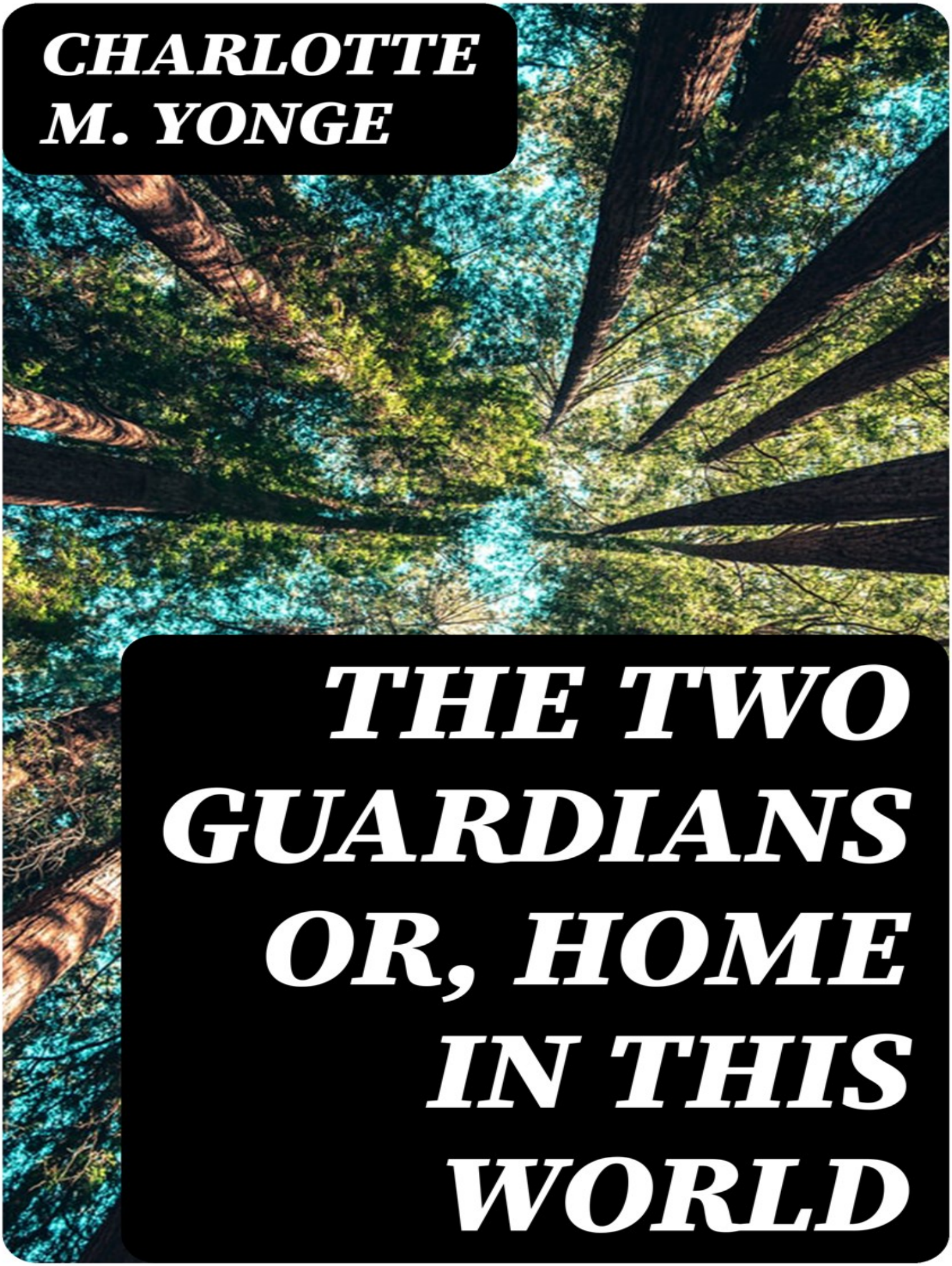
CHARLOTTE M. YONGE



THE TWO GUARDIANS OR, HOME IN THIS WORLD

Charlotte M. Yonge

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PREFACE.

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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.

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"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 heirlooms," 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.

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"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!"