of being constantly at his side, which was the great point. At any rate, she could not be very unhappy while he was in the house.

She heard nothing of him all the morning, but, just as the schoolroom dinner was over, in came Mrs. Lyddell, and with her Edmund himself, to the great surprise of all the inhabitants. Marian looked very happy, but said very little, while there was some talk with Miss Morley, and then Edmund asked if she had no drawings to show him. She brought out her portfolio, and felt it like old times when he observed on her improved shading, or criticised the hardness of her distant hills, while Miss Morley wondered at his taste and science. It was delightful to find that she and Gerald were really to take a walk with him by themselves. She almost flew to fetch her walking dress, and soon the three were on their way together.

There was a great quantity of home news to be talked over, for Edmund had not heard half so often nor so minutely as Marian, and he had to be told how Charles Wortley got on at his new school, that Ranger had been lost for a day and a half, and many pieces of the same kind of intelligence, of which the most important was that Farmer Bright's widow had given up the hill farm, and his nephew wanted to take it, but Mr. Wortley hoped that this would not be allowed, as he was a dissenter.

"Indeed!" said Edmund; "I wonder Carter did not mention that."

"Had you heard this before?" said Marian; "I thought it news."

"Most of it is," said Edmund, "but not about the farm. The letting it is part of my business here, but I did not know of this man's dissent. Your correspondence has done good service."

"I am sure it is my great delight," said Marian; "I do not know what I should do without hearing from Agnes. I think I have learnt to prize her more since I have known other people."

"You don't find the Miss Lyddells quite as formidable as you expected though?" said Edmund; "the eldest has a nice open, countenance."

"We get on very well," said Marian. "Caroline is so good-tempered and clever, and Lionel is delightful."

"O, Edmund," interposed Gerald, "Lionel and I had such fun the other day. We caught the old donkey and blindfolded it with our handkerchiefs, and let it loose, and if you could but have seen how it kicked up its heels–"

They went on with the history of adventures of the same description, enjoying themselves exceedingly, and when Marian went in, she was much pleased to find how favourable an impression Edmund had made on her companions, although some of their commendations greatly surprised her; Miss Morley pronouncing that he had in the greatest degree an *air distingue*, and was a remarkably fashionable young man. Marian could endure the *air distingue*, but could hardly swallow the fashionable young man, an expression which only conveyed to her mind the idea of Elliot Lyddell and his moustached friends. However, she knew it was meant for high praise, and her present amiable fit was strong enough to prevent her from taking it as an insult.

The next day was Sunday, and she provokingly missed Edmund three times, in the walks to and from church, he being monopolized by "some stupid person," who had far less right to him than she had; but at last, when she had been completely worried and vexed with her succession of disappointments, and had come into what Lionel would have emphatically called "a state of mind," Edmund contrived to come to her before going in doors, and asked if she could not take a few turns with him on the terrace. She came gladly, and yet hardly with full delight, for the irritation of the continually recurring disappointments through the whole day, still had its influence on her spirits, and she did not at first speak. "Where is Gerald?" asked Edmund.

"I don't know; somewhere with the boys," said Marian, disconsolately.

"Well, why not?" said Edmund laughing.

"I don't know," said Marian.

"That is a meditative 'I don't know,' which conveys more than meets the ear."

"I don't know whether–; I mean I don't think it does Gerald any good."

"It?—what?"

"I don't know," repeated Marian in a tone which to any one else would have appeared sullen.

"I should like to arrive at your meaning, Marian. Are you not happy about Gerald!"

"I don't know," said Marian; but Edmund, convinced that all was not right, was resolved to penetrate these determined professions of ignorance.

"Is Gerald under Miss Morley?" he asked.

"Yes, during most of the day. They all say he is very good."

"And does not that satisfy you?"

"I don't know."

Edmund perceived that the subject of her brother was too near her heart to be easily approached, and resolved to change his tone.

"How have you been getting on?" he asked. "Does learning flourish under the present dynasty?"

"I don't know," replied Marian for the seventh time, but she did not as usual stop there, and continued, "they think one knows nothing unless one has learnt all manner of dates, and latitudes, and such things. Not one of them knew Orion when they saw him in the sky, and yet even Clara thought me dreadfully stupid because I could not find out on the globe the altitude of Beta in Serpentarius, at New Orleans, at three o'clock in the morning."

Edmund could not help laughing at her half-complaining, half-humorous tone, and this encouraged her to proceed.

"In history they don't care whether a man is good or bad; they only care when he lived. O Edmund, the lists of names and dates, kings and Roman emperors–."

"Metals, semi-metals, and distinguished philosophers," said Edmund; and Marian, who in days of old had read "Mansfield Park," laughed as she used to do at home.

"Exactly," said she, "O, Edmund, it is very different learning from what it used to be. All lesson and no thinking, no explaining, no letting one make out more about the interesting places. I wanted the other day to look out in some history book to find whether Rinaldo in Tasso was a real man, but nobody would care about it; and as to the books, all the real good *grown-up* ones are down in Mr. Lyddell's library, where no one can get at them."

"Does not Miss Lyddell enter into these things?"

"O yes, Caroline does, a great deal more than Miss Morley; but I don't know—I never can get on with Caroline–."

Marian had now gone on to the moment when her heart was ready to be open, and the whole story, so long laid up for Edmund, began to be poured forth; while he, anxious to hear all, and more sympathizing than he was willing to show himself, only put in a word or two here and there, so as to sustain the narration. Everything was told, how Clara was frivolous and wearisome; how Caroline was cold, incomprehensible, and unsympathetic; how unjust and weak Miss Morley was; how sharp, hasty,

and unmotherly she found Mrs. Lyddell; and then, growing more eager, Marian, with tears springing to her eyes, told of the harm the influence of Oakworthy was doing Gerald; his love of the stables, and Saunders' opinion of the company he was likely to meet there. This led her to more of Saunders' communications about the general arrangement of the house, and the want of really earnest care for what is right; further still to what Saunders had told of Elliot and his ways, which were such as to shock her excessively, and yet she had herself heard Mr. Lyddell say that he was a fine spirited fellow!

Edmund was not sorry to find that he had but small space in which to give the reply for which Marian was eagerly looking. He avoided the main subject, and spoke directly to a point on which his little cousin was certainly wrong. "Well, Marian, who would have thought of your taking to gossiping with servants?" Then, as she looked down, too much ashamed to speak, he added, "I suppose poor Saunders has not sought for charms at Oakworthy any more than you have."

"Indeed I do not think I tried to make the worst of it when I came."

"Is that a confession that you are doing so now?"

"I do not know."

"Then let us see if you will give the same account to-morrow; I shall ask you whenever I see you particularly amiable. And now I think I have kept you out quite late enough."

The next day was very pleasant, bright, and frosty; Marian, from having relieved her heart, felt more free and happy, and her lessons went off quickly and smoothly. All went well, even though Edmund was obliged to go and call on a friend at Salisbury instead of coming to walk with her. Her walk with Miss Morley and her cousins was prosperous and pleasant; the boys ran races, and Marian and Clara were allowed to join them without a remonstrance. Marian was running and laughing most joyously, when she was stopped by hearing a horse's feet near her, and looking round saw Edmund returning from his ride. "May I keep her out a little longer?" said he to Miss Morley, as he jumped off his horse, and Marian came to his side. Miss Morley returned a ready assent, and after disposing of the horse, the two cousins walked on happily together, she telling him some pleasant histories of Gerald and the other little boys, and lamenting the loss that Lionel would be when he went to school. After they had talked over Salisbury Cathedral, and Marian had heard with great interest of Edmund's late employments in Scotland, and all he was to do and see in Africa, and saying much about that never-ending subject, Fern Torr, Edmund thought her so cheerful that he said, "Well, may I venture to ask your opinion of the people here?"

"I don't know," said Marian, who was so much ashamed of the accusation of gossiping with Saunders as to be willing to pass over all that had been founded on her information, "perhaps I did say too much yesterday, and yet I do not know I am sure I should never have chosen them for friends."

"Perhaps they would return that compliment."

"Then you really think it is my own fault?"

"No;" (Edmund tried hard to prevent his "no" from being too emphatic, and forced himself to go on thus) "I do not suppose it is entirely your fault, but at the same time you do not strike me as a person likely to make friends easily."

"O, Edmund, I could never bring myself to kiss, and say 'dearest' and 'darling,' and all that, like Clara."

"There is the thing," said Edmund; "not that it is wrong to dislike it, not that I could ever imagine your doing any thing like it;" and, indeed, the idea seemed so preposterous, that both the cousins laughed; "but the disposition is not one likely to be over and above prepossessing to strangers."

"You mean that I am disagreeable?"

"No, far from it. I only mean that you are chilly, and make almost all who come near you the same towards you."

"I cannot help it," said Marian.

"Yes, you could in time, if you did not fairly freeze yourself by constant dwelling on their worst points. Make the best of them with all your might, and you will soon learn to like them better."

"But if the things are so, Edmund, how can I see them otherwise?"

"Don't look out for them, and be glad of every excuse for disliking the people. Don't fancy harshness and unkindness where no one intends it. I am quite sure that Mr. Lyddell wishes to give you every advantage, and that Mrs. Lyddell thinks she treats you like her own child."

"I don't think I should like to be her own child," said Marian. "It is true that she is the same with me as with them, but—"

"Poor Marian," said Edmund, kindly, "you have been used to such gentleness at home, that no wonder the world seems hard and unkind to you. But I did not mean to make you cry; you know you must rough it, and bravely too."

"Never mind my crying," said Marian, struggling to speak; "it is nothing, but I cannot help it. It is so very long since any one has known what I meant."

Edmund could not trust himself to speak, so full was he of affectionate compassion for her, and of indignation against the Lyddells, when these few words revealed to him all her loneliness; and they walked on for a considerable distance in silence, till, with a sudden change of tone, he asked if she had had any riding since she came to Oakworthy.

"O no, I have not been on horseback once. What a treat a good canter on Mayflower would be!"

"I suspect one victory over her would put you in spirits to be amiable for a month," said Edmund.

"Dear old Mayflower!" said Marian. "How delightful that day was when she first came home, and we took that very long ride to the Eastcombe!"

Edmund and Marian fell into a line of reminiscences which enlivened them both, and she went in-doors in a cheerful mood, while he seriously took the riding into consideration; knowing, as he did, that her mother had thought a great deal of out-of-door exercise desirable for her, and guessing that her want of spirits might very probably arise from want of the air and freedom to which she had always been accustomed. The result of his meditations was, that the next morning she was delighted by Gerald's rushing into the school-room, calling out, "Put on your habit, Marian; make haste and put on your habit. You are to have my pony, and I am to have Lionel's, and Edmund is to have Sorell, and we are all to ride together to Chalk Down!"

How fast Marian obeyed the summons may well be believed; and though Gerald's pony was not comparable to Mayflower, it was much to feel herself again in the saddle, with the fresh wind breathing on her checks, and Edmund by her side. Par and joyously did they ride; so far, that Gerald was tired into unusual sleepiness all the evening; but Marian was but the fresher and brighter, full of life and merriment, which quite surprised her cousins.

But visits, alas! are fleeting things, and Edmund's last day at Oakworthy came only too soon. Precious as it was, it was for the most part devoted to business with Mr. Lyddell, though he sent Marian a message that he hoped for a walk with her and her brother in the afternoon.

The hour came, but not the man; and while Caroline and Clara went out with Miss Morley, Marian sat down with a book to wait for him. In about an hour's time the boys came to tell her they were going to the pond with Walter.

"O Gerald, won't you wait for Edmund?"

"I have waited till I am tired. I cannot stay in this whole afternoon, and I do not think he will come this age."

"He is shut up in the study with papa," said Lionel; "I heard their voices very loud, as if they were in *such* a rage."

"I wish I could see them," said Johnny, "it would be such fun."

Away ran the boys, leaving Marian in a state of wonder and anxiety, but still confident that Edmund would not forget her. She put on her walking dress, and sat down to her book again, but still she was left to wait. The winter twilight commenced, and still no Edmund; steps approached, but not the right ones; and in came the walking party, with a general exclamation of "Poor Marian! what, still waiting?" Miss Morley advised her to take a few turns on the terrace, instead of practising that

horrid Mozart. Marian disconsolately went down stairs, looking wistfully at the library door as she went past it, and, at a funeral pace, promenaded along the terrace. As she passed beneath the window of Caroline's room, a head was popped out, and a voice sang—

"So, sir, you're come at last, I thought you'd come no more,
I've waited with my bonnet on from one till half-past four!
You know I sit alone—"

At that moment, Edmund himself was seen advancing from the door; the song ended in a scream of laughter and dismay, and the window was hastily shut. Edmund smiled a little, but very little, and said, "True enough, I am afraid I have used you very ill."

"Tiresome affairs," said Marian, looking up into his harassed face. "I hope they have not made your head ache?"

"I have been worried, but it is not the fault of the affairs, I wish you had not lost your walk," added he abruptly, beginning to stride on so fast that she could scarcely keep up with him, and apparently forgetting her presence entirely in his own engrossing thoughts. She watched him intently as she toiled to keep by his side, longing, but not daring, to inquire what was the matter. At last he broke out into a muttered exclamation, "destitute of all principle! all labour in vain!"

"What—how—Mr. Lyddell?"

"This whole day have I been at it, trying to bring him to reason about that farm!"

"What? Did he wish the Dissenter to have it?"

"He saw no objection—treated all I said as the merest moonshine!"

"What? all the annoyance to the Wortleys, and the mischief to the poor people!" exclaimed Marian, "Why, we should have a meeting-house!"

"Nothing more likely, in the Manor field, and fifty pounds subscribed—all for the sake of toleration and Gerald's interests."

"You don't mean that he has done it?" said Marian, alarmed, and not quite understanding Edmund's tone of irony, "Cannot you prevent it?"

"I have prevented It; I said that, with my knowledge of my uncle's intentions, I could never feel justified in consenting to sign the lease."

"And that puts a stop to it? Oh, I am very glad. But I suppose he was very angry?"

"I never saw a man more so. He said he had no notion of sacrificing Gerald's interest to party feeling."

"How could it be for Gerald's interest to bring Dissenters to Fern Torr? I am sure it would be very disagreeable. I thought it, was quite wrong to have any dealings with them."

"He has been popularity-hunting too long to have many scruples on that score."

Marian could not help triumphing. "Well, Edmund, I am glad you have come to my opinion at last. I knew you would not like the Lyddells when you knew them better."

"I never was much smitten with them," said Edmund, abruptly, as if affronted at the imputation of having liked them.

"But Edmund," cried Marian, standing still in the extremity of her amazement, "what have you been about all this time? Have you not been telling me it is all my own fault that I do not get on with them?"

He was silent for a little while; and then turning round half-way, as people do when much diverted, he broke out into a hearty fit of laughter. "It is plain," said he, at last, "that nature never designed me for a young lady's counsellor."

"What do you mean, Edmund?"

"I suspect I have done mischief," said Edmund, after a little consideration, "and I believe all that remains to be done is to tell you all, and come down from my character of Mentor, which certainly I have not fulfilled particularly well."

"I am sure I do not understand you," said Marian.

"Well, then," said Edmund, speaking in a more free and unembarrassed tone than he had used since he had been at Oakworthy, "this is the fact of the matter, as Mrs. Cornthwayte would say, Marian. I always thought it very unlucky that you were obliged to live here; but as it could not be helped, and I really knew nothing against the Lyddells, there was no use in honing and moaning about it beforehand, so I tried to make the best of it. Well, I came here, and found things as bad as I expected, and was very glad to find you steady in the principles we learnt at home. Still, I thought you deficient in kindly feeling towards them, and inclined to give way to repining and discontent, and I think you allowed I was not far wrong. To-day, I must allow, I was off my guard, and have made a complete mess of all my prudence."

"O, I am very glad of it," said Marian. "I understand you now, and you are much more like yourself."

"Yes, it was a very unsuccessful attempt," said Edmund, again laughing at himself, "and I am very glad it is over; for I have been obliged to be the high and mighty guardian all this time, and I am very tired of it;" and he yawned.

"Then you don't like them any better than I do," repeated Marian, in a tone of heartfelt satisfaction.

"Stop, stop, stop; don't think that cousin Edmund means to give you leave to begin hating them."

"Hating them? O no! but now you will tell me what I ought to do, since there is no possibility of getting away from them."

"No, there is no possibility," said Edmund, considering; "I could not ask the Marchmonts again, though they did make the offer in the first fulness of their hearts. Besides, there are objections; I should not feel satisfied to trust you to so giddy a head as Selina's. No, Marian, it cannot be helped; so let us come to an understanding about these same Lyddells."

"Well, then, why is it that we do not do better? I know there are faults on my side; but what are the faults on theirs?"

"Marian, I believe the fault to be that they do not look beyond this present life," said Edmund, in a grave, low tone.

Marian thought a little while, and then said, "Caroline does, but I see what you mean with the others."

"Then your conduct should be a witness of your better principles," said Edmund. "You may stand on very high ground, and it entirely depends on yourself whether you maintain that position, or sink down to their level."

"O, but that is awful!" cried Marian; and then in a tone of still greater dismay, "and Gerald? O, Edmund, what is to become of him?"

"I must trust him to you, Marian."

"To me!"

"You have great influence over him, and that, rightly used, may be his safeguard. Many a man has owed everything to a sister's influence." Then, as Marian's eye glistened with somewhat of tender joy and yet of fear, he went on, "But take care; if you deteriorate, he will be in great danger; and, on the other hand, beware of obstinacy and rigidity in trifles—you know what I mean—which might make goodness distasteful to him."

"O, worse and worse, Edmund! What is to be done? If I can do him so much harm, I know I can do him very little good; and what will it be when he is older, and will depend less on what I say?"

"He will always depend more on what you *do* than on what you say."

"But what can I do? all the schoolboy temptations that I know nothing about. And Elliot—O, Edmund! think of Elliot, and say if it is not dreadful that Mr. Lyddell should have the management of our own Gerald? Papa never could have known—"

"I think, while he is still so young, that there is not much harm to be apprehended from that quarter," said Edmund; "afterwards, I believe I may promise you that he shall not be left entirely to Oakworthy training."

"And," said Marian, "could you not make him promise to keep away from the stables? Those men—and their language—could you not, Edmund?"

"I could, but I would not," said Edmund. "I had rather that, if he transgresses, he should not break his word as well as run into temptation. There is no such moral crime in going down to the stables, as should make us willing to oblige him to take a vow against it."

"Would it not keep him out of temptation?"

"Only by substituting another temptation," said Edmund. "No, Marian; a boy must be governed by principles, and not by promises."

"Principles—people are always talking of them, but I don't half understand what they are," said Marian.

"The Creed and the Ten Commandments are what I call principles," said Edmund.

"But those are promises, Edmund."

"You are right, Marian; but they are not promises to man."

"I could do better if I had any one to watch me, or care about me," said Marian.

Edmund's face was full of sadness. "We—I mean you, are alone indeed, Marian; but, depend upon it, it is for the best. We might be tempted not to look high enough, and you have to take heed to yourself for Gerald's sake."

"I do just sometimes feel as I ought," said Marian; "but it is by fits and starts. O, Edmund, I would give anything that you were not going."

"It is too late now," said Edmund, "and there are many reasons which convince me that I ought not to exchange. In a year or two, when I have my promotion, I hope to return, and then, Marian, I shall find you a finished young lady."

Marian shuddered.

"Poor child," said Edmund, laughing.

"And you are going home," said Marian, enviously.

"Home, yes," said Edmund, in a tone which seemed as if he did not think himself an object of envy.

"Yes, the hills and woods," said Marian, "and the Wortleys."

"Yes, I am very glad to go," said Edmund. "Certainly even the being hackneyed cannot spoil the beauty or the force of those lines of Gray's."

"What, you mean, 'Ah! happy hills; ah! pleasing shade?'"

"Yes," said Edmund, sighing and musing for some minutes before he again spoke, and then it was very earnestly. "Marian, you must not go wrong, Gerald must not—with such parents as yours–." Marian did not answer, for she could not; and presently he added, "It does seem strange that such care as my uncle's should have been given to me, and then his own boy left thus. But, Marian, you must watch him, you must guard him. If you are in real difficulty or doubt how to act, you have the Wortleys; and if you see anything about which you are seriously uneasy with regard to him, write to me, and I will do my utmost, little as that is."

"Yes, yes, I am glad to be sure of it," said Marian.

"Well, I am glad to have had this talk," said Edmund. "I did you injustice, Marian; you are fit to be treated as a friend: but you must forgive me, for it cost me a good deal to try to be wise with you."

"I think you have seemed much wiser since you left it off," said Marian, "Somehow, though I was glad to hear you, it did not comfort me or set me to rights before."

Edmund and Marian could have gone on for hours longer, but it was already quite dark; and the sound of Elliot's whistle approaching warned them that one was coming who would little understand their friendship,—why the soldier should loiter with the little girl, or why the young girl should cling to the side of her elder cousin. They went in-doors, and hastened different ways; they saw each other again, but only in full assembly of the rest of the family. And at last, soon after breakfast the nest morning, Marian stood in the hall, watching Edmund drive from the door; and while her face was cold, pale, and still as ever, her heart throbbed violently, and her throat felt as if she was ready to choke. She heard of him at Fern Torr, she heard of him at Portsmouth, she heard of his embarkation; and many and many a lonely moment was filled up with tears of storm and tempest; of fever and climate, of the lion and of the Caffre.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.