

Shorter Fictions and Literary Essays

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by

James Fenimore Cooper

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A New-England Tale; or Sketches of New-England Character and Manners

12mo. pp. 277. New-York. Bliss & White, 1822.

Of books that profess to illustrate American society and manners, we have never met with one which so perfectly and agreeably accomplishes the design, to a certain extent, as the little volume before us. Our political institutions, the state of learning among us, and the influence of religion upon the national character, have been often discussed and displayed; but our domestic manners, the social and the moral influences, which operate in retirement, and in common intercourse, and the multitude of local peculiarities, which form our distinctive features upon the many peopled earth, have very seldom been happily exhibited in our literature. It is true, that Mr. Washington Irving, in his Knickerbocker, Rip Van Winkle, and the Legend of Sleepy Hollow, has given, in inimitable burlesque, very natural, just, and picturesque views of one class of people in the land; but they are all ludicrous subjects, and do little towards forming a history of the diversities of passion, sentiment, and behaviour, as they are manifest in any of our little communities, detached, as it were, from the great world. We have seen but two attempts of this sort which merit any praise, a story called Salem Witchcraft, and Mr. Tyler's forgotten, and we fear, lost narrative of the Algerine Captive, both of which relate to times long past. Any future collector of our national tales, would do well to snatch these from oblivion, and to give them that place among the memorials of other days, which is due to the early and authentic historians of a country. We say the historians—we do not mean to rank the writers of these tales, among the recorders of statutes, and battles, and party chronicles; but among those true historians which Dr. Moore says, are wanting, to give us just notions of what manner of men the ancient Greeks were, in their domestic affections, and retired deportment; and with whom Fielding classes himself, nearly in these words: 'Those dignified authors who produce what are called true histories, are indeed writers of fictions, while I am a true historian, a describer of society as it exists, and of men as they are.'

An historian of this sort, is the author of the New-England Tale, whomsoever *he* or *she* may be: a person of fine feelings, and of fine observation, skilled in interpreting motives of action, well acquainted with that true moral philosophy, which has ascertained much of the natural influences of habit, example, and education upon the formation of character, and with this knowledge, possessing that delicacy of discernment, which produces felicity of manner in literary composition, and is, in fact, a combination of generous sentiments, wide intelligence, and enlightened taste; and which, when applied to literature, communicates whatever it perceives or enjoys with a gracefulness, sensibility, and simplicity, that vanity, mediocrity, and self-assumption, never can attain. The New-England Tale is prefaced by a modest declaration that its limited and simple

aim is to give a descriptive sketch of some prevailing characteristics of New-England; and this is done in the succeeding pages, so as to afford a continued interest, and a lively pleasure to the reader, and to demand, as an act of justice, (so we think,) sincere commendation from the candid and the rational. Surely no debt which opinion can pay, is rendered with more satisfaction by the debtor, than the honest tribute of praise, accorded by one who has been regaled by a beautiful literary production to him who has bestowed it.

Of all those who animate our solitude, refresh our weariness, and beguile our cares, the most successful is he who furnishes us with a new and interesting story. He carries us out of the world of our self-love, into one resembling, in many particulars, that of our experience, and makes us forget whatever is positively painful in our lot, or wanting to our happiness. This is done by employing the imagination agreeably, by presenting to it such views of the human heart with its affections, and of human life in its appearances, its modes of enjoyment and improvement, of suffering and degeneracy, as interest curiosity, increase our knowledge, correct our false opinions, and, what is more powerful than all, appeal to our sympathies. We love an interesting fiction, because, however paradoxical the assertion may appear, it addresses our love of truth—not the mere love of facts expressed by true names and dates, but the love of that higher truth, the truth of nature and of principles, which is a primitive law of the human mind, and only to be effaced by the most deplorable perversion. A good novel addresses itself very powerfully to our moral nature and conscience, and to those good feelings, and good principles, which Providence has planted within us, constantly to remind us that 'we have, all of us, one human heart.' In actual life our business and necessities come between us and living men: their sentiments, examples, and history, do not appeal to our generosity and our admiration, so affectingly as they would, did not the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and a thousand other counteracting influences upon our better nature, choak up our sympathies, and prevent them from flowing along in their natural exuberance with the destinies and the feelings of our fellow creatures. But no mixed motives enter into the emotions with which we regard the creations of the painter and the poet. When they bring before us the figure, passions, thoughts, expressions, and adventures of their ideal personages, our interests and prejudices disappear—then we give our homage to genius and virtue, and our pity to misfortune—we pour out our indignation upon crime, and plead for the tempted and the fallen, without a check from envy in ourselves, in the contemplation of greatness and goodness, and without a fear of censure from others, on account of our tenderness for infirmity, or our forgiveness of sin. We feel ourselves, as we look upon a touching picture, or as we read of a trying situation, to be just and generous, according to our emotions—and we love to feel so; we love to experience these secret sympathies, and we applaud ourselves for them; and these are more or less lively, more or less efficacious in their practical operation on our habitual dispositions and conduct, according to the previous cultivation and ascendancy of our moral sentiments and principles. The

writer of moral fiction always presumes upon the existence and susceptibility of these sentiments and principles, when he distributes virtues and vices; and he directs his train of retributions, not only in conformity to the obvious system of Providence, but according to the demand of his reader's probable judgment and moral sense; proving thus his respect for the natural virtue of the common mind, as well as his knowledge of the propriety of the individual characters which he attempts to portray. The gratification of the moral sense is, however, far from constituting all the pleasure produced by fine fiction. The delight of pure imagination, the transportation of ourselves beyond our own bounded vision and existence to the past and the distant, into scenes of splendor, and into conditions which fancy has devised, and fancy only could sustain or enjoy, are among the rarest pleasures that the reader of fiction tastes. We do not distrust that the enchantment thus produced is among the liveliest enjoyments of the fanciful mind, but we doubt whether the susceptibility of this excitement is universal, whether it is a healthful employment of the mind, and whether it is a source of so sweet, so complacent, or so deep emotions, as the other more frequent and familiar exercise of imagination, which is afforded by those who never soar to 'the highest heaven of invention,' but who, limiting themselves to the nature 'common to man,' study the characters of communities, the local peculiarities of separated regions, the traits marked by grades of station, and the influence of passions and interests, operating at different periods, and under various events of life. Are there not more persons who will be affected, who will remember it for a longer time, and who will experience a more natural pleasure, at the sight of one of Wilkins' simple and expressive pictures, similar to that which describes the oppression of a hard hearted landlord and his suffering tenants, or that of a blind fiddler in a motly family of the common people, producing a coarse but gay delight, than there are who can feel and understand the sublimities of the great masters; and is there not something more sweet and salutary, in the talent which moves and teaches so widely, than in that which enchants and astonishes only a few gifted minds? We do not pretend to put upon a level, the genius which gave Death upon the Pale Horse to canvass, with that which produced the Distraining for Rent; but we contend, that though the emotions of unspeakable admiration inspired by the former picture, can be experienced in their strongest power only by the most cultivated and exalted minds, yet the lesson of pity and forbearance taught by the latter, is extensively addressed to a very numerous class; and we love the artist who enters into the concerns and sufferings of the humble whose genius condescends to men of low estate, and who allies himself to the Father of mercies, when he teaches the callous and the cruel, how deep are the wounds they inflict, and how terrible the retribution they may provoke. We admire the inventive talent which employs itself in the province of daily life, which delineates what we have all felt and observed, which detects the vices that poison domestic peace, and corrupt social virtue, or which displays the opinions and passions that dignify and sweeten, or debase and embitter our earthly existence just as they are disciplined and directed by education and self-government. This employment of genius is not only good for the use of

edifying, but is most estimable for the quality of pleasing; for surely the enjoyment thus produced is wider in extent, and greater in amount, from the frequency of its excitement, than that which is afforded by higher displays of power, employed upon loftier subjects, and addressed to more elevated faculties. Hence we believe, that Oliver Goldsmith, when he wrote the *Vicar of Wakefield*—Maria Edgeworth, when she sketched *Simple Susan*, and Elizabeth Hamilton, when she drew her *Cottiers of Glenburnie*—rendered a service to virtue, and created an augmentation of human happiness, which many a venerable folio, and many a splendid epic, adorned by great names, and honoured by great critics, never can effect: nor do we at all overrate the talent and the design displayed in our New-England tale, by classing it with the interesting stories we have mentioned; neither do we fear that it, any more than they, will fall into obscurity, or fail to command its just share of admiration, or to do its proper portion of good.

The following brief outline, may serve in some small measure to illustrate this story, and we trust it will sufficiently excite the curiosity of those of our readers, who have not seen it, to procure so interesting a work. It is original, natural, and beautiful; written with such simplicity, with such 'a soul of goodness,' with such purity of taste, style, and purpose; in such affinity with things lovely, honourable, and of good report, that it must be acceptable to minds in accordance with itself: and they who would correct what is evil, and cherish what is good, in the character of the society which it so truly describes, may be shown in this mirror of just representation, the weeds that are to be rooted out, and the virtues that are to be cultivated, in the fairest and happiest, as well as in the less favoured districts of this our blessed native land.

Jane Elton, the heroine of the tale, is a young female, left an orphan when she was too young to provide for herself, and thrown upon the bounty of a relation, whose tender mercies were cruel. The mind of this child had been sown early with that good seed which springeth up and beareth fruit abundantly, the seed of a tender mother's christian example and judicious cares; cares which had kept her from all the evil communications that corrupt good manners, and had moreover instilled the principles of steadfast integrity and uniform self-government. The characters of Mr. and Mrs. Elton are very happily described. The wide difference that existed between them, is at once displayed in a single application of the words of scripture—He was 'of the earth, earthy'—she 'of the heavens, heavenly.' And as is common to the maternal influence, this pure and excellent mother transfused her own spirit into her child, in whom the 'uses of adversity' wrought a perfection of goodness, which is perhaps only to be produced by affliction. The character of the individual appointed to the discipline of the little girl, after the death of her parents, is admirably foreshown in the following conversation between the lady herself and her two sisters.

'The day after the funeral, Jane was sitting in Mrs. Elton's room, which, in her eyes, was consecrated by her sickness and death; the three aunts met at

Mr. Elton's house; she heard the ladies approaching through the adjoining apartment, and hastily taking up her Bible, which she had been trying to read, she drew her little bench behind the curtain of her mother's bed. There is an instinct in childhood that discerns affection wherever it exists, and shrinks from the coldness of calculating selfishness. In all their adversity, neither Jane nor her mother had ever been cheered by a glimmering of kindness from these relatives. Mrs. Elton had founded no expectations on them for her child; with her usual irresolution she had shrunk from preparing Jane's mind for the shocks that awaited her.

'The three sisters were led in by a young woman who had offered to stay with Jane till some arrangement was made for her. In reply to their asking where she was, the girl pointed to the bed.

"There," she said, "taking on *despotly*.—A body would think," added she, "that she had lost her uncles and aunts as well as her father and mother. And she might us well," (she continued, in a tone low enough not to be heard,) "for any good they will do her."

'The eldest sister began the conference by saying, "That she trusted that it was not expected she should take Jane upon her hands—that she was not so well off as either of her sisters—that to be sure she had no children; but then Mr. Daggett and herself *calculated* to do a great deal for the Foreign Missionary Society; that no longer ago than that morning, Mr. D. and she had agreed to pay the expense of one of the young Cherokees at the school at—; that there was a great work going on in the world, and as long as they had the heart given them to help it, they could not feel it their duty to withdraw any aid for a mere worldly purpose!"

'Mrs. Convers (the second sister) said that she had not any religion, and she did not mean to pretend to any; that she had ways enough to spend her money without sending it to Owyhee or the Foreign School; that she and her husband had worked hard, and saved all for their children; and now they meant they should make as good a figure as any body's children in the country. It took a great deal of money, she said, to pay the dancing-master, and the drawing-master, and the music-master; it was quite impossible for her sisters to think how much it took to dress a family of girls genteelly. It was not now, as it used to be when they were girls: now-a-days, girls must have merino shawls, and their winter hats, and summer hats, and prunella shoes, and silk stockings;—It was quite impossible to be decent without them. Besides, she added, as she did not live in the same place with Jane, it was not natural she should feel for her. It was her decided opinion, that Jane had better be put out at once, at some place where she could do light work till she was a little used to it; and she would advise too, to her changing her name, the child was so young she could not care about a name, and she

should be much mortified to have it known, in the town of —, that her daughters had a cousin that was a *hired girl*.

"There was something in this harsh counsel which touched Mrs. Wilson's (the younger sister's) pride, though it failed to awaken a sentiment of humanity. She said she desired to be thankful that she had been kept from any such sinful courses as sending her children to a dancing-school; nobody could say she had not done her duty by them; the minister's family was not kept more strict than her's.

"No," said Mrs. Convers, "and by all accounts is not more disorderly."

"Well, that is not our fault, Mrs. Convers, if we plant and water, we cannot give the increase."

Mrs. Wilson should have remembered that God does give the increase to those that rightly plant, and faithfully water. But Mrs. W's tongue was familiar with many texts, that had never entered her understanding, or influenced her heart.

Mrs. Wilson continued—"Sister Convers, I feel it to be my duty to warn you—you, the daughter and granddaughter of worthy divines who abhorred all such sinful practices, that you should own that you send your children to dancing-school, astonishes and grieves my spirit. Do you know that Mr. C—, in reporting the awakening in his parish, mentions that not one of the girls that attended dancing-school were among the converts, whereas two, who had engaged to attend it, but had received a remarkable warning in a dream, were among the first and brightest?"

"I would as soon," she continued, "follow one of my children to the grave, as to see her in that broad road to destruction, which leads through a ball-room."

"It is easy enough," replied Mrs. Convers, (adjusting her smart mourning cap at the glass) "to run down sins we have no fancy for."

Mrs. Wilson's ready answer was prevented by the entrance of Jane's humble friend, who asked, if the ladies had determined what was to be done with the little girl.

Mrs. Wilson in her vehemence had quite forgotten the object of their meeting, but now brought back to it, and instigated by a feeling of superiority to Mrs. Convers, and a little nettled by the excuses of Mrs. Daggett, which she thought were meant as a boast of superior piety, she said, that as she had no dancing-masters to pay, and had not *that* morning agreed to adopt a Cherokee—she could afford to take Jane for a little while. The child, she said, must not think of depending upon her for life, for though she was a widow, and could do what she was a mind to with her

own, she could not justify herself in taking the children's meat"—and she would have added—"throw it to the dogs,"—but she was interrupted by a person who, unregarded by the ladies, had taken her seat among them.

'This was a middle aged woman, whose mind had been unsettled in her youth by misfortunes. Having no mischievous propensities, she was allowed to indulge her vagrant inclinations, in wandering from house to house, and town to town, her stimulated imagination furnishing continual amusement to the curious by her sagacious observations, and unfailing mirth to the young and vulgar, by the fanciful medley in which she arrayed her person. There were some who noticed in her a quickness of feeling that indicated original sensibility, which, perhaps, had been the cause of her sufferings. The dogs of a surly master would sometimes bark at her, because her dress resembled the obnoxious livery of the beggar—a class they had been taught to chase with pharisaical antipathy. But except when her timid nature was alarmed by the sortie of dogs, which she always called the devil's servants, crazy Bet found a welcome wherever she went.

'It is common for persons in her unfortunate circumstances to seek every scene of excitement. The sober, sedate manners of the New England people, and the unvaried tenor of their lives, afford but few of these. Wherever there was an awakening, or a camp-meeting, crazy Bet was sure to be found. She was often seen by moonlight wandering in the church-yard, plucking the nettles from the graves, and wreathing the monuments with ground-pine. She would watch for whole nights by the side of a grave in her native village, where twenty years before were deposited the remains of her lover, who was drowned on the day before they were to have been married. She would range the woods, and climb to the very mountain's-top, to get sweet flowers, to scatter over the mound of earth that marked his grave. She would plant rose bushes and lilies there, and when they bloomed, pluck them up, because she said their purity and brightness mocked the decay below.

'She has been seen, when the sun came rejoicing over the eastern mountain's brow, and shot its first clear brilliant ray on the grave, to clap her hands and heard to shout, "I see an angel in the sun, and he saith Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such, the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

'Poor Bet was sure to follow in every funeral procession, and sometimes she would thrust herself amidst the mourners, and say, "the dead could not rest in their graves, if they were not followed by one true mourner." She has been seen to spring forward when the men were carelessly placing the coffin in the grave with the head to the east, and exclaim, "are ye heathens, that ye serve the dead thus? Know ye not the 'Lord cometh in the east.'" She always lingered behind after the crowd dispersed, and busily moved and removed

the sods; and many a time has she fallen asleep, with her head resting on the new made grave, for, she said, there was no sleep so quiet as "where the wicked did not trouble."

'The quick eye of crazy Bet detected, through their thin guise, the pride and hypocrisy and selfishness of the sisters. She interrupted Mrs. Wilson as she was concluding her most inappropriate quotation, "Throw it to the dogs;" said she, "It is more like taking the prey from the wolf." She then rose, singing in an under voice,

"Oh! be the law of love fulfilled
In every act and thought,
Each angry passion far removed,
Each selfish view forgot."

'She approached the bed, and withdrawing the curtain, exposed the little sufferer to view. She had lain the open Bible on the pillow, where she had often rested beside her mother, and, laying her cheek on it, had fallen asleep. It was open at the 5th chapter of John, which she had so often read to her mother, that she had turned instinctively to it. The page was blistered with her tears.

'Careless of the future, which to her seemed to admit no light, her exhausted nature had found relief in sleep, at the very moment her aunts were unfeelingly deciding her fate. Her pale cheek still wet with her tears, and the deep sadness of a face of uncommon sweetness, would have warmed with compassion any breast that had not been steeled by selfishness.

"Shame, shame, upon you!" said the maniac; "has pride turned your hearts to stone, that ye cannot shelter this poor little ewe-lamb in your fold? Ah! ye may spread your branches, like the green bay tree, but the tempest will come, and those who look for you shall not find you; but this little frost-bitten bud shall bloom in the paradise of God for ever and ever."

'Untying a piece of crape which she had wound around her throat, (for she never was without some badge of mourning,) she stooped and wiped the tears from Jane's cheek, saying in a low tone, "Bottles full of odours, which are the tears of saints;" then rising, she carefully closed the curtains, and busied herself for some minutes in pinning them together. She then softly, and on tiptoe, returned to her seat; and taking some ivy from her broken straw bonnet, began twisting it with the crape. "This," said she, "is a weed of Edward Carrol's hat; he buried his wife yesterday, and I have been to the very top of Tauconnick to get him a weed, that shall last fresh as long as his grief. See," added she, and she held it up, laughing, "it has begun to wilt already; it is a true token."

'She then rose from her seat, and with a quick step, between running and walking, left the room; but returning as suddenly, she said slowly and emphatically, "Offend not this little one; for her angel does stand before my Father. It were better that a mill-stone were hanged about your neck." Then, courtseying to the ground, she left them.

'Bet's solemn and slow manner of pronouncing this warning, was so different from her usually hurried utterance, that it struck a momentary chill to the hearts of the sisters. Mrs. Daggett was the first to break the silence.

"What does she mean?" said she. "Has Jane experienced religion?"

"Experienced religion!—no," replied Mrs. Wilson. "How should she? She has not been to a meeting since her mother was first taken sick; and no longer ago than the day after her mother's death, when I talked to her of her corrupt state by nature, and the opposition of her heart, (for I felt it to be my duty, at this peculiar season, to open to her the great truths of religion, and I was faithful to her soul, and did not scruple to declare the whole counsel,) she looked at me as if she was in a dull stupor. I told her the judgments of an offended God were made manifest towards her in a remarkable manner; and then I put it to her conscience, whether if she was sure her mother had gone where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, she should be reconciled to the character of God, and be willing herself to promote his glory, by suffering that just condemnation. She did not reply one word, or give the least symptoms of a gracious understanding. But when Mrs. Hervey entered, just as I was concluding, and passed her arm around Jane, and said to her, 'My child, God does not willingly grieve nor afflict you,' the child sobbed out, Oh no! Mrs. Hervey, so my mother told me, and I am sure of it.'

"No, no," she added, after a moment's hesitation; "this does not look as if Jane had a hope. But, sister Daggett, I wonder you should mind any thing crazy Bet says. She is possessed of as many devils as were sent out of Mary Magdalen."

"I don't mind her, Mrs. Wilson; but I know some very good people who say, that many a thing she has foretold has come to pass; and especially in seasons of affliction, they say she is very busy with the devil."

"I don't know how that may be," replied Mrs. Wilson, "but as I mean to do my duty by this child, I don't feel myself touched by Bet's crazy ranting "

'Mrs. Daggett, nettled by her sister's hint, rose and said, "that, as she was going in the afternoon to attend a meeting in a distant part of the town, (for," said she, "no one can say that distance or weather ever keeps me from my duties,) she had no more time to waste."

'Mrs Convers' husband drove to the door in a smart gig. and she took leave of her sisters, observing, she was glad the child was going to be so well

provided for. As she drove away, crazy Bet, who was standing by the gate, apparently intently reading the destiny of a young girl, in the palm of her hand, fixed her eyes for a moment on Mrs. Convers, and whispered to the girl, "all the good seed that fell on that ground was choked by thorns long ago."

'Mr. Wilson told Jane's attendant, Sally, to inform her, she might come to her house the next day, and stay there for the present.' p. 14–24.

In this extract we have unavoidably introduced "Crazy Bet." She is one of that extraordinary class of females which Shakspeare, Otway, and the author of *Waverley*, have employed with such effect; and which, perhaps, was originally taken from the Grecian Pythoness, or the Roman Sybil; or which, to be more natural, and less erudite, is probably to be found exemplified in some individuals of all times and places—for the writer of the *New-England Tale* declares, that "the author has avoided all personal allusions, however remote, with the exception, that a sketch has been attempted of a real character, under the appellation of 'Crazy Bet.'" Crazy Bet is one of those unfortunate beings, in whom a naturally fine genius, excess of sensibility, a neglected education, and a severe disappointment of the heart, have produced such predominance of the sensitive, and such infirmity of the intellectual and active faculties, as to destroy the equilibrium of powers; and by dethroning reason to leave the whole soul a prey to itself; yet sparing partial memory and unappropriated affections; and these affections, delivered up to undisciplined enthusiasm, entering into every wild conception of God, of nature, and of human beings, and inspiring ideas the most sublime, and expressions the most original and affecting.

It is not unaccountable, that a mind of such primitive elevation, impressed at the most susceptible age with lofty ideas of the divine Being, subsequently deprived of the use of reason and experience, and having no interests and ties with other human beings, should ally itself in fanciful communion with its Maker, should connect itself with 'mute and material things,' and should attach itself only to that beauty of innocence and tenderness which has compassion on the miserable, and which wears a thousand indications of loveliness that callous hearts cannot perceive: nor is it strange that such a wounded soul should feel the cruelty of those vile spirits that insult phrenzy and aggravate its sting. Crazy Bet's intuitive sagacity, her detestation of hard heartedness, her fervent devotion, and her knowledge of scripture, which is wrought by sad and bitter meditation into the very texture of her thoughts and language, give an extraordinary interest to all that she says. The style of the maniac's broken discourse displays a fine power of imagination, and an equal command of expression in the recorder of the character, if the language imputed to her be not taken from an original; and, in relation to the poor creature, it reminds us of those flowers which are said to spring up from the soil recently deluged by the fiery showers of a volcano, that derive their glowing colours and their sweet odours from the elements which have changed beauty to ashes and joy

to mourning. But to return to Jane: the poor child after the reluctant adoption of her by Mrs. Wilson, went into her family; when all that bad example could do to corrupt, and all that injustice could inflict to grieve her, assailed her virtue and her happiness. How she was fortified, and how she was consoled, appears by the following admonition from Mary Hull, her mother's faithful domestic, and her own exemplary guide. When Jane was about to enter the family of Mrs. Wilson, Mary Hull thus counselled her:

"My child," said she, "do not be down hearted. There has 'one taken you up who will not leave you, nor forsake you.' 'The fires may be about you, but they will not kindle on you.' Make the Bible your counsellor; you will always find some good word there, that will be a bright light to you in the darkest night: and do not forget the daily sacrifice of prayer; for, as the priests under the old covenant were nourished by a part of that which they offered, so, when the sacrifice of praise is sent upward by the broken and contrite heart, there is a strength cometh back upon our own souls: blessed be his name, it is what the world cannot give." p. 26.

How far the tyranny of Mrs. Wilson, or the unworthiness of her children might have frustrated the instruction, was not tried to the utmost extent of possibility, for the friendly notice of a benevolent stranger interfered, in some measure, with the oppressions practised on the poor orphan. Mary Hull became the housekeeper of Robert Lloyd, a Quaker, from Pennsylvania, who having buried a beloved wife on the borders of the Housatonic, took up his abode in the very house once possessed by Jane. Elton's parents. An incident that occurred to Mr. Lloyd, while travelling with his wife, a short time previous to her death, has furnished a scene, the description of which, for fidelity to nature, is not surpassed by any sketch of rustic life we ever saw. It is so perfectly characteristic of the mountaineers of a country, where poverty knows no wants, and where ignorance and vice are not inevitable attendants on those who have no property, that it is a refreshing, as well as entertaining account of the simple inhabitants of our comparatively waste places.

'From the Connecticut they passed by the romantic road that leads through the plains of West-Springfield, Westfield, &c. There is no part of our country, abundant as it is in the charms of nature, more, lavishly adorned with romantic scenery. The carriage slowly traced its way on the side of a mountain, from which the imprisoned road had with difficulty been won;—a noisy stream dashed impetuously along at their left, and as they ascended the mountain, they still heard it before them leaping from rock to rock, now almost lost in the deep pathway it had made, and then rushing with increased violence over its stony bed.

"This young stream," said Mr. Lloyd, "reminds me of the turbulence of headlong children; I can hardly believe it to be the same we admired, so leisurely winding its peaceful way into the bosom of the Connecticut."

"Thou likest the sobriety of maturity," replied Rebecca, "but I confess that there is something delightful to my imagination in the elastic bound of this infant stream; it reminds me of the joy of untamed spirits, and undiminished strength."

"The traveller's attention was withdrawn from the wild scene before them to the appearance of the heavens, by their coachman, who observed, that "never in his days had he seen clouds make so fast; it was not," he said, "five minutes since the first speck rose above the hill before them, and now there was not enough blue sky for a man to swear by:—but," added he, looking with a lengthened visage to what he thought an interminable hill before them, "the lightning will be saved the trouble of coming down to us, for if our poor beasts ever get us to the top, we may reach up and take it."

'Having reached the summit of the next acclivity, they perceived, by the road's side, a log hut; over the door was a slab, with a rude and mysterious painting, (which had been meant for a foaming can and a plate of gingerbread,) explained underneath by "cake and beer for sale." This did not look very inviting, but it promised a better shelter from the rain, for the invalid, than the carriage could afford. Mr. Lloyd opened the door, and lifted his wife over a rivulet, which actually ran between the sill of the house and the floor planks that had not originally been long enough for the dimensions of the apartment.

"The mistress of the mansion, a fat middle-aged woman, who sat with her baby in her arms at a round table, at which there were four other children eating from a pewter dish in the middle of the table, rose, and having ejected the eldest boy from a chair by a very unceremonious slap, offered it to Mrs. Lloyd and resumed her seat; quietly finishing her meal. Her husband, a ruddy, good natured, hardy looking mountaineer, had had the misfortune, by some accident in his childhood, to loose the use of both his legs, which were now ingeniously folded into the same chair on which he sat. He turned to the coachman, who, having secured his horses, had just entered, and smiling at his consternation, said, "Why, friend, you look scare't, pretty pokerish weather, to be sure, but then we don't mind it up here;" then turning to the child next him, who, in gazing at the strangers, had dropped half the food she was conveying to her mouth, he said,—"*Desdemony*, don't scatter the 'tatoes so." "But last week," he continued, resuming his address to the coachman, "there was the most *tedious* spell of weather I have seen sen the week before last thanksgiving, when my wife and I went down into the lower part of Becket, to hear Deacon Hollister's funeral *sarmont*. Don't you remember Tempy, that musical fellow that was there?—'I don't see,' says he, 'the use of the minister preaching up so much about hell-fire,' says he, 'it is a very good doctrine/ says he, 'to preach down on Connecticut River, but,'

says he, 'I should not think it would frighten any body in such a cold place as Becket.'"

'A bright flash that seemed to fire the heavens, succeeded by a tremendous clap of thunder, which made the hovel tremble, terrified all the groupe, excepting the fearless speaker—

"A pretty smart flash to be sure; but, as I was saying, it is nothing to that storm we had last week.—*Velorus*, pull that hat out of the window, so the gentleman can see.—There, sir," said he, "just look at that big maple tree, that was blown down, if it had come one yard nearer my house, it would have crushed it to atoms. Ah, this is a nice place as you will find any where," he continued, (for he saw Mr. Lloyd was listening attentively to him.) "to bring up boys; it makes them hardy and spirited, to live here with the wind, roaring about them, and the thunder rattling right over their heads: why they don't mind it any more than my woman's spinning-wheel, which, to be sure, makes a dumb noise sometimes."

'Our travellers were not a little amused with the humour of this man, who had a natural philosophy that a stoic might have envied. "Friend," said Mr. Lloyd, "you have a singular fancy about names; what may be the name of that chubby little girl who is playing with my wife's fan?"

"Yes, sir, I am a little notional about names; that girl, sir, I call *Octavy*, and that lazy little dog that stands by her, is *Rodolphus*."

"And this baby," said Mr. Lloyd, kindly giving the astonished little fellow his watch-chain to play with, "this must be *Vespasian* or *Agricola*."

"No, sir, no; I met with a disappointment about that boy's name—what you may call a slip between the cup and the lip—when he was born, the women asked me what I meant to call him? I told them that I did not mean to be in any hurry; for you must know, sir, the way I get my names, I buy a book of one of those pedlars that are going over the mountain with tin-ware and brooms, and books and pamphlets, and one notion and another; that is, I don't buy out and out, but we make a swap; they take some of my wooden dishes, and let me have the *vally* in books; for you must know I am a great reader, and mean all my children shall have learning too, though it is pretty tough scratching for it. Well, Sir, as I was saying about this boy, I found a name just to hit my fancy, for I can pretty generally suit myself; the name was *Sophonius*; but just about that time, as the deuce would have it, my wife's father died, and the gin'ral had been a very gin'rous man to us, and so to compliment the old gentleman, I concluded to call him *Solomon Wheeler*."

'Mr. Lloyd smiled, and throwing a dollar into the baby's lap, said, "There is something, my little fellow, to make up your loss." The sight and the gift of

a silver dollar produced a considerable sensation among the mountaineers. The children gathered round the baby to examine the splendid favour. The mother said, "The child was not old enough to make its manners to the gentleman, but he was as much beholden to him as if he could. The father only seemed insensible, and contented himself with remarking, with his usual happy nonchalance, that he "guessed it was easier getting money down country, than it was up on the hills."

"Very true, my friend," replied Mr. Lloyd, "and I should like to know how you support your family here. You do not appear to have any farm."

"No, sir," replied the man, laughing, "it would puzzle me, with my legs, to take care of a farm; but then I always say, that as long as a man has his wits, he has something to work with. This is a pretty cold, sappy soil up here, but we make out to raise all our sauce, and enough besides to fat a couple of pigs on; then, sir, as you see, my woman and I keep a stock of cake and beer, and tansy bitters—a nice trade for a cold stomach; there is considerable travel on the road, and people get dry by the time they get up here, and we find it good business: and then I turn wooden bowls and dishes, and go out peddling once or twice a year; and there is not an old wife, or a young one either for the matter of that, but I can coax them to buy a dish or two; I take my pay in provisions or clothing; all the cash I get, is by the beer and cake; and now, sir, though I say it, that may be should not say it, there is not a more independent man in the town of Becket than I am, though there is them that's more fore-handed; but I pay my minister's tax, and my school tax, as reg'lar as any of them."

Mr. Lloyd admired the ingenuity and contentment of this man, his enjoyment of the privilege, the "glorious privilege" of every New-England man, "of being independent." But his pleasure was somewhat abated by an appearance of a want of neatness and order, which would have contributed so much to the comfort of the family, and which, being a Quaker, he deemed essential to it. He looked at the little stream of water we have mentioned, and which the rain had already swollen so much that it seemed to threaten an inundation of the house; and observing, that neither the complexion of the floor nor of the children seemed to have been benefitted by its proximity, he remarked to the man, that he "should think a person of his ingenuity would have contrived some mode of turning the stream."

"Why, yes, sir," said the man, "I suppose I might, for I have got a book that treats upon hydrostatics and them things; but I'm calculating to build in the fall, and so I think we may as well musquash along till then."

"To build! Do explain to me how that is to be done?"

"Why, sir," said he, taking a box from the shelf behind him, which had a hole in the centre of the top, through which the money was passed in, but

afforded no facility for withdrawing it, "my woman and I agreed to save all the cash we could get for two years, and I should not be afraid to venture, there is thirty dollars there, sir. The neighbours in these parts are very kind to a poor man; one will draw the timber, and another will saw the boards, and they will all come to raising, and bring their own spirits into the bargain. Oh, sir, it must be a poor shack that can't make a turn to get a house over his head."

'Mr. Lloyd took (en dollars from his pocket book, and slipping it into the gap, said, "There is a small sum, my friend, and I wish it may be so expended as to give to thy new dwelling such conveniences as will enable thy wife to keep it neat. It will help on the trade too; for depend upon it, there is nothing makes a house look so inviting to a traveller as a cleanly air."

'Our mountaineer's indifference was vanquished by so valuable a donation. "You are the most gen'rous man, sir," said he, "that ever journeyed this way; and if I don't remember your advice, you may say there is no such thing as gratitude upon earth."

'By this time the rain had subsided, the clouds were rolling over, the merry notes of the birds sallying from their shelters, welcomed the returning rays of the sun, and the deep unclouded azure in the west promised a delightful afternoon.

'The travellers took a kind leave of the grateful cottagers, and as they drove away—"Tempy," said the husband, "if the days of miracles weren't quite entirely gone by, I should think we had 'entertained angels unawares."

"I think you might better say," replied the good woman, "that the angels have entertained us; any how, that sick lady will be an angel before long; she looks as good, and as beautiful, as one now." p. 40–47.

This fondness for names borrowed from hooks is quite peculiar to the very lowest order of the New-England people of the interior, who seem to have an indefinite desire thus to associate themselves with those who have had a name and a praise on the earth, and to advance a little out of their own obscurity by attaching themselves thus slightly to the eminence of others. We remember to have heard of three individuals, all *barefooted*, called from their respective occupations at the spinning wheel and the plough into the presence of a visiter, by the names of Hortensia, Olympia and Philologus, and to have seen many *young ladies* busily employed, to use their own phrases, *in hitcheling* flax and *whitening* cloth, who were called Annabella, Aurelia, and Amelia Stebbins; nor do we forget the sarcasm of an unromantic mechanic we once journeyed with in a stage coach, who sat listening to the discourse of two females, his fellow travellers: On hearing one of them, who held a baby in her arms, say in reply to the other's inquiry, "Its name is Amanda," he, rather impertinently, intruded the remark, that for his part he hated

such *pretensionary* names. An exquisite sense of the beauties and influences of external nature, as well as a just perception of manners and character, is strikingly displayed in the extract lately cited, terminating in so appropriate a delineation of rustic life: nor is the truly scenic description of the view, that so effected Mrs. Lloyd, the only passage which exhibits the picturesque in this volume. Among the most vivid and striking of this character is the following, which we insert here for the sake of illustration, though it is connected with a circumstance not in the order of facts in our present stage of the narrative.

The parties were all punctual to their appointment. The morning of which they were going to make so unhallowed a use, was a most beautiful one. Nature was in a poetic mood; in a humour to give her votaries an opportunity to diversify her realities with the bright creations of their imaginations. The vapour had diffused itself over the valley, so that from the hill, which was the place of rendezvous, it appeared like a placid lake that no 'breeze was upon;' from whose bosom rose the green spires of the poplar, rich masses of maple foliage, and the graceful and widely spreading boughs of the elm—

"Jocund day
Stood tip-toe on the misty mountain's top,"

and sent her morning greetings to the white cliffs of the southern mountain, —brightened the mist that filled the deep indenting dells between the verdant heights, resembling them to island hills, and sending such a flood of light upon the western slopes, that they shone as if there had been a thousand streams there rejoicing in the sunbeams. But this appeal of nature was unheeded and unnoticed by these rash young men. Her sacred volume is a sealed book to those who are inflamed by passion, or degraded by vice.
p. 217

Jane Elton, whom we have not forgotten, passes from childhood to maturity under the influences of provocation and forbearance; and with examples of hypocrisy and fanaticism always before her, holds fast her integrity and her faith.

Nothing occurs in her native village but the establishment of a school, at which she was placed by Mr. Lloyd, and the introduction of a dancing-master—who finally obtained a *footing*, though he was long resisted by clergy and laity, who considered dancing a sin too heinous "to be spoken of in holy writ." Among the dancing master's warmest opposers was Mrs. Wilson, who appointed a conference and a catechetical lecture, on the evenings in which the dancing was taught. We purposely omit some little incidents which occurred in Mrs. Wilson's family, that afford a true specimen of the fruits of those views of religion which do not admit, that "he that doeth righteousness is righteous," and which, acknowledging "the form of godiiness," deny the power thereof.

Jane Elton is represented in her first womanhood as adorned with a multitude of 'mortal and immortal graces,' and eminently formed to inspire love in a susceptible heart; and it appears that her attractions did not fail to charm two very opposite characters, the staid Robert Lloyd, and a village lawyer, the young 'squire Erskine. The latter gentleman was the individual selected by Mrs. Wilson for her *accomplished* daughter Elvira; one of those country nymphs, in whom vanity, artifice, superficial knowledge, and false taste, sometimes pass for extraordinary talents; and who in a very narrow sphere enjoy as much celebrity, and inspire as much envy, as the more brilliant beauties, and wits of our larger towns. Mr. Erskine was not on the whole an unsuitable match for Elvira; but few men are so blind as not to discern, or so unworthy as not to prefer, very conspicuous excellence, to the total want of it. The busy world rumoured the passion which Jane had excited in Erskine, her friend Lloyd heard it, and trembled for the happiness of his favourite; but Mrs Wilson was not aware of the failure of her plans, till some unlucky circumstances in her family led to an open engagement between Erskine and Jane.

Among the hopeful progeny of Mrs. Wilson was a son, in whom the neglect of moral cultivation, and the tiresome services and revolting doctrines of a system, that urges the necessity of no practical principles, and robs the parent of us all of his most endearing attributes, had produced an ignorance and disregard of all virtue, and an ascendancy of appetite, passion, and selfishness, that might go far to illustrate total depravity, whether it be natural or superinduced. This young man, bred in a college, acquired there nothing but habits of profusion, and constantly drew upon his sordid mother for sums beyond her inclination to supply. In consistency with his utter heartlessness, was his desertion of an unhappy girl who had no self-defence in her own virtue, and who in consequence fell a victim to this profligate youth. This unfortunate female expired in a retired cottage at which she was received from motives of humanity, and Jane Elton was summoned by the family, who hoped to derive some benefit from her interference in behalf of the stranger, to attend her last moments. Prudence demanded secrecy and during the darkness of night she was forced to obey a mysterious call "to save life."—This strange expedition, under the guidance of Crazy Bet, affords a very picturesque scene. Those who have felt for the peril and forlornness of some of C. B. Brown's heroes in their lonely and hazardous wanderings, will not be less interested, even if they are less apprehensive, for the gentle but courageous Jane, armed in her innocence, and impelled by compassion, as she follows her lunatic companion upon her errand of mercy. The place of meeting was the grave of a suicide, excluded from consecrated ground, and with all its associations almost as fearful a spot, to a timid or superstitious mind, as Muschat's Cairn.

Still, after the family were all hushed in repose, and Jane had stolen from her bed, and dressed herself for her secret expedition, she shrunk involuntarily from the task before her. "I do not like this mystery," said she, mentally; "I wish I had told my aunt, and asked David to go with me, or I

might have told Mary Hull. There could have been no harm in that. But it is now too late. John said, I might save life, and I will think of nothing else."

She rose from the bed, where she had seated herself to ponder, for the last time, upon the difficulties before her, crept softly down stairs, passed her aunt's room, and got clear of the house unmolested, except by a slight growl from Brutus, the house-dog, whose dreams she had broken, but, at her well-known kindly patting, and "Lie down Brutus, lie down," he quietly resumed his sleeping posture. Her courage was stimulated by having surmounted one obstacle. The waning moon had risen, and shed its mild lustre over the peaceful scene. "Now," thought Jane, "that I have stirred up my womanish thoughts with a manly spirit, I wonder what I could have been afraid of."

Anxious to ascertain whether she was to have the doubtful aid of crazy Bet's conduct, or trust solely to her own, she pressed onward.

To shorten her way to Lucy's grave, and to avoid the possibility of observation, she soon left the public road, and walked along under the shadow of a low-browed hill, which had formerly been the bank of the river, but from which it had receded and left an interval of beautiful meadow between the hill and its present bed. The deep verdure of the meadow sparkled with myriads of fire-flies, that seemed, in this hour of their dominion, to be keeping their merry revels by the music of the passing stream. The way was, as yet, perfectly familiar to Jane. After walking some distance in a straight line, she crossed the meadow by a direct path to a large tree, which had been, in part, uprooted by a *freshet*, and which now lay across the river, and supplied a rude passage to the adventurous, the tenacity of some of its roots still retaining it firmly in the bank. Fortunately the stream was unusually low, and when our heroine reached the further extremity of the fallen trunk, she sprang without difficulty over the few feet of water between her and the dry sand of the shore.

"That's well done!" exclaimed crazy Bet, in a voice that made the welkin ring, and starting up from the mound. "Strong of heart, and light of foot, you are a fit follower for one that hates the broad and beaten road, and loves the narrow straight way and the high rock. Sit down and rest you," she continued, for Jane was out of breath from ascending the steep bank where crazy Bet stood; "sit down, child; you may sit quiet, it is not time for her to rise yet."

"Oh, Bet," said Jane, "if you love me, take those greens off your head; they make you look so wild."

A stouter heart than Jane's would have quailed at Bet's appearance. She had taken off her old bonnet, and tied it on a branch of the tree that shaded the grave, and twisted around her head a full leaved vine, by which she had confined bunches of wild flowers, that drooped around her pale brow and

haggard face; her long hair was streaming over her shoulders; her little black mantle thrown back, leaving her throat and neck bare. The excitement of the scene, the purpose of the expedition, and the moonlight, gave to her large black eyes an unusual brightness.

To Jane's earnest entreaty she replied, "Child, you know not what you ask. Take off these greens, indeed! Every leaf of them has had a prayer said over it. There is a charm in every one of them. There is not an imp of the evil one that dares to touch me while I wear them. The toad with his glistening eye, springs far from me; and the big scaly snake, that's coiled and ready to dart, glides away from me."

"But," said Jane, in a tone of more timid expostulation, "what have I to guard me, Bet?"

"You!" and as she spoke she stroked Jane's hair back from her pure smooth brow; "have not you innocence? and know you not that is 'God's seal in the forehead' to keep you from all harm. Foolish girl! sit down—I say, she will not rise yet."

Jane obeyed her command, and rallying her spirits, replied, "No, Bet, I am not afraid she will rise. I believe the dead lie very quiet in their graves."

"Yes, those may that die in their beds and are buried by the tolling of the bell, and lie with a merry company about them in the church yard; but, I tell you, those that row themselves over the dark river, never have a quiet night's rest in their cold beds."

"Come," said Jane, impatiently rising, "for mercy's sake, let us go"

"I cannot stir from this spot," replied Bet, "till the moon gets above that tree; and so be quiet, while I tell you Lucy's story. Why, child, I sit here watching by her many a night, till her hour comes, and then I always go away, for the dead don't love to be seen rising from their beds."

"Well, Bet, tell me Lucy's story, and then I hope you will not keep me any longer here; and you need not tell me much, for, you know, I have heard it a thousand times."

"Ah! but you did not see her as I did, when Ashley's men went out, and she followed them, and begged them on her knees, for the love of God, not to fire upon the prisoners; for the story had come that Shay's men would cover their front with the captives; and you did not see her when he was brought to her shot through the heart, and dead as she is now. She did not speak a word—she fell upon his neck, and she clasped her arms round him; they thought to cut them off, it was so hard to get them loose;—and when they took her from him, (and the maniac laid her hand on Jane's head) she was all gone here. The very day they put him under the green sod, she drowned

herself in that deep place, under the mourning willow, that the boys call Lucy's well. And they buried her here, for the squires and the deacons found it against law, and gospel too, to give her Christian burial."

Bet told all these circumstances with an expression and action that showed she was living the scene over, while her mind dwelt on them. Jane was deeply interested; and when bet concluded, she said, "Poor Lucy! I never felt so much for her."

"That's right, child; now we will go on—but first let that teardrop that glistens in the moon-beam, fall on the grave, it helps to keep the grass green—and the dead like to be cried for," she added mournfully. '

They now proceeded; crazy Bet leading the way, with long and hasty strides, in a diagonal course, still ascending the hill, till she plunged into a deep wood, so richly clothed with foliage as to fee impervious to the moon-beams, and so choked with underbrush, that Jane found it very difficult to keep up with her pioneer. They soon, however, emerged into an open space, completely surrounded and enclosed by lofty trees. Crazy Bet had not spoken since they began their walk; she now stopped, and turning abruptly to Jane, "Do you know," said she, "who are the worshippers that meet in this temple? the spirits that were 'sometime disobedient,' but since *He* went and preached to them, they come out from their prison house, and worship in the open air, and under the light of the blessed heavens."

"It is a beautiful spot," said Jane; "I should think all obedient spirits would worship in this sanctuary of nature."

"Say you so?—then worship with me." The maniac fell on her knees—Jane knelt beside her: she had caught a spark of her companion's enthusiasm. The singularity of her situation, the beauty of the night, the novelty of the place, on which the moon, now riding high in the heavens, poured a flood of silver light, all conspired to give a high tone to her feelings. It is not strange she should have thought she never heard any thing so sublime as the prayer of her crazed conductor—who raised her arms and poured out her soul in passages of scripture the most sublime and striking, woven together by her own glowing language. She concluded suddenly, and springing on her feet, said to Jane, "Now follow me: fear not, and falter not; for you know what awaits the fearful and unbelieving."

Jane assured her she had no *fear* but that of being too late. "You need not think of that; the spirit never flits till I come."

They now turned into the wood by a narrow pathway, whose entrance lay under the shadow of two young beech trees: crazy Bet paused—"See ye these, child," said she, pointing to the trees, "I knew two who grew up thus on the same spot of earth;—so lovingly they grew," and she pointed to the

interlacing of the branches—"young and beautiful; but the axe was laid to the root of one—and the other (and she pressed both her hands on her head, and screamed wildly) perished here." A burst of tears afforded her a sudden relief.

"Poor broken-hearted creature!" murmured Jane.

"No, child; when she weeps, then the band is loosened: for" added she, drawing closer to Jane and whispering, "they put an iron band around her head, and when she is in darkness, it presses till she thinks she is in the place of the Tormentor; by the light of the moon it sits lightly. Ye cannot see it; but it is there—always there."

Jane began now to be alarmed at the excitement of Bet's imagination; and turning from her abruptly, entered the path, which, after they had proceeded a few yards, seemed to be leading them into a wild trackless region. "Where are we going Bet?" she exclaimed. "Through a pass, child, that none knows but the wild bird and the wild woman. Have you never heard of the 'caves of the mountain?'"

"Yes," replied Jane; "but I had rather not go through them to-night. Cannot we go some other way?"

"Nay, there is no other way; follow me, and fear not."

Jane had often heard of the pass called the 'Mountain-Caves,' and she knew it had only been penetrated by a few rash youths of daring and adventurous spirit. She was appalled at the thought of entering it in the dead of night, and with such a conductor; she paused, but she could see no way of escape, and summoning all her resolution to her aid, she followed Bet, who took no note of her scruples. They now entered a defile, which had been made by some tremendous convulsion of nature, that had rent the mountain asunder, and piled rock on rock in the deep abyss. The breadth of the passage, which was walled in by the perpendicular sides of the mountain, was not in any place more than twenty feet; and sometimes so narrow, that Jane thought she might have extended her arms quite across it. But she had no leisure for critical accuracy; her wayward guide pressed on, heedless of the difficulties of the way. She would pass between huge rocks, that had rolled so near together, as to leave but a very narrow passage between them; then grasping the tangled roots that projected from the side of the mountain, and placing her feet in the fissures of the rocks, or in the little channels that had been worn by the continual dropping from the mountain rills, she would glide over swiftly and safely, as if she had been on the beaten highway. They were sometimes compelled, in the depths of the caverns, to prostrate themselves and creep through narrow apertures in the rocks, it was impossible to surmount; and Jane felt that she was passing over immense masses of ice, the accumulation perhaps of a hundred winters. She was fleet

and agile, and inspired with almost supernatural courage; she 'though a woman, naturally born to fears,' followed on fearlessly, till they came to an immense rock, whose conical and giant form rested on broken masses below, that on every side were propping this 'mighty monarch of the scene.'

For the first time, crazy Bet seemed to remember she had a companion and to give a thought to her safety. "Jane," said she, "go carefully over this lower ledge, there is a narrow foot-hold there; let not your foot slip on the wet leaves, or the soft moss. I am in the spirit, and I must mount to the summit."

Jane obeyed her directions, and when, without much trouble, she had attained the further side of the rock, she looked back for crazy Bet, and saw her standing between heaven and earth on the very topmost point of the high rock: she leant on the branch of a tree she had broken off in her struggle to reach that lofty station. The moon had declined a little from the meridian; her oblique rays did not penetrate the depths where Jane stood, but fell in their full brightness on the face of her votress above. Her head, as we have noticed, was fantastically dressed with vines and flowers; her eyes were in a fine 'frenzy, rolling from earth to heaven, and heaven to earth,' she looked like the wild genius of the savage scene, and she seemed to breathe its spirit, when, after a moment's silence, she sang, with a powerful and thrilling voice, which waked the sleeping echoes of the mountain, the following stanza:

"Tell them 'I AM,' Jehovah said
To Moses, while earth heard in dread,
And smitten to the heart;
At once above, beneath, around,
All nature, without voice or sound,
Replied, Oh Lord, Thou art!"

In vain Jane called upon her. In vain she entreated her to descend. She seemed wrapt in some heavenly vision; and she stood mute again and motionless, till a bird, that had been scared from its nest in a clift of the rock, by the wild sounds, fluttered over her and lit on the branch she still held in her hand. "Oh!" exclaimed she, "messenger of love, and omen of mercy, I am content;" and she swiftly descended the sloping side of the rock, which she hardly seemed to touch.

"Now," said Jane, soothingly, "you are rested, let us go on."

"Rested! yes, my body is rested, but my spirit has been the way of the eagle in the air. You cannot bear the revelation now, child. Come on, and do your earthly work."

They walked on for a few yards, when Bet, suddenly turned to the left and ascended the mountain, which was there less steep and rugged than at any place they had passed. At a short distance before her Jane perceived, glimmering through the trees, a faint light. "Heaven be praised!" said she, "that must be John's cottage."

As they came nearer the dog barked; and the old man, coming out of the door, signed to Jane to sit down on a log, which answered the purpose of a rude door-step; and then speaking to crazy Bet, in a voice of authority, which, to Jane's utter surprise, she meekly, obeyed—"Take off," said he, "you mad fool, those ginglements from your head, and stroke your hair back like a decent Christian woman; get into the house, but mind you say not a word to her."

Mary Oakley, the name of the stranger, died during the night; and Jane, deeply affected, returned before dawn to her aunt's, where, on entering the parlour, she discovered her cousin David robbing his mother's desk. Jane entreats him to restore the money he was just grasping, to its place, and offers to intercede with his mother in his behalf; but he will not listen to her expostulation, and, taking out a pistol, threatens to shoot himself, if she does not promise to conceal his crime; and she, in her alarm for Wilson's life, solemnly promises to be silent concerning his guilt. Jane's pocket handkerchief, attached unfortunately to the desk, is brought forward the next morning, as a presumptive proof that she had taken the money that is missing; but, notwithstanding this, and all the clamours of spite and avarice, she is acquitted by the known probity of her character; and Mr. Erskine, entering in the midst of the contention of Mrs. Wilson's family, under a sudden impulse of virtue is overcome by the dignity of innocence, assumes the part of a defender, and touched, more than ever, by the heightened charms of tried and conscious virtue, makes an offer of his heart to the injured Jane, which she, more grateful than loving, accepts. The remainder of the book is occupied with details that develop the character of Erskine, and the Wilsons. Erskine proves to be a man whose good feelings are only occasional—brief—reappearances of that natural goodness which needs the power of religion to direct it aright, and to make it the paramount and uniform principle that controls every disposition, action, and judgment. This great want in Erskine's character left him unguarded in the most important points—in reverence for sacred things, and in respect to the duties of benevolence, and the higher and more delicate sentiments of morality. General decorum was not enough for a woman bred up in the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord;' therefore, affluence, all the comforts, honours, and privileges, which money and marriage hold out to the poor and unprotected orphan, could not tempt her,—whose wisdom was not worldly, and whose affections connected things material with things spiritual, and things temporal with things eternal.

Erskine, in repeated instances, committed follies utterly repugnant to the principles of Jane, but the climax of his offences was a duel between himself and an

insignificant fellow who passed for a fine gentleman *from the Springs*. On this occasion Mr. Lloyd interferes, and prevents a consummation of the affair. This circumstance produced a final separation between the young couple, and together with the series of contrasted actions of the two gentlemen which preceded it, induced a comparison, in Jane's mind, between the lawyer and the Quaker, which made her nothing loath to grant the sober suit of the latter. Jane's rejection of Erskine is one of finest specimens of character which her history exhibits. Most other acts in her life display the most yielding disposition; but in this, the necessity of asserting herself, of assuming a powerful will, and of resisting the pleadings of the softest and the strongest feelings, at the suggestion of the purest and highest motives, determine her without the least hesitation, or failing of purpose, to do right. This noble firmness is thus finely expressed; after Erskine has vainly attempted to palliate and repel the various charges, to which a frivolous, unfeeling and unprincipled course of conduct had exposed him; but none of the fallacies of his self-deception, or the sophistries of his self-love, could blind an understanding, or mislead a heart, in which justice, generosity, and tenderness, mingling together, required corresponding virtues in their genuineness and efficacy, to satisfy their demands:

"I have no wish to hear any thing further," replied Jane. "I have heard enough to make my path plain before me. I loved you, Edward; I confessed to you that I did."

"And you do not any longer?"

"I cannot; the illusion has vanished. Neither do you love me." Edward would have interrupted her, but she begged him to hear her, with a dignified composure, that convinced him this was no sudden burst of resentment, no girlish pique that he might sooth with flattery and professions. "A most generous impulse, Edward, led you to protect an oppressed orphan; and I thought the devotion of my heart and my life were a small return to you. It is but a few months since. Is not love an engrossing passion? But what sacrifices have you made to it? Oh, Edward! if in the youth and spring of your affection, I have not had more power over you, what can I hope from the future?"

"Hope!—believe every thing, Jane. I will be as plastic as wax, in your hands. You shall mould me as you will."

"No, Edward; I have tried my power over you, and found it wanting. Broken confidence cannot be restored."

"Jane, you are rash; you are giving up independence—protection. If you reject me, who will defend you from your aunt? Do you forget that you are still in her power?"