

CHAPTER X

HITHERTO I have recorded in detail the events of my insignificant existence: to the first ten years of my life I have given almost as many chapters. But this is not to be a regular autobiography. I am only bound to invoke Memory where I know her responses will possess some degree of interest; therefore I now pass a space of eight years almost in silence: a few lines only are necessary to keep up the links of connection.

When the typhus fever had fulfilled its mission of devastation at Lowood, it gradually disappeared from thence; but not till its virulence and the number of its victims had drawn public attention on the school. Inquiry was made into the origin of the scourge, and by degrees various facts came out which excited public indignation in a high degree. The unhealthy nature of the site; the quantity and quality of the children's food; the brackish, fetid water used in its preparation; the pupils' wretched clothing and accommodations- all these things were discovered, and the discovery produced a result mortifying to Mr. Brocklehurst, but beneficial to the institution.

Several wealthy and benevolent individuals in the county subscribed largely for the erection of a more convenient building in a better situation; new regulations were made; improvements in diet and clothing introduced; the funds of the school were intrusted to the management of a committee. Mr. Brocklehurst, who, from his wealth and family connections, could not be overlooked, still retained the post of treasurer; but he was aided in the discharge of his duties by gentlemen of rather more enlarged and sympathising minds: his office of inspector, too, was shared by those who knew how to combine reason with strictness, comfort with economy, compassion with uprightness. The school, thus improved, became in time a truly useful and noble institution. I remained an inmate of its walls, after its regeneration, for eight years: six as pupil, and two as teacher; and in both capacities I bear my testimony to its value and importance.

During these eight years my life was uniform: but not unhappy, because it was not inactive. I had the means of an excellent education placed within my reach; a fondness for some of my studies, and a desire to excel in all, together with a great delight in pleasing my teachers, especially such as I loved, urged me on: I availed myself fully of the advantages offered me. In time I rose to be the first girl of the first class; then I was invested with the office of teacher; which I discharged with zeal for two years: but at the end of that time I altered.

Miss Temple, through all changes, had thus far continued superintendent of the seminary: to her instruction I owed the best part of my acquirements; her friendship and society had been my continual solace; she had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and, latterly, companion. At this period she married, removed with her husband (a clergyman, an excellent man, almost worthy of such a wife) to a distant county, and consequently was lost to me.

From the day she left I was no longer the same: with her was gone every settled feeling, every association that had made Lowood in some degree a home to me. I had imbibed from her something of her nature and much of her habits: more harmonious thoughts: what seemed better regulated feelings had become the inmates of my mind. I had given in allegiance to duty and order; I was quiet; I believed I was content: to the eyes of others, usually even to my own, I appeared a disciplined and subdued character.

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But destiny, in the shape of the Rev. Mr. Nasmyth, came between me and Miss Temple: I saw her in her travelling dress step into a post-chaise, shortly after the marriage ceremony; I watched the chaise mount the hill and disappear beyond its brow; and then retired to my own room, and there spent in solitude the greatest part of the half-holiday granted in honour of the occasion.

I walked about the chamber most of the time. I imagined myself only to be regretting my loss, and thinking how to repair it; but when my reflections were concluded, and I looked up and found that the afternoon was gone, and evening far advanced, another discovery dawned on me, namely, that in the interval I had undergone a transforming process; that my mind had put off all it had borrowed of Miss Temple- or rather that she had taken with her the serene atmosphere I had been breathing in her vicinity- and that now I was left in my natural element, and beginning to feel the stirring of old emotions.

It did not seem as if a prop were withdrawn, but rather as if a motive were gone: it was not the power to be tranquil which had failed me, but the reason for tranquillity was no more. My world had for some years been in Lowood: my experience had been of its rules and systems; now I remembered that the real world was wide, and that a varied field of hopes and fears, of sensations and excitements, awaited those who had courage to go forth into its expanse, to seek real knowledge of life amidst its perils.

I went to my window, opened it, and looked out. There were the two wings of the building; there was the garden; there were the skirts of Lowood; there was the hilly horizon. My eye passed all other objects to rest on those most remote, the blue peaks; it was those I longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground, exile limits. I traced the white road winding round the base of one mountain, and vanishing in a gorge between two; how I longed to follow it farther! I recalled the time when I had travelled that very road in a coach; I remembered descending that hill at twilight; an age seemed to have elapsed since the day which brought me first to Lowood, and I had never quitted it since. My vacations had all been spent at school: Mrs. Reed had never sent for me to Gateshead; neither she nor any of her family had ever been to visit me. I had had no communication by letter or message with the outer world: school-rules, school-duties, school-habits and notions, and voices, and faces, and phrases, and costumes, and preferences, and antipathies- such was what I knew of existence. And now I felt that it was not enough; I tired of the routine of eight years in one afternoon. I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer; it seemed scattered on the wind then faintly blowing. I abandoned it and framed a humbler supplication; for change, stimulus: that petition, too, seemed swept off into vague space:

'Then,' I cried, half desperate, 'grant me at least a new servitude!' Here a bell, ringing the hour of supper, called me downstairs.

I was not free to resume the interrupted chain of my reflections till bedtime: even then a teacher who occupied the same room with me kept me from the subject to which I longed to recur, by a prolonged effusion of small talk. How I wished sleep would silence her. It seemed as if, could I but go back to the idea which had last entered my mind as I stood at the window, some inventive suggestion would rise for my relief.

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Miss Gryce snored at last; she was a heavy Welsh-woman, and till now her habitual nasal strains had never been regarded by me in any other light than as a nuisance; to-night I hailed the first deep notes with satisfaction; I was debarrassed of interruption; my half-effaced thought instantly revived.

'A new servitude! There is something in that,' I soliloquised (mentally, be it understood; I did not talk aloud). 'I know there is, because it does not sound too sweet; it is not like such words as Liberty, Excitement, Enjoyment: delightful sounds truly; but no more than sounds for me; and so hollow and fleeting that it is mere waste of time to listen to them. But Servitude! That must be matter of fact. Any one may serve: I have served here eight years; now all I want is to serve elsewhere. Can I not get so much of my own will? Is not the thing feasible? Yes- yes- the end is not so difficult; if I had only a brain active enough to ferret out the means of attaining it.'

I sat up in bed by way of arousing this said brain: it was a chilly night; I covered my shoulders with a shawl, and then I proceeded to think again with all my might.

'What do I want? A new place, in a new house, amongst new faces, under new circumstances: I want this because it is of no use wanting anything better. How do people do to get a new place? They apply to friends, I suppose: I have no friends. There are many others who have no friends, who must look about for themselves and be their own helpers; and what is their resource?'

I could not tell: nothing answered me; I then ordered my brain to find a response, and quickly. It worked and worked faster: I felt the pulses throb in my head and temples; but for nearly an hour it worked in chaos; and no result came of its efforts. Feverish with vain labour, I got up and took a turn in the room; undrew the curtain, noted a star or two, shivered with cold, and again crept to bed.

A kind fairy, in my absence, had surely dropped the required suggestion on my pillow; for as I lay down, it came quietly and naturally to my mind:- 'Those who want situations advertise; you 'How? I know nothing about advertising.'

Replies rose smooth and prompt now:-

'You must enclose the advertisement and the money to pay for it under a cover directed to the editor of the Herald; you must put it, the first opportunity you have, into the post at Lowton; answers must be addressed to J. E., at the post-office there; you can go and inquire in about a week after you send your letter, if any are come, and act accordingly.'

This scheme I went over twice, thrice; it was then digested in my mind; I had it in a clear practical form: I felt satisfied, and fell asleep.

With earliest day, I was up: I had my advertisement written, enclosed, and directed before the bell rang to rouse the school; it ran thus:-

'A young lady accustomed to tuition' (had I not been a teacher two years?) 'is desirous of meeting with a situation in a private family where the children are under fourteen' (I thought that as I was barely eighteen, it would not do to undertake the guidance of pupils nearer my own age). 'She is qualified to

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teach the usual branches of a good English education, together with French, Drawing, and Music' (in those days, reader, this now narrow catalogue of accomplishments, would have been held tolerably comprehensive).

This document remained locked in my drawer all day: after tea, I asked leave of the new superintendent to go to Lowton, in order to perform some small commissions for myself and one or two of my fellow-teachers; permission was readily granted; I went. It was a walk of two miles, and the evening was wet, but the days were still long; I visited a shop or two, slipped the letter into the post-office, and came back through heavy rain, with streaming garments, but with a relieved heart.

The succeeding week seemed long: it came to an end at last, however, like all sublunary things, and once more, towards the close of a pleasant autumn day, I found myself afoot on the road to Lowton. A picturesque track it was, by the way, lying along the side of the beck and through the sweetest curves of the dale: but that day I thought more of the letters, that might or might not be awaiting me at the little burgh whither I was bound, than of the charms of lea and water.

My ostensible errand on this occasion was to get measured for a pair of shoes; so I discharged that business first, and when it was done, I stepped across the clean and quiet little street from the shoemaker's to the post-office: it was kept by an old dame, who wore horn spectacles on her nose, and black mittens on her hands.

'Are there any letters for J. E.?' I asked.

She peered at me over her spectacles, and then she opened a drawer and fumbled among its contents for a long time, so long that my hopes began to falter. At last, having held a document before her glasses for nearly five minutes, she presented it across the counter, accompanying the act by another inquisitive and mistrustful glance- it was for J. E.

'Is there only one?' I demanded.

'There are no more,' said she; and I put it in my pocket and turned my face homeward: I could not open it then; rules obliged me to be back by eight, and it was already half-past seven.

Various duties awaited me on my arrival: I had to sit with the girls during their hour of study; then it was my turn to read prayers; to see them to bed: afterwards I supped with the other teachers.

Even when we finally retired for the night, the inevitable Miss Gryce was still my companion: we had only a short end of candle in our candlestick, and I dreaded lest she should talk till it was all burnt out; fortunately, however, the heavy supper she had eaten produced a soporific effect: she was already snoring before I had finished undressing. There still remained an inch of candle: I now took out my letter; the seal was an initial F.; I broke it; the contents were brief.

Thursday, possesses the acquirements mentioned, and if she is in a position to give satisfactory references as to character and competency, a situation can be offered her where there is but one pupil,

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a little girl, under ten years of age; and where the salary is thirty pounds per annum. J. E. is requested to send references, name, address, and all particulars to the direction:-

I examined the document long: the writing was old-fashioned and rather uncertain, like that of an elderly lady. This circumstance was satisfactory: a private fear had haunted me, that in thus acting for myself, and by my own guidance, I ran the risk of getting into some scrape; and, above all things, I wished the result of my endeavours to be respectable, proper, en regle. I now felt that an elderly lady was no bad ingredient in the business I had on hand. Mrs. Fairfax! I saw her in a black gown and widow's cap; frigid, perhaps, but not uncivil: a model of elderly English respectability.

Thornfield! that, doubtless, was the name of her house: a neat orderly spot, I was sure; though I failed in my efforts to conceive a recollections of the map of England; yes, I saw it; both the shire and county where I now resided: that was a recommendation to me. I longed to go where there was life and movement: Millcote was a large doubtless: so much the better; it would be a complete change at least.

Not that my fancy was much captivated by the idea of long chimneys and clouds of smoke- 'but,' I argued, 'Thornfield will, probably, be a good way from the town.'

Here the socket of the candle dropped, and the wick went out.

Next day new steps were to be taken; my plans could no longer be confined to my own breast; I must impart them in order to achieve their success. Having sought and obtained an audience of the superintendent during the noontide recreation, I told her I had a prospect of getting a new situation where the salary would be double what I now received (for at Lowood I only got L15 per annum); and requested she would break the matter for me to Mr. Brocklehurst, or some of the committee, and ascertain whether they would permit me to mention them as references. She obligingly consented to act as mediatrix in the matter. The next day she laid the affair before Mr. Brocklehurst, who said that Mrs. Reed must be written to, as she was my natural guardian. A note was accordingly addressed to that lady, who returned for answer, that 'I might do as I pleased: she had long relinquished all interference in my affairs.' This note went the round of the committee, and at last, after what appeared to me most tedious delay, formal leave was given me to better my condition if I could; and an assurance added, that as I had always conducted myself well, both as teacher and pupil, at Lowood, a testimonial of character and capacity, signed by the inspectors of that institution, should forthwith be furnished me.

This testimonial I accordingly received in about a month, forwarded a copy of it to Mrs. Fairfax, and got that lady's reply, stating that she was satisfied, and fixing that day fortnight as the period for my assuming the post of governess in her house.

I now busied myself in preparations: the fortnight passed rapidly. I had not a very large wardrobe, though it was adequate to my wants; and the last day sufficed to pack my trunk,- the same I had brought with me eight years ago from Gateshead.

The box was corded, the card nailed on. In half an hour the carrier was to call for it to take it to Lowton, whither I myself was to repair at an early hour the next morning to meet the coach. I had brushed my black stuff travelling-dress, prepared my bonnet, gloves, and muff; sought in all my drawers to see that

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no article was left behind; and now having nothing more to do, I sat down and tried to rest. I could not; though I had been on foot all day, I could not now repose an instant; I was too much excited. A phase of my life was closing tonight, a new one opening to-morrow: impossible to slumber in the interval; I must watch feverishly while the change was being accomplished.

'Miss,' said a servant who met me in the lobby, where I was wandering like a troubled spirit, 'a person below wishes to see you.'

'The carrier, no doubt,' I thought, and ran downstairs without inquiry. I was passing the back-parlour or teachers' sitting-room, the door of which was half open, to go to the kitchen, when some one ran out-

'It's her, I am sure!- I could have told her anywhere!' cried the individual who stopped my progress and took my hand.

I looked: I saw a woman attired like a well-dressed servant, matronly, yet still young; very good-looking, with black hair and eyes, and lively complexion.

'Well, who is it?' she asked, in a voice and with a smile I half recognised; 'you've not quite forgotten me, I think, Miss Jane?'

In another second I was embracing and kissing her rapturously.

'Bessie! Bessie! Bessie!' that was all I said; whereat she half laughed, half cried, and we both went into the parlour. By the fire stood a little fellow of three years old, in plaid frock and trousers.

'That is my little boy,' said Bessie directly.

'Then you are married, Bessie?'

'Yes; nearly five years since to Robert Leaven, the coachman; and I've a little girl besides Bobby there, that I've christened Jane.'

'And you don't live at Gateshead?'

'I live at the lodge: the old porter has left.'

'Well, and how do they all get on? Tell me everything about them, Bessie: but sit down first; and, Bobby, come and sit on my knee, will you?' but Bobby preferred sidling over to his mother.

'You're not grown so very tall, Miss Jane, nor so very stout,' continued Mrs. Leaven. 'I daresay they've not kept you too well at school: Miss Reed is the head and shoulders taller than you are; and Miss Georgiana would make two of you in breadth.'

'Georgiana is handsome, I suppose, Bessie?'

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'Very. She went up to London last winter with her mama, and there everybody admired her, and a young lord fell in love with her: but his relations were against the match; and- what do you think?- he and Miss Georgiana made it up to run away; but they were found out and stopped.

It was Miss Reed that found them out: I believe she was envious; and now she and her sister lead a cat and dog life together; they are always quarrelling.'

'Well, and what of John Reed?'

'Oh, he is not doing so well as his mama could wish. He went to college, and he got- plucked, I think they call it: and then his uncles wanted him to be a barrister, and study the law: but he is such a dissipated young man, they will never make much of him, I think.'

'What does he look like?'

'He is very tall: some people call him a fine-looking young man; but he has such thick lips.'

'And Mrs. Reed?'

'Missis looks stout and well enough in the face, but I think she's not quite easy in her mind: Mr. John's conduct does not please her- he spends a deal of money.'

'Did she send you here, Bessie?'

'No, indeed: but I have long wanted to see you, and when I heard that there had been a letter from you, and that you were going to another part of the country, I thought I'd just set off, and get a look at you before you were quite out of my reach.'

'I am afraid you are disappointed in me, Bessie.' I said this laughing: I perceived that Bessie's glance, though it expressed regard, did in no shape denote admiration.

'No, Miss Jane, not exactly: you are genteel enough; you look like a lady, and it is as much as ever I expected of you: you were no beauty as a child.'

I smiled at Bessie's frank answer: I felt that it was correct, but I confess I was not quite indifferent to its import: at eighteen most people wish to please, and the conviction that they have not an exterior likely to second that desire brings anything but gratification.

'I daresay you are clever, though,' continued Bessie, by way of solace. 'What can you do? Can you play on the piano?'

'A little.'

There was one in the room; Bessie went and opened it, and then asked me to sit down and give her a tune: I played a waltz or two, and she was charmed.

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'The Miss Reeds could not play as well!' said she exultingly. 'I always said you would surpass them in learning: and can you draw?'

'That is one of my paintings over the chimney-piece.' It was a landscape in water colours, of which I had made a present to the superintendent, in acknowledgment of her obliging mediation with the committee on my behalf, and which she had framed and glazed.

'Well, that is beautiful, Miss Jane! It is as fine a picture as any Miss Reed's drawing-master could paint, let alone the young ladies themselves, who could not come near it: and have you learnt French?'

'Yes, Bessie, I can both read it and speak it.'

'And you can work on muslin and canvas?'

'I can.'

'Oh, you are quite a lady, Miss Jane! I knew you would be: you will get on whether your relations notice you or not. There was something I wanted to ask you. Have you ever heard anything from your father's kinsfolk, the Eyres?'

'Never in my life.'

'Well, you know, Missis always said they were poor and quite despicable: and they may be poor; but I believe they are as much gentry as the Reeds are; for one day, nearly seven years ago, a Mr. Eyre came to Gateshead and wanted to see you; Missis said you were at school fifty miles off; he seemed so much disappointed, for he could not stay: he was going on a voyage to a foreign country, and the ship was to sail from London in a day or two. He looked quite a gentleman, and I believe he was your father's brother.'

'What foreign country was he going to, Bessie?'

'An island thousands of miles off, where they make wine- the butler did tell me-"Madeira?'" I suggested.

'Yes, that is it- that is the very word.'

'So he went?'

'Yes; he did not stay many minutes in the house: Missis was very high with him; she called him afterwards a "sneaking tradesman." My Robert believes he was a wine-merchant.'

'Very likely,' I returned; 'or perhaps clerk or agent to a wine-merchant.'

Bessie and I conversed about old times an hour longer, and then she was obliged to leave me: I saw her again for a few minutes the next morning at Lowton, while I was waiting for the coach. We parted finally at the door of the Brocklehurst Arms there, each went her separate way; she set off for the brow of Lowood Fell to meet the conveyance which was to take her back to Gateshead, I mounted the vehicle

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which was to bear me to new duties and a new life in the unknown environs of Millcote.

第十章

到目前为止，我已细述了自己微不足道的身世。我一生的最初十年，差不多花了十章来描写。但这不是一部正正规规的自传。我不过是要勾起自知会使读者感兴趣的记忆，因此我现在要几乎只字不提跳过八年的生活，只需用几行笔墨来保持连贯性。

斑疹伤寒热在罗沃德完成了它摧毁件的使命以后，便渐渐地在那里销声匿迹了。但是其病毒和牺牲者的数字，引起了公众对学校的注意，于是人们对这场灾祸的根源作了调查，而逐步披露的事实大大激怒了公众。学校的地点不利于健康，孩子们的伙食量少质差，做饭用的水臭得使人恶心；学生们的衣着和居住条件很糟，一切都暴露无遗，曝光的结果使布罗克赫斯特大夫失脸面，使学校大受得益。

那里的一些富家善人慷慨解囊，在一个更好的地点建造了一座更合适的大楼。校规重新作了制订，饮食和衣着有所改善。学校的经费委托给一个委员会管理。布罗克赫斯特先生，有钱又有势，自然不能忽视，所以仍担任司库一职。但在履行职务时得到了更为慷慨和富有同情心的绅士们的协助。他作为督导的职能，也由他人一起来承担，他们知道该怎样把理智与严格、舒适与经济、怜悯与正直结合起来。学校因此大有改进，到时候成了一个真正有用的高尚学府。学校获得新生之后，我在它的围墙之内生活了八年，当了六年的学生，二年的教师，在双重身份上成了它价值和重要性的见证人。

在这八年中，我的生活十分单一，但并无不快，因为日子没有成为一潭死水。这里具备接受良好教育的条件。我喜爱某些课程；我希望超过所有人；我很乐意使教师尤其是我所爱的教师高兴，一切都激励我奋进。我充分利用所提供的有利条件，终于一跃而成为第一班的第一名，后来又被授予教师职务，满腔热情地干了两年，但两年之后我改变了主意。

坦普尔小姐历经种种变迁，一直担任着校长的职位，我所取得的最好成绩归功于她的教诲。同她的友谊和交往始终是对我的慰藉。她担当了我的母亲和家庭教师的角色，后来成了我的伙伴。这时候，她结了婚，随她的丈夫（一位牧师、一个出色的男人，几乎与这样一位妻子相般配）迁往一个遥远的郡，结果同我失去了联系。

打从她离开的那天起，我已不再同原来一样了。她一走，那种已经确立了的使罗沃德有几分像家的感情和联系，都随之消失。我从她那儿吸收了某些个性和很多习惯。比较和谐的思想，比较有节制的感情，已经在我的头脑里生根。我决意忠于职守，服从命令。我很文静，相信自己十分满足。在别人的眼中，甚至在我自己看来，我似乎是一位懂规矩守本份的人。

但是命运化作牧师内史密斯把我和坦普尔小组分开了。我见她身着行装在婚礼后不久跨进一辆驿站马车，我凝视着马车爬上小山，消失在陡坡后面。随后我回到了自己的房间，在孤寂中度过了为庆祝这一时刻而放的半假日的绝大部分时间。

大部分时候我在房间里踟躇。我本以为自己只对损失感到遗憾，并考虑如何加以补救，但当我结束了思考，抬头看到下午已经逝去，夜色正浓时，蓦地我有了新的发现。那就是在这一间隙，我经历了一个变化的过程，我的心灵丢弃了我从坦普尔小姐那儿学来的东西，或者不如说她带走了我在她身边所感受到的宁静气息，现在我又恢复了自己的天性，感到原有的情绪开始萌动了，我并不是失去了支柱，而是失去了动机；并不是无力保持平静、而是需要保持平静的理由已不复存在。几年来，我的世界就在罗沃德，我的经历就是学校的规章制度，而现在我记起来了，真正的世界无限广阔，一个变满着希望与忧烦，刺激与兴奋的天地等待着那些有胆识的人，去冒各种风险，追求人生的真谛。

我走向窗子，把它打开，往外眺望。我看见了大楼的两翼，看见了花园，看见了罗沃德的边缘，看见了山峦起伏的地平线。我的目光越过了其他东西，落在那些最遥远的蓝色山峰上。正是那些山峰，我渴望去攀登。荒凉不堪岩石嶙峋的边界之内，仿佛是囚禁地，是放逐的极限。我跟踪那条白色的路蜿蜒着绕过一座山的山脚，消失在两山之间的峡谷之中。我多么希望继续跟着它往前走啊！我忆起了我乘着马车沿着那条路走的日子，我记得在薄暮中驶下了山，自从我被第一次带到罗沃德时起，仿佛一个世纪已经过去，但我从来没有离开过这里。假期都是在学校里度过的，里德太太从来没有把我接到盖茨黑德去过，不管是她本人，还是家里的其他人，从未来看过我。我与外部世界既没有书信往来，也不通消息。学校的规定、任务、习惯、观念、音容、语言、服饰、好恶，就是我所知道的生活内容。而如今我觉得这很不够。一个下午之间，我对八年的常规生活突然感到厌倦了，我憧憬自由，我渴望自由，我为自由作了一个祷告，这祈祷似乎被驱散，融入了微风之中。我放弃了祈祷，设想了一个更谦卑的祈求，祈求变化，祈求刺激。而这恳求似乎也被吹进了浩茫的宇宙。“那么”，我近乎绝望地叫道，“至少赐予我一种新的苦役吧！”

这时，晚饭铃响了，把我召唤到了楼下。

直到睡觉的时候，我才有空继续那被打断了的沉思。即便在那时，同房间的一位教师还絮絮叨叨闲聊了好久，使我没法回到我所渴望的问题上。我多么希望瞌睡会使她闭上嘴巴！仿佛只要我重新思考伫立窗前时闪过脑际的念头，某个独特的想法便会自己冒出来，使我得以解脱似的。

格丽丝小姐终于打瞌了。她是一位笨重的威尔士女人，在此之前我对她惯常的鼻音曲除了认为讨厌，没有别的看法。而今晚我满意地迎来了它最初的深沉曲调，我免除了打扰，心中那抹去了一半的想法又立刻复活了。

“一种新的苦役！这有一定道理，”我自言自语（要知道，只是心里想想，没有说出口来）。“我知道是有道理，因为它并不十分动听，不像自由、兴奋、享受这些词，它们的声音确实很悦耳，徒然浪费时间。但是这苦役却全然不同！它毕竟是实实在在的，任何个人都可以服苦役。我在这儿已经服了八年，现在我所祈求的不过是到别处去服役。难道我连这点愿望也达不到？难道这事不可行？是呀，是呀，要达到目的并非难事，只要我肯动脑筋，找到达到目的之手段。”

我从床上坐起来，以便开动脑筋。这是一个寒冷的夜晚，我在肩上围了块披巾，随后便全力以赴地进一步思考起来。

“我需要什么呢？在新的环境、新的面孔、新的房子中一个新的的工作。我只要这个，因为好高骛远是徒劳无益的。人们怎样才能找到一个新工作呢？我猜想他们求助于朋友。但我没有朋友。很多没有朋友的人只好自己动手去找工作，自己救自己，他们采用什么办法呢？”

我说不上来，找不到答案。随后我责令自己的头脑找到一个回答，而且要快。我动着脑筋，越动越快。我感到我的脑袋和太阳穴在搏动着。但将近一个小时，我的脑子乱七八糟，一切努力毫无结果。我因为徒劳

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无功而心乱加麻，便立起身来，在房间里转了转，拉开窗帘，望见一两颗星星，在寒夜中颤抖，我再次爬到床上。

准是有一位善良的仙女，趁我不在时把我需要的主意放到了我枕头上，因为我躺下时，这主意悄悄地、自然而然地闪入我脑际。“凡是谋职的人都登广告，你必须在《××郡先驱报》上登广告。”

“怎么登呢？我对广告一无所知。”

回答来得自然而又及时：

“你必须把广告和广告费放在同一个信封里，寄给《先驱报》的编辑，你必须立即抓住第一个机会把信投到洛顿邮局，回信务必寄往那里邮局的 J.E.。信寄出后一个星期，你可以去查询。要是来了回音，那就随之行动。”

我把这个计划琢磨了二三回，接着便消化在脑子里，我非常清晰地把它具体化了，我很满意，不久便酣然入睡。

第二天我一大早就起来了，没等起床铃把全校吵醒就写好了广告，封入信封，写上了地址。信上说：

“现有一位年轻女士，熟悉教学（我不是做了两年的教师吗？）愿谋一家庭教师职位，儿童年龄须幼于十四岁（我想自己才十八岁，要指导一个跟我年龄相仿的人是断然不行的）。该女士能胜任良好的英国教育所含的普通课科，以及法文、绘画和音乐的教学（读者呀，现在这张狭窄的技能表，在那个时代还算是比较广博的）。回信请寄××郡洛顿邮局，J.E.收。”

这份文件在我抽屉里整整锁了一天。用完茶点以后，我向新来的校长请假去洛顿，为自己也为一两共事的老师办些小事。她欣然允诺，于是我便去了。一共有两英里步行路程，傍晚还下着雨，好在白昼依然很长。我逛了一两家商店，把信塞进邮局，冒着大雨回来，外衣都滴着水，但心里如释重负。

接着的那个星期似乎很长，然而，它像世间的万物一样，终于到了尽头。一个秋高气爽的傍晚，我再次踏上了去洛顿的路途。顺便提一句，小路风景如画，沿着小溪向前延伸，穿过弯弯曲曲秀色诱人的山谷。不过那天我想得更多的是那封可能在，可能不在小城等着我的信，而不是草地和溪水的魅力。

这时我冠冕堂皇的差使是度量脚码做一双鞋。所以我去干这件事。了却以后，从鞋匠那儿出来，穿过洁净安宁的小街，来到邮局。管理员是位老妇人，鼻梁上架着角质眼镜，手上戴着黑色露指手套。

“有写给 J.E. 的信吗？”我问。

她从眼镜上方盯着我，随后打开一个抽屉，在里面放着的東西中间翻了好久好久。时间那么长，我简直开始有些泄气了。最后，她终于把一份文件放到眼镜底上，过了将近五分钟，才越过柜台，递给我，同时投过来刨根究底，疑虑重重的一瞥——这封信是写给 J.E. 的。

“就只有这么一封？”我问。

“没有了，”她说，我把信放进口袋，回头就走。当时我不能拆开，按照规定我得八点前返回，而这时已经七点半了。

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一到家便有种种事务等着我去做。姑娘们做课时我得陪坐着，随后是轮到我读祷告，照应她们上床。在此之后，我与其他教师吃了晚饭。甚至最后到了夜间安寝时，那位始终少不了的格丽丝小姐仍与我作伴。烛台上只剩下一短截蜡烛了，我担心她会喋喋不休，直至烛灭。幸好那一顿饭产生了催眠的效果。我还没有脱好衣服，她已酣声大作。蜡烛只剩一英寸，我取出了信，封口上署着缩写F.，我拆开信封，发现内容十分简单。

“如上周四在郡《先驱报》上登了广告的J.E.具备她所提及的修养，如她能为自己的品格与能力提供满意的证明人，即可获得一份工作，仅需教一名学生，一个不满十岁的小女孩，年薪为三十英镑。务请将证明人及其姓名、地址和详情寄往下列姓名和地址：“××郡，米尔科特附近，桑菲尔德，费尔法克斯太太收。”

我把文件细看了很久。字体很老式，笔迹不大稳，像是一位老年妇女写的。这一情况倒是让人满意的。我曾暗自担心，我自作主张，独自行动，会有陷入某种困境的危险。尤其是我希望自己努力得来的成果是体面的、正当的、en regle。我现在觉得手头的这件事涉及一位老年妇女倒是好事。费尔法克斯太太！我想象她穿着黑色的长袍，戴着寡妇帽，也许索然无味，但并不失为一位典型的英国老派体面人物。桑菲尔德！毫无疑问，那是她住宅的名称，肯定是个整洁而井井有条的地方，尽管我无力设想这幢房子的确切结构。××郡的米尔科特，我重温了记忆中的英国地图。不错，郡和镇都看到了。××郡比我现在居住的最偏远的郡，离伦敦要近七十英里。这对我来说是十分可取的。我向往活跃热闹的地方。禾尔科特是个大工业城市，坐落在埃×河岸上，无疑是够热闹的。这样岂不更好，至少也是个彻底的改变。倒不是我的想象被那些高高的烟囱和团团烟雾所吸引，“不过，”我争辩着，“或许桑菲尔德离镇很远呢。”

这时残烛落入了烛台孔中，烛芯熄灭了。

第二天我得采取一些新的措施，这个计划不能再闷在自己心里了。为了获得成功我必须说出口。下午娱乐活动时间，我去拜见了校长，告诉她我有可能找到一个新的职位，薪金是我目前所得的两倍（在罗沃德我的年薪为十五镑），请她替我把这事透露给布罗克赫斯特先生或委员会里的某些人，并问明白他们是否允许我把他们作为证明人提出来。她一口答应充当这件事情的协调人。第二天，她向布罗克赫斯特先生提出了这件事，而他说必须写信通知里德太太，因为她是我的当然监护人。结果便向那位太太发了封简函。她回信说，一切悉听尊便，她已久不干预我的事务了。这封信函在委员会里传阅，并经过了在我看来是极其令人厌烦的拖延后，我终于得到了正式许可，在可能情况下改善自己的处境。附带还保证，由于我在罗沃德当教师和当学生时，一向表现很好，为此即将为我提供一份由学校督导签字的品格和能力证明书。

大约一周以后，我收到了这份证明，抄寄了一份给费尔法克斯太太，并得到了那位太太的回复，说是对我感到满意，并定于两周后我去那位太太家担任家庭教师。

现在我忙于作准备了。两周时间一晃而过。我的衣装不多，只是够穿罢了。最后一天也完全够我整理箱子——还是八年前从盖茨黑德带来的那一只。

箱子已用绳子捆好，贴上了标签。半小时之后有脚夫来把它取走，送往洛顿，我自己则第二天一早要赶到那里去等公共马车。我刷好了我的黑呢旅行装，备好帽子、手套和皮手筒，把所有的抽屉翻了一遍，免得丢下什么东西。此刻，我已无事可做，便想坐下来休息一下。但我做不到，尽管我已奔忙了一整天，却一刻也无法休息，我太兴奋了。我生活的一个阶段今晚就要结束，明天将开始一个新的阶段。在两者的间隙，我难以入睡，我必须满腔热情地观看这变化的完成。

“小姐，”一个在门厅碰到我的仆人说。这会儿我正像一个不安的幽灵似地在那里徘徊，“楼下有个人要见你。”

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“准是脚夫，”我想，问也没问一声就奔下了楼去。我正经过半开着的后客厅，也就是教师休息室，向厨房走去，有人却从里面跑了出来。“准是她！——在哪儿我都认得出她来！”那人拦住我，一把抓过我的手叫道。

我定睛一看，见是一个少妇，穿戴得像一个衣着讲究的仆人，一付已婚妇女模样，却不失年轻漂亮，头发和眸子乌黑，脸色红润。

“瞧，是谁来了？”她回话的嗓音和笑容我似曾相识，“我想你没有把我完全忘记吧，简小姐？”

顷刻之间我便喜不自禁地拥抱她，吻她了。“贝茜！贝茜！贝茜！”我光这么叫着，而她听了又是笑又是哭，两人都进了后客厅。壁炉旁边站着一个小家伙，穿着花格呢外衣和裤子。

“那是我的儿子，”贝茜立刻说。

“这么说，你结婚了，贝茜？”

“是呀，已经快五年了，嫁给了马车夫罗伯特·利文，除了站在那儿的鲍比，我还有一个小女孩，我把她的教名取作简。”

“你不住在盖茨黑德了？”

“我住在门房里，原来那个看门的走了。”

“噢，他们都过得怎么样？把他们的事情统统都告诉我，贝茜。不过先坐下来，还有鲍比，过来坐在我的膝头上好吗？”但鲍比还是喜欢侧着身子挨近他妈妈。

“你长得那么高了，简小姐，而又没有发胖，”利文太太继续说。“我猜想学校里没有把你照看得太好吧，里德小姐要比你高得多呢。而乔治亚娜小姐有你两个人那么阔。”

“乔治亚娜想来很漂亮吧，贝茜？”

“很漂亮。去年冬天她同妈妈上了伦敦，在那儿人见人爱，一个年轻勋爵爱上了她，但勋爵的亲戚反对这门亲事，而——你认为怎么样——他和乔治亚娜小姐决定私奔，于是让人发现了，受到了阻止。发现他们的正是里德小姐，我想她是出于妒嫉，如今她们姐妹俩像猫和狗一样不合，老是吵架。”

“那么，约翰·里德怎么样了？”

“啊，他辜负了他妈妈的希望，表现并不好。他上了大学，而考试不及格，我想他们是这么说的。后来他的叔叔们要他将来当律师，去学习法律，但他是个年轻浪荡子，我想他们甭想使他有出息。”

“他长成什么模样了？”

“他很高，有人叫他俊小伙子，不过他的嘴唇很厚。”

“里德太太怎么样？”

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“太太显得有些发胖，外表看看倒不错，但我想她心里很不安。约翰先生的行为使她不高兴——约翰用掉了很多钱。”

“是她派你到这里来的吗，贝茜？”

“说真的，不是。我倒早就想见你了。我听说你写了信来，说是要去远地方，我想我还是乘你还没有远走高飞的时候，动身来见你一面。”

“恐怕你对我失望了吧，贝茜。”说完我笑了起来。我发觉贝茜的目光虽然流露出关切，却丝毫没有赞赏之意。

“不，简小姐，不完全这样。你够文雅的了，你看上去像个贵妇人。当然你还是我所预料的那样，还是孩子的时候你就长得不漂亮。”

我对贝茜坦率的回答报之以微笑。我想她说得对，不过我承认，我对这话的含义并没有无动于衷。在十八岁的年纪上，大多数人都希望能讨人喜欢，而她们相信，自己并不具备有助于实现这种愿望的外表时，心里是绝不会高兴的。

“不过我想你很聪明，”贝茜继续说，以表示安慰。“你会什么？能弹钢琴吗？”

“会一点儿。”

房内有一架钢琴。贝茜走过去把它打开，随后要我坐下来给她弹个曲子。我弹了一两曲华尔兹，她听得着了迷。

“两位里德小姐弹不了这么好！”她欣喜地说，“我总是说你在学问上一定会超过她们的，你能画吗？”

“壁炉架上的那幅画就是我画的。”这是一幅水彩风景画，我把它作为礼物送给了校长，以感谢她代表我在委员会中所作的善意斡旋。她把这幅画加了框，还上了光。

“嗨，好漂亮，简小姐！它同里德小姐的绘画老师作的画一样好，更不要说年轻小姐她们自己了，她们同你天差地远。你学法语了吗？”

“学了，贝茜，我能读还能讲。”

“你会做细布和粗布上的刺绣活吗？”

“我会。”

“啊，你是个大家闺秀啦，简小姐！我早知道你会的。不管你的亲戚理不理你，照样会有长进。我有件事儿要问你，你父亲的亲属，有没有写过信给你，就是那些姓爱的人？”

“这辈子还没有。”

“啊，你知道太太常说，他们又穷又让人瞧不起。穷倒是可能的，但我相信他们像里德家的人一样有绅士派头。大约七年前的一天，一位爱先生来到盖茨黑德，而且要见见你。太太说你在五十英里外的学校里，他

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好像很失望，因为他不能多呆。他要乘船到外国去，一两天后从伦敦开航。他看上去完全像个绅士，我想他是你父亲的兄弟。”

“他上国外哪个国家，贝茜？”

“几千英里外的一个岛，那儿出产酒——管家告诉我的。”

“马德拉岛？”我提醒了一下。

“对，就是这地方——就是这几个字。”

“那他走了？”

“是的，他在屋里没有呆上几分钟。太太对他很傲慢，后来她把他叫作一个‘狡猾的生意人’，我那位罗伯特估计他是个酒商。”

“很可能，”我回答，“或者酒商的职员或代理人。”

贝茜和我又谈了一个钟头的往事，后来，她不得不告辞了。第二天在洛顿候车时又见了她五分钟。最后我们在布洛克赫斯特纹章旅店的门边分手，各走各的路，她动身去罗沃德山岗搭车回盖茨黑德；而我登上了车子，让它把我带往米尔科特那个陌生的郊区，从事新的使命，开始新的生活。