

CHAPTER XII

THE promise of a smooth career, which my first calm introduction to Thornfield Hall seemed to pledge, was not belied on a longer acquaintance with the place and its inmates. Mrs. Fairfax turned out to be what she appeared, a placid-tempered, kind-natured woman, of competent education and average intelligence. My pupil was a lively child, who had been spoilt and indulged, and therefore was sometimes wayward; but as she was committed entirely to my care, and no injudicious interference from any quarter ever thwarted my plans for her improvement, she soon forgot her little freaks, and became obedient and teachable. She had no great talents, no marked traits of character, no peculiar development of feeling or taste which raised her one inch above the ordinary level of childhood; but neither had she any deficiency or vice which sunk her below it. She made reasonable progress, entertained for me a vivacious, though perhaps not very profound, affection; and by her simplicity, gay prattle, and efforts to please, inspired me, in return, with a degree of attachment sufficient to make us both content in each other's society.

This, *par parenthese*, will be thought cool language by persons who entertain solemn doctrines about the angelic nature of children, and the duty of those charged with their education to conceive for them an idolatrous devotion: but I am not writing to flatter parental egotism, to echo cant, or prop up humbug; I am merely telling the truth. I felt a conscientious solicitude for Adele's welfare and progress, and a quiet liking for her little self: just as I cherished towards Mrs. Fairfax a thankfulness for her kindness, and a pleasure in her society proportionate to the tranquil regard she had for me, and the moderation of her mind and character.

Anybody may blame me who likes, when I add further, that, now and then, when I took a walk by myself in the grounds; when I went down to the gates and looked through them along the road; or when, while Adele played with her nurse, and Mrs. Fairfax made jellies in the storeroom, I climbed the three staircases, raised the trap-door of the attic, and having reached the leads, looked out afar over sequestered field and hill, and along dim sky-line- that then I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit; which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen- that then I desired more of practical experience than I possessed; more of intercourse with my kind, of acquaintance with variety of character, than was here within my reach. I valued what was good in Mrs. Fairfax, and what was good in Adele; but I believed in the existence of other and more vivid kinds of goodness, and what I believed in I wished to behold.

Who blames me? Many, no doubt; and I shall be called discontented. I could not help it: the restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes. Then my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third storey, backwards and forwards, safe in the silence and solitude of the spot, and allow my mind's eye to dwell on whatever bright visions rose before it- and, certainly, they were many and glowing; to let my heart be heaved by the exultant movement, which, while it swelled it in trouble, expanded it with life; and, best of all, to open my inward ear to a tale that was never ended- a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously; quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence.

It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and

millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.

When thus alone, I not unfrequently heard Grace Poole's laugh: the same peal, the same low, slow ha! ha! which, when first heard, had thrilled me: I heard, too, her eccentric murmurs; stranger than her laugh. There were days when she was quite silent; but there were others when I could not account for the sounds she made. Sometimes I saw her: she would come out of her room with a basin, or a plate, or a tray in her hand, go down to the kitchen and shortly return, generally (oh, romantic reader, forgive me for telling the plain truth!) bearing a pot of porter. Her appearance always acted as a damper to the curiosity raised by her oral oddities: hard-featured and staid, she had no point to which interest could attach. I made some attempts to draw her into conversation, but she seemed a person of few words: a monosyllabic reply usually cut short every effort of that sort.

The other members of the household, viz, John and his wife, Leah the housemaid, and Sophie the French nurse, were decent people; but in no respect remarkable; with Sophie I used to talk French, and sometimes I asked her questions about her native country; but she was not of a descriptive or narrative turn, and generally gave such vapid and confused answers as were calculated rather to check than encourage inquiry.

October, November, December passed away. One afternoon in January, Mrs. Fairfax had begged a holiday for Adele, because she had a cold; and, as Adele seconded the request with an ardour that reminded me how precious occasional holidays had been to me in my own childhood, I accorded it, deeming that I did well in showing pliability on the point. It was a fine, calm day, though very cold;

I was tired of sitting still in the library through a whole long morning: Mrs. Fairfax had just written a letter which was waiting to be posted, so I put on my bonnet and cloak and volunteered to carry it to Hay; the distance, two miles, would be a pleasant winter afternoon walk. Having seen Adele comfortably seated in her little chair by Mrs. Fairfax's parlour fireside, and given her her best wax doll (which I usually kept enveloped in silver paper in a drawer) to play with, and a story-book for a change of amusement; and having replied to her 'Revenez bientot, ma bonne amie, ma chere Mdlle.

Jeannette,' with a kiss I set out.

The ground was hard, the air was still, my road was lonely; I walked fast till I got warm, and then I walked slowly to enjoy and analyse the species of pleasure brooding for me in the hour and situation. It was three o'clock; the church bell tolled as I passed under the belfry: the charm of the

hour lay in its approaching dimness, in the low-gliding and pale-beaming sun. I was a mile from Thornfield, in a lane noted for wild roses in summer, for nuts and blackberries in autumn, and even now possessing a few coral treasures in hips and haws, but whose best winter delight lay in its utter solitude and leafless repose. If a breath of air stirred, it made no sound here; for there was not a holly, not an evergreen to rustle, and the stripped hawthorn and hazel bushes were as still as the white, worn stones which causewayed the middle of the path. Far and wide, on each side, there were only fields, where no cattle now browsed; and the little brown birds, which stirred occasionally in the hedge, looked like single russet leaves that had forgotten to drop.

This lane inclined up-hill all the way to Hay; having reached the middle, I sat down on a stile which led thence into a field. Gathering my mantle about me, and sheltering my hands in my muff, I did not feel the cold, though it froze keenly; as was attested by a sheet of ice covering the causeway, where a little brooklet, now congealed, had overflowed after a rapid thaw some days since. From my seat I could look down on Thornfield: the grey and battlemented hall was the principal object in the vale below me; its woods and dark rookery rose against the, west. I lingered till the sun went down amongst the trees, and sank crimson and clear behind them. I then turned eastward.

On the hill-top above me sat the rising moon; pale yet as a cloud, but brightening momentarily, she looked over Hay, which, half lost in trees, sent up a blue smoke from its few chimneys: it was yet a mile distant, but in the absolute hush I could hear plainly its thin murmurs of life. My ear, too, felt the flow of currents; in what dales and depths I could not tell: but there were many hills beyond Hay, and doubtless many becks threading their passes. That evening calm betrayed alike the tinkle of the nearest streams, the sigh of the most remote.

A rude noise broke on these fine ripples and whisperings, at once so far away and so clear: a positive tramp, tramp, a metallic clatter, which effaced the soft wave-wanderings; as, in a picture, the solid mass of a crag, or the rough boles of a great oak, drawn in dark and strong on the foreground, efface the aerial distance of azure hill, sunny horizon, and blended clouds where tint melts into tint.

The din was on the causeway: a horse was coming; the windings of the lane yet hid it, but it approached. I was just leaving the stile; yet, as the path was narrow, I sat still to let it go by. In those days I was young, and all sorts of fancies bright and dark tenanted my mind: the memories of nursery stories were there amongst other rubbish; and when they recurred, maturing youth added to them a vigour and vividness beyond what childhood could give. As this horse approached, and as I watched for it to appear through the dusk, I remembered certain of Bessie's tales, wherein figured a North-of-England spirit called a 'Gytrash,' which, in the form of horse, mule, or large dog, haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travellers, as this horse was now coming upon me.

It was very near, but not yet in sight; when, in addition to the tramp, tramp, I heard a rush under the hedge, and close down by the hazel stems glided a great dog, whose black and white colour made him a distinct object against the trees. It was exactly one form of Bessie's Gytrash- a lion-like creature with long hair and a huge head:

it passed me, however, quietly enough; not staying to look up, with strange pretercanine eyes, in my face, as I half expected it would.

The horse followed,- a tall steed, and on its back a rider. The man, the human being, broke the spell at once. Nothing ever rode the Gytrash: it was always alone; and goblins, to my notions, though they might tenant the dumb carcasses of beasts, could scarce covet shelter in the commonplace human form. No Gytrash was this,- only a traveller taking the short cut to Millcote. He passed, and I went on; a few steps, and I turned: a sliding sound and an exclamation of 'What the deuce is to do now?' and a clattering tumble, arrested my attention. Man and horse were down; they had slipped on the sheet of ice which glazed the causeway. The dog came bounding back, and seeing his master in a predicament, and hearing the horse groan, barked till the evening hills echoed the sound, which was deep in proportion to his magnitude. He snuffed round the prostrate group, and then he ran up to me; it was all he could do,- there was no other help at hand to summon. I obeyed him, and walked down to the traveller, by this time struggling himself free of his steed. His efforts were so vigorous, I thought he could not be much hurt; but I asked him the question-

'Are you injured, sir?'

I think he was swearing, but am not certain; however, he was pronouncing some formula which prevented him from replying to me directly.

'Can I do anything?' I asked again.

'You must just stand on one side,' he answered as he rose, first to his knees, and then to his feet. I did; whereupon began a heaving, stamping, clattering process, accompanied by a barking and baying which removed me effectually some yards' distance; but I would not be driven quite away till I saw the event. This was finally fortunate; the horse was re-established, and the dog was silenced with a 'Down, Pilot!' The traveller now, stooping, felt his foot and leg, as if trying whether they were sound; apparently something ailed them, for he halted to the stile whence I had just risen, and sat down.

I was in the mood for being useful, or at least officious, I think, for I now drew near him again.

'If you are hurt, and want help, sir, I can fetch some one either from Thornfield Hall or from Hay.'

'Thank you: I shall do: I have no broken bones,- only a sprain;' and again he stood up and tried his foot, but the result extorted an involuntary 'Ugh!'

Something of daylight still lingered, and the moon was waxing bright: I could see him plainly. His figure was enveloped in a riding cloak, fur collared and steel clasped; its details were not apparent, but I traced the general points of middle height and considerable breadth of chest. He had a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow; his eyes and gathered eyebrows looked ireful and thwarted just now; he was past youth, but had not reached middle-age; perhaps he might be thirty-five. I felt no fear of him, and but little shyness. Had he been a handsome, heroic-looking young

gentleman, I should not have dared to stand thus questioning him against his will, and offering my services unasked. I had hardly ever seen a handsome youth; never in my life spoken to one. I had a theoretical reverence and homage for beauty, elegance, gallantry, fascination; but had I met those qualities incarnate in masculine shape, I should have known instinctively that they neither had nor could have sympathy with anything in me, and should have shunned them as one would fire, lightning, or anything else that is bright but antipathetic.

If even this stranger had smiled and been good-humoured to me when I addressed him; if he had put off my offer of assistance gaily and with thanks, I should have gone on my way and not felt any vocation to renew inquiries: but the frown, the roughness of the traveller, set me at my ease: I retained my station when he waved to me to go, and announced-

'I cannot think of leaving you, sir, at so late an hour, in this solitary lane, till I see you are fit to mount your horse.'

He looked at me when I said this; he had hardly turned his eyes in my direction before.

'I should think you ought to be at home yourself,' said he, 'if you have a home in this neighbourhood: where do you come from?'

'From just below; and I am not at all afraid of being out late when it is moonlight: I will run over to Hay for you with pleasure, if you wish it: indeed, I am going there to post a letter.'

'You live just below- do you mean at that house with the battlements?' pointing to Thornfield Hall, on which the moon cast a hoary gleam, bringing it out distinct and pale from the woods, that, by contrast with the western sky, now seemed one mass of shadow.

'Yes, sir.'

'Whose house is it?'

'Mr. Rochester's.'

'Do you know Mr. Rochester?'

'No, I have never seen him.'

'He is not resident, then?'

'No.'

'Can you tell me where he is?'

'I cannot.'

'You are not a servant at the hall, of course. You are-' He stopped, ran his eye over my dress, which, as usual, was quite simple: a black merino cloak, a black beaver bonnet; neither of them half fine enough for a lady's-maid. He seemed puzzled to decide what I was; I helped him.

'I am the governess.'

'Ah, the governess!' he repeated; 'deuce take me, if I had not forgotten! The governess!' and again my raiment underwent scrutiny. In two minutes he rose from the stile: his face expressed pain when he tried to move.

'I cannot commission you to fetch help,' he said; 'but you may help me a little yourself, if you will be so kind.'

'Yes, sir.'

'You have not an umbrella that I can use as a stick?'

'No.'

'Try to get hold of my horse's bridle and lead him to me: you are not afraid?'

I should have been afraid to touch a horse when alone, but when told to do it, I was disposed to obey. I put down my muff on the stile, and went up to the tall steed; I endeavoured to catch the bridle, but it was a spirited thing, and would not let me come near its head; I made effort on effort, though in vain: meantime, I was mortally afraid of its trampling forefeet. The traveller waited and watched for some time, and at last he laughed.

'I see,' he said, 'the mountain will never be brought to Mahomet, so all you can do is to aid Mahomet to go to the mountain; I must beg of you to come here.'

I came. 'Excuse me,' he continued: 'necessity compels me to make you useful.' He laid a heavy hand on my shoulder, and leaning on me with some stress, limped to his horse. Having once caught the bridle, he mastered it directly and sprang to his saddle; grimacing grimly as he made the effort, for it wrenched his sprain.

'Now,' said he, releasing his under lip from a hard bite, 'just hand me my whip; it lies there under the hedge.' I sought it and found it.

'Thank you; now make haste with the letter to Hay, and return as fast as you can.'

A touch of a spurred heel made his horse first start and rear, and then bound away; the dog rushed in his traces; all three vanished, 'Like heath that, in the wilderness, The wild wind whirls away.'

I took up my muff and walked on. The incident had occurred and was gone for me: it was an incident of no moment, no romance, no interest in a sense; yet it marked with change one single hour of a monotonous life. My help had been needed and claimed; I had given it: I was pleased to have done something; trivial, transitory though the deed was, it was yet an active thing, and I was weary of an existence all passive. The new face, too, was like a new picture introduced to the gallery of memory; and it was dissimilar to all the others hanging there: firstly, because it was masculine; and, secondly, because it was dark, strong, and stern. I had it still before me when I entered Hay, and slipped the letter into the post-office; I saw it as I walked fast down-hill all the way home.

When I came to the stile, I stopped a minute, looked round and listened, with an idea that a horse's hoofs might ring on the causeway again, and that a rider in a cloak, and a Gytrash-like Newfoundland dog, might be again apparent: I saw only the hedge and a pollard willow before me, rising up still and straight to meet the moonbeams; I heard only the faintest waft of wind roaming fitful among the trees round Thornfield, a mile distant; and when I glanced down in the direction of the murmur, my eye, traversing the hall-front, caught a light kindling in a window: it reminded me that I was late, and I hurried on.

I did not like re-entering Thornfield. To pass its threshold was to return to stagnation; to cross the silent hall, to ascend the darksome staircase, to seek my own lonely little room, and then to meet tranquil Mrs. Fairfax, and spend the long winter evening with her, and her only, was to quell wholly the faint excitement wakened by my walk,- to slip again over my faculties the viewless fetters of an uniform and too still existence; of an existence whose very privileges of security and ease I was becoming incapable of appreciating. What good it would have done me at that time to have been tossed in the storms of an uncertain struggling life, and to have been taught by rough and bitter experience to long for the calm amidst which I now repined! Yes, just as much good as it would do a man tired of sitting still in a 'too easy chair' to take a long walk: and just as natural was the wish to stir, under my circumstances, as it would be under his.

I lingered at the gates; I lingered on the lawn; I paced backwards and forwards on the pavement; the shutters of the glass door were closed; I could not see into the interior; and both my eyes and spirit seemed drawn from the gloomy house- from the grey hollow filled with rayless cells, as it appeared to me- to that sky expanded before me,- a blue sea absolved from taint of cloud; the moon ascending it in solemn march; her orb seeming to look up as she left the hill-tops, from behind which she had come, far and farther below her, and aspired to the zenith, midnight dark in its fathomless depth and measureless distance; and for those trembling stars that followed her course; they made my heart tremble, my veins glow when I viewed them. Little things recall us to earth; the clock struck in the hall; that sufficed; I turned from moon and stars, opened a side-door, and went in.

The hall was not dark, nor yet was it lit, only by the high-hung bronze lamp; a warm glow suffused both it and the lower steps of the oak staircase. This ruddy shine issued from the great dining-room, whose two-leaved door stood open, and showed a genial fire in the grate, glancing on marble hearth and brass fire-irons, and revealing purple draperies and polished furniture, in the most pleasant

radiance. It revealed, too, a group near the mantelpiece: I had scarcely caught it, and scarcely become aware of a cheerful mingling of voices, amongst which I seemed to distinguish the tones of Adele, when the door closed.

I hastened to Mrs. Fairfax's room; there was a fire there too, but no candle, and no Mrs. Fairfax. Instead, all alone, sitting upright on the rug, and gazing with gravity at the blaze, I beheld a great black and white long-haired dog, just like the Gytrash of the lane. It was so like it that I went forward and said- 'Pilot,' and the thing got up and came to me and snuffed me. I caressed him, and he wagged his great tail; but he looked an eerie creature to be alone with, and I could not tell whence he had come. I rang the bell, for I wanted a candle; and I wanted, too, to get an account of this visitant. Leah entered.

'What dog is this?'

'He came with master.'

'With whom?'

'With master- Mr. Rochester- he is just arrived.'

'Indeed! and is Mrs. Fairfax with him?'

'Yes, and Miss Adele; they are in the dining-room, and John is gone for a surgeon; for master has had an accident; his horse fell and his ankle is sprained.'

'Did the horse fall in Hay Lane?'

'Yes, coming down-hill; it slipped on some ice.'

'Ah! Bring me a candle, will you, Leah?'

Leah brought it; she entered, followed by Mrs. Fairfax, who repeated the news; adding that Mr. Carter the surgeon was come, and was now with Mr. Rochester: then she hurried out to give orders about tea, and I went upstairs to take off my things.

第十二章

我初到桑菲尔德府的时候，一切都显得平平静静，似乎预示着我未来的经历会一帆风顺。我进一步熟悉了这个地方及其居住者以后，发现这预期没有落空。费尔法克斯太太果然与她当初给人的印象相符，性格温和，心地善良，受过足够的教育，具有中等的智力。我的学生非

常活泼，但由于过份溺爱已被宠坏，有时显得倔强任性，好在完全由我照管，任何方面都没有进行不明智的干预，破坏我的培养计划，她也很快改掉了任性的举动，变得驯服可教了。她没有非凡的才能，没有个性特色，没有那种使她稍稍超出一般儿童水平的特殊情趣，不过也没有使她居于常人之下的缺陷和恶习。她取得了合情合理的进步，对我怀有一种也许并不很深却十分热烈的感情。她的单纯、她愉快的喁语、她想讨人喜欢的努力，反过来也多少激起了我对她的爱恋，使我们两人之间维系着一种彼此都感到满意的关系。

这些话，Par?parenthese，会被某些人视为过于冷淡，这些人持有庄严的信条，认为孩子要有天使般的本性，承担孩子教育责任者，应当对他们怀有偶像崇拜般的虔诚。不过这样写并不是迎合父母的利己主义，不是附和时髦的高论，不是支持骗人的空谈。我说的无非是真话。我觉得我真诚地关心阿黛勒的幸福和进步，默默地喜欢这个小家伙，正像我对费尔法克斯太太的好心怀着感激之情一样，同时也因为她对我的默默敬意以及她本人温和的心灵与性情，而觉得同她相处是一种乐趣了。

我想再说几句，谁要是高兴都可以责备我，因为当我独个儿在庭园里散步时，当我走到大门口并透过它往大路望去时，或者当阿黛勒同保姆做着游戏，费尔法克斯太太在储藏室制作果子冻时，我爬上三道楼梯，推开顶楼的活动天窗，来到铅皮屋顶，极目远望与世隔绝的田野和小山，以及暗淡的地平线。随后，我渴望自己具有超越那极限的视力，以便使我的目光抵达繁华的世界，抵达那些我曾有所闻，却从未目睹过的生气勃勃的城镇和地区。随后我渴望掌握比现在更多的实际经验，接触比现在范围内更多与我意气相投的人，熟悉更多类型的个性。我珍重费尔法克斯太太身上的德性，也珍重阿黛勒身上的德性，但我相信还存在着其他更显著的德性，而凡我所信奉的，我都希望看一看。

谁责备我呢？无疑会有很多人，而且我会被说成贪心不知足。我没有办法，我的个性中有一种骚动不安的东西，有时它搅得我很痛苦。而我唯一的解脱办法是，在三层楼过道上来回踱步。这里悄无声息，孤寂冷落，十分安全，可以任心灵的目光观察浮现在眼前的任何光明的景象——当然这些景象很多，而且都光辉灿烂；可以让心脏随着欢快的跳动而起伏，这种跳动在烦恼中使心脏膨胀，同时又以生命来使它扩展。最理想的是，敞开我心灵的耳朵，来倾听一个永远不会结束的故事。这个故事由我的想象所创造，并被继续不断地讲下去。这个故事还由于那些我朝思暮想，却在我实际生活中所没有的事件、生活、激情和感觉，而显得更加生动。说人类应当满足于平静的生活，是徒劳无益的。他们应当有行动，而且要是他们没有办法找到，那就自己来创造。成千上万的人命里注定要承受比我更沉寂的灭亡；而成千上万的人在默默地反抗他们的命运。没有人知道除了政治反抗之外，有多少反抗在人间芸芸众生中酝酿着。一般都认为女人应当平平静静，但女人跟男人有一样的感觉。她们需要发挥自己的才能，而且也像兄弟们一样需要有用武之地。她们对严厉的束缚，绝对的停滞，都跟男人一样感到痛苦，比她们更享有特权的同类们，只有心胸狭窄者才会说，女人们应当只做做布丁，织织长袜，弹弹钢，绣绣布包，要是她们希望超越世俗认定的女性所应守的规范，做更多的事情，学更多的东西，那么为此去谴责或讥笑她们未是轻率的。

我这么独自一人时，常常听到格雷斯·普尔的笑声，同样的一阵大笑，同样的低沉、迟缓的哈哈声，初次听来，令人毛骨悚然。我也曾听到过她怪异的低语声，比她的笑声还古怪。有些日子她十分安静，但另一些日子她会发出令人费解的声音。有时我看到了她。她会从房间里出来，手里拿着一个脸盆，或者一个盘子，或者一个托盘，下楼到厨房去，并很快就返回，一般说来（唉，浪漫的读者，请恕我直言！）拿着一罐黑啤酒。她的外表常常会消除她口头

的怪癖所引起的好奇。她一脸凶相，表情严肃，没有一点使人感兴趣的地方。我几次想使她开口，但她似乎是个少言寡语的人，回答往往只有一两个字，终于使我意兴全无了。

府上的其他成员，如约翰夫妇，女佣莉娅和法国保姆索菲娅都是正派人，但决非杰出之辈。我同索菲娅常说法语，有时也问她些关于她故国的问题，但她没有描绘或叙述的才能，一般听作的回答既乏味又混乱，仿佛有意阻止而不是鼓励我继续发问。

十月、十一月和十二月过去了。第二年一月的某个下午，因为阿黛勒得了感冒，费尔法克斯太太为她来向我告假。阿黛勒表示热烈附加，这使我想起自己的童年时代，偶尔的假日显得有多可贵。于是便同意了，还认为自己在这点上做得很有灵活性。这是一个十分寒冷却很宁静的好天。我讨厌静坐书房，消磨整个长长的下午。费尔法克斯太太刚写好了一封信，等着去邮寄。于是我戴好帽子，披了斗篷，自告奋勇把信送到海镇去。冬日下午步行两英里路，不失为一件快事。我看到阿黛勒舒舒服服地坐在费尔法克斯太太的客厅炉火边的小椅子上，给了她最好的蜡制娃娃（平时我用锡纸包好放在抽屉里）玩，还给了一本故事书换换口味。听她说了“*Revenez?bientot?ma?bonne?amie,ma?chere Mdlle,Jean?nette*”后，我吻了她一下，算是对她的回答，随后便出发了。

地面坚硬，空气沉静，路沟寂寞。我走得很快，直到浑身暖和起来才放慢脚步，欣赏和品味此时此景蕴蓄着的种种欢乐。时候是三点，我经过钟楼时，教堂的钟正好敲响。这一时刻的魅力，在于天色渐暗，落日低垂，阳光惨淡。我走在离桑菲尔德一英里的一条小路上。夏天，这里野玫瑰盛开；秋天，坚果与黑草莓累累，就是现在，也还留着珊瑚色珍宝般的蔷薇果和山楂果。但冬日最大的愉悦，却在于极度的幽静和光秃秃的树木所透出的安宁。微风吹来，在这里听不见声息，因为没有一枝冬青，没有一棵常绿树，可以发出婆娑之声。片叶无存的山楂和榛灌木、像小径中间磨损了的白石那样寂静无声。小路两旁。远近只有田野，却不见吃草的牛群。偶尔拨弄着树篱的黄褐色小鸟，看上去像是忘记掉落的零星枯叶。

这条小径沿着山坡一路往上直至海镇。步到半路，我在通向田野的台阶上坐了下来。我用斗篷把自己紧紧裹住，把手捂在皮手筒里，所以尽管天寒地冻，却并不觉得很冷。几天前已经融化泛滥的小河，现在又冻结起来。堤坝上结了一层薄冰，这是寒冷的明证。从我落座的地方外以俯视桑菲尔德府。建有城垛的灰色府第是低处溪谷中的主要景物，树林和白嘴鸦黑魍魉的巢穴映衬着西边的天际。我闲荡着，直支太阳落入树丛，树后一片火红，才往东走去。

在我头顶的山尖上，悬挂着初升的月光，先是像云朵般苍白，但立刻便明亮起来，俯瞰着海村。海村掩映在树丛之中，不多的烟囱里升起了袅袅蓝烟。这里与海村相距一英里，因为万籁俱寂，我可以清晰地听到村落轻微的动静，我的耳朵也感受到了水流声，但来自哪个溪谷和深渊，却无法判断。海村那边有很多小山，无疑会有许多山溪流过隘口。黄昏的宁静，也同样反衬出近处溪流的叮冬声和最遥远处的飒飒风声。

一个粗重的声音，冲破了细微的潺潺水声和沙沙的风声，既遥远而又清晰：一种确实实的脚步声。刺耳的喀嗒喀嗒声，盖过了柔和的波涛起伏似的声响，犹如在一幅画中。浓墨渲染的前景——一大块峭岩或者一棵大橡树的粗壮树干，消融了远景中青翠的山峦、明亮的天际和斑驳的云彩。

这声音是从小路上传来的，一匹马过来了，它一直被弯曲的小路遮挡着，这时已渐渐靠近。

我正要离开台阶，但因为小路很窄，便端坐不动，让它过去。在那段岁月里，我还年轻，脑海里有着种种光明和黑暗的幻想，记忆中的育儿室故事，和别的无稽之谈交织在一起。这一切在脑际重现时，正在成熟的青春给它们增添了一种童年时所没有的活力和真实感，当这匹马越来越近，而我凝眸等待它在薄暮中出现时，我蓦地记起了贝茜讲的故事中一个英格兰北部的精灵，名叫“盖特拉西”，形状像马，也像骡子，或是像一条大狗，出没在偏僻的道路上，有时会扑向迟归的旅人，就像此刻这匹马向我驰来一样。

这匹马已经近了，但还看不见。除了得得的蹄声，我还听见了树篱下一阵骚动，紧靠地面的榛子树枝下，悄悄地溜出一条大狗，黑白相间的毛色衬着树木，使它成了一个清晰的目标。这正是贝茜故事中，“盖特拉西”的面孔，一个狮子一般的怪物，有着长长的头发和硕大无比的头颅，它从我身旁经过，却同我相安无事。并没有像我有几分担心的那样，停下来用比狗更具智想的奇特目光，抬头看我的面孔。那匹马接踵而来，是匹高头大马，马背上坐着一位骑手。那男人，也就是人本身，立刻驱散了魔气。“盖特拉西”总是独来独往。从来没有被当作坐骑的。而据我所知，尽管妖怪们会寄生在哑巴动物的躯壳之内，却不大可能看中一般人的躯体，把它作为藏身之地。这可不是盖特拉西，而不过是位旅行者，抄近路到米尔科特去。他从我身边走过，我依旧继续赶路。还没走几步，我便回过头来，一阵什么东西滑落的声音，一声“怎么办，活见鬼？”的叫喊和哗啦啦翻滚落地的声响，引起了我的注意。人和马都已倒地，是在路当中光滑的薄冰层上滑倒的。那条狗窜了回来，看见主人处境困难，听见马在呻吟，便狂吠着，暮霭中的群山响起了回声，那吠声十分深沉，与它巨大的身躯很相称。它先在倒地的两位周围闻闻，随后跑到了我面前。它也只能如此，因为附近没有别人可以求助。我顺了它，走到了这位旅行者身边，这时他已挣扎着脱离了自己的马，他的动作十分有力、因而我认为他可能伤得不重，但我还是问了这个问题。

“你伤着了吗，先生？”

我现在想来他当时在骂骂咧咧，不过我没有把握，然而他口中念念有词，所以无法马上回答我。

“我能帮忙吗？”我又问。

“你得站到一边来，”他边回答边站起来。先是成跪姿，然后站立起来，我照他的话做了。于是出现了一个人喘马嘶、脚步杂踏和马蹄冲击的场面，伴之以狗的狂吠，结果把我撵到了几码远之外，但还不至于远到看不见这件事情的结局。最后总算万幸，这匹马重新站立起来了，那条狗也在叫了一声“躺下，派洛特！”，后便乖乖地不吱声了。此刻这位赶路人弯下身子摸了摸自己的脚和腿，仿佛在试验一下它们是否安然无恙。显然他什么部位有些疼痛，因为他蹒跚地踱向我刚才起身离开的台阶，一屁股坐了下来。

我心里很想帮忙，或者我想至少是爱管闲事，这时我再次走近了他。

“要是你伤着了，需要帮忙，先生，我可以去叫人，到桑菲尔德，或音海村。”

“谢谢你，我能行，骨头没有跌断，只不过扭坏了脚，”他再次站起来，试了试脚，可是结果却不由自主地叫了声“唉！”

白昼的余光迟迟没有离去，月亮越来越大，也越来越亮，这时我能将他看得清楚了。他身上裹着骑手披风，戴着皮毛领，系着钢扣子。他的脸部看不大清楚，但我捉摸得出，他大体中等身材，胸膛很宽。他的脸庞黝黑，面容严厉、眉毛浓密；他的眼睛和紧锁的双眉看上去刚才遭到了挫折、并且愤怒过。他青春已逝，但未届中年。大约三十五岁，我觉得自己并不怕他，但有点儿腼腆。要是他是位漂亮笑俊的年轻绅士，我也许不会如此大胆地站着，违背他心愿提出问题，而且不等他开口就表示愿意帮忙，我几乎没有看到过一位漂亮的青年，平生也从未同一位漂亮青年说过话，我在理论上尊崇美丽、高雅、勇敢和魅力，但如果我见到这些品质体现有男性的躯体中，那我会本能地明白，这些东西没有，也不可能与我的品质共鸣、那我也会像人们躲避火灾、闪电、或者别的虽然明亮却令人厌恶的东西一样，对它们避之不迭。

如果这位陌生人在我同他说话时微笑一下，并且对我和和气气；如果他愉快地谢绝我的帮助，并表示感谢，我准会继续赶路，不会感到有任何职责去重新向他发问。但是这位赶路人的皱眉和粗犷，却使我坦然自若，因此当他挥手叫我走的时候，我仍然坚守阵地，并且宣布：

“先生，没有看到你能够骑上马，我是不能让你留在这条偏僻小路上的，天已经这么晚了。”

我说这话的时候，他看着我，而在这之前，他几乎没有朝我的方向看过。

“我觉得你自己该回家了，”他说，“要是你的家在附近的话。你是从哪儿来的？”

“就是下面那个地方，只要有月光，在外面呆晚了我也一点都不害怕。我很乐意为你去跑一趟海村，要是你想的话。说真的，我正要去那儿去寄封信。”

“你说就住在下面，是不是指有城垛的那幢房子？”他指着桑菲尔德府。这时月亮给桑菲尔德府洒下了灰白色的光，清晰地勾勒出了它以树林为背景的苍白轮廓。而那树林，在西边的天际衬托之下，似乎成了一大片阴影。

“是的，先生。”

“那是谁的房子？”

“罗切斯特先生的。”

“你知道罗切斯特先生吗？”

“不知道，从来没有见过他。”

“他不常住在那里吗？”

“是的。”

“能告诉我他在哪里吗？”

“我不知道。”

“当然你不是府上的佣人了？你是——”他打住了，目光掠过我照例十分朴实的衣服，我披着黑色美利奴羊毛斗篷，戴着顶黑水獭皮帽，这两件东西远远没有太太的佣人衣服那么讲究。他似乎难以判断我的身份，我帮了他。

“我是家庭教师。”

“啊，家庭教师！”他重复了一下，“见鬼，我竟把这也忘了！家庭教师！”我的服饰再次成了他审视的对象。过了两分钟，他从台阶上站起来，刚一挪动，脸上就露出了痛苦的表情。

“我不能托你找人帮忙，”他说，“不过要是你愿意，你本人倒可以帮我一点忙。”

“好的，先生。”

“你有没有伞，可以让我当拐杖用？”

“没有。”

“想办法抓住马笼头，把马牵到我这里来，你不害怕吗？”

我一个人是准不敢去碰一匹马的，但既然他吩咐我去干，我也就乐意服从了，我把皮手筒放在台阶上，向那匹高高的骏马走去。我竭力想抓住马笼头，但这匹马性子很烈，不让我靠近它头部。我试了又试、却都劳而无功，我还很怕被它的前腿踩着。这位赶路人等待并观察了片刻，最后终于笑了起来。

“我明白，”他说，“山是永远搬不到穆罕默德这边来的，因此你所能做到的，是帮助穆罕默德走到山那边去，我得请你到这儿来。”

我走了过去——“对不起，”他继续说，“出于需要，我不得不请你帮忙了。”他把一只沉重的手搭在我肩上，吃力地倚着我，一瘸一瘸朝他的马走去。他一抓住笼头，就立刻使马服服贴贴，随后跳上马鞍，因为搓了一下扭伤的部位，一用力便露出了痛苦的表情。

“好啦，”他说，放松了紧咬着的下唇，“把马鞭递给我就行啦，在树篱下面。”

我找了一下，把马鞭找到了。

“谢谢你，现在你快去海村寄信罢，快去快回。”

他把带马刺的后跟一叩，那马先是一惊，后腿跃起，随后便疾驰而去，那条狗窜上去紧追不舍，刹那之间，三者便无影无踪，像荒野中的石楠被一阵狂风卷走。

我拾起皮手筒继续赶路，对我来说、这件事已经发生，并已成为过去。在某种程度上说，它既不重要，也不浪漫，又不有趣。但它却标志着单调乏味的生活有了一个小时的变化。人家

需要我的帮助，而且求了我，而我给予了帮助。我很高兴总算干了点什么。这件事尽管微不足道，稍纵即逝，但毕竟是积极的，而我对被动的生活方式已感到厌倦。这张新面孔犹如一幅新画，被送进了记忆的画廊，它同已经张贴着的画全然不同。第一，因为这是位男性；第二，他又黑又强壮、又严厉。我进了海村把信投入邮局的时候，这幅画仍浮现在我眼前。我迅步下山一路赶回家时，也依然看到它。我路过台阶时驻足片刻，举目四顾，并静听着。心想马蹄声会再次在小路上回响，一位身披斗篷的骑手，一条盖特拉西似的纽芬兰狗会重新出现在眼前。但我只看到树篱和面前一棵没有枝梢的柳树，静静地兀立着，迎接月亮的清辉；我只听到一阵微风，在一英里开外，绕着桑菲尔德府的树林时起时落；当我朝轻风拂拂的方向俯视时，我的目光扫过府楼正面，看到了一个窗户里亮着灯光，提醒我时候已经不早。我匆匆往前走。

我不情愿再次跨进桑菲尔德府。踏进门槛就意味着回到了一潭死水之中，穿过寂静的大厅，登上暗洞洞的楼梯，寻找我那孤寂的小房间，然后去见心如古井的费尔法克斯太太，同她，只同她度过漫长的冬夜，这一切将彻底浇灭我这回步行所激起的兴奋，重又用一成不变的静止生活的无形镣铐，锁住我自己的感官。这种生活的稳定安逸的长处，我已难以欣赏。那时候要是我被抛掷到朝不虑夕、苦苦挣扎的生活风暴中去，要是艰难痛苦的经历，能启发我去向往我现在所深感不满的宁静生活，对我会有多大的教益呀！是呀，它的好处大可以与远距离散步对在“超等安乐椅”上坐累了的人的好处相媲美。在我现在这种情况下，希望走动走动，跟他在那种情况希望走动一样，是很自然的事。

我在门口徘徊，我在草坪上徘徊，我在人行道上来回踱步。玻璃门上的百叶窗已经关上，我看不见窗子里面的东西。我的目光与心灵似乎已从那幢阴暗的房子，从在我看来是满布暗室的灰色洞穴中，退缩出来，到达了展现在我面前的天空——一片云影全无的蓝色海洋。月亮庄严地大步迈向天空，离开原先躲藏的山顶背后，将山峦远远地抛在下面，仿佛还在翘首仰望，一心要到达黑如子夜、深远莫测的天顶。那些闪烁着的繁星尾随其后，我望着它们不觉心儿打颤，热血沸腾。一些小事往往又把我们拉回人间。大厅里的钟已经敲响，这就够了。我从月亮和星星那儿掉过头来，打开边门，走了进去。

大厅还没有暗下来，厅里独一无二、高悬着的铜灯也没有点亮。暖融融的火光，映照着大厅和橡树楼梯最低几级踏阶。这红光是从大餐厅里射出来的，那里的两扇门开着。只见温暖宜人的炉火映出了大理石炉板和铜制的炉具，并把紫色的帐幔和上了光的家具照得辉煌悦目。炉火也映出了壁炉边的一群人，但因为关着门，我几乎没能看清楚他们，也没有听清楚欢乐而嘈杂的人声，不过阿黛勒的口音，似乎还能分辨得出来。

我赶到了费尔法克斯太太的房间，那儿也生着火，却没有点蜡烛，也不见费尔法克斯太太。我却看到了一头长着黑白相间的长毛、酷似小路上的“盖特拉西”大狗，孤孤单单、端端正正坐在地毯上，神情严肃地凝视着火焰。它同那“盖特拉西”如此形神毕肖，我禁不住走上前说了声——“派洛特”，那家伙一跃而起，走过来嗅嗅我。我抚摸着它，它摇着硕大的尾巴。不过独个儿与它在一起时，这东西却显得有些怪异可怖。我无法判断它是从什么地方来的。我拉了一下铃，想要一支蜡烛，同时也想了解一下这位来客。莉娅走进门来。

“这条狗是怎么回事？”

“它跟老爷来的。”

“跟谁？”

“跟老爷，罗切斯特先生，他刚到。”

“真的！费尔法克斯太太跟他在一起吗？”

“是的，还有阿黛勒小姐。他们都在餐室，约翰已去叫医生了。老爷出了一个事故，他的马倒下了，他扭伤了脚踝。”

“那匹马是在海路上倒下的吗？”

“是呀，下山的时候，在冰上滑了一下。”

“啊！给我一支蜡烛好吗，莉娅？”

莉娅把蜡烛送来了，进门时后面跟着费尔法克斯太太，她把刚才的新闻重复了一遍，还说外科医生卡特已经来了，这会儿同罗切斯特先生在一起。说完便匆匆走出去吩咐上茶点，而我则上楼去脱外出时的衣装。