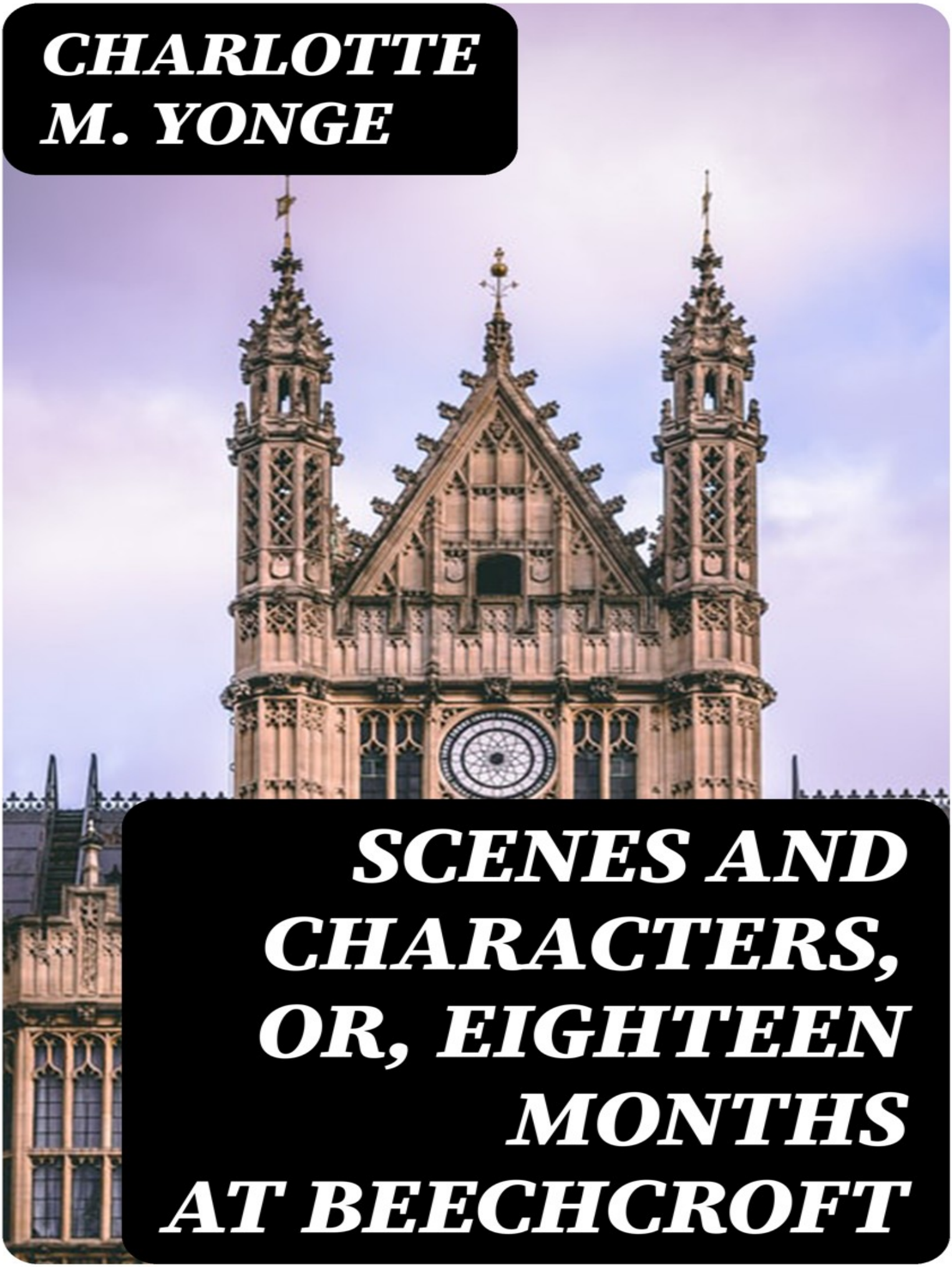
CHARLOTTE M. YONGE



SCENES AND CHARACTERS, OR, EIGHTEEN MONTHS AT BEECHCROFT

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PREFACE

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Of those who are invited to pay a visit to Beechcroft, there are some who, honestly acknowledging that amusement is their object, will be content to feel with Lilias, conjecture with Jane, and get into scrapes with Phyllis, without troubling themselves to extract any moral from their proceedings; and to these the Mohun family would only apologise for having led a very humdrum life during the eighteen months spent in their company.

There may, however, be more unreasonable visitors, who, professing only to come as parents and guardians, expect entertainment for themselves, as well as instruction for those who had rather it was out of sight,—look for antiques in carved cherry-stones,—and require plot, incident, and catastrophe in a chronicle of small beer.

To these the Mohuns beg respectfully to observe, that they hope their examples may not be altogether devoid of indirect instruction; and lest it should be supposed that they lived without object, aim, or principle, they would observe that the maxim which has influenced the delineation of the different *Scenes and Characters* is, that feeling, unguided and unrestrained, soon becomes mere selfishness; while the simple endeavour to fulfil each immediate claim of duty may lead to the highest acts of self-devotion.

New Court, Beechcroft,
18th *January*.

PREFACE (1886)

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PERHAPS this book is an instance to be adduced in support of the advice I have often given to young authors—not to print before they themselves are old enough to do justice to their freshest ideas.

Not that I can lay claim to its being a production of tender and interesting youth. It was my second actual publication, and I believe I was of age before it appeared—but I see now the failures that more experience might have enabled me to avoid; and I would not again have given it to the world if the same characters recurring in another story had not excited a certain desire to see their first start.

In fact they have been more or less my life-long companions. An almost solitary child, with periodical visits to the Elysium of a large family, it was natural to dream of other children and their ways and sports till they became almost realities. They took shape when my French master set me to write letters for him. The letters gradually became conversation and narrative, and the adventures of the family sweetened the toils of French composition. In the exigencies of village school building in those days gone by, before in every place

> "It there behoved him to set up the standard of her Grace,"

the tale was actually printed for private sale, as a link between translations of short stories.

This process only stifled the family in my imagination for a time. They awoke once more with new names, but substantially the same, and were my companions in many a

solitary walk, the results of which were scribbled down in leisure moments to be poured into my mother's ever patient and sympathetic ears.

And then came the impulse to literature for young people given by the example of that memorable book the *Fairy Bower*, and followed up by *Amy Herbert*. It was felt that elder children needed something of a deeper tone than the Edgeworthian style, yet less directly religious than the Sherwood class of books; and on that wave of opinion, my little craft floated out into the great sea of the public.

Friends, whose kindness astonished me, and fills me with gratitude when I look back on it, gave me seasonable criticism and pruning, and finally launched me. My heroes and heroines had arranged themselves so as to work out a definite principle, and this was enough for us all.

Children's books had not been supposed to require a plot. Miss Edgeworth's, which I still continue to think gems in their own line, are made chronicles, or, more truly, illustrations of various truths worked out upon the same personages. Moreover, the skill of a Jane Austen or a Mrs. Gaskell is required to produce a perfect plot without doing violence to the ordinary events of an every-day life. It is all a matter of arrangement. Mrs. Gaskell can make a perfect little plot out of a sick lad and a canary bird; and another can do nothing with half a dozen murders and an explosion; and of arranging my materials so as to build up a story, I was quite incapable. It is still my great deficiency; but in those days I did not even understand that the attempt was desirable. Criticism was a more thorough thing in those times than it has since become through the multiplicity of

books to be hurried over, and it was often very useful, as when it taught that such arrangement of incident was the means of developing the leading idea.

Yet, with all its faults, the children, who had been real to me, caught, chiefly by the youthful sense of fun and enjoyment, the attention of other children; and the curious semi-belief one has in the phantoms of one's brain made me dwell on their after life and share my discoveries with my friends, not, however, writing them down till after the lapse of all these years the tenderness inspired by associations of early days led to taking up once more the old characters in *The Two Sides of the Shield*; and the kind welcome this has met with has led to the resuscitation of the crude and inexperienced tale which never pretended to be more than a mere family chronicle.

C. M. YONGE.

6*th October* 1886.

CHAPTER I
THE ELDER SISTER

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‘Return, and in the daily round
Of duty and of love,
Thou best wilt find that patient faith
That lifts the soul above.’

Eleanor Mohun was the eldest child of a gentleman of old family, and good property, who had married the sister of his friend and neighbour, the Marquis of Rotherwood. The first years of her life were marked by few events. She was a quiet, steady, useful girl, finding her chief pleasure in nursing and teaching her brothers and sisters, and her chief annoyance in her mamma’s attempts to make her a fine lady; but before she had reached her nineteenth year she had learnt to know real anxiety and sorrow. Her mother, after suffering much from grief at the loss of her two brothers, fell into so alarming a state of health, that her husband was obliged immediately to hurry her away to Italy, leaving the younger children under the care of a governess, and the elder boys at school, while Eleanor alone accompanied them.

Their absence lasted nearly three years, and during the last winter, an engagement commenced between Eleanor and Mr. Francis Hawkesworth, rather to the surprise of Lady Emily, who wondered that he had been able to discover the real worth veiled beneath a formal and retiring manner, and to admire features which, though regular, had a want of

light and animation, which diminished their beauty even more than the thinness and compression of the lips, and the very pale gray of the eyes.

The family were about to return to England, where the marriage was to take place, when Lady Emily was attacked with a sudden illness, which her weakened frame was unable to resist, and in a very few days she died, leaving the little Adeline, about eight months old, to accompany her father and sister on their melancholy journey homewards. This loss made a great change in the views of Eleanor, who, as she considered the cares and annoyances which would fall on her father, when left to bear the whole burthen of the management of the children and household, felt it was her duty to give up her own prospects of happiness, and to remain at home. How could she leave the tender little ones to the care of servants—trust her sisters to a governess, and make her brothers' home yet more dreary? She knew her father to be strong in sense and firm in judgment, but indolent, indulgent, and inattentive to details, and she could not bear to leave him to be harassed by the petty cares of a numerous family, especially when broken in spirits and weighed down with sorrow. She thought her duty was plain, and, accordingly, she wrote to Mr. Hawkesworth, to beg him to allow her to withdraw her promise.

Her brother Henry was the only person who knew what she had done, and he alone perceived something of tremulousness about her in the midst of the even cheerfulness with which she had from the first supported her father's spirits. Mr. Mohun, however, did not long remain in ignorance, for Frank Hawkesworth himself arrived at

Beechcroft to plead his cause with Eleanor. He knew her value too well to give her up, and Mr. Mohun would not hear of her making such a sacrifice for his sake. But Eleanor was also firm, and after weeks of unhappiness and uncertainty, it was at length arranged that she should remain at home till Emily was old enough to take her place, and that Frank should then return from India and claim his bride.

Well did she discharge the duties which she had undertaken; she kept her father's mind at ease, followed out his views, managed the boys with discretion and gentleness, and made her sisters well-informed and accomplished girls; but, for want of fully understanding the characters of her two next sisters, Emily and Lilias, she made some mistakes with regard to them. The clouds of sorrow, to her so dark and heavy, had been to them but morning mists, and the four years which had changed her from a happy girl into a thoughtful, anxious woman, had brought them to an age which, if it is full of the follies of childhood, also partakes of the earnestness of youth; an age when deep foundations of enduring confidence may be laid by one who can enter into and direct the deeper flow of mind and feeling which lurks hid beneath the freaks and fancies of the early years of girlhood. But Eleanor had little sympathy for freaks and fancies. She knew the realities of life too well to build airy castles with younger and gayer spirits; her sisters' romance seemed to her dangerous folly, and their lively nonsense levity and frivolity. They were too childish to share in her confidence, and she was too busy and too much preoccupied to have ear or mind for visionary trifles, though to trifles of real life she paid no small degree of attention.

It might have been otherwise had Henry Mohun lived; but in the midst of the affection of all who knew him, honour from those who could appreciate his noble character, and triumphs gained by his uncommon talents, he was cut off by a short illness, when not quite nineteen, a most grievous loss to his family, and above all, to Eleanor. Unlike her, as he was joyous, high-spirited, full of fun, and overflowing with imagination and poetry, there was a very close bond of union between them, in the strong sense of duty, the firmness of purpose, and energy of mind which both possessed, and which made Eleanor feel perfect reliance on him, and look up to him with earnest admiration. With him alone she was unreserved; he was the only person who could ever make her show a spark of liveliness, and on his death, it was only with the most painful efforts that she could maintain her composed demeanour and fulfil her daily duties. Years passed on, and still she felt the blank which Harry had left, almost as much as the first day that she heard of his death, but she never spoke of him, and to her sisters it seemed as if he was forgotten. The reserve which had begun to thaw under his influence, again returning, placed her a still greater distance from the younger girls, and unconsciously she became still more of a governess and less of a sister. Little did she know of the ‘blissful dreams in secret shared’ between Emily, Lilias, and their brother Claude, and little did she perceive the danger that Lilias would be run away with by a lively imagination, repressed and starved, but entirely untrained.

Whatever influenced Lilias, had, through her, nearly the same effect upon Emily, a gentle girl, easily led, especially

by Lilias, whom she regarded with the fondest affection and admiration. The perils of fancy and romance were not, however, to be dreaded for Jane, the fourth sister, a strong resemblance of Eleanor in her clear common sense, love of neatness, and active usefulness; but there were other dangers for her, in her tendency to faults, which, under wise training, had not yet developed themselves.

Such were the three girls who were now left to assist each other in the management of the household, and who looked forward to their new offices with the various sensations of pleasure, anxiety, self-importance, and self-mistrust, suited to their differing characters, and to the ages of eighteen, sixteen, and fourteen.

CHAPTER II
THE NEW COURT

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‘Just at the age ’twixt boy and youth,
When thought is speech, and speech is truth.’

THE long-delayed wedding took place on the 13th of January, 1845, and the bride and bridegroom immediately departed for a year’s visit among Mr. Hawkesworth’s relations in Northumberland, whence they were to return to Beechcroft, merely for a farewell, before sailing for India.

It was half-past nine in the evening, and the wedding over—Mr. and Mrs. Hawkesworth gone, and the guests departed, the drawing-room had returned to its usual state. It was a very large room, so spacious that it would have been waste and desolate, had it not been well filled with handsome, but heavy old-fashioned furniture, covered with crimson damask, and one side of the room fitted up with a bookcase, so high that there was a spiral flight of library steps to give access to the upper shelves. Opposite were four large windows, now hidden by their ample curtains; and near them was at one end of the room a piano, at the other a drawing-desk. The walls were wainscoted with polished black oak, the panels reflecting the red fire-light like mirrors. Over the chimney-piece hung a portrait, by Vandyke, of a pale, dark cavalier, of noble mien, and with arched eyebrows, called by Lilias, in defiance of dates, by the name of Sir Maurice de Mohun, the hero of the family, and allowed by every one to be a striking likeness of Claude, the youth

who at that moment lay, extending a somewhat superfluous length of limb upon the sofa, which was placed commodiously at right angles to the fire.

The other side of the fire was Mr. Mohun's special domain, and there he sat at his writing-table, abstracted by deafness and letter writing, from the various sounds of mirth and nonsense, which proceeded from the party round the long narrow sofa table, which they had drawn across the front of the fire, leaving the large round centre table in darkness and oblivion.

This party had within the last half hour been somewhat thinned; the three younger girls had gone to bed, the Rector of Beechcroft, Mr. Robert Devereux, had been called home to attend some parish business, and there remained Emily and Lilias—tall graceful girls, with soft hazel eyes, clear dark complexions, and a quantity of long brown curls. The latter was busily completing a guard for the watch, which Mr. Hawkesworth had presented to Reginald, a fine handsome boy of eleven, who, with his elbows on the table, sat contemplating her progress, and sometimes teasing his brother Maurice, who was earnestly engaged in constructing a model with some cards, which he had pilfered from the heap before Emily. She was putting her sister's wedding cards into their shining envelopes, and directing them in readiness for the post the next morning, while they were sealed by a youth of the same age as Claude, a small slim figure, with light complexion and hair, and dark gray eyes full of brightness and vivacity.

He was standing, so as to be more on a level with the high candle, and as Emily's writing was not quite so rapid as

his sealing, he amused himself in the intervals with burning his own fingers, by twisting the wax into odd shapes.

‘Why do you not seal up his eyes?’ inquired Reginald, with an arch glance towards his brother on the sofa.

‘Do it yourself, you rogue,’ was the answer, at the same time approaching with the hot sealing-wax in his hand—a demonstration which occasioned Claude to open his eyes very wide, without giving himself any further trouble about the matter.

‘Eh?’ said he, ‘now they try to look innocent, as if no one could hear them plotting mischief.’

‘Them! it was not!—Redgie there—young ladies—I appeal—was not I as innocent?’—was the very rapid, incoherent, and indistinct answer.

‘After so lucid and connected a justification, no more can be said,’ replied Claude, in a kind of ‘leave me, leave me to repose’ tone, which occasioned Lilias to say, ‘I am afraid you are very tired.’

‘Tired! what has he done to tire him?’

‘I am sure a wedding is a terrible wear of spirits!’ said Emily—‘such excitement.’

‘Well—when I give a spectacle to the family next year, I mean to tire you to some purpose.’

‘Eh?’ said Mr. Mohun, looking up, ‘is Rotherwood’s wedding to be the next?’

‘You ought to understand, uncle,’ said Lord Rotherwood, making two stops towards him, and speaking a little more clearly, ‘I thought you longed to get rid of your nephew and his concerns.’

‘You idle boy!’ returned Mr. Mohun, ‘you do not mean to have the impertinence to come of age next year.’

‘As much as having been born on the 30th of July, 1825, can make me.’

‘But what good will your coming of age do us?’ said Lilias, ‘you will be in London or Brighton, or some such stupid place.’

‘Do not be senseless, Lily,’ returned her cousin. ‘Devereux Castle is to be in splendour—Hetherington in amazement—the county’s hair shall stand on end—illuminations, bonfires, feasts, balls, colours flying, bands playing, tenants dining, fireworks—’

‘Hurrah! jolly! jolly!’ shouted Reginald, dancing on the ottoman, ‘and mind there are lots of squibs.’

‘And that Master Reginald Mohun has a new cap and bells for the occasion,’ said Lord Rotherwood.

‘Let me make some fireworks,’ said Maurice.

‘You will begin like a noble baron of the hospitable olden time,’ said Lily.

‘It will be like the old days, when every birthday of yours was a happy day for the people at Hetherington,’ said Emily.

‘Ah! those were happy old days,’ said Lord Rotherwood, in a graver tone.

‘These are happy days, are not they?’ said Lily, smiling.

Her cousin answered with a sigh, ‘Yes, but you do not remember the old ones, Lily;’ then, after a pause, he added, ‘It was a grievous mistake to shut up the castle all these years. We have lost sight of everybody. I do not even know what has become of the Aylmers.’

‘They went to live in London,’ said Emily, ‘Aunt Robert used to write to them there.’

‘I know, I know, but where are they now?’

‘In London, I should think,’ said Emily. ‘Some one said Miss Aylmer was gone out as a governess.’

‘Indeed! I wish I could hear more! Poor Mr. Aylmer! He was the first man who tried to teach me Latin. I wonder what has become of that mad fellow Edward, and Devereux, my father’s godson! Was not Mrs. Aylmer badly off? I cannot bear that people should be forgotten!’

‘It is not so very long that we have lost sight of them,’ said Emily.

‘Eight years,’ said Lord Rotherwood. ‘He died six weeks after my father. Well! I have made my mother promise to come home.’

‘Really?’ said Lilias, ‘she has been coming so often.’

‘Aye—but she is coming this time. She is to spend the winter at the castle, and make acquaintance with all the neighbourhood.’

‘His lordship is romancing,’ said Claude to Lily in a confidential tone.

‘I’ll punish you for suspecting me of talking hyperborean language—hyperbolical, I mean,’ cried Lord Rotherwood; ‘I’ll make you dance the Polka with all the beauty and fashion.’

‘Then I shall stay at Oxford till it is over,’ said Claude.

‘You do not know what a treasure you will be,’ said the Marquis, ‘ladies like nothing so well as dancing with a fellow twice the height he should be.’

‘Beware of putting me forward,’ said Claude, rising, and, as he leant against the chimney-piece, looking down from

his height of six feet three, with a patronising air upon his cousin, ‘I shall be taken for the hero, and you for my little brother.’

‘I wish I was,’ said Lord Rotherwood, ‘it would be much better fun. I should escape the speechifying, the worst part of it.’

‘Yes,’ said Claude, ‘for one whose speeches will be scraps of three words each, strung together with the burthen of the apprentices’ song, Radara tadara, tandore.’

‘Radaratade,’ said the Marquis, laughing. ‘By the bye, if Eleanor and Frank Hawkesworth manage well, they may be here in time.’

‘Because they are so devoted to gaiety?’ said Claude. ‘You will say next that William is coming from Canada, on purpose.’

‘That tall captain!’ said Lord Rotherwood. ‘He used to be a very awful person.’

‘Ah! he used to keep the spoilt Marquis in order,’ said Claude.

‘To say nothing of the spoilt Claude,’ returned Lord Rotherwood.

‘Claude never was spoilt,’ said Lily.

‘It was not Eleanor’s way,’ said Emily.

‘At least she cannot be accused of spoiling me,’ said Lord Rotherwood. ‘I shall never dare to write at that round table again—her figure will occupy the chair like Banquo’s ghost, and wave me off with a knitting needle.’

‘Ah! that stain of ink was a worse blot on your character than on the new table cover,’ said Claude.

‘She was rigidly impartial,’ said Lord Rotherwood.

‘No,’ said Claude, ‘she made exceptions in favour of Ada and me. She left the spoiling of the rest to Emily.’

‘And well Emily will perform it! A pretty state you will be in by the 30th of July, 1846,’ said Lord Rotherwood.

‘Why should not Emily make as good a duenna as Eleanor?’ said Lily.

‘Why should she not? She will not—that is all,’ said the Marquis. ‘Such slow people you all are! You would all go to sleep if I did not sometimes rouse you up a little—grow stagnant.’

‘Not an elegant comparison,’ said Lilias; ‘besides, you must remember that your hasty brawling streams do not reflect like tranquil lakes.’

‘One of Lily’s poetical hits, I declare!’ said Lord Rotherwood, ‘but she need not have taken offence—I did not refer to her—only Claude and Emily, and perhaps—no, I will not say who else.’

‘Then, Rotherwood, I will tell you what I am—the Lily that derives all its support from the calm lake.’

‘Well done, Lily, worthy of yourself,’ cried Lord Rotherwood, laughing, ‘but you know I am always off when you talk poetry.’

‘I suspect it is time for us all to be off,’ said Claude, ‘did I not hear it strike the quarter?’

‘And to-morrow I shall be off in earnest,’ said Lord Rotherwood. ‘Half way to London before Claude has given one turn to “his sides, and his shoulders, and his heavy head.”’

‘Shall we see you at Easter?’ said Emily.

‘No, I do not think you will. I am engaged to stay with somebody somewhere, I forget the name of place and man; besides, Grosvenor Square is more tolerable then than at any other time of the year, and I shall spend a fortnight with my mother and Florence. It is after Easter that you come to Oxford, is it not, Claude?’

‘Yes, my year of idleness will be over. And there is the Baron looking at his watch.’

The ‘Baron’ was the title by which the young people were wont to distinguish Mr. Mohun, who, as Lily believed, had a right to the title of Baron of Beechcroft. It was certain that he was the representative of a family which had been settled at Beechcroft ever since the Norman Conquest, and Lily was very proud of the name of Sir William de Moune in the battle roll, and of Sir John among the first Knights of the Garter. Her favourite was Sir Maurice, who had held out Beechcroft Court for six weeks against the Roundheads, and had seen the greater part of the walls battered down. Witnesses of the strength of the old castle yet remained in the massive walls and broad green ramparts, which enclosed what was now orchard and farm-yard, and was called the Old Court, while the dwelling-house, built by Sir Maurice after the Restoration, was named the New Court. Sir Maurice had lost many an acre in the cause of King Charles, and his new mansion was better suited to the honest squires who succeeded him, than to the mighty barons his ancestors. It was substantial and well built, with a square gravelled court in front, and great, solid, folding gates opening into a lane, bordered with very tall well-clipped holly hedges, forming a polished, green, prickly wall. There

was a little door in one of these gates, which was scarcely ever shut, from whence a well-worn path led to the porch, where generally reposed a huge Newfoundland dog, guardian of the hoops and walkingsticks that occupied the corners. The front door was of heavy substantial oak, studded with nails, and never closed in the daytime, and the hall, wainscoted and floored with slippery oak, had a noble open fireplace, with a wood fire burning on the hearth.

On the other side of the house was a terrace sloping down to a lawn and bowling-green, hedged in by a formal row of evergreens. A noble plane-tree was in the middle of the lawn, and beyond it a pond renowned for water-lilies. To the left was the kitchen garden, terminating in an orchard, planted on the ramparts and moat of the Old Court; then came the farm buildings, and beyond them a field, sloping upwards to an extensive wood called Beechcroft Park. In the wood was the cottage of Walter Greenwood, gamekeeper and woodman by hereditary succession, but able and willing to turn his hand to anything, and, in fact, as Adeline once elegantly termed him, the ‘family tee totum.’

To the right of the house there was a field, called Long Acre, bounded on the other side by the turnpike road to Raynham, which led up the hill to the village green, surrounded by well-kept cottages and gardens. The principal part of the village was, however, at the foot of the hill, where the Court lane crossed the road, led to the old church, the school, and parsonage, in its little garden, shut in by thick yew hedges. Beyond was the blacksmith’s shop, more cottages, and Mrs. Appleton’s wondrous village warehouse; and the lane, after passing by the handsome old

farmhouse of Mr. Harrington, Mr. Mohun’s principal tenant, led to a bridge across a clear trout stream, the boundary of the parish of Beechcroft.

CHAPTER III
THE NEW PRINCIPLE

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‘And wilt thou show no more, quoth he,
Than doth thy duty bind?
I well perceive thy love is small.’

On the Sunday evening which followed Eleanor’s wedding, Lilias was sitting next to Emily, and talking in very earnest tones, which after a time occasioned Claude to look up and say, ‘What is all this about? Something remarkably absurd I suspect.’

‘Only a new principle,’ said Emily.

‘New!’ cried Lily, ‘only what must be the feeling of every person of any warmth of character?’

‘Now for it then,’ said Claude.

‘No, no, Claude, I really mean it (and Lily sincerely thought she did). I will not tell you if you are going to laugh.’

‘That depends upon what your principle may chance to be,’ said Claude. ‘What is it, Emily? She will be much obliged to you for telling.’

‘She only says she cannot bear people to do their duty, and not to act from a feeling of love,’ said Emily.

‘That is not fair,’ returned Lily, ‘all I say is, that it is better that people should act upon love for its own sake, than upon duty for its own sake.’

‘What comes in rhyme with Lily?’ said Claude.

‘Don’t be tiresome, Claude, I really want you to understand me.’

‘Wait till you understand yourself,’ said the provoking brother, ‘and let me finish what I am reading.’

For about a quarter of an hour he was left in peace, while Lily was busily employed with a pencil and paper, under the shadow of a book, and at length laid before him the following verses:—

‘What is the source of gentleness,
The spring of human blessedness,
Bringing the wounded spirit healing,
The comforts high of heaven revealing,
The lightener of each daily care,
The wing of hope, the life of prayer,
The zest of joy, the balm of sorrow,
Bliss of to-day, hope of to-morrow,
The glory of the sun’s bright beam,
The softness of the pale moon stream,
The flow’ret’s grace, the river’s voice,
The tune to which the birds rejoice;
Without it, vain each learned page,
Cold and unfelt each council sage,
Heavy and dull each human feature,
Lifeless and wretched every creature;
In which alone the glory lies,
Which value gives to sacrifice?
’Tis that which formed the whole creation,
Which rests on every generation.
Of Paradise the only token
Just left us, ’mid our treasures broken,
Which never can from us be riven,
Sure earnest of the joys of Heaven.

And which, when earth shall pass away,
Shall be our rest on the last day,
When tongues shall fail and knowledge cease,
And throbbing hearts be all at peace:
When faith is sight, and hope is sure,
That which alone shall still endure
Of earthly joys in heaven above,
'Tis that best gift, eternal Love!'

'What have you there?' said Mr. Mohun, who had come towards them while Claude was reading the lines. Taking the paper from Claude's hand, he read it to himself, and then saying, 'Tolerable, Lily; there are some things to alter, but you may easily make it passable,' he went on to his own place, leaving Lilias triumphant.

'Well, Claude, you see I have the great Baron on my side.'

'I am of the Baron's opinion,' said Claude, 'the only wonder is that you doubted it.'

'You seemed to say that love was good for nothing.'

'I said nothing but that Lily has a rhyme.'

'And saying that I was silly, was equivalent to saying that love was nothing,' said Lily.

'O Lily, I hope not,' said Claude, with a comical air.

'Well, I know I often am foolish, but not in this,' said Lily; 'I do say that mere duty is not lovable.'

'Say it if you will then,' said Claude, yawning, 'only let me finish this sermon.'

Lily set herself to reconsider some of her lines: but presently Emily left the room, Claude looked up, and Lily exclaimed, 'Now, Claude, let us make a trial of it.'

‘Well,’ said Claude, yawning again, and looking resigned.

‘Think how Eleanor went on telling us of duty, duty, duty—never making allowances—never relaxing her stiff rules about trifles—never unbending from her duenna-like dignity—never showing one spark of enthusiasm—making great sacrifices, but only because she thought them her duty—because it was right—good for herself—only a higher kind of selfishness—not because her feeling prompted her.’

‘Certainly, feeling does not usually prompt people to give up their lovers for the sake of their brothers and sisters.’

‘She did it because it was her duty,’ said Lily, ‘quite as if she did not care.’

‘I wonder whether Frank thought so,’ said Claude.

‘At any rate you will confess that Emily is a much more engaging person,’ said Lily.

‘Certainly, I had rather talk nonsense to her,’ said Claude.

‘You feel it, though you will not allow it,’ said Lily. ‘Now think of Emily’s sympathy, and gentleness, and sweet smile, and tell me if she is not a complete personification of love. And then Eleanor, unpoetical—never thrown off her balance by grief or joy, with no ups and downs—no enthusiasm—no appreciation of the beautiful—her highest praise “very right,” and tell me if there can be a better image of duty.’

Claude might have had some chance of bringing Lily to her senses, if he had allowed that there was some truth in what she had said; but he thought the accusation so unjust in general, that he would not agree to any part of it, and only answered, ‘You have very strange views of duty and of Eleanor.’

‘Well!’ replied Lily, ‘I only ask you to watch; Emily and I are determined to act on the principle of love, and you will see if her government is not more successful than that of duty.’

Such was the principle upon which Lily intended her sister to govern the household, and to which Emily listened without knowing what she meant much better than she did herself. Emily’s own views, as far as she possessed any, were to get on as smoothly as she could, and make everybody pleased and happy, without much trouble to herself, and also to make the establishment look a little more as if a Lady Emily had lately been its mistress, than had been the case in Eleanor’s time. Mr. Mohun’s property was good, but he wished to avoid unnecessary display and expense, and he expected his daughters to follow out these views, keeping a wise check upon Emily, by looking over her accounts every Saturday, and turning a deaf ear when she talked of the age of the drawing-room carpet, and the ugliness of the old chariot. Emily had a good deal on her hands, requiring sense and activity, but Lilias and Jane were now quite old enough to assist her. Lily however, thought fit to despise all household affairs, and bestowed the chief of her attention on her own department—the village school and poor people; and she was also much engrossed by her music and drawing, her German and Italian, and her verse writing.

Claude had more power over her than any one else. He was a gentle, amiable boy, of high talent, but disposed to indolence by ill health. In most matters he was, however, victorious over this propensity, which was chiefly visible in

his love of easy chairs, and his dislike of active sports, which made him the especial companion of his sisters. A dangerous illness had occasioned his removal from Eton, and he had since been at home, reading with his cousin Mr. Devereux, and sharing his sisters' amusements.

Jane was in her own estimation an important member of the administration, and in fact, was Emily's chief assistant and deputy. She was very small and trimly made, everything fitted her precisely, and she had tiny dexterous fingers, and active little feet, on which she darted about noiselessly and swiftly as an arrow; an oval brown face, bright colour, straight features, and smooth dark hair, bright sparkling black eyes, a little mouth, wearing an arch subdued smile, very white teeth, and altogether the air of a woman in miniature. Brisk, bold, and blithe—ever busy and ever restless, she was generally known by the names of Brownie and Changeling, which were not inappropriate to her active and prying disposition.

Excepting Claude and Emily, the young party were early risers, and Lily especially had generally despatched a good deal of business before the eight o'clock breakfast.

At nine they went to church, Mr. Devereux having restored the custom of daily service, and after this, Mr. Mohun attended to his multitudinous affairs; Claude went to the parsonage,—Emily to the storeroom, Lily to the village, the younger girls to the schoolroom, where they were presently joined by Emily. Lily remained in her own room till one o'clock, when she joined the others in the schoolroom, and they read aloud some book of history till two, the hour of dinner for the younger, and of luncheon for the elder.

They then went out, and on their return from evening service, which began at half-past four, the little ones had their lessons to learn, and the others were variously employed till dinner, the time of which was rather uncertain but always late. The evening passed pleasantly and quickly away in reading, work, music, and chatter.

As Emily had expected, her first troubles were with Phyllis; called, not the neat handed, by her sisters; Master Phyl, by her brothers; and Miss Tomboy, by the maids. She seemed born to be a trial of patience to all concerned with her; yet without many actual faults, except giddiness, restlessness, and unrestrained spirits. In the drawing-room, schoolroom, and nursery she was continually in scrapes, and so often reproved and repentant, that her loud roaring fits of crying were amongst the ordinary noises of the New Court. She was terribly awkward when under constraint, or in learning any female accomplishment, but swift and ready when at her ease, and glorying in the boyish achievements of leaping ditches and climbing trees. Her voice was rather highly pitched, and she had an inveterate habit of saying, ‘I’ll tell you what,’ at the beginning of all her speeches. She was not tall, but strong, square, firm, and active; she had a round merry face, a broad forehead, and large bright laughing eyes, of a doubtful shade between gray and brown. Her mouth was wide, her nose turned up, her complexion healthy, but not rosy, and her stiff straight brown hair was more apt to hang over her eyes, than to remain in its proper place behind her ears.

Adeline was very different; her fair and brilliant complexion, her deep blue eyes and golden ringlets, made