

CHAPTER XXX

THE more I knew of the inmates of Moor House, the better I liked them. In a few days I had so far recovered my health that I could sit up all day, and walk out sometimes. I could join with Diana and Mary in all their occupations; converse with them as much as they wished, and aid them when and where they would allow me. There was a reviving pleasure in this intercourse, of a kind now tasted by me for the first time- the pleasure arising from perfect congeniality of tastes, sentiments, and principles.

I liked to read what they liked to read: what they enjoyed, delighted me; what they approved, I revered. They loved their sequestered home. I, too, in the grey, small, antique structure, with its low roof, its latticed casements, its mouldering walls, its avenue of aged firs- all grown aslant under the stress of mountain winds; its garden, dark with yew and holly- and where no flowers but of the hardest species would bloom- found a charm both potent and permanent. They clung to the purple moors behind and around their dwelling- to the hollow vale into which the pebbly bridle-path leading from their gate descended, and which wound between fern-banks first, and then amongst a few of the wildest little pasture-fields that ever bordered a wilderness of heath, or gave sustenance to a flock of grey moorland sheep, with their little mossy-faced lambs:- they clung to this scene, I say, with a perfect enthusiasm of attachment. I could comprehend the feeling, and share both its strength and truth. I saw the fascination of the locality. I felt the consecration of its loneliness: my eye feasted on the outline of swell and sweep- on the wild colouring communicated to ridge and dell by moss, by heath-bell, by flower-sprinkled turf, by brilliant bracken, and mellow granite crag. These details were just to me what they were to them- so many pure and sweet sources of pleasure. The strong blast and the soft breeze; the rough and the halcyon day; the hours of sunrise and sunset; the moonlight and the clouded night, developed for me, in these regions, the same attraction as for them- wound round my faculties the same spell that entranced theirs.

Indoors we agreed equally well. They were both more accomplished and better read than I was; but with eagerness I followed in the path of knowledge they had trodden before me. I devoured the books they lent me: then it was full satisfaction to discuss with them in the evening what I had perused during the day. Thought fitted thought; opinion met opinion: we coincided, in short, perfectly.

If in our trio there was a superior and a leader, it was Diana.

Physically, she far excelled me: she was handsome; she was vigorous.

In her animal spirits there was an affluence of life and certainty of flow, such as excited my wonder, while it baffled my comprehension.

I could talk a while when the evening commenced, but the first gush of vivacity and fluency gone, I was fain to sit on a stool at Diana's feet, to rest my head on her knee, and listen alternately to her and Mary, while they sounded thoroughly the topic on which I had but touched. Diana offered to teach me German. I liked to learn of her:

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I saw the part of instructress pleased and suited her; that of scholar pleased and suited me no less. Our natures dovetailed: mutual affection- of the strongest kind- was the result. They discovered I could draw: their pencils and colour-boxes were immediately at my service. My skill, greater in this one point than theirs, surprised and charmed them. Mary would sit and watch me by the hour together: then she would take lessons; and a docile, intelligent, assiduous pupil she made. Thus occupied, and mutually entertained, days passed like hours, and weeks like days.

As to Mr. St. John, the intimacy which had arisen so naturally and rapidly between me and his sisters did not extend to him. One reason of the distance yet observed between us was, that he was comparatively seldom at home: a large proportion of his time appeared devoted to visiting the sick and poor among the scattered population of his parish.

No weather seemed to hinder him in these pastoral excursions: rain or fair, he would, when his hours of morning study were over, take his hat, and, followed by his father's old pointer, Carlo, go out on his mission of love or duty- I scarcely know in which light he regarded it. Sometimes, when the day was very unfavourable, his sisters would expostulate. He would then say, with a peculiar smile, more solemn than cheerful-

'And if I let a gust of wind or a sprinkling of rain turn me aside from these easy tasks, what preparation would such sloth be for the future I propose to myself?'

Diana and Mary's general answer to this question was a sigh, and some minutes of apparently mournful meditation.

But besides his frequent absences, there was another barrier to friendship with him: he seemed of a reserved, an abstracted, and even of a brooding nature. Zealous in his ministerial labours, blameless in his life and habits, he yet did not appear to enjoy that mental serenity, that inward content, which should be the reward of every sincere Christian and practical philanthropist. Often, of an evening, when he sat at the window, his desk and papers before him, he would cease reading or writing, rest his chin on his hand, and deliver himself up to I know not what course of thought; but that it was perturbed and exciting might be seen in the frequent flash and changeful dilation of his eye.

I think, moreover, that Nature was not to him that treasury of delight it was to his sisters. He expressed once, and but once in my hearing, a strong sense of the rugged charm of the hills, and an inborn affection for the dark roof and hoary walls he called his home; but there was more of gloom than pleasure in the tone and words in which the sentiment was manifested; and never did he seem to roam the moors for the sake of their soothing silence- never seek out or dwell upon the thousand peaceful delights they could yield.

Incommunicative as he was, some time elapsed before I had an opportunity of gauging his mind. I first got an idea of its calibre when I heard him preach in his own church at Morton. I wish I could describe that sermon: but it is past my power. I cannot even render faithfully the effect it produced on me.

It began calm- and indeed, as far as delivery and pitch of voice went, it was calm to the end: an earnestly felt, yet strictly restrained zeal breathed soon in the distinct accents, and prompted the nervous language. This grew to force- compressed, condensed, controlled. The heart was thrilled, the mind astonished, by the power of the preacher: neither were softened. Throughout there was a strange bitterness; an absence of consolatory gentleness; stern allusions to Calvinistic doctrines- election, predestination, reprobation- were frequent; and each reference to these points sounded like a sentence pronounced for doom. When he had done, instead of feeling better, calmer, more enlightened by his discourse, I experienced an expressible sadness; for it seemed to me- I know not whether equally so to others- that the eloquence to which I had been listening had sprung from a depth where lay turbid dregs of disappointment- where moved troubling impulses of insatiate yearnings and disquieting aspirations. I was sure St. John Rivers- pure-lived, conscientious, zealous as he was- had not yet found that peace of God which passeth all understanding; he had no more found it, I thought, than had I with my concealed and racking regrets for my broken idol and lost elysium- regrets to which I have latterly avoided referring, but which possessed me and tyrannised over me ruthlessly.

Meantime a month was gone. Diana and Mary were soon to leave Moor House, and return to the far different life and scene which awaited them, as governesses in a large, fashionable, south-of-England city, where each held a situation in families by whose wealthy and haughty members they were regarded only as humble dependants, and who neither knew nor sought out their innate excellences, and appreciated only their acquired accomplishments as they appreciated the skill of their cook or the taste of their waiting-woman. Mr. St. John had said nothing to me yet about the employment he had promised to obtain for me; yet it became urgent that I should have a vocation of some kind. One morning, being left alone with him a few minutes in the parlour, I ventured to approach the window-recess- which his table, chair, and desk consecrated as a kind of study- and I was going to speak, though not very well knowing in what words to frame my inquiry- for it is at all times difficult to break the ice of reserve glassing over such natures as his- when he saved me the trouble by being the first to commence a dialogue.

Looking up as I drew near- 'You have a question to ask of me?' he said.

'Yes; I wish to know whether you have heard of any service I can offer myself to undertake?'

'I found or devised something for you three weeks ago; but as you seemed both useful and happy here- as my sisters had evidently become attached to you, and your society gave them unusual pleasure- I deemed it inexpedient to break in on your mutual comfort till their approaching departure from Marsh End should render yours necessary.'

'And they will go in three days now?' I said.

'Yes; and when they go, I shall return to the parsonage at Morton: Hannah will accompany me; and this old house will be shut up.'

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I waited a few moments, expecting he would go on with the subject first broached: but he seemed to have entered another train of reflection: his look denoted abstraction from me and my business. I was obliged to recall him to a theme which was of necessity one of close and anxious interest to me.

'What is the employment you had in view, Mr. Rivers? I hope this delay will not have increased the difficulty of securing it.'

'Oh, no; since it is an employment which depends only on me to give, and you to accept.'

He again paused: there seemed a reluctance to continue. I grew impatient: a restless movement or two, and an eager and exacting glance fastened on his face, conveyed the feeling to him as effectually as words could have done, and with less trouble.

'You need be in no hurry to hear,' he said: 'let me frankly tell you, I have nothing eligible or profitable to suggest. Before I explain, recall, if you please, my notice, clearly given, that if I helped you, it must be as the blind man would help the lame. I am poor; for I find that, when I have paid my father's debts, all the patrimony remaining to me will be this crumbling grange, the row of scathed firs behind, and the patch of moorish soil, with the yew-trees and holly-bushes in front. I am obscure: Rivers is an old name; but of the three sole descendants of the race, two earn the dependant's crust among strangers, and the third considers himself an alien from his native country- not only for life, but in death. Yes, and deems, and is bound to deem, himself honoured by the lot, and aspires but after the day when the cross of separation from fleshly ties shall be laid on his shoulders, and when the Head of that church-militant of whose humblest members he is one, shall give the word, "Rise, follow Me!"'

St. John said these words as he pronounced his sermons, with a quiet, deep voice; with an unflushed cheek, and a coruscating radiance of glance. He resumed-

'And since I am myself poor and obscure, I can offer you but a service of poverty and obscurity. You may even think it degrading- for I see now your habits have been what the world calls refined: your tastes lean to the ideal, and your society has at least been amongst the educated; but I consider that no service degrades which can better our race. I hold that the more arid and unreclaimed the soil where the Christian labourer's task of tillage is appointed him- the scantier the meed his toil brings- the higher the honour. His, under such circumstances, is the destiny of the pioneer; and the first pioneers of the Gospel were the Apostles- their captain was Jesus, the Redeemer, Himself.'

'Well?' I said, as he again paused- 'proceed.'

He looked at me before he proceeded: indeed, he seemed leisurely to read my face, as if its features and lines were characters on a page. The conclusions drawn from this scrutiny he partially expressed in his succeeding observations.

'I believe you will accept the post I offer you,' said he, 'and hold it for a while: not permanently,

though: any more than I could permanently keep the narrow and narrowing- the tranquil, hidden office of English country incumbent; for in your nature is an alloy as detrimental to repose as that in mine, though of a different kind.'

'Do explain,' I urged, when he halted once more.

'I will; and you shall hear how poor the proposal is,- how trivial- how cramping. I shall not stay long at Morton, now that my father is dead, and that I am my own master. I shall leave the place probably in the course of a twelvemonth; but while I do stay, I will exert myself to the utmost for its improvement. Morton, when I came to it two years ago, had no school: the children of the poor were excluded from every hope of progress. I established one for boys: I mean now to open a second school for girls. I have hired a building for the purpose, with a cottage of two rooms attached to it for the mistress's house. Her salary will be thirty pounds a year: her house is already furnished, very simply, but sufficiently, by the kindness of a lady, Miss Oliver; the only daughter of the sole rich man in my parish-

Mr. Oliver, the proprietor of a needle-factory and iron-foundry in the valley. The same lady pays for the education and clothing of an orphan from the workhouse, on condition that she shall aid the mistress in such menial offices connected with her own house and the school as her occupation of teaching will prevent her having time to discharge in person. Will you be this mistress?'

He put the question rather hurriedly; he seemed half to expect an indignant, or at least a disdainful rejection of the offer: not knowing all my thoughts and feelings, though guessing some, he could not tell in what light the lot would appear to me. In truth it was humble- but then it was sheltered, and I wanted a safe asylum: it was plodding- but then, compared with that of a governess in a rich house, it was independent; and the fear of servitude with strangers entered my soul like iron: it was not ignoble- not unworthy- not mentally degrading. I made my decision.

'I thank you for the proposal, Mr. Rivers, and I accept it with all my heart.'

'But you comprehend me?' he said. 'It is a village school: your scholars will be only poor girls-cottagers' children- at the best, farmers' daughters. Knitting, sewing, reading, writing, ciphering, will be all you will have to teach. What will you do with your accomplishments? What, with the largest portion of your mind- sentiments- tastes?'

'Save them till they are wanted. They will keep.'

'You know what you undertake, then?'

'I do.'

He now smiled: and not a bitter or a sad smile, but one well pleased and deeply gratified.

'And when will you commence the exercise of your function?'

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'I will go to my house to-morrow, and open the school, if you like, next week.'

'Very well: so be it.'

He rose and walked through the room. Standing still, he again looked at me. He shook his head.

'What do you disapprove of, Mr. Rivers?' I asked.

'You will not stay at Morton long: no, no!'

'Why? What is your reason for saying so?'

'I read it in your eye; it is not of that description which promises the maintenance of an even tenor in life.'

'I am not ambitious.'

He started at the word 'ambitious.' He repeated, 'No. What made you think of ambition? Who is ambitious? I know I am: but how did you find it out?'

'I was speaking of myself.'

'Well, if you are not ambitious, you are-' He paused.

'What?'

'I was going to say, impassioned: but perhaps you would have misunderstood the word, and been displeased. I mean, that human affections and sympathies have a most powerful hold on you. I am sure you cannot long be content to pass your leisure in solitude, and to devote your working hours to a monotonous labour wholly void of stimulus: any more than I can be content,' he added, with emphasis, 'to live here buried in morass, pent in with mountains- my nature, that God gave me, contravened; my faculties, heaven-bestowed, paralysed- made useless. You hear now how I contradict myself. I, who preached contentment with a humble lot, and justified the vocation even of hewers of wood and drawers of water in God's service- I, His ordained minister, almost rave in my restlessness. Well, propensities and principles must be reconciled by some means.'

He left the room. In this brief hour I had learnt more of him than in the whole previous month: yet still he puzzled me.

Diana and Mary Rivers became more sad and silent as the day approached for leaving their brother and their home. They both tried to appear as usual; but the sorrow they had to struggle against was one that could not be entirely conquered or concealed. Diana intimated that this would be a different parting from any they had ever yet known. It would probably, as far as St. John was

concerned, be a parting for years: it might be a parting for life.

'He will sacrifice all to his long-framed resolves,' she said: 'natural affection and feelings more potent still. St. John looks quiet, Jane; but he hides a fever in his vitals. You would think him gentle, yet in some things he is inexorable as death; and the worst of it is, my conscience will hardly permit me to dissuade him from his severe decision: certainly, I cannot for a moment blame him for it. It is right, noble, Christian: yet it breaks my heart!' And the tears gushed to her fine eyes. Mary bent her head low over her work.

'We are now without father: we shall soon be without home and brother,' she murmured.

At that moment a little accident supervened, which seemed decreed by fate purposely to prove the truth of the adage, that 'misfortunes never come singly,' and to add to their distresses the vexing one of the slip between the cup and the lip. St. John passed the window reading a letter. He entered.

'Our uncle John is dead,' said he.

Both the sisters seemed struck: not shocked or appalled; the tidings appeared in their eyes rather momentous than afflicting.

'Dead?' repeated Diana.

'Yes.'

She riveted a searching gaze on her brother's face. 'And what then?' she demanded, in a low voice.

'What then, Die?' he replied, maintaining a marble immobility of feature. 'What then? Why-nothing. Read.'

He threw the letter into her lap. She glanced over it, and handed it to Mary. Mary perused it in silence, and returned it to her brother. All three looked at each other, and all three smiled- a dreary, pensive smile enough.

'Amen! We can yet live,' said Diana at last.

'At any rate, it makes us no worse off than we were before,' remarked Mary.

'Only it forces rather strongly on the mind the picture of what might have been; said Mr. Rivers, 'and contrasts it somewhat too vividly with what is.'

He folded the letter, locked it in his desk, and again went out.

For some minutes no one spoke. Diana then turned to me.

'Jane, you will wonder at us and our mysteries,' she said, 'and think us hard-hearted beings not to be more moved at the death of so near a relation as an uncle; but we have never seen him or known him. He was my mother's brother. My father and he quarrelled long ago.'

It was by his advice that my father risked most of his property in the speculation that ruined him. Mutual recrimination passed between them: they parted in anger, and were never reconciled. My uncle engaged afterwards in more prosperous undertakings: it appears he realised a fortune of twenty thousand pounds. He was never married, and had no near kindred but ourselves and one other person, not more closely related than we. My father always cherished the idea that he would atone for his error by leaving his possessions to us; that letter informs us that he has bequeathed every penny to the other relation, with the exception of thirty guineas, to be divided between St. John, Diana, and Mary Rivers, for the purchase of three mourning rings. He had a right, of course, to do as he pleased: and yet a momentary damp is cast on the spirits by the receipt of such news.

Mary and I would have esteemed ourselves rich with a thousand pounds each; and to St. John such a sum would have been valuable, for the good it would have enabled him to do.'

This explanation given, the subject was dropped, and no further reference made to it by either Mr. Rivers or his sisters. The next day I left Marsh End for Morton. The day after, Diana and Mary quitted the parsonage: and so the old grange was abandoned.

第三十章

我越了解沼泽居的人就越是喜欢他们。不到几天工夫，我的身体便很快地恢复，已经可以整天坐着，有时还能出去走走。我已能参加黛安娜和玛丽的一切活动，她们爱谈多久就谈多久，什么时候，什么地方，只要她们允许，就去帮忙。在这些交往中，有一种令人振奋的愉悦——在我还是第一次体会到——这种愉悦产生于趣味、情调和原则的融洽。

我爱读她们喜欢读的书，她们所欣赏的使我感到愉快，她们所赞同的我也尊重。她们喜欢这个与世隔绝的家，我也在灰色、古老、小巧的建筑中找到了巨大而永久的魅力。这里有低矮的屋顶、带格子的窗户、消蚀的小径和古杉夹道的大路——强劲的山风使这些古杉都已倾斜。还有长着紫杉和冬青而呈黑色的花园——这里除了顽强的花种，什么花都不开放。她们眷恋住宅后面和周围紫色的荒原——眷恋凹陷的溪谷。一条鹅卵石筑成的马道，从大门口由高而低通向那里，先在蔽树丛生的两岸之间蜿蜒着，随后又经过与欧石南荒原交界的几个最荒芜的小牧场。一群灰色的荒原羊和苔藓般面孔的羊羔，都靠这些牧场来维持生命——嗨，她们热情满怀地眷恋着这番景色。我能理解她们的感情，同她们一样感受这个地方的力量与真谛，我看到了这一带诱人的魅力，体会到它所奉献的孤寂。我的眼目尽情地享受着起伏的荒原，享受着山脊上与山谷中由青苔、灰色欧石南、小花点点的草地、鲜艳夺目的欧洲蕨和颜色柔和的花岗岩所形成的荒野色彩。这些点滴景物之于我如同之于她们——都是无数纯洁可爱的快乐源泉。猛烈的狂风和柔和的微风、凄风苦雨的天气和平平静静的日子、日出时分和日落时刻、月光皎洁的夜晚和乌云密布的黑夜，都使我同他们一样深为这个地区所吸引，都对我如同对他们一样，产生了一种魔力。

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在家里我们一样相处得很融洽。她们比我更有造诣，读的书也更多。但是我急切地走着她们在我前面踩踏出来的知识之路。我狼吞虎咽地读着她们借给我的书，而夜晚与她们切磋我白天读过的书是一种极大的满足。我们想法一致，观点相合，总之大家意气相投。

如果我们三人中有一位更出色者和领袖，那就是黛安娜。体态上她远胜于我，漂亮而精力过人，活泼而有生气，流动着一种使我为之惊异又难以理解的丰富的生命力，夜晚的最初时刻，我还能谈一会儿，但第一阵子轻松自如的谈话之后，我便只好坐在黛安娜脚边的矮凳上，把头靠在她膝头上，轮流听着她和玛丽深谈着我只触及了皮毛的话题。黛安娜愿意教我德语，我喜欢跟她学。我发觉教师的角色很适合她，使她高兴，而同样学生的角色也适合我，使我高兴。我们的个性十分吻合，结果彼此之间感情深厚。她们知道我能作画，就立刻把铅笔和颜料盒供我使用。这项唯一胜过她们的技能，使她们感到惊奇，也让她们着了迷。我绘画时玛丽会坐着看我作画，随后也学了起来，而且是位聪明、听话、用功的学生。就这样忙这忙那，彼此都得到了乐趣，一周的日子像一天，一天的时间像一小时那么过去了。

至于圣·约翰先生，我与他妹妹之间自然而迅速形成的亲密无间的感情，与他无缘。我们之间显得疏远的一个原因，是他难得在家，一大部份时间都奔忙于他教区分散的居民之间，走访病人和穷人。

任何天气似乎都阻挡不住牧师的短途行程。不管晴天还是雨天，每天早晨的学习时间一结束，他会戴上帽子，带着他父亲的老猎狗卡罗，出门开始了出于爱好或是职责的使命——我几乎不知道他怎样看待它。天气很糟的时候妹妹们会劝他别去，但他脸上浮起了庄严甚于愉快的笑容说：

“要是一阵风和几滴雨就弄得我放弃这些轻而易举的工作，那么这样懒懒散散，又怎么能为我设想的未来作准备呢？”

黛安娜和玛丽对这个问题的回答，往往是一声叹息和几分钟明显伤心的沉默。

但是除了因为他频繁外出之外，还有另一大障碍使我无法与他建立友情。他似乎是个生性寡言少语、心不在焉、沉思默想的人，尽管他对牧师工作非常热情，生活习惯上也无可指摘，但他好像并没有享受到每个虔诚的基督徒和脚踏实地的慈善家应得的酬报：内心的宁静和满足。晚上，他常常坐在窗前，对着面前的书桌和纸张会停止阅读和写作，把下巴靠在手上，任自己的思绪不知向什么方向飘忽，但显得局促不安，从他眼睛频繁的闪烁和变幻莫测的张合中，可以看到兴奋与激动。

此外，我认为大自然对于他并不像对于她妹妹那样是快乐的源泉。我听到过一次，也只有一次，他表示自己被崎岖的小山深深地迷住了，同时对被他称之为自己家的黑色屋顶和灰白的墙壁，怀着一种眷恋之情。但是在表达这种情感的音调和语言中，隐含的忧郁甚于愉快。而且他从来没有因为要感受一下荒原舒心的字静而漫步其中，——从来没有去发现或谈及荒原给人千百种平静的乐趣。

由于他不爱交际，我过了一些时候才有机会探究他的思想。我听了他在莫尔顿自己的教堂讲道后，对他的能力有了初步的了解。我希望能描绘一下他那次讲道，但无能为力，我甚至无

法确切表达它给我的印象。

开头很平静——其实，以讲演的风格和语调而言，那是自始至终很平静的。一种发自肺腑而严加控制的热情，很快注进了清晰的语调，激发起了生动的语言，话渐渐地变得有力起来——简练、浓缩而有分寸。牧师的力量使人内心为之震颤，头脑为之惊异，但两者都没有被感化。他的讲演自始至终有着一种奇怪的痛苦，缺乏一种抚慰人的温柔。他不断严厉地提到加尔文主义——上帝的选拔、命定和天罚，每次的提醒听起来仿佛是在宣布末日的来临。布道结束以后，我不是受到他讲演的启发，感觉更好更平静了，而是体会到了一种难以言喻的哀伤。因为我似乎觉得——我不知道别人是不是有同样感觉——我所倾听的雄辩，出自于充满混浊的失望之渣的心灵深处——那里躁动着无法满足的愿望和不安的憧憬。我确信圣·约翰·里弗斯尽管生活单纯，又真诚热情，却并没有找到不可理解的上帝的安宁。我想他与我一样，都没有找到。我是因为打碎了偶像，失去了天堂而产生了隐蔽而焦躁不安的悔恨——这些悔恨我虽然最近已避而不谈，但仍无情地纠缠着、威压着我。

与此同时，一个月过去了。黛安娜和玛丽不久就离开沼泽居，回到等待着的截然不同的生活环境中去，在英国南部一个时髦的城市当家庭教师。她们各自在别人家里谋职，被富有而高傲的家庭成员们视为低下的附庸。这些人既不了解也不去发现她们内在的美德，而只赏识她们已经获得的技艺，如同赏识他们厨师的手艺和侍女的情趣。圣·约翰先生一句也没有说起答应帮我找的工作，而对我来说谋个职业已是迫在眉睫的事了。一天早晨，我与他单独在客厅里呆了几分钟，我冒昧地走近窗子的凹陷处——他的桌子、椅子和书桌已使这里成了个书房——我正要开口，尽管还不十分明白该用怎样的措词把问题提出来——因为无论何时要打破包裹着他这种性格的拘谨外壳，都是十分困难的——他省了我麻烦，先开口了。

我走近时他抬起头来，“你有问题要问我吗，”他说。

“是的，我想知道一下你是否听到过什么我能够做的工作。”

“三个星期前我找到了或是替你设计了某个工作，但你在这里似乎既很有用处，自己又很愉快——我的妹妹们显然同你形影不离，有你作伴她们格外开心——我觉得妨碍你们彼此所感到的快慰是不适宜的，还是等她们快要离开沼泽居因而你也有必要离开时再说。”

“现在她们三天后就要走了：”我说。

“是呀，她们一走我就要回到莫尔顿的牧师住所去，汉娜随我走，这所老房子要关闭。”

我等了一会儿，以为他会继续他首次提出的话题，但他似乎已另有所思。他明显走了神，忘了我和我的事儿。我不得不把他拉回出于需要已成为我最迫切最关心的话题。

“你想到了什么工作，里弗斯先生？我希望这次拖延不至于增加谋职的难度。”

“呵，不会。既然这项工作只决定于我来提供，你来接受。”

他又不吱声了，仿佛不愿再继续说下去。我有些耐不住了，——两个不安的动作以及一个急切而严厉的眼神落在他脸上，向他表达了同语言一样有效，但省却了不少麻烦的情感。

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“你不必急于听到，”他说，“坦率告诉你吧，我没有什么合适的或是挣钱的工作可以建议。我解释之前，请回忆一下，我明明白白地向你打过招呼，要是我帮你，那得是瞎子帮助跛子。我很穷，因为我发现偿付了父亲的债务后，父亲留给我的全部遗产就只有这个摇摇欲坠的田庄，庄后一排枯萎的杉树，一片前面长着紫杉和冬青灌木的荒土。我出身卑微，里弗斯是个古老的名字。但这个族的三个仅存的后裔，两个在陌生人中间依赖他人求生，第三个认为自己是远离故土的异乡人——活着和死了都是如此。是的，他认为，必然认为这样的命运是他的光荣，他盼望有朝一日摆脱尘世束缚的十字架会放在他肩上，那位自己也是最卑微一员的教会斗士的首领会传下号令：起来，跟着我？”

圣·约翰像布道一样说着这些话，语调平静而深沉，脸不发红，目光炯炯。他继续说：

“既然我自己也贫穷卑微，我只能向你提供贫穷卑微的工作，你甚至可能认为这很低俗——因为我现在知道你的举止属于世人所说的高雅；你的情趣倾向于理想化；你所交往的至少是受过教育的人，——但我认为凡是有益于人类进步的工作都不能说低俗。越是贫瘠和没有开垦的土地，基督教徒越是要承担去那儿开垦的使命——他的劳动所挣得的报酬越少，他的荣誉就越高。在这种情况下，他的命运就是先驱者的命运，传播福音的第一批先驱者就是使徒们——他们的首领就是耶稣，他本人就是救世主。”

“嗯？”他再次停下时我说——“说下去。”

他还没有说下去便又瞧了瞧我，似乎悠闲地读着我的面孔，仿佛它的五官和线条是一页书上的人物。他仔细打量后所得出的结论，部份地表露在后来的谈话中。

“我相信你会接受我提供的职位，”他说，“而且会干一会儿，尽管不会永久干下去，就像我不会永久担任英国乡村牧师这狭隘，使人越来越狭隘——平静而神秘的职位。因为你的性格也像我的一样，有一种不安分的东西，尽管本质上有所区别。”

“请务必解释一下，”他再次停下来时我催促道。

“一定。你会听到这工作多么可怜——多么琐碎——多么束缚人。我父亲已去世，我自己也就独立了，所以我不会在莫尔顿久待。我很可能在一年之内离开这个地方，但我还在时，我要竭尽全力使它有所改进。两年前我来到时，莫尔顿没有学校，穷人的孩子都被排除在一切渴求上进的希望之外，我为男孩子们建立了一所学校。现在我有意为女孩子开设第二所学校。我已租了一幢楼用于这个目的，附带两间破屋作为女教师的住房。她的工资为三十镑一年，她的房子已安上家具，虽然简陋，但已够用，那是奥利弗小姐做的好事，她是我教区内唯一的一位富人奥利弗先生的独生女，奥利弗先生是山谷中制针厂和铁铸厂的业主。这位女士还为一个从济贫院来的孤儿付教育费和服装费，条件是这位孤儿得协助教师，干些跟她住所和学校有关的琐碎事务，因为教学工作不允许女教师亲自来过问。你愿意做这样一位教师吗？”

他的问题问得有些匆忙。他似乎估计这个建议多半会遭到愤怒的，或者至少轻蔑的拒绝。他虽然可以作些猜测，但不完全了解我的思想和感情，无法判断我会怎样看待自己的命运。说实在，这工作很低下——但提供了住所，而我需要一个安全的避难所。这工作沉闷乏味——但比之富人家庭的女教师，它却是无拘无束的。而替陌生人操劳的恐惧象铁钳一样夹住了我

学英语，练听力，上听力课堂！

的心。这个工作并不丢脸——不是不值得——精神上也并不低下，我下定了决心。

“谢谢你的建议，里弗斯先生。我欣然接受这份工作。”

“可是你理解我的意思吗？”他说。“这是一所乡村学校。你的学生都只是穷苦女孩——茅屋里的孩子——至多是农夫的女儿。编织、缝纫和读、写、算你都得教。你自己的技艺派什么用处呢？你大部份的思想——感情——情趣又有什么用处呢？”

“留着它们等有用时再说。它们可以保存下来。”

“那你知道你要干的事了。”

“我知道。”

这时他笑了，不是苦笑，也不是伤心的笑，而是十分满意并深为感激的笑容。

“你什么时候开始履行职务？”

“我明天就到自己的房子去，要是你高兴，下周就开学。”

“很好，就这样吧。”

他立起身来，穿过房间，一动不动地站着再次看着我。他摇了摇头。

“你有什么不赞成呢，里弗斯先生？”我问。

“你不会在莫尔顿呆得很久，不，不会的。”

“为什么？你这么说的理由是什么？”

“我从你的眼睛里看到了。不是那种预示着要安度一生的表情。”

“我没有雄心。”

他听了“雄心”两个字吃了一惊，便重复说：“不，你怎么会想到雄心？谁雄心勃勃呢？我知道自己是这样。但你怎么发现的？”

“我在说我自己。”

“嗯，要是你并不雄心勃勃，那你是——”他打住了。

“是什么呢？”

“我正要说明多，但也许你会误解这个字，而会不高兴。我的意思是，人类的爱心和同情心

在你的身上表现得很强烈。我确信你不会长期满足于在孤寂中度过闲暇，把你的工作时间用于一项完全没有刺激的单调劳动，”他又强调着补充说，“就象我不会满足于住在这里，埋在沼泽地里，封闭在大山之中——上帝赐予我的天性与此格格不入，上天所赋予的才能会被断送——会弄得，一无用处。这会儿你听见了我如何自相矛盾了吧。我自己讲道时说要安于自己卑贱的命运，只要为上帝效劳，即使当砍柴工和汲水人也心甘情愿——而我，上帝所任命的牧师，几乎是焦躁不安地咆哮着。哎呀，爱好与原则总得想个办法统一起来。”

他走出了房间。短短的一小时之内，我对他的了解胜于以前的一个月。不过他仍使我无法理解。

随着同哥哥和家园告别的日子越来越近，黛安娜和玛丽·里弗斯也越来越伤心，越来越沉默了。她们都想装得同往常一样，但是她们所要驱除的忧愁是无法完全克制或是掩饰的。黛安娜说，这次离别与以往所经历的完全不同。就圣·约翰来说，那可能是一去几年，也可能是一辈子。

“他会为他长期形成的决定而牺牲一切，”她说：“但天性的爱恋与感情却更加强烈。圣·约翰看上去文文静静，简，但是他的躯体里隐藏着一种热情。你可能认为他很温顺，但在某些事情上，他可以像死一般冷酷。最糟糕的是，我的良心几乎不容我说服他放弃自己苛刻的决定。当然我也绝不能为此而责备他。这是正当、高尚、符合基督教精神的，但使我心碎。”说完，眼泪一下子涌上了她漂亮的眼睛。玛丽低着头干着自己的活儿。

“如今我们已没有父亲，很快就要没有家，没有哥哥了，”她喃喃地说。

这时候发生了一个小小的插曲，仿佛也是天意，要证实“祸不单行”的格言，伤心之中因眼看到手的東西又失掉而更添恼怒。圣·约翰走过窗前，读着一封信，他走进房间。

“我们的舅舅去世了，”他说。

两位姐妹都似乎一怔，既不感到震惊也不表示惊讶。在它们的眼睛里这消息显得很重要，但并不令人痛苦。

“死了？”黛安娜重复说。

“是的。”

她带着搜索的目光紧盯着她哥哥的脸庞。“那又怎样呢？”她低声问。

“那又怎样，死了？”他回答，面部象大理石一样毫无表情。“那又怎样？哎呀——没有怎样。自己看吧。”

他把信扔到她膝头。她眼睛粗略地扫了一下，把它交给了玛丽。玛丽默默地细读着，后来又把信还给了她哥哥。三人彼此你看我，我看你，都笑了起来——那是一种凄凉、忧郁的笑容。

“阿门！我们还能活着，”黛安娜终于说。

“不管怎么说，这并没有弄得我们比以前更糟，”玛丽说。

“只不过它强行使人想起本来可能会出现的景象，”里弗斯先生说，“而同实际的景象形成有些过份鲜明的对照。”

他折好信，锁进抽屉，又走了出去。

几分钟内没有人开腔。黛安娜转向我。

“简，你会对我们和我们的秘密感到奇怪，”她说，“而且会认为我们心肠太狠，居然象舅舅这样一位近亲去世了却并不那么动情。但是我们从来没有见过他，也不知道他。他是我们母亲的兄弟。很久以前我父亲和他曾有过争吵。听从他的建议，我们父亲把大部分资产冒险投入一桩后来毁了他的买卖。彼此都责备对方。他们怒气冲冲地分别了，从此没有和好。我舅舅后来又投资了几家使他财运亨通的企业。他似乎积攒了二万英镑的财产。他一直单身，除了我们也没有近亲，另外有一个关系比我们要离得远些。我的父亲一直希望他会把遗产留给我们，以弥补他的过失。这封信通知我们，他已把每个子儿都给了另外一位亲戚，只留下三十畿尼，由圣·约翰、黛安娜和玛丽·里弗斯三分，用来购置三枚丧戒。当然他有权按他高兴的去，但是收到这样的消息暂时总使我们有些扫兴。玛丽和我都会认为各得一千英镑是很富的了，而这样一笔钱对圣·约翰所要做的好事也是很可贵的。”

这番解释以后，这个话题也就扔到了一边，里弗斯先生和他的妹妹也没有再提起。第二天我离开沼泽居去莫尔顿。第三天黛安娜和玛丽告别这里去遥远的B城。一周后里弗斯先生和汉娜去了牧师住宅，于是这古老的田庄就被废弃了。