ANNIE BESANT

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

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Table of Contents

I.

Table of Contents

On October 1st, 1847, I made my appearance in this "vale of tears", "little Pheasantina", as I was irreverently called by a giddy aunt, a pet sister of my mother's. Just at that time my father and mother were staying within the boundaries of the City of London, so that I was born well "within the sound of Bow bells".

Though born in London, however, full three quarters of my blood are Irish. My dear mother was a Morris—the spelling of the name having been changed from Maurice some five generations back—and I have often heard her tell a quaint story, illustrative of that family pride which is so common a feature of a decayed Irish family. She was one of a large family, and her father and mother, gay, handsome, and extravagant, had wasted merrily what remained to them of patrimony. I can remember her father well, for I was fourteen years of age when he died. A bent old man, with hair like driven snow, splendidly handsome in his old age, hot-tempered to passion at the lightest provocation, loving and wrath in quick succession. As the family grew larger and the moans grew smaller, many a pinch came on the household, and the parents were glad to accept the offer of a relative to take charge of Emily, the second daughter. A very proud old lady was this maiden aunt, and over the mantel-piece of her drawing-room ever hung a great

diagram, a family tree, which mightily impressed the warm imagination of the delicate child she had taken in charge. It was a lengthy and well-grown family tree, tracing back the Morris family to the days of Charlemagne, and branching out from a stock of "the seven kings of France". Was there ever yet a decayed. Irish family that did not trace itself back to some "kings"? and these "Milesian kings"—who had been expelled from France, doubtless for good reasons, and who had sailed across the sea and landed in fair Erin, and there had settled and robbed and fought—did more good 800 years after their death than they did, I expect, during their ill-spent lives, if they proved a source of gentle harmless pride to the old maiden lady who admired their names over her mantel-piece in the earlier half of the present century. And, indeed, they acted as a kind of moral thermometer, in a fashion that would much have astonished their ill-doing and barbarous selves. For my mother has told me how when she would commit some piece of childish naughtiness, her aunt would say, looking gravely over her spectacles at the small culprit: "Emily, your conduct is unworthy of the descendant of the seven kings of France." And Emily, with her sweet grey Irish eyes, and her curling masses of raven-black hair, would cry in penitent shame over her unworthiness, with some vague idea that those royal, and to her very real ancestors, would despise her small sweet rosebud self, as wholly unworthy of their disreputable majesties. But that same maiden aunt trained the child right well, and I keep ever grateful memory of her, though I never knew her, for her share in forming the tenderest, sweetest, proudest, purest, noblest woman I have ever known. I have

never met a woman more selflessly devoted to those she loved, more passionately contemptuous of all that was mean or base, more keenly sensitive on every question of honor, more iron in will, more sweet in tenderness, than the mother who made my girlhood sunny as dreamland, who guarded me until my marriage from every touch of pain that she could ward off, or could bear for me, who suffered more in every trouble that touched me in later life than I did myself, and who died in the little house I had taken for our new home in Norwood, worn out ere old age touched her, by sorrow, poverty and pain, in May, 1874.

Of my father my memory is less vivid, for he died when I was but five years old. He was of mixed race, English on his father's side, Irish on his mother's, and was born in Galway, and educated in Ireland; he took his degree at Dublin University, and walked the hospitals as a medical student. But after he had qualified as a medical man a good appointment was offered him by a relative in the City of London, and he never practised regularly as a doctor.

In the City his prospects were naturally promising; the elder branch of the Wood Family, to which he belonged, had for many generations been settled in Devonshire, farming their own land. When the eldest son William, my father, came of age, he joined with his father to cut off the entail, and the old acres were sold. Meanwhile members of other branches had entered commercial life, and had therein prospered exceedingly. One of them had become Lord Mayor of London, had vigorously supported the unhappy Queen Caroline, had paid the debts of the Duke of Kent, in order that that reputable individual might return to England with

his Duchess, so that the future heir to the throne might be born on English soil; he had been rewarded with a baronetcy as a cheap method of paying his services. Another, my father's first cousin once removed, a young barrister, had successfully pleaded a suit in which was concerned the huge fortune of a miserly relative, and had thus laid the foundations of a great success; he won for himself a vice-chancellorship and a knighthood, and then the Lord Chancellorship of England, with the barony of Hatherley. A third, a brother of the last, Western Wood, was doing good service in the House of Commons. A fourth, a cousin of the last two, had thrown himself with such spirit and energy into mining work, that he had accumulated a fortune. In fact all the scattered branches had made their several ways in the world, save that elder one to which my father belonged. That had vegetated on down in the country, and had grown poorer while the others grew richer. My father's brothers had somewhat of a fight for life. One has prospered and is comfortable and well-to-do. The other led for years a rough and wandering life, and "came to grief" generally. Some years ago I heard of him as a store-keeper in Portsmouth dock-yard, occasionally boasting in feeble fashion that his cousin was Lord Chancellor of England, and not many months since I heard from him in South Africa, where he has secured some appointment in the Commissariat Department, not, I fear, of a very lucrative character.

Let us come back to Pheasantina, who, I am told, was a delicate and somewhat fractious infant, giving to both father and mother considerable cause for anxiety. Her first attempts at rising in the world were attended with disaster,

for as she was lying in a cradle, with carved iron canopy, and was for a moment left by her nurse in full faith that she could not rise from the recumbent position, Miss Pheasantina determined to show that she was capable of unexpected independence, and made a vigorous struggle to assume that upright position which is the proud prerogative of man. In another moment the recumbent position was re-assumed, and the nurse returning found the baby's face covered with blood, streaming from a severe wound on the forehead, the iron fretwork having proved harder than the baby's head. The scar remains down to the present time, and gives me the valuable peculiarity of only wrinkling up one side of my forehead when I raise my eyebrows, a feat that I defy any of my readers to emulate. The heavy cut has, I suppose, so injured the muscles in that spot that they have lost the normal power of contraction.

My earliest personal recollections are of a house and garden that we lived in when I was three and four years of age, situated in Grove Road, St. John's Wood. I can remember my mother hovering round the dinner-table to see that all was bright for the home-coming husband; my brother—two years older than myself—and I watching "for papa"; the loving welcome, the game of romps that always preceded the dinner of the elder folks. I can remember on the first of October, 1851, jumping up in my little cot, and shouting out triumphantly: "Papa! mamma! I am four years old!" and the grave demand of my brother, conscious of superior age, at dinner-time: "May not Annie have a knife to-day, as she is four years old?"

It was a sore grievance during that same year 1851, that I was not judged old enough to go to the Great Exhibition, and I have a faint memory of my brother consolingly bringing me home one of those folding pictured strips that are sold in the streets, on which were imaged glories that I longed only the more to see. Far-away, dusky, trivial memories, these. What a pity it is that a baby cannot notice, cannot observe, cannot remember, and so throw light on the fashion of the dawning of the external world on the human consciousness. If only we could remember how things looked when they were first imaged on the retinae; what we felt when first we became conscious of the outer world; what the feeling was as faces of father and mother grew out of the surrounding chaos and became familiar things, greeted with a smile, lost with a cry; if only memory would not become a mist when in later years we strive to throw our glances backward into the darkness of our infancy, what lessons we might learn to help our stumbling psychology, how many questions might be solved whose answers we are groping for in vain.

II.

Table of Contents

The next scene that stands out clearly against the background of the past is that of my father's death-bed. The events which led to his death I know from my dear mother. He had never lost his fondness for the profession for which

he had been trained, and having many medical friends, he would now and then accompany them on their hospital rounds, or share with them the labors of the dissecting room. It chanced that during the dissection of the body of a person who had died of rapid consumption, my father cut his finger against the edge of the breast-bone. The cut did not heal easily, and the finger became swollen and inflamed. "I would have that finger off, Wood, if I were you," said one of the surgeons, a day or two afterwards, on seeing the state of the wound. But the others laughed at the suggestion, and my father, at first inclined to submit to the amputation, was persuaded to "leave Nature alone".

About the middle of August, 1852, he got wet through, riding on the top of an omnibus, and the wetting resulted in a severe cold, which "settled on his chest". One of the most eminent doctors of the day, as able as he was rough in manner, was called to see him. He examined him carefully, sounded his lungs, and left the room followed by my mother. "Well?" she asked, scarcely anxious as to the answer, save as it might worry her husband to be kept idly at home. "You must keep up his spirits", was the thoughtless answer. "He is in a galloping consumption; you will not have him with you six weeks longer." The wife staggered back, and fell like a stone on the floor. But love triumphed over agony, and half an hour later she was again at her husband's side, never to leave it again for ten minutes at a time, night or day, till he was lying with closed eyes asleep in death.

I was lifted on to the bed to "say good-bye to dear Papa" on the day before his death, and I remember being frightened at his eyes which looked so large, and his voice

which sounded so strange, as he made me promise always to be "a very good girl to darling Mamma, as Papa was going right away". I remember insisting that "Papa should kiss Cherry", a doll given me on my birthday, three days before, by his direction, and being removed, crying and struggling, from the room. He died on the following day, October 5th, and I do not think that my elder brother and I—who were staying at our maternal grandfather's—went to the house again until the day of the funeral. With the death, my mother broke down, and when all was over they carried her senseless from the room. I remember hearing afterwards how, when she recovered her senses, she passionately insisted on being left alone, and locked herself into her room for the night; and how on the following morning her mother, at last persuading her to open the door, started back at the face she saw with the cry: "Good God! Emily! your hair is white!" It was even so; her hair, black, glossy and abundant, which, contrasting with her large grey eyes, had made her face so strangely attractive, had turned grey in that night of agony, and to me my mother's face is ever framed in exquisite silver bands of hair as white as the driven unsullied snow.

I have heard that the love between my father and mother was a very beautiful thing, and it most certainly stamped her character for life. He was keenly intellectual, and splendidly educated; a mathematician and a good classical scholar, thoroughly master of French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese, with a smattering of Hebrew and Gaelic, the treasures of ancient and of modern literature were his daily household delight. Nothing pleased him so

well as to sit with his wife, reading aloud to her while she worked; now translating from some foreign poet, now rolling forth melodiously the exquisite cadences of Queen Mab. Student of philosophy as he was, he was deeply and steadily sceptical; and a very religious relative has told me that he often drove her from the room by his light playful mockery of the tenets of the Christian faith. His mother and sister were strict Roman Catholics, and near the end forced a priest into his room, but the priest was promptly ejected by the wrath of the dying man, and by the almost fierce resolve of the wife that no messenger of the creed he detested should trouble her darling at the last.

This scepticism of his was not wholly shared by his wife, who held to the notion that women should be "religious," while men might philosophise as they would; but it so deeply influenced her own intellectual life that she utterly rejected the most irrational dogmas of Christianity, such as eternal punishment, the vicarious atonement of Christ, the doctrine that faith is necessary to salvation, the equality of Christ with God, the infallibility of the Bible; she made morality of life, not orthodoxy of belief, her measure of "religion"; she was "a Christian", in her own view of the matter, but it was a Christian of the school of Jowett, of Colenso, and of Stanley. The latter writer had for her, in after years, the very strongest fascination, and I am not sure that his "variegated use of words", so fiercely condemned by Dr. Pusey, did not exactly suit her own turn of mind, which shrank back intellectually from the crude dogmas of orthodox Christianity, but clung poetically to the artistic side of religion, to its art and to its music, to the grandeur of its

glorious fanes, and the solemnity of its stately ritual. She detested the meretricious show, the tinsel gaudiness, the bowing and genuflecting, the candles and the draperies, of Romanism, and of its pinchbeck imitator Ritualism; but I doubt whether she knew any keener pleasure than to sit in one of the carved stalls of Westminster Abbey, listening to the polished sweetness of Dean Stanley's exquisite eloquence; or to the thunder of the organ mingled with the voices of the white-robed choristers, as the music rose and fell, as it pealed up to the arched roof and lost itself in the carven fretwork, or died away softly among the echoes of the chapels in which kings and saints and sages lay sleeping, enshrining in themselves the glories and the sorrows of the past.

To return to October, 1852. On the day of the funeral my elder brother and I were taken back to the house where my father lay dead, and while my brother went as chief mourner, poor little boy swamped in crape and miserable exceedingly, I sat in an upstairs room with my mother and her sisters; and still comes back to me her figure, seated on a sofa, with fixed white face and dull vacant eyes, counting the minutes till the funeral procession would have reached Kensal Green, and then following in mechanical fashion, prayer-book in hand, the service, stage by stage, until to my unspeakable terror, with the words, dully spoken, "It is all over", she fell back fainting. And here comes a curious psychological problem which has often puzzled me. Some weeks later she resolved to go and see her husband's grave. A relative who had been present at the funeral volunteered to guide her to the spot, but lost his way in that wilderness

of graves. Another of the small party went off to find one of the officials and to enquire, and my mother said: "If you will take me to the chapel where the first part of the service was read, I will find the grave". To humor her whim, he led her thither, and, looking round for a moment or two, she started from the chapel, followed the path along which the corpse had been borne, and was standing by the newly-made grave when the official arrived to point it out. Her own explanation was that she had seen all the service; what is certain is, that she had never been to Kensal Green before, and that she walked steadily to the grave from the chapel. Whether the spot had been carefully described to her, whether she had heard others talking of its position or not, we could never ascertain; she had no remembrance of any such description, and the matter always remained to us a problem. But after the lapse of years a hundred little things may have been forgotten which unconsciously served as guides at the time. She must have been, of course, at that time, in a state of abnormal nervous excitation, a state of which another proof was shortly afterwards given. The youngest of our little family was a boy about three years younger than myself, a very beautiful child, blue-eyed and golden haired—I have still a lock of his hair, of exquisite pale golden hue—and the little lad was passionately devoted to his father. He was always a delicate boy, and had I suppose, therefore, been specially petted, and he fretted continually for "papa". It is probable that the consumptive taint had touched him, for he pined steadily away, with no marked disease, during the winter months. One morning my mother calmly stated: "Alf is going to die". It was in vain that it was urged on her that

with the spring strength would return to the child. "No", she persisted. "He was lying asleep in my arms last night, and William came to me and said that he wanted Alf with him, but that I might keep the other two." She had in her a strong strain of Celtic superstition, and thoroughly believed that this "vision"—a most natural dream under the circumstances—was a direct "warning", and that her husband had come to her to tell her of her approaching loss. This belief was, in her eyes, thoroughly justified by the little fellow's death in the following March, calling to the end for "Papa! papa!" My brother and I were allowed to see him just before he was placed in his coffin; I can see him still, so white and beautiful, with a black spot in the middle of the fair waxen forehead, and I remember the deadly cold which startled me when I was told to kiss my little brother. It was the first time that I had touched Death. That black spot made a curious impression on me, and long afterwards, asking what had caused it, I was told that at the moment after his death my mother had passionately kissed the baby brow. Pathetic thought, that the mother's kiss of farewell should have been marked by the first sign of corruption on the child's face.

And now began my mother's time of struggle and of anxiety. Hitherto, since her marriage, she had known no money troubles, for her husband was earning a good income; he was apparently vigorous and well: no thought of anxiety clouded their future. When he died, he believed that he left his wife and children safe, at least, from pecuniary distress. It was not so. I know nothing of the details, but the outcome of all was that nothing was left for the widow and

children, save a trifle of ready money. The resolve to which, my mother came was characteristic. Two of her husband's relatives, Western and Sir William Wood, offered to educate her son at a good city school, and to start him in commercial life, using their great city influence to push him forward. But the young lad's father and mother had talked of a different future for their eldest boy; he was to go to a public school, and then to the University, and was to enter one of the "learned professions"—to take orders, the mother wished; to go to the Bar, the father hoped. On his death-bed there was nothing more earnestly urged by my father than that Harry should receive the best possible education, and the widow was resolute to fulfil that last wish. In her eyes, a city school was not "the best possible education", and the Irish pride rebelled against the idea of her son not being "a University man". Many were the lectures poured out on the young widow's head about her "foolish pride", especially by the female members of the Wood family; and her persistence in her own way caused a considerable alienation between herself and them. But Western and William, though half-disapproving, remained her friends, and lent many a helping hand to her in her first difficult struggles. After much cogitation, she resolved that the boy should be educated at Harrow, where the fees are comparatively low to lads living in the town, and that he should go thence to Cambridge or to Oxford, as his tastes should direct. A bold scheme for a penniless widow, but carried out to the letter; for never dwelt in a delicate body a more resolute mind and will than that of my dear mother.

In a few months' time—during which we lived, poorly enough, in Richmond Terrace, Clapham, close to her father and mother—to Harrow, then, she betook herself, into lodgings over a grocer's shop, and set herself to look for a house. This grocer was a very pompous man, fond of long words, and patronised the young widow exceedingly, and one day my mother related with much amusement how he had told her that she was sure to get on if she worked hard. "Look at me!" he said swelling visibly with importance; "I was once a poor boy, without a penny of my own, and now I am a comfortable man, and have my submarine villa to go to every evening". That "submarine villa" was an object of amusement when we passed it in our walks for many a long day. "There is Mr. ——'s submarine villa", some one would say, laughing: and I, too, used to laugh merrily, because my elders did, though my understanding of the difference between suburban and submarine was on a par with that of the honest grocer.

My mother had fortunately found a boy, whose parents were glad to place him in her charge, of about the age of her own son, to educate with him; and by this means she was able to pay for a tutor, to prepare the two boys for school. The tutor had a cork leg, which was a source of serious trouble to me, for it stuck out straight behind when we knelt down to family prayers—conduct which struck me as irreverent and unbecoming, but which I always felt a desire to imitate. After about a year, my mother found a house which she thought would suit her scheme, namely, to obtain permission from Dr. Vaughan, the then Head Master of Harrow, to take some boys into her house, and so gain

means of education for her own son. Dr. Vaughan, who must have been won by the gentle, strong, little woman, from that time forth became her earnest friend and helper; and to the counsel and active assistance both of himself and of his wife, was due much of the success that crowned her toil. He made only one condition in granting the permission she asked, and that was, that she should also have in her house one of the masters of the school, so that the boys should not suffer from the want of a house-tutor. This condition, of course, she readily accepted, and the arrangement lasted for ten years, until after her son had left school for Cambridge.

The house she took is now, I am sorry to say, pulled down, and replaced by a hideous red-brick structure. It was very old and rambling, rose-covered in front, ivy-covered behind; it stood on the top of Harrow Hill, between the church and the school, and had once been the vicarage of the parish, but the vicar had left it because it was so far removed from the part of the village where all his work lay. The drawing-room opened by an old-fashioned half-window, half-door—which proved a constant source of grief to me, for whenever I had on a new frock I always tore it on the bolt as I flew through it—into a large garden which sloped down one side of the hill, and was filled with the most delightful old trees, fir and laurel, may, mulberry, hazel, apple, pear, and damson, not to mention currant and gooseberry bushes innumerable, and large strawberry beds spreading down the sunny slopes. There was not a tree there that I did not climb, and one, a widespreading Portugal laurel, was my private country house. I had there my bedroom and my

sitting-rooms, my study, and my larder. The larder was supplied by the fruit-trees, from which I was free to pick as I would, and in the study I would sit for hours with some favorite book—Milton's "Paradise Lost" the chief favorite of all. The birds must often have felt startled, when from the small swinging form perching on a branch, came out in childish tones the "Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers", of Milton's stately and sonorous verse. I liked to personify Satan, and to declaim the grand speeches of the hero-rebel, and many a happy hour did I pass in Milton's heaven and hell, with for companions Satan and "the Son", Gabriel and Abdiel. Then there was a terrace running by the side of the churchyard, always dry in the wettest weather, and bordered by an old wooden fence, over which clambered roses of every shade; never was such a garden for roses as that of the Old Vicarage. At the end of the terrace was a little summer-house, and in this a trap-door in the fence, which swung open and displayed one of the fairest views in England. Sheer from your feet downwards went the hill, and then far below stretched the wooded country till your eye reached the towers of Windsor Castle, far away on the horizon. It was the view at which Byron was never tired of gazing, as he lay on the flat tombstone close by—Byron's tomb, as it is still called—of which he wrote:

"Again I behold where for hours I have pondered,
As reclining, at eve, on yon tombstone I lay,
Or round the steep brow of the churchyard I wandered,
To catch the last gleam of the sun's setting ray."

Reader mine, if ever you go to Harrow, ask permission to enter the old garden, and try the effect of that sudden burst of beauty, as you swing back the small trap-door at the terrace end.

Into this house we moved on my eighth birthday, and for eleven years it was "home" to me, left always with regret, returned to always with joy.

Almost immediately afterwards I left my mother for the first time; for one day, visiting a family who lived close by, I found a stranger sitting in the drawing-room, a lame lady with, a strong face, which softened marvellously as she smiled at the child who came dancing in; she called me to her presently, and took me on her lap and talked to me, and on the following day our friend came to see my mother, to ask if she would let me go away and be educated with this lady's niece, coming home for the holidays regularly, but leaving my education in her hands. At first my mother would not hear of it, for she and I scarcely ever left each other; my love for her was an idolatry, hers for me a devotion. [A foolish little story, about which I was unmercifully teased for years, marked that absolute idolatry of her, which has not yet faded from my heart. In tenderest rallying one day of the child who trotted after her everywhere, content to sit, or stand, or wait, if only she might touch hand or dress of "mamma," she said: "Little one (the name by which she always called me), if you cling to mamma in this way, I must really get a string and tie you to my apron, and how will you like that?" "O mamma darling," came the fervent answer, "do let it be in a knot." And, indeed, the tie of love between us was so tightly knotted that nothing ever loosened it till

the sword of Death cut that which pain and trouble never availed to slacken in the slightest degree.] But it was urged upon her that the advantages of education offered were such as no money could purchase for me; that it would be a disadvantage for me to grow up in a houseful of boys—and, in truth, I was as good a cricketer and climber as the best of them—that my mother would soon be obliged to send me to school, unless she accepted an offer which gave me every advantage of school without its disadvantages. At last she yielded, and it was decided that Miss Marryat, on returning home, should take me with her.

Miss Marryat—the favorite sister of Captain Marryat, the famous novelist—was a maiden lady of large means. She had nursed her brother through the illness that ended in his death, and had been living with her mother at Wimbledon Park. On her mother's death she looked round for work which would make her useful in the world, and finding that one of her brothers had a large family of girls, she offered to take charge of one of them, and to educate her thoroughly. Chancing to come to Harrow, my good fortune threw me in her way, and she took a fancy to me and thought she would like to teach two little girls rather than one. Hence her offer to my mother.

Miss Marryat had a perfect genius for teaching, and took in it the greatest delight. From time to time she added another child to our party, sometimes a boy, sometimes a girl. At first, with Amy Marryat and myself, there was a little boy, Walter Powys, son of a clergyman with a large family, and him she trained for some years, and then sent him on to school admirably prepared. She chose "her children"—as

she loved to call us—in very definite fashion. Each must be gently born and gently trained, but in such position that the education freely given should be a relief and aid to a slender parental purse. It was her delight to seek out and aid those on whom poverty presses most heavily, when the need for education for the children weighs on the proud and the poor. "Auntie" we all called her, for she thought "Miss Marryat" seemed too cold and stiff. She taught us everything herself except music, and for this she had a master, practising us in composition, in recitation, in reading aloud English and French, and later, German, devoting herself to training us in the soundest, most thorough fashion. No words of mine can tell how much I owe her, not only of knowledge, bit of that love of knowledge which has remained with me ever since as a constant spur to study.

Her method of teaching may be of interest to some, who desire to train children with the least pain, and the most enjoyment to the little ones themselves. First, we never used a spelling-book—that torment of the small child—nor an English grammar. But we wrote letters, telling of the things we had seen in our walks, or told again some story we had read; these childish compositions she would read over with us, correcting all faults of spelling, of grammar, of style, of cadence; a clumsy sentence would be read aloud, that we might hear how unmusical it sounded; an error in observation or expression pointed out. Then, as the letters recorded what we had seen the day before, the faculty of observation was drawn out and trained. "Oh, dear! I have nothing to say!" would come from a small child, hanging over a slate. "Did you not go out for a walk yesterday?"

Auntie would question. "Yes", would be sighed out; "but there's nothing to say about it". "Nothing to say! And you walked in the lanes for an hour and saw nothing, little No-eyes? You must use your eyes better to-day." Then there was a very favorite "lesson", which proved an excellent way of teaching spelling. We used to write out lists of all the words we could think of, which sounded the same but were differently spelt. Thus: "key, quay," "knight, night," and so on; and great was the glory of the child who found the largest number. Our French lessons—as the German later—included reading from the very first. On the day on which we began German we began reading Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell," and the verbs given to us to copy out were those that had occurred in the reading. We learned much by heart, but always things that in themselves were worthy to be learned. We were never given the dry questions and answers which lazy teachers so much affect. We were taught history by one reading aloud while the others worked—the boys as well as the girls learning the use of the needle. "It's like a girl to sew," said a little fellow, indignantly, one day. "It is like a baby to have to run after a girl if you want a button sewn on," quoth Auntie. Geography was learned by painting skeleton maps—an exercise much delighted in by small fingers—and by putting together puzzle maps, in which countries in the map of a continent, or counties in the map of a country, were always cut out in their proper shapes. I liked big empires in those days; there was a solid satisfaction in putting down Russia, and seeing what a large part of the map was filled up thereby.

The only grammar that we ever learned as grammar was the Latin, and that not until composition had made us familiar with the use of the rules therein given. Auntie had a great horror of children learning by rote things they did not understand, and then fancying they knew them. "What do you mean by that expression, Annie?" she would ask me. After feeble attempts to explain, I would answer: "Indeed, Auntie, I know in my own head, but I can't explain". "Then, indeed, Annie, you do not know in your own head, or you could explain, so that I might know in my own head." And so a healthy habit was fostered of clearness of thought and of expression. The Latin grammar was used because it was more perfect than the modern grammars, and served as a solid foundation for modern languages.

Miss Marryat took a beautiful place, Fern Hill, near Charmouth, in Dorsetshire, on the borders of Devon, and there she lived for some five years, a centre of beneficence in the district. She started a Sunday-school, and a Bible-class after a while for the lads too old for the school, who clamored for admission to her class in it. She visited the poor, taking help wherever she went, and sending food from her own table to the sick. It was characteristic of her that she would never give "scraps" to the poor, but would have a basin brought in at dinner, and would cut the best slice to tempt the invalid appetite. Money she rarely, if ever, gave, but she would find a day's work, or busy herself to seek permanent employment for anyone asking aid. Stern in rectitude herself, and iron to the fawning or the dishonest, her influence, whether she was feared or loved, was always for good. Of the strictest sect of the Evangelicals, she was