

IT was near Christmas by the time all was settled: the season of general holiday approached. I now closed Morton school, taking care that the parting should not be barren on my side. Good fortune opens the hand as well as the heart wonderfully; and to give somewhat when we have largely received, is but to afford a vent to the unusual ebullition of the sensations. I had long felt with pleasure that many of my rustic scholars liked me, and when we parted, that consciousness was confirmed: they manifested their affection plainly and strongly. Deep was my gratification to find I had really a place in their unsophisticated hearts: I promised them that never a week should pass in future that I did not visit them, and give them an hour's teaching in their school.

Mr. Rivers came up as, having seen the classes, now numbering sixty girls, file out before me, and locked the door, I stood with the key in my hand, exchanging a few words of special farewell with some half-dozen of my best scholars: as decent, respectable, modest, and well-informed young women as could be found in the ranks of the British peasantry. And that is saying a great deal; for after all, the British peasantry are the best taught, best mannered, most self-respecting of any in Europe: since those days I have seen paysannes and Bauerinnen; and the best of them seemed to me ignorant, coarse, and besotted, compared with my Morton girls.

'Do you consider you have got your reward for a season of exertion?' asked Mr. Rivers, when they were gone. 'Does not the consciousness of having done some real good in your day and generation give pleasure?'

'Doubtless.'

'And you have only toiled a few months! Would not a life devoted to the task of regenerating your race be well spent?'

'Yes,' I said; 'but I could not go on for ever so: I want to enjoy my own faculties as well as to cultivate those of other people. I must enjoy them now; don't recall either my mind or body to the school; I am out of it and disposed for full holiday.'

He looked grave. 'What now? What sudden eagerness is this you evince? What are you going to do?'

'To be active: as active as I can. And first I must beg you to set Hannah at liberty, and get somebody else to wait on you.'

'Do you want her?'

'Yes, to go with me to Moor House. Diana and Mary will be at home in a week, and I want to have everything in order against their arrival.'

'I understand. I thought you were for flying off on some excursion.'

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It is better so: Hannah shall go with you.'

'Tell her to be ready by to-morrow then; and here is the schoolroom key: I will give you the key of my cottage in the morning.'

He took it. 'You give it up very gleefully,' said he; 'I don't quite understand your light-heartedness, because I cannot tell what employment you propose to yourself as a substitute for the one you are relinquishing. What aim, what purpose, what ambition in life have you now?'

'My first aim will be to clean down (do you comprehend the full force of the expression?)- to clean down Moor House from chamber to cellar; my next to rub it up with bees-wax, oil, and an indefinite number of cloths, till it glitters again; my third, to arrange every chair, table, bed, carpet, with mathematical precision; afterwards I shall go near to ruin you in coals and peat to keep up good fires in every room; and lastly, the two days preceding that on which your sisters are expected will be devoted by Hannah and me to such a beating of eggs, sorting of currants, grating of spices, compounding of Christmas cakes, chopping up of materials for mince-pies, and solemnising of other culinary rites, as words can convey but an inadequate notion of to the uninitiated like you. My purpose, in short, is to have all things in an absolutely perfect state of readiness for Diana and Mary before next Thursday; and my ambition is to give them a beau-ideal of a welcome when they come.' St. John smiled slightly: still he was dissatisfied.

'It is all very well for the present,' said he; 'but seriously, I trust that when the first flush of vivacity is over, you will look a little higher than domestic endearments and household joys.'

'I mean, on the contrary, to be busy.'

'Jane, I excuse you for the present: two months' grace I allow you for the full enjoyment of your new position, and for pleasing yourself with this late-found charm of relationship; but then, I hope you will begin to look beyond Moor House and Morton, and sisterly society, and the selfish calm and sensual comfort of civilised affluence. I hope your energies will then once more trouble you with their strength.'

I looked at him with surprise. 'St. John,' I said, 'I think you are almost wicked to talk so. I am disposed to be as content as a queen, and you try to stir me up to restlessness! To what end?'

'To the end of turning to profit the talents which God has committed to your keeping; and of which He will surely one day demand a strict account. Jane, I shall watch you closely and anxiously- I warn you of that. And try to restrain the disproportionate fervour with which you throw yourself into commonplace home pleasures. Don't cling so tenaciously to ties of the flesh; save your constancy and ardour for an adequate cause; forbear to waste them on trite transient objects. Do you hear, Jane?'

'Yes; just as if you were speaking Greek. I feel I have adequate cause to be happy, and I will be

happy. Good-bye!"

Happy at Moor House I was, and hard I worked; and so did Hannah: she was charmed to see how jovial I could be amidst the bustle of a house turned topsy-turvy- how I could brush, and dust, and clean, and cook. And really, after a day or two of confusion worse confounded, it was delightful by degrees to invoke order from the to purchase some new furniture: my cousins having given me carte blanche to effect what alterations I pleased, and a sum having been set aside for that purpose. The ordinary sitting-room and bedrooms I left much as they were: for I knew Diana and Mary would derive more pleasure from seeing again the old homely tables, and chairs, and beds, than from the spectacle of the smartest innovations. Still some novelty was necessary, to give to their return the piquancy with which I wished it to be invested. Dark handsome new carpets and curtains, an arrangement of some carefully selected antique ornaments in porcelain and bronzæ, new coverings, and mirrors, and dressing-cases, for the toilet-tables, answered the end: they looked fresh without being glaring. A spare parlour and bedroom I refurnished entirely, with old mahogany and crimson upholstery: I laid canvas on the passage, and carpets on the stairs. When all was finished, I thought Moor House as complete a model of bright modest snugness within, as it was, at this season, a specimen of wintry waste and desert dreariness without.

The eventful Thursday at length came. They were expected about dark, and ere dusk fires were lit upstairs and below; the kitchen was in perfect trim; Hannah and I were dressed, and all was in readiness.

St. John arrived first. I had entreated him to keep quite clear of the house till everything was arranged: and, indeed, the bare idea of the commotion, at once sordid and trivial, going on within its walls sufficed to scare him to estrangement. He found me in the kitchen, watching the progress of certain cakes for tea, then baking. Approaching the hearth, he asked, 'If I was at last satisfied with housemaid's work?' I answered by inviting him to accompany me on a general inspection of the result of my labours. With some difficulty, I got him to make the tour of the house. He just looked in at the doors I opened; and when he had wandered upstairs and downstairs, he said I must have gone through a great deal of fatigue and trouble to have effected such considerable changes in so short a time: but not a syllable did he utter indicating pleasure in the improved aspect of his abode.

This silence damped me. I thought perhaps the alterations had disturbed some old associations he valued. I inquired whether this was the case: no doubt in a somewhat crestfallen tone.

'Not at all; he had, on the contrary, remarked that I had scrupulously respected every association: he feared, indeed, I must have bestowed more thought on the matter than it was worth. How many minutes, for instance, had I devoted to studying the arrangement of this very room?- By the bye, could I tell him where such a book was?'

I showed him the volume on the shelf: he took it down, and withdrawing to his accustomed window recess, he began to read it.

Now, I did not like this, reader. St. John was a good man; but I began to feel he had spoken truth of himself when he said he was hard and cold. The humanities and amenities of life had no attraction for him- its peaceful enjoyments no charm. Literally, he lived only to aspire- after what was good and great, certainly; but still he would never rest, nor approve of others resting round him. As I looked at his lofty forehead, still and pale as a white stone- at his fine lineaments fixed in study- I comprehended all at once that he would hardly make a good husband: that it would be a trying thing to be his wife. I understood, as by inspiration, the nature of his love for Miss Oliver; I agreed with him that it was but a love of the senses. I comprehended how he should despise himself for the feverish influence it exercised over him; how he should wish to stifle and destroy it; how he should mistrust its ever conducting permanently to his happiness or hers. I saw he was of the material from which nature hews her heroes- Christian and Pagan- her lawgivers, her statesmen, her conquerors: a steadfast bulwark for great interests to rest upon; but, at the fireside, too often a cold cumbrous column, gloomy and out of place.

'This parlour is not his sphere,' I reflected: 'the Himalayan ridge or Caffre bush, even the plague-cursed Guinea Coast swamp would suit him better. Well may he eschew the calm of domestic life; it is not his element: there his faculties stagnate- they cannot develop or appear to advantage. It is in scenes of strife and danger- where courage is proved, and energy exercised, and fortitude tasked- that he will speak and move, the leader and superior. A merry child would have the advantage of him on this hearth. He is right to choose a missionary's career- I see it now.'

'They are coming! they are coming!' cried Hannah, throwing open the parlour door. At the same moment old Carlo barked joyfully. Out I ran.

It was now dark; but a rumbling of wheels was audible. Hannah soon had a lantern lit. The vehicle had stopped at the wicket; the driver opened the door: first one well-known form, then another, stepped out.

In a minute I had my face under their bonnets, in contact first with Mary's soft cheek, then with Diana's flowing curls. They laughed- kissed me- then Hannah: patted Carlo, who was half wild with delight; asked eagerly if all was well; and being assured in the affirmative, hastened into the house.

They were stiff with their long and jolting drive from Whitcross, and chilled with the frosty night air; but their pleasant countenances expanded to the cheerful firelight. While the driver and Hannah brought in the boxes, they demanded St. John. At this moment he advanced from the parlour. They both threw their arms round his neck at once. He gave each one quiet kiss, said in a low tone a few words of welcome, stood a while to be talked to, and then, intimating that he supposed they would soon rejoin him in the parlour, withdrew there as to a place of refuge.

I had lit their candles to go upstairs, but Diana had first to give hospitable orders respecting the driver; this done, both followed me. They were delighted with the renovation and decorations of their rooms; with the new drapery, and fresh carpets, and rich tinted china vases: they expressed their gratification ungrudgingly. I had the pleasure of feeling that my arrangements met their

wishes exactly, and that what I had done added a vivid charm to their joyous return home.

Sweet was that evening. My cousins, full of exhilaration, were so eloquent in narrative and comment, that their fluency covered St. John's taciturnity: he was sincerely glad to see his sisters; but in their glow of fervour and flow of joy he could not sympathise. The event of the day- that is, the return of Diana and Mary- pleased him; but the accompaniments of that event, the glad tumult, the garrulous glee of reception irked him: I saw he wished the calmer morrow was come. In the very meridian of the night's enjoyment, about an hour after tea, a rap was heard at the door. Hannah entered with the intimation that 'a poor lad was come, at that unlikely time, to fetch Mr. Rivers to see his mother, who was drawing away.'

'Where does she live, Hannah?'

'Clear up at Whitcross Brow, almost four miles off, and moor and moss all the way.'

'Tell him I will go.'

'I'm sure, sir, you had better not. It's the worst road to travel after dark that can be: there's no track at all over the bog. And then it is such a bitter night- the keenest wind you ever felt. You had better send word, sir, that you will be there in the morning.'

But he was already in the passage, putting on his cloak; and without one objection, one murmur, he departed. It was then nine o'clock: he did not return till midnight. Starved and tired enough he was: but he looked happier than when he set out. He had performed an act of duty; made an exertion; felt his own strength to do and deny, and was on better terms with himself.

I am afraid the whole of the ensuing week tried his patience. It was Christmas week: we took to no settled employment, but spent it in a sort of merry domestic dissipation. The air of the moors, the freedom of home, the dawn of prosperity, acted on Diana and Mary's spirits like some life-giving elixir: they were gay from morning till noon, and from noon till night. They could always talk; and their discourse, witty, pithy, original, had such charms for me, that I preferred listening to, and sharing in it, to doing anything else. St. John did not rebuke our vivacity; but he escaped from it: he was seldom in the house; his parish was large, the population scattered, and he found daily business in visiting the sick and poor in its different districts.

One morning at breakfast, Diana, after looking a little pensive for some minutes, asked him, 'If his plans were yet unchanged.'

'Unchanged and unchangeable,' was the reply. And he proceeded to inform us that his departure from England was now definitely fixed for the ensuing year.

'And Rosamond Oliver?' suggested Mary, the words seeming to escape her lips involuntarily: for no sooner had she uttered them, than she made a gesture as if wishing to recall them. St. John had a book in his hand- it was his unsocial custom to read at meals- he closed it, and looked up.

'Rosamond Oliver,' said he, 'is about to be married to Mr. Granby, one of the best connected and most estimable residents in from her father yesterday.'

His sisters looked at each other and at me; we all three looked at him: he was serene as glass.

'The match must have been got up hastily,' said Diana: 'they cannot have known each other long.'

But where there are no obstacles to a union, as in the present case, where the connection is in every point desirable, delays are Frederic gives up to them, can be refitted for their reception.'

The first time I found St. John alone after this communication, I felt tempted to inquire if the event distressed him: but he seemed so little to need sympathy, that, so far from venturing to offer him more, I experienced some shame at the recollection of what I had already hazarded. Besides, I was out of practice in talking to him: his reserve was again frozen over, and my frankness was congealed beneath it. He had not kept his promise of treating me like his sisters; he continually made little, chilling differences between us, which did not at all tend to the development of cordiality: in short, now that I was acknowledged his kinswoman, and lived under the same roof with him, I felt the distance between us to be far greater than when he had known me only as the village schoolmistress. When I remembered how far I had once been admitted to his confidence, I could hardly comprehend his present frigidity.

Such being the case, I felt not a little surprised when he raised his head suddenly from the desk over which he was stooping, and said- 'You see, Jane, the battle is fought and the victory won.'

Startled at being thus addressed, I did not immediately reply: after a moment's hesitation I answered-

'But are you sure you are not in the position of those conquerors whose triumphs have cost them too dear? Would not such another ruin you?'

'I think not; and if I were, it does not much signify; I shall never be called upon to contend for such another. The event of the conflict is decisive: my way is now clear; I thank God for it!' So saying, he returned to his papers and his silence.

As our mutual happiness (i.e., Diana's, Mary's, and mine) settled into a quieter character, and we resumed our usual habits and regular studies, St. John stayed more at home: he sat with us in the same room, sometimes for hours together. While Mary drew, Diana pursued a course of encyclopaedic reading she had (to my awe and amazement) undertaken, and I fagged away at German, he pondered a mystic lore of his own: that of some Eastern tongue, the acquisition of which he thought necessary to his plans.

Thus engaged, he appeared, sitting in his own recess, quiet and absorbed enough; but that blue eye of his had a habit of leaving the outlandish-looking grammar, and wandering over, and sometimes

fixing upon us, his fellow-students, with a curious intensity of observation: if caught, it would be instantly withdrawn; yet ever and anon, it returned searchingly to our table. I wondered what it meant: I wondered, too, at the punctual satisfaction he never failed to exhibit on an occasion that seemed to me of small moment, namely, my weekly visit to Morton school; and still more was I puzzled when, if the day was unfavourable, if there was snow, or rain, or high wind, and his sisters urged me not to go, he would invariably make light of their solicitude, and encourage me to accomplish the task without regard to the elements.

'Jane is not such a weakling as you would make her,' he would say: 'she can bear a mountain blast, or a shower, or a few flakes of snow, as well as any of us. Her constitution is both sound and elastic;- better calculated to endure variations of climate than many more robust.'

And when I returned, sometimes a good deal tired, and not a little weather-beaten, I never dared complain, because I saw that to murmur would be to vex him: on all occasions fortitude pleased him; the reverse was a special annoyance.

One afternoon, however, I got leave to stay at home, because I really had a cold. His sisters were gone to Morton in my stead: I sat reading Schiller; he, deciphering his crabbed Oriental scrolls. As I exchanged a translation for an exercise, I happened to look his way: there I found myself under the influence of the ever-watchful blue eye. How long it had been searching me through and through, and over and over, I cannot tell: so keen was it, and yet so cold, I felt for the moment superstitious- as if I were sitting in the room with something uncanny.

'Jane, what are you doing?'

'Learning German.'

'I want you to give up German and learn Hindostanee.'

'You are not in earnest?'

'In such earnest that I must have it so: and I will tell you why.'

He then went on to explain that Hindostanee was the language he was himself at present studying; that, as he advanced, he was apt to forget the commencement; that it would assist him greatly to have a pupil with whom he might again and again go over the elements, and so fix them thoroughly in his mind; that his choice had hovered for some time between me and his sisters; but that he had fixed on me because he saw I could sit at a task the longest of the three. Would I do him this favour? I should not, perhaps, have to make the sacrifice long, as it wanted now barely three months to his departure.

St. John was not a man to be lightly refused: you felt that every impression made on him, either for pain or pleasure, was deep-graved and permanent. I consented. When Diana and Mary returned, the former found her scholar transferred from her to her brother: she laughed, and both she and Mary



agreed that St. John should never have persuaded them to such a step. He answered quietly-

'I know it.'

I found him a very patient, very forbearing, and yet an exacting master: he expected me to do a great deal; and when I fulfilled his expectations, he, in his own way, fully testified his approbation.

By degrees, he acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind: his praise and notice were more restraining than his indifference. I could no longer talk or laugh freely when he was by, because a tiresomely importunate instinct reminded me that vivacity (at least in me) was distasteful to him. I was so fully aware that only serious moods and occupations were acceptable, that in his presence every effort to sustain or follow any other became vain: I fell under a freezing spell. When he said 'go,' I went; 'come,' I came; 'do this,' I did it. But I did not love my servitude: I wished, many a time, he had continued to neglect me.

One evening when, at bedtime, his sisters and I stood round him, bidding him good-night, he kissed each of them, as was his custom; and, as was equally his custom, he gave me his hand. Diana, who chanced to be in a frolicsome humour (she was not painfully controlled by his will; for hers, in another way, was as strong), exclaimed- 'St. John! you used to call Jane your third sister, but you don't treat her as such: you should kiss her too.'

She pushed me towards him. I thought Diana very provoking, and felt uncomfortably confused; and while I was thus thinking and feeling, St. John bent his head; his Greek face was brought to a level with mine, his eyes questioned my eyes piercingly- he kissed me. There are no such things as marble kisses or ice kisses, or I should say my ecclesiastical cousin's salute belonged to one of these classes; but there may be experiment kisses, and his was an experiment kiss. When given, he viewed me to learn the result; it was not striking: I am sure I did not blush; perhaps I might have turned a little pale, for I felt as if this kiss were a seal affixed to my fetters. He never omitted the ceremony afterwards, and the gravity and quiescence with which I underwent it, seemed to invest it for him with a certain charm.

As for me, I daily wished more to please him; but to do so, I felt daily more and more that I must disown half my nature, stifle half my faculties, wrest my tastes from their original bent, force myself to the adoption of pursuits for which I had no natural vocation. He wanted to train me to an elevation I could never reach; it racked me hourly to aspire to the standard he uplifted. The thing was as impossible as to mould my irregular features to his correct and classic pattern, to give to my changeable green eyes the sea-blue tint and solemn lustre of his own.

Not his ascendancy alone, however, held me in thrall at present. Of late it had been easy enough for me to look sad: a cankering evil sat in my heart and drained my happiness at its source- the evil of suspense.

Perhaps you think I had forgotten Mr. Rochester, reader, amidst these changes of place and fortune. Not for a moment. His idea was still with me, because it was not a vapour sunshine could disperse,



nor a sand-traced effigy storms could wash away; it was a name graven on a tablet, fated to last as long as the marble it inscribed. The craving to know what had become of him followed me everywhere; when I was at Morton, I re-entered my cottage every evening to think of that; and now at Moor House, I sought my bedroom each night to brood over it.

In the course of my necessary correspondence with Mr. Briggs about the will, I had inquired if he knew anything of Mr. Rochester's present residence and state of health; but, as St. John had conjectured, he was quite ignorant of all concerning him. I then wrote to Mrs. Fairfax, entreating information on the subject. I had calculated with certainty on this step answering my end: I felt sure it would elicit an early answer. I was astonished when a fortnight passed without reply; but when two months wore away, and day after day the post arrived and brought nothing for me, I fell a prey to the keenest anxiety.

I wrote again: there was a chance of my first letter having missed.

Renewed hope followed renewed effort: it shone like the former for some weeks, then, like it, it faded, flickered: not a line, not a word reached me. When half a year wasted in vain expectancy, my hope died out, and then I felt dark indeed.

A fine spring shone round me, which I could not enjoy. Summer approached; Diana tried to cheer me: she said I looked ill, and wished to accompany me to the sea-side. This St. John opposed; he said I did not want dissipation, I wanted employment; my present life was too purposeless, I required an aim; and, I suppose, by way of supplying deficiencies, he prolonged still further my lessons in Hindostanee, and grew more urgent in requiring their accomplishment: and I, like a fool, never thought of resisting him- I could not resist him.

One day I had come to my studies in lower spirits than usual; the ebb was occasioned by a poignantly felt disappointment. Hannah had told me in the morning there was a letter for me, and when I went down to take it, almost certain that the long-looked-for tidings were vouchsafed me at last, I found only an unimportant note from Mr. Briggs on business. The bitter check had wrung from me some tears; and now, as I sat poring over the crabbed characters and flourishing tropes of an Indian scribe, my eyes filled again.

St. John called me to his side to read; in attempting to do this my voice failed me: words were lost in sobs. He and I were the only occupants of the parlour: Diana was practising her music in the drawing-room, Mary was gardening- it was a very fine May day, clear, sunny, and breezy. My companion expressed no surprise at this emotion, nor did he question me as to its cause; he only said-

'We will wait a few minutes, Jane, till you are more composed.' And while I smothered the paroxysm with all haste, he sat calm and patient, leaning on his desk, and looking like a physician watching with the eye of science an expected and fully understood crisis in a patient's malady. Having stifled my sobs, wiped my eyes, and muttered something about not being very well that morning, I resumed my task, and succeeded in completing it. St. John put away my books and his,

locked his desk, and said-

'Now, Jane, you shall take a walk; and with me.'

'I will call Diana and Mary.'

'No; I want only one companion this morning, and that must be you. Put on your things; go out by the kitchen-door: take the road towards the head of Marsh Glen: I will join you in a moment.'

I know no medium: I never in my life have known any medium in my dealings with positive, hard characters, antagonistic to my own, between absolute submission and determined revolt. I have always faithfully observed the one, up to the very moment of bursting, sometimes with volcanic vehemence, into the other; and as neither present circumstances warranted, nor my present mood inclined me to mutiny, I observed careful obedience to St. John's directions; and in ten minutes I was treading the wild track of the glen, side by side with him.

The breeze was from the west: it came over the hills, sweet with scents of heath and rush; the sky was of stainless blue; the stream descending the ravine, swelled with past spring rains, poured along plentiful and clear, catching golden gleams from the sun, and sapphire tints from the firmament. As we advanced and left the track, we trod a soft turf, mossy fine and emerald green, minutely enamelled with a tiny white flower, and spangled with a star-like yellow blossom: the hills, meantime, shut us quite in; for the glen, towards its head, wound to their very core.

'Let us rest here,' said St. John, as we reached the first stragglers of a battalion of rocks, guarding a sort of pass, beyond which the beck rushed down a waterfall; and where, still a little farther, the mountain shook off turf and flower, had only heath for raiment and crag for gem- where it exaggerated the wild to the savage, and exchanged the fresh for the frowning- where it guarded the forlorn hope of solitude, and a last refuge for silence.

I took a seat: St. John stood near me. He looked up the pass and down the hollow; his glance wandered away with the stream, and returned to traverse the unclouded heaven which coloured it: he removed his hat, let the breeze stir his hair and kiss his brow. He seemed in communion with the genius of the haunt: with his eye he bade farewell to something.

'And I shall see it again,' he said aloud, 'in dreams when I sleep by the Ganges: and again in a more remote hour- when another slumber overcomes me- on the shore of a darker stream!'

Strange words of a strange love! An austere patriot's passion for his fatherland! He sat down; for half an hour we never spoke; neither he to me nor I to him: that interval past, he recommenced-

'Jane, I go in six weeks; I have taken my berth in an East Indiaman which sails on the 20th of June.'

'God will protect you; for you have undertaken His work,' I answered.

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'Yes,' said he, 'there is my glory and joy. I am the servant of an infallible Master. I am not going out under human guidance, subject to the defective laws and erring control of my feeble fellow-worms: my king, my lawgiver, my captain, is the All-perfect. It seems strange to me that all round me do not burn to enlist under the same banner,- to join in the same enterprise.'

'All have not Your powers, and it would be folly for the feeble to wish to march with the strong.'

'I do not speak to the feeble, or think of them: I address only such as are worthy of the work, and competent to accomplish it.'

'Those are few in number, and difficult to discover.'

'You say truly; but when found, it is right to stir them up- to urge and exhort them to the effort- to show them what their gifts are, and why they were given- to speak Heaven's message in their ear,- to offer them, direct from God, a place in the ranks of His chosen.'

'If they are really qualified for the task, will not their own hearts be the first to inform them of it?'

I felt as if an awful charm was framing round and gathering over me: I trembled to hear some fatal word spoken which would at once declare and rivet the spell.

'And what does your heart say?' demanded St. John.

'My heart is mute- my heart is mute,' I answered, struck and thrilled.

'Then I must speak for it,' continued the deep, relentless voice.

'Jane, come with me to India: come as my helpmeet and fellow-labourer.'

The glen and sky spun round: the hills heaved! It was as if I had heard a summons from Heaven- as if a visionary messenger, like him of Macedonia, had enounced, 'Come over and help us!' But I was no apostle,- I could not behold the herald,- I could not receive his call.

'Oh, St. John!' I cried, 'have some mercy!'

I appealed to one who, in the discharge of what he believed his duty, knew neither mercy nor remorse. He continued-

'God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary's wife you must- shall be.

You shall be mine: I claim you- not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service.'

'I am not fit for it: I have no vocation,' I said.

He had calculated on these first objections: he was not irritated by them. Indeed, as he leaned back against the crag behind him, folded his arms on his chest, and fixed his countenance, I saw he was prepared for a long and trying opposition, and had taken in a stock of patience to last him to its close- resolved, however, that that close should be conquest for him.

'Humility, Jane,' said he, 'is the groundwork of Christian virtues: you say right that you are not fit for the work. Who is fit for it? Or who, that ever was truly called, believed himself worthy of the summons? I, for instance, am but dust and ashes. With St. Paul, I acknowledge myself the chiefest of sinners; but I do not suffer this sense of my personal vileness to daunt me. I know my Leader: that He is just as well as mighty; and while He has chosen a feeble instrument to perform a great task, He will, from the boundless stores of His providence, supply the inadequacy of the means to the end. Think like me, Jane- trust like me. It is the Rock of Ages I ask you to lean on: do not doubt but it will bear the weight of your human weakness.'

'I do not understand a missionary life: I have never studied missionary labours.'

'There I, humble as I am, can give you the aid you want: I can set you your task from hour to hour; stand by you always; help you from moment to moment. This I could do in the beginning: soon (for I know your powers) you would be as strong and apt as myself, and would not require my help.'

'But my powers- where are they for this undertaking? I do not feel them. Nothing speaks or stirs in me while you talk. I am sensible of no light kindling- no life quickening- no voice counselling or cheering. Oh, I wish I could make you see how much my mind is at this moment like a rayless dungeon, with one shrinking fear fettered in its depths- the fear of being persuaded by you to attempt what I cannot accomplish!'

'I have an answer for you- hear it. I have watched you ever since we first met: I have made you my study for ten months. I have proved you in that time by sundry tests: and what have I seen and elicited?

In the village school I found you could perform well, punctually, uprightly, labour uncongenial to your habits and inclinations; I saw you could perform it with capacity and tact: you could win while you controlled. In the calm with which you learnt you had become suddenly rich, I read a mind clear of the vice of Demas:- lucre had no undue power over you. In the resolute readiness with which you cut your wealth into four shares, keeping but one to yourself, and relinquishing the three others to the claim of abstract justice, I recognised a soul that revelled in the flame and excitement of sacrifice. In the tractability with which, at my wish, you forsook a study in which you were interested, and adopted another because it interested me; in the untiring assiduity with which you have since persevered in it- in the unflagging energy and unshaken temper with which you have met its difficulties- I acknowledge the complement of the qualities I seek. Jane, you are docile, diligent, disinterested, faithful, constant, and courageous; very gentle, and very heroic: cease to mistrust yourself- I can trust you unreservedly. As a conductress of Indian schools, and a helper

amongst Indian women, your assistance will be to me invaluable.'

My iron shroud contracted round me; persuasion advanced with slow, sure step. Shut my eyes as I would, these last words of his succeeded in making the way, which had seemed blocked up, comparatively clear. My work, which had appeared so vague, so hopelessly diffuse, condensed itself as he proceeded, and assumed a definite form under his shaping hand. He waited for an answer. I demanded a quarter of an hour to think, before I again hazarded a reply.

'Very willingly,' he rejoined; and rising, he strode a little distance up the pass, threw himself down on a swell of heath, and there lay still.

'I can do what he wants me to do: I am forced to see and acknowledge that,' I meditated, - 'that is, if life be spared me. But I feel mine is not the existence to be long protracted under an Indian sun. What then? He does not care for that: when my time came to die, he would resign me, in all serenity and sanctity, to the God who gave me. The case is very plain before me. In leaving England, I should leave a loved but empty land- Mr. Rochester is not there; and if he were, what is, what can that ever be to me? My business is to live without him now: nothing so absurd, so weak as to drag on from day to day, as if I were waiting some impossible change in circumstances, which might reunite me to him. Of course (as St. John once said) I must seek another interest in life to replace the one lost: is not the occupation he now offers me truly the most glorious man can adopt or God assign? Is it not, by its noble cares and sublime results, the one best calculated to fill the void left by upturned affections and demolished hopes? I believe I must say, Yes- and yet I shudder. Alas! If I join St. John, I abandon half myself: if I go to India, I go to premature death. And how will the interval between leaving England for India, and India for the grave, be filled? Oh, I know well! That, too, is very clear to my vision. By straining to satisfy St. John till my sinews ache, I shall satisfy him- to the finest central point and farthest outward circle of his expectations. If I do go with him- if I do make the sacrifice he urges, I will make it absolutely: I will throw all on the altar- heart, vitals, the entire victim. He will never love me; but he shall approve me; I will show him energies he has not yet seen, resources he has never suspected. Yes, I can work as hard as he can, and with as little grudging.

'Consent, then, to his demand is possible: but for one item- one dreadful item. It is- that he asks me to be his wife, and has no more of a husband's heart for me than that frowning giant of a rock, down which the stream is foaming in yonder gorge. He prizes me as a soldier would a good weapon, and that is all. Unmarried to him, this would never grieve me; but can I let him complete his calculations- coolly put into practice his plans- go through the wedding ceremony?

Can I receive from him the bridal ring, endure all the forms of love (which I doubt not he would scrupulously observe) and know that the spirit was quite absent? Can I bear the consciousness that every endearment he bestows is a sacrifice made on principle? No: such a martyrdom would be monstrous. I will never undergo it. As his sister, I might accompany him- not as his wife: I will tell him so.'

I looked towards the knoll: there he lay, still as a prostrate column; his face turned to me: his eye

beaming watchful and keen. He started to his feet and approached me.

'I am ready to go to India, if I may go free.'

'Your answer requires a commentary,' he said; 'it is not clear.'

'You have hitherto been my adopted brother- I, your adopted sister: let us continue as such: you and I had better not marry.'

He shook his head. 'Adopted fraternity will not do in this case. If you were my real sister it would be different: I should take you, and seek no wife. But as it is, either our union must be consecrated and sealed by marriage, or it cannot exist: practical obstacles oppose themselves to any other plan. Do you not see it, Jane? Consider a moment- your strong sense will guide you.'

I did consider; and still my sense, such as it was, directed me only to the fact that we did not love each other as man and wife should: and therefore it inferred we ought not to marry. I said so.

'St. John,' I returned, 'I regard you as a brother- you, me as a sister: so let us continue.'

'We cannot- we cannot,' he answered, with short, sharp determination: 'it would not do. You have said you will go with me to India: remember- you have said that.'

'Conditionally.'

'Well- well. To the main point- the departure with me from England, the co-operation with me in my future labours- you do not object.'

You have already as good as put your hand to the plough: you are too consistent to withdraw it. You have but one end to keep in view- how the work you have undertaken can best be done. Simplify your complicated interests, feelings, thoughts, wishes, aims; merge all considerations in one purpose: that of fulfilling with effect- with power- the mission of your great Master. To do so, you must have a coadjutor: not a brother- that is a loose tie- but a husband. I, too, do not want a sister: a sister might any day be taken from me.

I want a wife: the sole helpmeet I can influence efficiently in life, and retain absolutely till death.'

I shuddered as he spoke: I felt his influence in my marrow- his hold on my limbs.

'Seek one elsewhere than in me, St. John: seek one fitted to you.'

'One fitted to my purpose, you mean- fitted to my vocation. Again I tell you it is not the insignificant private individual- the mere man, with the man's selfish senses- I wish to mate: it is the missionary.'

'And I will give the missionary my energies- it is all he wants- but not myself: that would be only adding the husk and shell to the kernel. For them he has no use: I retain them.'

'You cannot- you ought not. Do you think God will be satisfied with half an oblation? Will He accept a mutilated sacrifice? It is the cause of God I advocate: it is under His standard I enlist you. I cannot accept on His behalf a divided allegiance: it must be entire.'

'Oh! I will give my heart to God,' I said. 'You do not want it.'

I will not swear, reader, that there was not something of repressed sarcasm both in the tone in which I uttered this sentence, and in the feeling that accompanied it. I had silently feared St. John till now, because I had not understood him. He had held me in awe, because he had held me in doubt. How much of him was saint, how much mortal, I could not heretofore tell: but revelations were being made in this conference: the analysis of his nature was proceeding before my eyes. I saw his fallibilities: I comprehended them. I understood that, sitting there where I did, on the bank of heath, and with that handsome form before me, I sat at the feet of a man, erring as I. The veil fell from his hardness and despotism. Having felt in him the presence of these qualities, I felt his imperfection and took courage. I was with an equal- one with whom I might argue- one whom, if I saw good, I might resist.

He was silent after I had uttered the last sentence, and I presently risked an upward glance at his countenance. His eye, bent on me, expressed at once stern surprise and keen inquiry. 'Is she sarcastic, and sarcastic to me!' it seemed to say. 'What does this signify?'

'Do not let us forget that this is a solemn matter,' he said ere long; 'one of which we may neither think nor talk lightly without sin.'

I trust, Jane, you are in earnest when you say you will give your heart to God: it is all I want. Once wrench your heart from man, and fix it on your Maker, the advancement of that Maker's spiritual kingdom on earth will be your chief delight and endeavour; you will be ready to do at once whatever furthers that end. You will see what impetus would be given to your efforts and mine by our physical and mental union in marriage: the only union that gives a character of permanent conformity to the destinies and designs of human beings; and, passing over all minor caprices- all trivial difficulties and delicacies of feeling- all scruple about the degree, kind, strength or tenderness of mere personal inclination- you will hasten to enter into that union at once.'

'Shall I?' I said briefly; and I looked at his features, beautiful in their harmony, but strangely formidable in their still severity; at his brow, commanding but not open; at his eyes, bright and deep and searching, but never soft; at his tall imposing figure; and fancied myself in idea his wife. Oh! it would never do! As his curate, his comrade, all would be right: I would cross oceans with him in that capacity; toil under Eastern suns, in Asian deserts with him in that office; admire and emulate his courage and devotion and vigour; accommodate quietly to his masterhood; smile undisturbed at his ineradicable ambition; discriminate the Christian from the man: profoundly esteem the one, and



freely forgive the other. I should suffer often, no doubt, attached to him only in this capacity: my body would be under rather a stringent yoke, but my heart and mind would be free. I should still have my unblighted self to turn to: my natural unenslaved feelings with which to communicate in moments of loneliness. There would be recesses in my mind which would be only mine, to which he never came, and sentiments growing there fresh and sheltered which his austerity could never blight, nor his measured warrior-march trample down: but as his wife- at his side always, and always restrained, and always checked- forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital- this would be unendurable.

'St. John!' I exclaimed, when I had got so far in my meditation.

'Well?' he answered icily.

'I repeat I freely consent to go with you as your fellow-missionary, but not as your wife; I cannot marry you and become part of you.'

'A part of me you must become,' he answered steadily: 'otherwise the whole bargain is void. How can I, a man not yet thirty, take out with me to India a girl of nineteen, unless she be married to me?

How can we be for ever together- sometimes in solitudes, sometimes amidst savage tribes- and unwed?'

'Very well,' I said shortly; 'under the circumstances, quite as well as if I were either your real sister, or a man and a clergyman like yourself.'

'It is known that you are not my sister; I cannot introduce you as such: to attempt it would be to fasten injurious suspicions on us both. And for the rest, though you have a man's vigorous brain, you have a woman's heart and- it would not do.'

'It would do,' I affirmed with some disdain, 'perfectly well. I have a woman's heart, but not where you are concerned; for you I have only a comrade's constancy; a fellow-soldier's frankness, fidelity, fraternity, if you like; a neophyte's respect and submission to his hierophant: nothing more- don't fear.'

'It is what I want,' he said, speaking to himself; 'it is just what I want. And there are obstacles in the way: they must be hewn down.'

Jane, you would not repent marrying me- be certain of that; we must be married. I repeat it: there is no other way; and undoubtedly enough of love would follow upon marriage to render the union right even in your eyes.'

'I scorn your idea of love,' I could not help saying, as I rose up and stood before him, leaning my back against the rock. 'I scorn the counterfeit sentiment you offer: yes, St. John, and I scorn you

when you offer it.'

He looked at me fixedly, compressing his well-cut lips while he did so. Whether he was incensed or surprised, or what, it was not easy to tell: he could command his countenance thoroughly.

'I scarcely expected to hear that expression from you,' he said: 'I think I have done and uttered nothing to deserve scorn.'

I was touched by his gentle tone, and overawed by his high, calm mien.

'Forgive me the words, St. John; but it is your own fault that I have been roused to speak so unguardedly. You have introduced a topic on which our natures are at variance- a topic we should never discuss: the very name of love is an apple of discord between us. If the reality were required, what should we do? How should we feel? My dear cousin, abandon your scheme of marriage- forget it.'

'No,' said he; 'it is a long-cherished scheme, and the only one which can secure my great end: but I shall urge you no further at present. To-morrow, I leave home for Cambridge: I have many friends there to whom I should wish to say farewell. I shall be absent a fortnight- take that space of time to consider my offer: and do not forget that if you reject it, it is not me you deny, but God.'

Through my means, He opens to you a noble career; as my wife only can you enter upon it. Refuse to be my wife, and you limit yourself for ever to a track of selfish ease and barren obscurity. Tremble lest in that case you should be numbered with those who have denied the faith, and are worse than infidels!'

He had done. Turning from me, he once more 'Looked to river, looked to hill.'

But this time his feelings were all pent in his heart: I was not worthy to hear them uttered. As I walked by his side homeward, I read well in his iron silence all he felt towards me: the disappointment of an austere and despotic nature, which has met resistance where it expected submission- the disapprobation of a cool, inflexible judgment, which has detected in another feelings and views in which it has no power to sympathise: in short, as a man, he would have wished to coerce me into obedience: it was only as a sincere Christian he bore so patiently with my perversity, and allowed so long a space for reflection and repentance.

That night, after he had kissed his sisters, he thought proper to forget even to shake hands with me, but left the room in silence. I- who, though I had no love, had much friendship for him- was hurt by the marked omission: so much hurt that tears started to my eyes.

'I see you and St. John have been quarrelling, Jane,' said Diana, 'during your walk on the moor. But go after him; he is now lingering in the passage expecting you- he will make it up.'

I have not much pride under such circumstances: I would always rather be happy than dignified;

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and I ran after him- he stood at the foot of the stairs.

'Good-night, St. John,' said I.

'Good-night, Jane,' he replied calmly.

'Then shake hands,' I added.

What a cold, loose touch he impressed on my fingers! He was deeply displeased by what had occurred that day; cordiality would not warm, nor tears move him. No happy reconciliation was to be had with him- no cheering smile or generous word: but still the Christian was patient and placid; and when I asked him if he forgave me, he answered that he was not in the habit of cherishing the remembrance of vexation; that he had nothing to forgive, not having been offended.

And with that answer he left me. I would much rather he had knocked me down.

第三十四章

英文

一切都办妥的时候已临近圣诞节了，普天下人的假日季节就要到来。于是我关闭了莫尔顿学校，并注意自己不空着手告别。交上好运不但使人心境愉快，而且出手也格外大方了。我们把大宗所得分些给别人，是为自己不平常的激动之情提供一个渲泄的机会。我早就愉快地感到，我的很多农村学生都喜欢我。离别时，这种感觉得到了证实。她们的感情很强烈，也很外露。我发现自己确实已在她们纯朴的心灵中占据了一个位置，我深为满意。我答应以后每周都去看她们，在学校中给她们上一小时课。

里弗斯先生来了——看到现在这些班级的六十个学生，在我前面鱼贯而出，看我锁上了门——这时我手拿钥匙站着，跟五六个最好的学生，特意交换几句告别的话。这些年轻姑娘之正派、可敬、谦逊和有知识，堪与英国农民阶层中的任何人媲美。这话很有份量，因为英国农民同欧洲的任何农民相比较，毕竟是最有教养、最有礼貌、最为自尊的。打从那时以来，我见过一些 *paysannes* 和 *Bauerinnen*，比之莫尔顿的姑娘，就是最出色的也显得无知、粗俗和糊涂。

“你认为自己这一时期的努力已经得到报偿了吗？”她们走掉后里弗斯先生问。“你觉得在自己风华正茂的岁月，做些真正的好事是一种愉快吗？”

“毫无疑问。”

“而你还只辛苦了几个月，如果你的一生致力于提高自己的民族岂不是很值得吗？”“是呀，”我说，“但我不能永远这么干下去。我不但要培养别人的能力，而且也要发挥自己的能力。现在就得发挥。别让我再把身心都投进学校，我已经摆脱，一心只想度假了。”

他神情很严肃。“怎么啦？你突然显得那么急切，这是什么意思？你打算干什么呢？”

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“要活跃起来，要尽我所能活跃起来，首先我得求你让汉娜走，另找别人服侍你。”

“你要她吗？”

“是的。让她同我一起去沼泽居。黛安娜和玛丽一周之后就回家，我要把一切都拾掇得整整齐齐，迎接她们到来。”

“我理解。我还以为你要去远游呢。不过这样也好，汉娜跟你走。”

“那么通知她明天以前作好准备。这是教室钥匙。明天早上我会把小屋的钥匙交给你。”

他拿了钥匙。“你高高兴兴地歇手了，”他说，“我并不十分理解你轻松的心情，因为我不知道你放弃这项工作后，要找什么工作来代替。现在你生活中的目标、目的和雄心是什么？”

“我的第一个目标是清理（你理解这个词的全部力量吗？），把沼泽居从房间到地窖清理一遍；第二个目标是用蜂蜡、油和数不清的布头把房子擦得锃亮；第三个目标是按数学的精密度来安排每一件椅子、桌子、床和地毯，再后我要差不多耗尽你的煤和泥炭，把每个房间都生起熊熊的炉火来。最后，你妹妹们预计到达之前的两天，汉娜和我要打其鸡蛋，细拣葡萄干，研磨调料，做圣诞饼，剁肉馅饼料子，隆重操持其他烹饪习俗。对你这样的门外汉，连语言也难以充分表达这番忙碌。总之，我的目的是下星期四黛安娜和玛丽到家之前，使一切都安排得妥妥贴贴。我的雄心就是她们到时给予最理想的欢迎。”

圣.约翰微微一笑，仍不满意。

“眼下说来这都不错，”他说，“不过认真地说，我相信第一阵快活的冲动过后，你的眼界不会局限于家人的亲热和家庭的欢乐。”

“人世间最好的东西，”我打断了他。

“不，简，这个世界不是享乐的天地，别去想把它变成这样，或者变成休憩的乐园，不要懈怠懒惰。”

“恰恰相反，我的意思是要大忙一番。”

“简，我暂时谅解你，给你两个月的宽限，充分享受你新职位的乐趣，也为最近找到亲戚而陶醉一番。但以后，我希望你开始把眼光放远些，不要光盯着沼泽居和莫尔顿，盯着姐妹圈子，盯着自己的宁静，盯着文明富裕所带来的肉体享受。我希望到那时你的充沛精力会再次让你不安。”

我惊讶地看着他。“圣.约翰，”我说，“我认为你这样说是近乎恶毒了。我本希望象女皇那样称心如意，而你却要弄得我不得安宁！你安的什么心？”

“我的用心是要使上帝赋予你的才能发挥作用，有一天他肯定会对此严加盘问的。简，我会

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密切而焦急地注意你——我提醒你——要竭力抑制你对庸俗的家庭乐趣所过分流露的热情。不要那么苦苦依恋肉体的关系，把你的坚毅和热诚留给一项适当的事业，不要将它浪费在平凡而短暂的事情上。听见了吗，简？”

“听见了，就仿佛你在说希腊文。我觉得我有充分理由感到愉快，我一定会愉快的。再见！”

我在沼泽居很愉快，也干得很起劲，汉娜也一样，她看着我在一片混乱的房子里会忙得乐不可支，看着我会那么扫呀，摔呀，清理呀，烧呀，忙个不停，简直看得入了迷。真的，过了那么一两天最乱的日子后，我们很高兴地从自己所制造的混乱中，逐步恢复了秩序。在此之前我上了S城，购买了一些新家具，我的表兄表姐们全权委托我，随我高兴对房间的布置作什么改动，并且拿出一笔钱来派这个用处。普通的起居室和寝室我大体保持原样，因为我知道，黛安娜和玛丽又一次看到朴实的桌子、椅子和床，会比看到最时髦的整修更愉快。不过赋予某些新意还是必要的，使她们回家的时候有一种我所希望的生气。添上黑色漂亮的新地毯、新窗帘、几件经过精心挑选的、古色古香的瓷器和铜器摆设，还有新床罩、镜子和化妆台上的化妆盒等等，便达到了这一目的。它们看上去鲜艳而不耀眼。一间空余的客厅和寝室，用旧红木家具和大红套子重新布置了一下。我在过道上铺了帆布，楼梯上铺了地毯。一切都完成以后，我想在这个季节里沼泽居既是室内光亮舒适的典范，又是室外寒冬枯叶、荒芜凄凉的标准。

不平凡的星期四终于到来了。估计她们约摸天黑时到。黄昏前楼上楼下都生了火，厨房里清清爽爽。汉娜和我都穿戴好了，一切都已收拾停当。

圣·约翰先到。我求他等全都布置好了再进房子。说真的，光想想四壁之内又肮脏又琐碎乱哄哄的样子，足以吓得他躲得远远的。他看见我在厨房里，照管着正在烘烤的茶点用饼，便走近炉子问道，“你是不是终于对女仆的活儿感到满意了？”作为回答，我邀请他陪我全面察看一下我劳动的成果。我好不容易说动他到房子里去走一走，他也不过是往我替他打开的门里瞧了一瞧。他楼上楼下转了一圈后说，准是费了很大一番劳累和麻烦，才能在那么短时间内带来如此可观的变化。但他只字未提住处面貌改变后给他带来了什么愉快。

他的沉默很使我扫兴。我想也许这些更动扰乱了他所珍惜的某些往事的联想。我问他是不是这么回事，当然语气有点儿灰心丧气。

“一点也没有。相反，我认为你悉心考虑了每种联想。说真的，我担心你在这上面花的心思太多了，不值得。譬如说吧，你花了多少时间来考虑布置这间房间？——随便问一下，你知道某本书在哪儿吗？”

我把书架上的那本书指给他看。他取了下来，像往常一样躲到窗子凹陷处，读了起来。

此刻，我不大喜欢这种举动，读者。圣·约翰是个好人，但我开始觉得他说自己冷酷无情时，他说的是真话。人的美德和人生的欢乐对他没有吸引力——平静的享受也不具魅力。他活着纯粹是为了向往——当然是向往优秀伟大的东西。但他永远不会休息，也不赞成周围的人休息。当我瞧着他白石一般苍白平静的高耸额头——瞧着他陷入沉思的漂亮面容时，我立刻明白他很难成为一个好丈夫，做他的妻子是件够折磨人的事。我恍然领悟到他对奥利弗小姐之爱的实质是什么。我同意他的看法，这不过是一种感官的爱。我理解他怎么会因为这种爱给



他带来的狂热影响而鄙视自己，怎么会希望抑杀和毁灭它，而不相信爱会永远有助于他或她的幸福。我明白他是一块大自然可以从中雕刻出英雄来的材料——基督教徒和异教徒英雄——法典制定者、政治家、征服者。他是可以寄托巨大利益的坚强堡垒，但是在火炉旁边，却总是一根冰冷笨重的柱子，阴郁沉闷，格格不入。

“这间客厅不是他的天地，”我沉思道：“喜马拉雅山谷或者南非丛林，甚至瘟疫流行的几内亚海岸的沼泽，才是他用武之地。他满可以放弃宁静的家庭生活。家庭不是他活动的环境，在这里他的官能会变得迟钝，难以施展或显露。在充满斗争和危险的环境中——显示勇气，发挥能力，考验韧性的地方，——他才会像一个首领和长官那样说活和行动。而在火炉边，一个快乐的孩子也会比他强。他选择传教士的经历是正确的——现在我明白了”。

“她们来啦！她们来啦！”汉娜砰地打开客厅门嚷道。与此同时，老卡罗高兴地吠叫起来。我跑了出去，此刻天已经黑了，但听得见嘎嘎的车轮声。汉娜立刻点上了提灯。车子在小门边停了下来，车夫开了门，一位熟悉的身躯走了出来，接着又出来了另一位。刹那之间我的面孔便埋进了她的帽子底下，先是触碰了玛丽柔软的脸，随后是黛安娜飘洒的卷发。她们大笑着——吻了吻我——随后吻了汉娜，拍了拍卡罗，卡罗乐得差点发了疯。她们急着问是否一切都好，得到肯定的回答后，便匆匆进了屋。

他们被惠特克劳斯到这里的长途颠簸弄得四肢僵硬，被夜间的寒气冻坏了。但是见了令人振奋的火光便绽开了愉快的笑靥。车夫和汉娜忙着把箱子拿进屋的时候，她们问起了圣·约翰。这时圣·约翰从客厅里走了出来。她们俩立刻搂住了他的脖子，他静静地给了各人一个吻，低声地说了几句欢迎的话，站了一会儿让她们同他交谈，随后便说估计她们很快会同他在客厅会面，像躲进避难所一样钻进了客厅。

我点了蜡烛好让她们上楼去，但黛安娜得先周到地叮嘱车夫，随后两人在我后面跟着。她们对房间的整修和装饰，对新的帷幔、新的地毯和色泽鲜艳的瓷花瓶都很满意，慷慨地表示了感激。我感到很高兴，我的安排完全符合她们的愿望，我所做的为她们愉快的家园之行增添了生动的魅力。

那是个可爱的夜晚。兴高彩烈的表姐们，又是叙述又是议论，滔滔不绝，她们的畅谈掩盖了圣·约翰的沉默。看到妹妹们，他由衷地感到高兴，但是她们闪烁的热情，流动的喜悦都无法引起他的共鸣。那天的大事——就是黛安娜和玛丽的归来——谈他感到很愉快，但伴随而来快乐的喧哗，喋喋不休、欣喜万分的接待，使他感到厌倦。我明白他希望宁静的第二天快点到来。用完茶点后一个小时，那晚的欢乐到达了极致，这时却响起来了一阵敲门声，汉娜进来报告说，“一个可怜的少年来得真不是时候，要请里弗斯先生去看看她的母亲，她快要死了。”

“她住在哪儿，汉娜？”

“一直要到惠特克劳斯坡呢，差不多有四英里路，一路都是沼泽和青苔。”

“告诉他我就去。”

“先生，我想你还是别去好。天黑以后走这样的路是最糟糕的，整个沼泽地都没有路，而且

又碰上了天气这么恶劣的晚上——风从来没有刮得那么大，你还是传个话，先生，明天上那儿去。”

但他已经在过道上，披上了斗篷，没有反对，没有怨言，便出发了，那时候已经九点。他到了半夜才回来，尽管四肢冻僵，身子疲乏，却显得比出发时还愉快。他完成了一项职责，作了一次努力，感到自己有克己献身的魄力，自我感觉好了不少。

我担心接下来的一整周使他很不耐烦。那是圣诞周，我们不干正经事儿，却沉浸在家庭的欢闹之中。荒原的空气，家里的自由自在的气氛，生活富裕的曙光，对黛安娜和玛丽的心灵，犹如起死回生的长生不老药。从上午到下午，从下午到晚上，她们都寻欢作乐。她们总能谈个不休，她们的交谈机智、精辟、富有独创，对我的吸引力很大。我喜欢倾听，喜欢参与，甚过干一切别的事情。圣·约翰对我们的说笑并无非议，但避之不迭。他很少在家，他的教区大，人口分散，访问不同地区的贫苦人家，便成了每天的例行公事。

一天早晨吃早饭的时候，黛安娜闷闷不乐了一阵子后问道，“你的计划没有改变吗？”“没有改变，也不可改变”便是对方的回答。他接着告诉我们，他离开英国的时间确定在明年。

“那么罗莎蒙德·奥利弗呢？”玛丽问。这句话似乎是脱口而出的，因为她说完不久便做了个手势，仿佛要把它收回去。圣·约翰手里捧着一本书——吃饭时看书是他不合群的习惯——他合上书，抬起头来。

“罗莎蒙德·奥利弗，”他说“要跟格兰比先生结婚了。他是弗雷德里克·格兰比爵士的孙子和继承人，是S城家庭背景最好、最受尊敬的居民之一我是昨天从他父亲那儿得到这个消息的。”

他的妹妹们相互看看，又看了看我。我们三个人都看着他，他像一块玻璃那样安详。

“这门婚事准是定得很匆忙，”黛安娜说，“他们彼此不可能认识很久的。”

“但有两个月了。他们十月份在S城的一个乡间舞会上见的面。可是，眼下这种情况，从各方面看来这门亲事都是称心合意的，没有什么障碍，也就没必要拖延了。一等弗雷德里克爵士出让给他们的S城那个地方整修好，可以接待他们了，他们就结婚。”

这次谈话后我第一回见圣·约翰独自呆着的时候，很想问问他，这件事是不是很使他伤心。但他似乎不需要什么同情，因此，我不但没有冒昧地再有所表示，反而想起自己以前的冒失而感到羞愧。此外，我已疏于同他交谈，他的冷漠态度再次结冻，我的坦率便在底下凝固了。他并没有信守诺言，对我以妹妹相待，而是不断地显出那种小小的令人寒心的区别，丝毫没有要慢慢亲热起来的意思。总之，自从我被认作他的亲人，并同住一屋后，我觉得我们间的距离，远比当初我不过是乡村女教师时大得多。当我记起我曾深得他的信任时，我很难理解他现在的冷淡态度。

在这种情况下，他突然从趴着的书桌上抬起头来说话时，我不免有些惊讶了。

“你瞧，简，仗已经打过了，而且获得了胜利。”

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我被这样的说话方式吓了一跳，没有立即回答。但犹豫了一阵子后，说道：

“可是你确信自己不是那种为胜利付出了重大代价的征服者吗？如果再来一仗岂不会把你毁掉？”

“我想不会。要是会，也并没有多大关系。我永远也不会应召去参加另一次这样的争斗了。争斗的结局是决定性的，现在我的道路已经扫清，我为此而感谢上帝！”说完，他回到了自己的文件和沉默中去了。

我们彼此间的欢乐（即黛安娜的、玛丽的和我的）渐渐地趋于安静了。我们恢复了平时的习惯和正常的学习，圣·约翰呆在家里的时间更多了，与我们一起坐在同一个房间里，有时一坐几小时。这时候玛丽绘画；黛安娜继续她的《百科全书》阅读课程（使我不胜惊讶和敬畏）；我苦读德文；他则思索着自己神秘的学问，就是某种东方语言，他认为要实现自己的计划需要把它掌握。

他似乎就这么忙着，坐在自己的角落里，安静而投入。不过他的蓝眼睛惯于离开看上去稀奇古怪的语法，转来转去，有时会出奇地紧盯着我们这些同学，一与别人的目光相通就会立即收敛，但不时又回过来搜索我们的桌子。我感到纳闷，不明白内中的含义。我也觉得奇怪，虽然在我看来每周一次上莫尔顿学校是件小事，但他每次必定要不失时机地表示满意。更使我不解的是，要是某一天天气不好，落雪下雨，或者风很大，她的妹妹们会劝我不要去看，而他必定会无视她们的关心，鼓动我不顾恶劣天气去完成使命。

“简可不是那种你们要把她说成的弱者，”他会说，“她会顶着山风，暴雨，或是几片飞雪，比我们谁都不差。她体格健康富有适应性——比很多身强力壮的人更能忍受天气的变化。”

我回到家里，虽然有时风吹雨淋，疲惫不堪，但从不敢抱怨，因为我明白一嘀咕就会惹他生气。无论何时，你坚忍不拔，他会为之高兴，反之，则特别恼火。

一天下午，我却告假呆在家里，因为我确实感冒了。他妹妹们代我去了莫尔顿，我坐着读起席勒的作品来。他在破译鸡爪一样的东方涡卷形字体。我换成练习翻译时，碰巧朝他的方向看了下，发觉自己正处于那双蓝眼睛的监视之下。它彻底底底，一遍遍地扫视了多久，我无从知道。他的目光锐利而冷漠，刹那之间我有些迷信了——仿佛同某种不可思议的东西坐在一个屋子里。

“简，你在干嘛？”

“学习德语。”

“我要你放弃德语，改学印度斯坦语。”

“你不是当真的吧？”

“完全当真，我会告诉你为什么。”

随后他继续解释说，印度斯坦语是他眼下正在学习的语言，学了后面容易忘记前面。要是有个学生，对他会有很大帮助，他可以向他一遍遍重复那些基本知识，以便牢记在自己的脑子里。究竟选我还是他的妹妹们，他犹豫了好久。但选中了我，因为他看到我比任何一位都能坐得住。我愿意帮他忙吗？也许我不必作太久的牺牲，因为离他远行的日子只有三个月了。

圣.约翰这个人不是轻易就能拒绝的。让你觉得，他的每个想法，不管是痛苦的，还是愉快的，都是刻骨铭心，永不磨灭的。我同意了。黛安娜和玛丽回到家里，前一位发现自己的学生转到了她哥哥那里，便大笑不已。她和玛丽都认为，圣.约翰绝对说服不了她们走这一步。他平静地答道：

“我知道。”

我发现他是位耐心、克制而又很严格的老师。他期望我做得很多，而一旦我满足了他的期望，他又会以自己的方式表示赞许。渐渐地他产生了某种左右我的力量，使我的头脑失去了自由。他的赞扬和注意比他的冷淡更有抑制作用。只要他在，我就再也不能谈笑自如了，因为一种纠缠不休的直觉，提醒我他讨厌轻松活泼（至少表现在我身上时）。我完全意识到只有态度严肃，干着一本正经的事儿才合他的心意，因此凡他在场的时候，就不可能有别的想头了。我觉得自己被置于一种使人结冻的魔力之下。他说“去”，我就去，他说“来”，我就来；他说“干这个”，我就去干。但是我不喜欢受奴役，很多次都希望他像以前那样忽视我。

一天夜里，到了就寝时间，他的妹妹和我都围他而立，同他说声晚安。他照例吻了吻两个妹妹，又照例把手伸给我。黛安娜正好在开玩笑的兴头上（她并没有痛苦地被他的意志控制着，因为从另一个意义上说她的意志力也很强），便大叫道。

“圣.约翰！你过去总把简叫作你的第三个妹妹，不过你并没有这么待她，你应当也吻她。”

她把我推向他。我想黛安娜也是够惹人恼火的，一时心里乱糟糟的很不舒服。我正这么心有所想并有所感时，圣.约翰低下了头，他那希腊式的面孔，同我的摆到了一个平面上，他的眼睛穿心透肺般地探究着我的眼睛——他吻了我。世上没有大理石吻或冰吻一类的东西，不然我应当说，我的牧师表哥的致意，属于这种性质。可是也许有实验性的吻，他的就是这样一种吻。他吻了我后，还打量了我一下，看看有什么结果。结果并不明显，我肯定没有脸红，也许有点儿苍白，因为我觉得这个吻仿佛是贴在镣铐上的封条。从此以后他再也没有忽略这一礼节，每次我都严肃庄重，默然无言地忍受着，在他看来似乎又为这吻增加了魅力。

至于我，每天都更希望讨他喜欢。但是这么一来，我越来越觉得我必须抛却一半的个性，窒息一半的官能，强行改变原有的情趣，强迫去从事自己缺乏禀性来完成的事业。他要把我提携到我永远无法企及的高度。每时每刻我都为渴求达到他的标准而受着折磨。这是不可能付诸实现的，就像要把我那不规则的面容，塑造成他标准的古典模式，也象要把他的海蓝色泽和庄重的光彩，放进我那不可改变的青色眼睛里。

然而，使我目前动弹不得的不全是他的支配意识。最近我很容易显出伤心来，一个腐朽的恶魔端坐在我的心坎上，吸干了我幸福的甘泉——这就是忧心恶魔。

读者，你也许以为在地点和命运的变迁中，我已经忘掉了罗切斯特先生。说真的，一刻都没有忘记。我仍旧思念着他，因为这不是阳光就能驱散的雾气，也不是风暴便可吹没的沙造人像。这是刻在碑文上的一个名字，注定要像刻着它的大理石那样长存。无论我走到哪里，我都渴望知道他的情况。在莫尔顿的时候，我每晚一踏进那间小屋便惦记起他来；这会儿在沼泽居，每夜一走进自己的卧室，便因为他而心潮起伏。

为了遗嘱的事我不得不写信给布里格斯先生时，问他是不是知道罗切斯特先生目前的地址和健康状况。但就像圣.约翰猜想的那样，他对他的情况一无所知。我随后写信给费尔法克斯太太，求她谈谈有关情况。我原以为这一步肯定能达到我的目的，确信会早早地得到她的回音。二个星期过去了，还是没有收到回信，我万分惊讶。而两个月逝去，日复一日邮件到来，却没有我的信，我便深为忧虑了。

我再次写了信，因为第一封有可能是丢失的。新的希望伴随着新的努力而来，象上次一样闪了一下光，随后也一样摇曳着淡去了。我没有收到一行字，一句话。在徒劳的企盼中半年已经过去，我的希望幻灭了，随后便觉得真的堕入了黑暗。

风和日丽的春天，我无意消受。夏天就要到了，黛安娜竭力要使我振作起来，说是我脸有病容，希望陪我上海边去。圣.约翰表示反对，他说我并不需要散漫，却缺些事儿干干。我眼下的生活太无所用心，需要有个目标。我想大概是为了补缺，他进一步延长了我的印度斯坦语课，并更迫切地要我去完成。我象一个傻瓜，从来没有想到要反抗——我无法反抗他。

一天，我开始了我的功课，情绪比往常要低。我的无精打采是一种强烈感受到的失望所引起的。早上汉娜告诉我有我的一封信，我下楼去取的时候，心里几乎十拿九稳，该是久盼的消息终于来了。但我发现不过是一封无关紧要的短筒，是布里格斯先生的公务信。我痛苦地克制自己，但眼泪夺眶而出。而我坐着细读印度文字难辨的字母和华丽的比喻时，泪水又涌了上来。

圣.约翰把我叫到他旁边去读书，但我的嗓子不争气，要读的词语被啜泣淹没了。客厅里只有他和我两人，黛安娜在休憩室练习弹唱，玛丽在整园子——这是个晴朗的五月天，天清气爽，阳光明丽，微风阵阵。我的同伴对我这种情绪并未表示惊奇，也没有问我是什么缘故，他只是说：

“我们停几分钟吧，简，等你镇静下来再说。”我赶紧忍住不再发作，而他镇定而耐心地坐着，靠在书桌上，看上去像个医生，用科学的眼光，观察着病人的险情，这种险情既在意料之中又是再明白不过的。我止住了哽咽，擦去了眼泪，嘟哝着说是早上身体不好，又继续我的功课，并终于完成了，圣.约翰把我的书和他的书放在一边，锁了书桌，说：——

“好吧，简，你得去散散步，同我一起去。”

“我来叫黛安娜和玛丽。”

“不，今天早上我只要一个人陪伴，一定得是你。穿上衣服，从厨房门出去，顺着通往沼泽谷源头的路走，我马上会赶来的。”

我不知道有折中的办法。在与同我自己的性格相左的那种自信冷酷的个性打交道时，我不知道在绝对屈服和坚决反抗之间，生活中还有什么中间道路。我往往忠实执行一种方法，有时终于到了似火山喷涌，一触即发的地步，接着便转变成执行另一种方法了。既然眼前的情况不能保证我起来反抗，而我此刻的心境又无意反抗，我便审慎地服从了圣·约翰的指令，十分钟后。我与他并肩踩在幽谷的野径上了。

微风从四面吹来，飘过山峦，带来了欧石南和灯心草的芳香。天空湛蓝湛蓝，小溪因为下过春雨而上涨，溪水流下山谷，充盈清冽，从太阳那儿借得了金光，从天空中吸取了蓝宝石的色泽。我们往前走着离开了小径，踏上了一块细如苔藓、青如绿宝石的柔软草地，草地上精细地点缀着一种白色的小花，并闪耀着一种星星似的黄花。山峦包围着我们，因为溪谷在靠近源头的地方蜿蜒伸到了山峦之中。

“让我们在这儿歇一下吧，”圣·约翰说，这时我们已来到了一个岩石群的第一批散乱的石头跟前。这个岩石群守卫着隘口，一条小溪从隘口的另一头飞流直下，形成了瀑布。再远一点的地方，山峦抖落了身上的草地和花朵，只剩下欧石南蔽体，岩石作珠宝——在这里山把荒凉夸大成了蛮荒，用愁眉苦脸来代替精神饱满——在这里，山为孤寂守护着无望的希望，为静穆守护着最后的避难所。

我坐了下来，圣·约翰坐在我旁边。他抬头仰望山隘，又低头俯视空谷。他的目光随着溪流飘移，随后又回过来扫过给溪流上了彩的明净的天空。他脱去帽子，让微风吹动头发，吻他的额头。他似乎在与这个他常到之处的守护神在交流，他的眼睛在向某种东西告别。

“我会再看到它的，”他大声说，“在梦中，当我睡在恒河旁边的時候。再有，在更遥远的时刻——当我又一次沉沉睡去的时候——在一条更暗淡的小溪的岸边。”

离奇的话表达了一种离奇的爱：一个严峻的爱国者对自己祖国的激情！他坐了下来，我们足足有半小时没有说话，他没有开口，我也没有吱声。这段沉默之后，他开始说了：“简，六周以后我要走了，我已在‘东印度人’号船里订好了舱位，六月二十日开航。”

“上帝一定会保护你，因为你做着他的工作，”我回答。

“不错，”他说，“那是我的光荣，也是我的欢乐。我是永不出错的主的一个奴仆。我出门远游不是在凡人的指引之下，不受有缺陷的法规的制约，不受软弱无力的同类可怜虫的错误控制。我的国王，我的立法者，我的首领是尽善尽美的主。我觉得奇怪，我周围的人为什么不热血沸腾，投到同一面旗帜下来——参加同一项事业。”

“并不是所有的人都具有你那样的毅力。弱者希望同强者并驾齐驱是愚蠢的。”

“我说的不是弱者，想到的也不是他们。我只同那些与那工作相配，并能胜任的人说话。”

“那些人为数不多，而且很难发现。”



## 学英语，练听力，上听力课堂！

“你说得很对，但一经发现，就要把他们鼓动起来——敦促和激励他们去作出努力——告诉他们自己的才能何在，又是怎么被赋予的——向他们耳朵传递上天的信息——直接代表上帝，在选民的队伍中给他们一个位置。”

“要是他们确实能胜任那工作，那么他们的心灵岂不第一个得到感应？”

我仿佛觉得一种可怕的魔力在我周围和头顶积聚起来。我颤栗着，唯恐听到某些会立即召来释放能力的致命的话。

“那么你的心怎么说呀？”圣·约翰问。

“我的心没有说——我的心没有说，”我回答，直吓得手骨悚然。

“那我得替它说了，”他继续说，语调深沉冷酷。“简，跟我一起去印度吧，做个伴侣和同事。”

溪谷和天空顿时旋转起来，群山也翻腾起伏：我仿佛听到了上天的召唤——仿佛像马其顿那样的一位幻觉使者已经宣布：“过来帮助我们，”但我不是使徒——我看不见那位使者——我接受不到他的召唤。

“呵，圣·约翰！”我叫道，“怜悯怜悯吧！”

我在向一个自以为在履行职责，不知道怜悯和同情的人请求。他继续说：

“上帝和大自然要你做一个传教士的妻子，他们给予你的不是肉体上的能力，而是精神上的禀赋。你生来是为了操劳，而不是为了爱情。你得做传教士的妻子——一定得做。你将属于我的，我要你——不是为了取乐，而是为了对主的奉献。”

“我不适合，我没有意志力，”我说。

他估计到一开始我会反对，所以并没有被我的话所激怒。说真的他倚在背后的一块岩石上，双臂抱着放在胸前，脸色镇定沉着。我明白他早已准备好对付长久恼人的反抗，而且蓄足了耐心坚持到底——决心以他对别人的征服而告终。

“谦卑，简，”他说，“是基督美德的基础。你说得很对，你不适合这一工作。可谁适合呢？或者，那些真正受召唤的人，谁相信自己是配受召唤的呢？以我来说，不过是尘灰草芥而已，跟圣·保尔相比，我承认自己是最大的罪人。但我不允许这种个人的罪恶感使自己畏缩不前。我知道我的领路人。他公正而伟大，在选择一个微弱的工具来成就一项大事业时，他会借助上帝无穷的贮藏，为实现目标而弥补手段上不足。你我一样去想吧，简——像我一样去相信吧。我要你倚靠的是永久的磐石，不要怀疑，它会承受住你人性缺陷的负荷。”

“我不了解传教士生活，从来没有研究过传教士的劳动。”

“听着，尽管我也很卑微，但我可以给予你所需要的帮助，可以把工作一小时一小时布置给你，常常支持你，时时帮助你。开始的时候我可以这么做，不久之后（因为我知道你的能力）

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你会像我一样强，一样合适，不需要我的帮助。”

“可是我的能力呢，——要承担这一工作，又从何谈起？我感觉不到灯火在燃烧起——感觉不到生命在加剧搏动——感觉不到有个声音在劝戒和鼓励我。呵，但愿我能让你看到，这会儿我的心象一个没有光线的牢房，它的角落里铐着一种畏畏缩缩的忧虑——那就是担心自己被你说服，去做我无法完成的事情。”

“我给你找到了一个答案——你，听着。自从同你初次接触以后，我就已经在注意你了。我已经研究了你十个月。那时我在你身上做了各种实验，我看到了什么，得出了什么启示呢？在乡村学校里，我发现你按时而诚实地完成了不合你习惯和心意的工作。我看到你能发挥自己的能力和机智去完成它。你能自控时，就能取胜。你知道自己突然发了财时非常镇静，从这里我看到了一个毫无底马罪过的心灵——钱财对你并没有过份的吸引力。你十分坚定地愿把财富分成四份，自己只留一份，把其余的让给了空有公道理由的其他三个人。从这里，我看到了一个为牺牲而狂喜拣起我所感兴趣的东西那种驯服性格中，从你一直坚持的孜孜不倦刻苦勤奋的精神中，从你对待困难那永不衰竭的活力和不可动摇的个性中，我看到了你具备我所寻求的一切品格。简，你温顺、勤奋、无私、忠心、坚定、勇敢。你很文雅而又很英勇。别再不信任你自己了——我可以毫无保留地信任你。你可以掌管印度学校，帮助印度女人，你的协助对我是无价之宝。”

罩在我头上的铁幕紧缩了起来。说服在稳健地步步进逼。我闭上眼睛，最后的几句话终于扫清了原先似乎已堵塞的道路。我所做的工作本来只是那么模模糊糊，零零碎碎，经他一说便显得简明扼要，经他亲手塑造便变得形态毕现了。他等候着回答。我要求他给我一刻钟思考，才能再冒昧地答复他。

“非常愿意，”他回答道。一边站了起来，快步朝隘口走了一小段路，猛地躺倒在一块隆起的欧石南地上，静静地躺着。

“我不得不看到并承认，我可以做他要我做的事，”我沉思起来，“如果能让我活命的话。但我觉得，在印度的太阳照射下，我活不了太久——那又怎么样呢？他又不在乎。我的死期来临时，他会平静而神圣地把我交付给创造了我的上帝。我面前的情况非常明白。离开英国，就是离开一块亲切而空荡的土地——罗切斯特先生不在这里。而即使他在，同我又有关系呢？现在我就是没有他而活下去。没有比这么日复一日地苟延残喘更荒唐更软弱了，仿佛我在等待不可能发生的情况变化，从而把我和他连结在一起。当然（如圣·约翰曾说过的）我得在生活中寻找新的乐趣，来替代已经失去的。而他现在所建议的工作，岂不正是人所能接受，上帝所能赐予的最好的工作？从其高尚的目的和崇高的结果来看，岂不是最适合来填补撕裂的情感和毁灭的希望所留下的空白？我相信我必须说，是的——然而我浑身发抖了。哎呀！要是我跟着他，我就抛弃了我的一半。我去印度就是走向过早的死亡。而离开英国到印度和离开印度到坟墓之间的空隙，又是如何填补呢？我也看得清清楚楚。为了使圣·约翰满意，我会忙个不停，直弄得肌肉酸痛。我会使他满意——做得丝毫不辜负他的希望。要是我真的跟他去了——要是我真的作出他所怂恿的牺牲，那我会做得很彻底。我会把一切心灵和肉体——都扔到圣坛上，作出全部牺牲。他决不会爱我，但他会赞许我的做法。我会向他显示他尚未见过的能力和他从不表示怀疑的才智。不错，我会像他那样奋力工作，像他那样毫无怨言。”

“那么有可能同意他的要求了，除了一条，可怕的一条。也就是他要我做他的妻子，而他那颗为丈夫的心，并不比那边峡谷中小溪泛起泡沫流过的阴沉的巨岩强多少。他珍视我就象士兵珍视一个好的武器，仅此而已。不同他结婚，这决不会使我担忧。可是我能使他如愿以偿——冷静地将计划付诸实践——举行婚礼吗？我能从他那儿得到婚戒，受到爱的一切礼遇（我不怀疑他会审慎地做到）而心里却明白完全缺乏心灵的交流？我能忍受他所给予的每份爱是对原则的一次牺牲这种意识吗？不，这样的殉道太可怕了。我决不能承受。我可以作为他的妹妹，而不是他的妻子来陪伴他，我一定要这么告诉他。”

我朝土墩望去，他躺在那里，一动不动，像根倒地的柱子。他的脸朝着我，眼睛闪着警觉锐利的光芒。他猛地立起向我走来。

“我准备去印度，要是我可以自由自在地去。”

“你的回答需要解释一下，”他说，“不清楚。”

“你至今一直是我的义兄，而我是你的义妹。让我们这么过下去吧，你我还是不要结婚好。”

他摇了摇头。“在这种情况下义兄义妹是行不通的。如果你是我的亲妹妹，那便是另外一回事了，我会带着你，而不另找妻子。而现在的情况是，我们的结合要么非得以婚姻来奉献和保证，要么这种结合就不能存在。现实的障碍不允许有其他打算。你难道没有看到这一点吗，简？考虑一下吧——你的坚强的理智会引导你。”

我的确考虑了。我的理智虽然平庸，却替我指出了这样的事实：我们并没有象夫妻那么彼此相爱，因而断言我们不应当结婚。于是我这么说。“圣，约翰，”我回答，“我把你当作哥哥——你把我当作妹妹，就让我们这么继续下去吧。”

“我们不能——我们不能，”他毅然决然地回答，“这不行。你已经说过要同我一起去印度。记住——你说过这话。”

“有条件的。”

“行呵——行呵。在关键的问题上——同我一起离开英国，在未来的工作中同我合作——你没有反对。你已经等于把你的手放在犁轭下了，你说话算数，不会缩回去。你面前只有一个目标——如何把你做的工作出色地做好，把你复杂的兴趣、情感、想法、愿望、目标弄得更单纯一点吧，把一切考虑汇成一个目的：全力以赴，有效地完成伟大的主的使命。要这么做，你得有个帮手——不是一个兄长，那样的关系太松散，而是一个丈夫。我也不需要一个妹妹。妹妹任何时候都可以从我身边带走。我要的是妻子，我生活中能施予有效影响的唯一伴侣，一直维持到死亡。”

他说话的时候我颤抖着。我感觉到他的影响透入我骨髓——他捆住了我的手脚。

“别在我身上动脑筋了，到别的地方找一个吧，圣·约翰。找一个适合你的。”

“你的意思是一个适合我目标的——适合我天职的。我再次告诉你，我不是作为微不足道的



个人——一个带着自私自利观念的男人，而希望结婚的，却是作为一个传教士。”

“我会把我的精力献给传教士——他所需要的就是这个——而不是我本人。我对于他来说，无非等于是把果壳加到果仁上，而他并不需要果壳一类的东西：我要把它们保留着。”

“你不能——也不应该。你想上帝会对半心半意的献身表示满意吗？他会接受部份的牺牲吗？我所拥护的是上帝的事业，我是把你招募到他的旗帜下的。我不能代表上帝接受三心二意的忠诚，非得死心塌地不可。”

“呵！我会把我的心交给上帝，”我说，“你并不需要它。”

读者呵，我不能保证我说这句话的语气和伴随着的感情里，有没有一种克制的嘲弄。我向来默默地惧怕圣·约翰，因为我不了解他。他使我感到敬畏，因为总能让我吃不准。他身上有多少属于圣人，有多少属于凡人，我一直难以分辨。但这次谈话却给了我启示，在我眼皮底下展开着对他本性的剖析。我看到了他的错误，并有所理解。我明白，我坐在欧石南岸边那个漂亮的身躯后面时，我是坐在一个同我一样有错的男人跟前。面罩从他冷酷和专横的面孔上落下。我一旦觉得他身上存在着这些品质，便感到他并非完美无缺了，因而也就鼓起了勇气。我与一位同等的人在一起——我可以与他争辩——如果认为妥当，还可以抗拒。

我说了最后一句话后，他沉默了。我立刻大胆地抬头去看他的面容。他的目光对着我，既表示惊讶，又露出了急切的探询之情。“她可在嘲弄？是嘲弄我吗？”这目光仿佛说。“那是什么意思呢？”

“别让我们忘记这是一件严肃的事情，”过了一会儿他说。“这是一件我们无论轻率地想，还是轻率地谈都不免有罪的事。简，我相信你说把心交给上帝的时候，你是真诚的。我就只要你这样。一旦你把心从人那儿掏出来，交给了上帝，那么在世上推进上帝的精神王国会成为你的乐趣和事业。凡能推动这一目标的一切，你都准备立即去做。你就会看到我们肉体和精神上的结合，将会对你我的努力有多大的促进！只有这种结合才能给人类的命运和设想以一种永久一致的特性。而且只要你摆脱一切琐细的任性——克服感情上的一切细小障碍和娇气——放弃考虑个人爱好的程度、种类、力量或是柔情——你就会立刻急于要达成这种结合。”

“我会吗？”我简短地说。我瞧着他的五官，它们漂亮匀称，但呆板严肃，出奇地可怕；我瞧着他的额头，它威严却并不舒展；我瞧着他的眼睛，它们明亮、深沉、锐利，却从不温柔；我瞧着他那高高的、威严的身子，设想我自己是他的妻子！呵！这绝对不行！作他的副牧师，他的同事，那一切都没有问题。我要以那样的身份同他一起漂洋过海，在东方的日头下劳作；以那样的职责与他同赴亚洲的沙漠，钦佩和仿效他的勇气、忠诚和活力；默默地听任他的控制；自由自在地笑他根深蒂固的雄心；区别基督教徒和一般人，对其中一个深为敬重，对另一个随意宽恕。毫无疑问，仅以这样的身份依附他，我常常感到痛苦。我的肉体将会置于紧紧的枷锁之中，不过我的心灵和思想却是自由的。我仍然还可以转向没有枯萎的自我，也就是那未受奴役的自然的感情，在孤独的时刻我还可以与这种感情交流。在我的心田里有着一个只属于我的角落，他永远到不了那里，情感在那里发展，新鲜而又隐蔽。他的严酷无法使它枯竭，他那勇士般的整齐步伐，也无法将它踏倒。但是做他的妻子，永远在他身边，永远受到束缚，永远需要克制——不得不将天性之火压得很小，迫使它只在内心燃烧，永远不喊出声来，尽管被禁锢的火焰销蚀了一个又一个器官——这简直难以忍受。

“圣.约翰！”我想得那么远时叫了出来。

“嗯？”他冷冷地回答。

“我重复一遍，我欣然同意作为你的传教士伙伴跟你去，但不作为你的妻子。我不能嫁你，成为你的一部分。”

“你必须成为我的一部分，”他沉着地回答，“不然整个事儿只是一句空话。除非你跟我结婚，要不我这样一个不到三十岁的男人怎么能带一个十九岁的站娘去印度呢？我们怎么能没有结婚却始终呆在一起呢——有时与外界隔绝，有时与野蛮种族相处？”

“很好，”我唐突地说，“既然如此，那还不如把我当成你的亲妹妹，或者像你一样一个男人，一个牧师。”

“谁都知道你不是我的妹妹。我不能那样把你介绍给别人，不然会给我们两人招来嫌疑和中伤。至于其他，尽管你有着男子活跃的头脑，却有一颗女人的心——这就不行了。”“这行”，我有些不屑地肯定说，“完全行。我有一颗女人的心，但这颗心与你说的无关。对你，我只抱着同伴的坚贞，兄弟战士的坦率、忠诚和友情，如果还有别的，那就是新教士对圣师的尊敬和服从。没有别的了——请放心。”

“这就是我所需要的，”他自言自语地说，“我正需要这个。道路上障碍重重，必须一一排除。简，跟我结婚你不会后悔的。肯定是这样，我们一定得结婚，我再说一句，没有别的路可走了。毫无疑问，结婚以后，爱情会随之而生，足以使这样的婚姻在你看来也是正确的。”

“我瞧不起你的爱情观，”我不由自主地说，一面立起来，背靠岩石站在他面前。“我瞧不起你所献的虚情假意，是的，圣.约翰，你那么做的时候，我就瞧不起你了。”

他眼睛盯着我，一面紧抿着有棱角的嘴唇。他究竟是被激怒了，还是感到吃惊，或是其他等等，很不容易判断。他完全能驾驭自己的面部表情。

我几乎没有料到会从那儿听到这样的话，”他说，“我认为我并没有做过和说过让你瞧不起的事情。”

我被他温和的语调所打动，也被他傲慢镇定的神态所震慑。

“原谅我的话吧，圣.约翰。不过这是你自己的过错，把我激得说话毫无顾忌了。你谈起了一个我们两个水火不容的话题——一个我们决不应该讨论的话题。爱情这两个字本身就会挑起我们之间的争端——要是从实际出发，我们该怎么办呢？我们该怎么感觉？我的亲爱的表兄，放弃你那套结婚计划吧——忘掉它。”

“不，”他说，“这是一个久经酝酿的计划，而且是唯一能使我实现我伟大目标的计划。不过现在我不想再劝你了。明天我要离家上剑桥去，那里我有很多朋友，我想同他们告别一下。我要外出两周——利用这段时间考虑一下我的建议吧。别忘了，要是你拒绝，你舍弃的不是

## 学英语，练听力，上听力课堂！

我，而是上帝。通过我，上帝为你提供了高尚的职业，而只有做我的妻子，你才能从事这项职业。拒绝做我的妻子，你就永远把自己局限在自私闲适、一无所获、默默无闻的小道上。你簌簌发抖，担心自己被归入放弃信仰、比异教徒还糟糕的一类人！”

他说完从我那儿走开，再次——

“眺望小溪，眺望山坡。”

但这时候他把自己的感情全都闷在心里。我不配听它渲泄。我跟着他往家走的时候，从他铁板一样的沉默中，我清楚地知道他对我的态度。那是一种严厉、专制的个性，在预料对方能俯首贴耳的情形下，遭到了反抗——对一种冷静和不可改变的裁决表示了非难之后，以及在另一个人身上发现了自己无力打动的情感与观点之后所感到的失望。总之，作为一个男人，他本希望逼迫我就范。而只是因为他是一个虔诚的基督教徒，才这么耐心地忍住了我的执拗，给我那么长时间思考和忏悔。

那天晚上，他吻了妹妹们以后，认为忘掉同我握手比较妥当，便默默地离开了房间，我尽管对他没有爱情，却有深厚的友谊，被他这种明显的冷落刺伤了心，我心里难受得连泪水都涌上了眼睛。

“我看得出来，你们在荒原上散步时，你和圣·约翰吵过了，简，”黛安娜说，“可是，跟上他吧，他在过道里走来走去，盼着你呢——他会和好的。”

这种情况下我没有多大的自尊。与其保持尊严，总还不如保持心境愉快，我跟在他后面跑过去——他在楼梯跟前站住了。

“晚安，圣·约翰，”我说。

“晚安，简，”他镇定地回答。

“那么握握手吧，”我加了一句。

他的手触碰我的手指时是多么冷，多么松弛呀！他对那天发生的事情很不高兴。热诚已无法使他温暖，眼泪也不能打动他了。同他已不可能达成愉快的和解——他没有激励人的笑容，也没有慷慨大度的话语。可是这位基督徒依然耐心而平静。我问他是否原谅我时，他说没有记恨的习惯，也没有什么需要原谅，因为压根儿就没有被冒犯过。

他那么回答了以后，便离开了我。我宁愿被他打倒在地。