

In the course of time, Mr Earnshaw began to fail. He had been active and healthy, yet his strength left him suddenly; and when he was confined to the chimney-corner he grew grievously irritable. A nothing vexed him, and suspected slights of his authority nearly threw him into fits.

This was especially to be remarked if any one attempted to impose upon, or domineer over his favourite: he was painfully jealous lest a word should be spoken amiss to him, seeming to have got into his head the notion that, because he liked Heathcliff, all hated, and longed to do him an ill-turn.

It was a disadvantage to the lad, for the kinder among us did not wish to fret the master, so we humoured his partiality; and that humouring was rich nourishment to the child's pride and black tempers. Still it became in a manner necessary; twice, or thrice, Hindley's manifestations of scorn, while his father was near, roused the old man to a fury. He seized his stick to strike him, and shook with rage that he could not do it.

At last, our curate (we had a curate then who made the living answer by teaching the little Lintons and Earnshaws, and farming his bit of land himself), he advised that the young man should be sent to college, and Mr Earnshaw agreed, though with a heavy spirit, for he said -

'Hindley was naught, and would never thrive as where he wandered.'

I hoped heartily we should have peace now. It hurt me to think the master should be made uncomfortable by his own good deed. I fancied the discontent of age and disease arose from his family disagreements, as he would have it that it did; really, you know, sir, it was in his sinking frame.

We might have got on tolerably, notwithstanding, but for two people, Miss Cathy, and Joseph, the servant: you saw him, I dare say, up yonder. He was, and is yet, most likely, the wearisomest, self-righteous pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises to himself, and fling the curses on his neighbours. By his knack of sermonizing and pious discoursing, he contrived to make a great impression on Mr Earnshaw, and, the more feeble the master became, the more influence he gained.

He was relentless in worrying him about his soul's concerns, and about ruling his children rigidly. He encouraged him to regard Hindley as a reprobate; and, night after night, he regularly grumbled out a long string of tales against Heathcliff and Catherine; always minding to flatter Earnshaw's weakness by heaping the heaviest blame on the last.

Certainly, she had ways with her such as I never saw a child take up before; and she put all of us past our patience fifty times and oftener in a day; from the hour she came down stairs, till the hour she went to bed, we had not a moment's security that she wouldn't be in mischief. Her spirits were always at high-water mark, her tongue always going - singing, laughing, and plaguing everybody who would not do the same. A wild, wick slip she was - but she had the bonniest eye, and sweetest smile, and lightest foot in the parish; and, after all, I believe she meant no harm; for when once she made you cry in good earnest, it seldom happened that she would not keep you company; and oblige you to be quiet that you might comfort her.

She was much too fond of Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we would invent for her was to keep her separate from him: yet she got chided more than any of us on his account.

In play, she liked, exceedingly, to act the little mistress; using her hands freely, and commanding her companions: she did so to me, but I would not bear slapping, and ordering; and so I let her know.

Now, Mr Earnshaw did not understand jokes from his children: he had always been strict and grave with them; and Catherine, on her part, had no idea why her father should be crosser and less patient in his ailing condition, than he was in his prime.

His peevish reproofs wakened in her a naughty delight to provoke him; she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, and her ready words; turning Joseph's religious curses into ridicule, baiting me, and doing just what her father hated most, showing how her pretended insolence, which he thought real, had more power over Heathcliff than his kindness. How the boy would do her bidding in anything, and his only when it suited his own inclination.

After behaving as badly as possible all day, she sometimes came fondling to make it up at night.

'Nay, Cathy,' the old man would say, 'I cannot love thee; thou'rt worse than thy brother. Go, say thy prayers, child, and ask God's pardon. I doubt thy mother and I must rue that we ever reared thee!'

That made her cry, at first; and then, being repulsed continually hardened her, and she laughed if I told her to say she was sorry for her faults, and beg to be forgiven.

But the hour came, at last, that ended Mr Earnshaw's troubles on earth. He died quietly in his chair one October evening, seated by the fire-side.

A high wind blustered round the house, and roared in the chimney: it sounded wild and stormy, yet it was not cold, and we were all together - I, a little removed from the hearth, busy at my knitting, and Joseph reading his Bible near the table, (for the servants generally sat in the house then, after their work was done). Miss Cathy had been sick, and that made her still; she leant against her father's knee, and Heathcliff was lying on the floor with his head in her lap.

I remember the master, before he fell into a doze, stroking her bonny hair - it pleased him rarely to see her gentle - and saying -

'Why canst thou not always be a good lass, Cathy?'

And she turned her face up to his, and laughed, and answered -

'Why cannot you always be a good man, father?'

But as soon as she saw him vexed again, she kissed his hand, and said she would

sing him to sleep. She began singing very low, till his fingers dropped from hers, and his head sank on his breast. Then I told her to hush, and not stir, for fear she should wake him. We all kept as mute as mice a full half hour, and should have done longer, only Joseph, having finished his chapter, got up and said that he must rouse the master for prayers and bed. He stepped forward, and called him by name, and touched his shoulder, but he would not move – so he took the candle and looked at him.

I thought there was something wrong as he set down the light; and seizing the children each by an arm, whispered them to ‘frame’ upstairs, and make little din – they might pray alone that evening – he had ‘summut to do.’

‘I shall bid father goodnight first,’ said Catherine, putting her arms round his neck before we could hinder her.

The poor thing discovered her loss directly – she screamed out –

‘Oh, he’s dead, Heathcliff! he’s dead!’

And they both set up a heart-breaking cry.

I joined my wail to theirs, loud and bitter; but Joseph asked what we could be thinking of to roar in that way over a saint in heaven.

He told me to put on my cloak and run to Gimmerton for the doctor and the parson. I could not guess the use that either would be of, then. However, I went, through wind and rain, and brought one, the doctor, back with me; the other said he would come in the morning.

Leaving Joseph to explain matters, I ran to the children’s room; their door was ajar, I saw they had never laid down, though it was past midnight; but they were calmer, and did not need me to console them. The little souls were comforting each other with better thoughts than I could have hit on; no parson in the world ever pictured heaven so beautifully as they did, in their innocent talk; and, while I sobbed, and listened, I could not help wishing we were all there safe together.

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Mr Hindley came home to the funeral; and – a thing that amazed us, and set the neighbours gossiping right and left – he brought a wife with him.

What she was, and where she was born, he never informed us probably, she had neither money nor name to recommend her, or he would scarcely have kept the union from his father.

She was not one that would have disturbed the house much on her own account. Every object she saw, the moment she crossed the threshold, appeared to delight her; and every circumstance that took place about her, except the preparing for the burial, and the presence of the mourners.

I thought she was half silly from her behaviour while that went on; she ran into her chamber, and made me come with her, though I should have been dressing the children; and there she sat shivering and clasping her hands, and asking repeatedly –

‘Are they gone yet?’

Then she began describing with hysterical emotion the effect it produced on her to see black; and started, and trembled, and, at last, fell a-weeping – and when I asked what was the matter? answered, she didn’t know; but she felt so afraid of dying!

I imagined her as little likely to die as myself. She was rather thin, but young, and fresh complexioned, and her eyes sparkled as bright as diamonds. I did remark, to be sure, that mounting the stairs made her breathe very quick, that the least sudden noise set her all in a quiver, and that she coughed troublesomely sometimes: but, I knew nothing of what these symptoms portended, and had no impulse to sympathize with her. We don’t in general take to foreigners here, Mr Lockwood, unless they take to us first.

Young Earnshaw was altered considerably in the three years of his absence. He had grown sparer, and lost his colour, and spoke and dressed quite differently: and, on the very day of his return, he told Joseph and me we must thenceforth quarter ourselves in the back-kitchen, and leave the house for him. Indeed, he would have carpeted and papered a small spare room for a parlour but his wife expressed such pleasure at the white floor, and huge glowing fire-place, at the pewter dishes, and delf-case, and dog-kennel, and the wide space there was to move about in, where they usually sat, that he thought it unnecessary to her comfort, and so dropped the intention.

She expressed pleasure, too, at finding a sister among her new acquaintance, and she prattled to Catherine, and kissed her, and ran about with her, and gave her quantities of presents, at the beginning. Her affection tired very soon, however, and when she grew peevish, Hindley became tyrannical. A few words from her, evincing a dislike to Heathcliff, were enough to rouse in him all his old hatred of the boy. He drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead, compelling him to do so, as hard as any other lad on the farm.

He bore his degradation pretty well at first, because Cathy taught him what she learnt, and worked or played with him in the fields. They both promised fair to grow up as rude as savages, the young master being entirely negligent how they behaved, and what they did, so they kept clear of him. He would not even have seen after their going to church on Sundays, only Joseph and the curate reprimanded his carelessness when they absented themselves, and that reminded him to order Heathcliff a flogging, and Catherine a fast from dinner or supper.

But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at. The curate might set as many chapters as he pleased for Catherine to get by heart, and Joseph might thrash Heathcliff till his arm ached; they forgot everything the minute they were together again, at least the minute they had contrived some naughty plan of revenge, and many a time I’ve cried to myself to watch them growing more reckless daily, and I not daring to speak a syllable for fear of losing the small power I still retained over the unfriended creatures.

One Sunday evening, it chanced that they were banished from the sitting-room, for making a noise, or a light offence of the kind, and when I went to call them

to supper, I could discover them nowhere.

We searched the house, above and below, and the yard, and stables; they were invisible; and, at last, Hindley in a passion told us to bolt the doors, and swore nobody should let them in that night.

The household went to bed; and I, too anxious to lie down, opened my lattice and put my head out to harken, though it rained, determined to admit them in spite of the prohibition, should they return.

In a while, I distinguished steps coming up the road, and the light of a lantern glimmering through the gate.

I threw a shawl over my head and ran to prevent them from waking Mr Earnshaw by knocking. There was Heathcliff, by himself; it gave me a start to see him alone.

‘Where is Miss Catherine?’ I cried hurriedly. ‘No accident, I hope?’

‘At Thrushcross Grange,’ he answered, ‘and I would have been there too, but they had not the manners to ask me to stay.’

‘Well, you will catch it!’ I said, ‘you’ll never be content till you’re sent about your business. What in the world led you wandering to Thrushcross Grange?’

‘Let me get off my wet clothes, and I’ll tell you all about it, Nelly,’ he replied.

I bid him beware of rousing the master, and while he undressed, and I waited to put out the candle, he continued –

‘Cathy and I escaped from the wash-house to have a ramble at liberty, and getting a glimpse of the Grange lights, we thought we would just go and see whether the Lintons passed their Sunday evenings standing shivering in corners, while their father and mother sat eating and drinking, and singing and laughing, and burning their eyes out before the fire. Do you think they do? Or reading sermons, and being catechised by their man-servant, and set to learn a column of Scripture names, if they don’t answer properly?’

‘Probably not,’ I responded. ‘They are good children, no doubt, and don’t deserve the treatment you receive, for your bad conduct.’

‘Don’t you cant, Nelly,’ he said: ‘Nonsense! We ran from the top of the Heights to the park, without stopping – Catherine completely beaten in the race, because she was barefoot. You’ll have to seek for her shoes in the bog tomorrow. We crept through a broken hedge, groped our way up the path, and planted ourselves on a flower-pot under the drawing-room window. The light came from thence; they had not put up the shutters, and the curtains were only half closed. Both of us were able to look in by standing on the basement, and clinging to the ledge, and we saw – ah! it was beautiful – a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers. Old Mr and Mrs Linton were not there. Edgar and his sister had it entirely to themselves; shouldn’t they have been happy? We should have thought ourselves in heaven! And now, guess what your good children were

doing? Isabella – I believe she is eleven, a year younger than Cathy – lay screaming at the farther end of the room, shrieking as if witches were running red-hot needles into her. Edgar stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog shaking its paw and yelping, which, from their mutual accusations, we understood they had nearly pulled in two between them. The idiots! That was their pleasure! to quarrel who should hold a heap of warm hair, and each begin to cry because both, after struggling to get it, refused to take it. We laughed outright at the petted things, we did despise them! When would you catch me wishing to have what Catherine wanted? or find us by ourselves, seeking entertainment in yelling, and sobbing, and rolling on the ground, divided by the whole room? I'd not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange – not if I might have the privilege of flinging Joseph off the highest gable, and painting the housefront with Hindley's blood!'

'Hush, hush!' I interrupted. 'Still you have not told me, Heathcliff, how Catherine is left behind?'

'I told you we laughed,' he answered. 'The Lintons heard us, and with one accord, they shot like arrows to the door; there was silence, and then a cry, "Oh, mamma, mamma! Oh, papa Oh, mamma, come here. Oh, papa, oh!" They really did howl out, something in that way. We made frightful noises to terrify them still more, and then we dropped off the ledge, because somebody was drawing the bars, and we felt we had better flee. I had Cathy by the hand, and was urging her on, when all at once she fell down.'

"Run, Heathcliff, run!" she whispered. "They have let the bull-dog loose, and he holds me!"

'The devil had seized her ankle, Nelly; I heard his abominable snorting. She did not yell out – no! She would have scorned to do it, if she had been spitted on the horns of a mad cow. I did, though, I vociferated curses enough to annihilate any fiend in Christendom, and I got a stone and thrust it between his jaws, and tried with all my might to cram it down his throat. A beast of a servant came up with a lantern, at last, shouting –

"Keep fast, Skulker, keep fast!"

'He changed his note, however, when he saw Skulker's game. The dog was throttled off, his huge, purple tongue hanging half a foot out of his mouth, and his pendant lips streaming with bloody slaver.

'The man took Cathy up; she was sick; not from fear, I'm certain, but from pain. He carried her in; I followed, grumbling execrations and vengeance.

"What prey, Robert?" hallooed Linton from the entrance.

"Skulker has caught a little girl, sir," he replied; "and there's a lad here," he added, making a clutch at me, "who looks an out-and-outer! Very like, the robbers were for putting them through the window, to open the doors to the gang after all were asleep, that they might murder us at their ease. Hold your tongue, you foul-mouthed thief, you! you shall go to the gallows for this. Mr Linton, sir, don't lay by your gun."

“No, no, Robert,” said the old fool. “The rascals knew that yesterday was my rent-day; they thought to have me cleverly. Come in; I’ll furnish them a reception. There, John, fasten the chain. Give Skulker some water, Jenny. To beard a magistrate in his stronghold, and on the Sabbath, too! where will their insolence stop? Oh, my dear Mary, look here! Don’t be afraid, it is but a boy – yet, the villain scowls so plainly in his face, would it not be a kindness to the country to hang him at once, before he shows his nature in acts, as well as features?”

‘He pulled me under the chandelier, and Mrs Linton placed her spectacles on her nose and raised her hands in horror. The cowardly children crept nearer also, Isabella lisping –

“Frightful thing! Put him in the cellar, papa. He’s exactly like the son of the fortune-teller, that stole my tame pheasant. Isn’t he, Edgar?”

‘While they examined me, Cathy came round; she heard the last speech, and laughed. Edgar Linton, after an inquisitive stare, collected sufficient wit to recognize her. They see us at church, you know, though we seldom meet them elsewhere.

“That’s Miss Earnshaw!” he whispered to his mother, “and look how Skulker has bitten her – how her foot bleeds!”

“Miss Earnshaw? Nonsense!” cried the dame. “Miss Earnshaw scouring the country with a gipsy! And yet, my dear, the child is in mourning – surely it is – and she may be lamed for life!”

“What culpable carelessness in her brother!” exclaimed Mr Linton, turning from me to Catherine. “I’ve understood from Shielders” (that was the curate, sir) “that he lets her grow up in absolute heathenism. But who is this? Where did she pick up this companion? Oho! I declare he is that strange acquisition my late neighbour made, in his journey to Liverpool – a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway.”

“A wicked boy, at all events,” remarked the old lady, “and quite unfit for a decent house! Did you notice his language, Linton? I’m shocked that my children should have heard it.”

‘I recommenced cursing – don’t be angry, Nelly – and so Robert was ordered to take me off – I refused to go without Cathy – he dragged me into the garden, pushed the lantern into my hand, assured me that Mr Earnshaw should be informed of my behaviour, and bidding me march, directly, secured the door again.

‘The curtains were still looped up at one corner; and I resumed my station as spy, because, if Catherine had wished to return, I intended shattering their great glass panes to a million of fragments, unless they let her out.

‘She sat on the sofa quietly. Mrs Linton took off the grey cloak of the dairy maid which we had borrowed for our excursion, shaking her head, and expostulating with her, I suppose; she was a young lady and they made a distinction between her treatment and mine. Then the woman servant brought a basin of warm water, and washed her feet; and Mr Linton mixed a tumbler of negus, and Isabella emptied a plate of cakes into her lap, and Edgar stood

gaping at a distance. Afterwards, they dried and combed her beautiful hair, and gave her a pair of enormous slippers, and wheeled her to the fire, and I left her, as merry as she could be, dividing her food between the little dog and Skulker, whose nose she pinched as she ate; and kindling a spark of spirit in the vacant blue eyes of the Lintons – a dim reflection from her own enchanting face – I saw they were full of stupid admiration; she is so immeasurably superior to them – to everybody on earth; is she not, Nelly?’

‘There will more come of this business than you reckon on,’ I answered, covering him up and extinguishing the light, ‘You are incurable Heathcliff, and Mr Hindley will have to proceed to extremities, see if he won’t.’

My words came truer than I desired. The luckless adventure made Earnshaw furious – And then, Mr Linton, to mend matters, paid us a visit himself, on the morrow; and read the young master such a lecture on the road he guided his family, that he was stirred to look about him, in earnest.

Heathcliff received no flogging, but he was told that the first word he spoke to Miss Catherine should ensure a dismissal; and Mrs Earnshaw undertook to keep her sister-in-law in due restraint, when she returned home; employing art, not force – with force she would have found it impossible.

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Cathy stayed at Thrushcross Grange five weeks, till Christmas. By that time her ankle was thoroughly cured, and her manners much improved. The mistress visited her often, in the interval, and commenced her plan of reform by trying to raise her self-respect with fine clothes and flattery, which she took readily: so that, instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there lighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person, with brown ringlets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in.

Hindley lifted her from her horse, exclaiming delightedly,

‘Why, Cathy, you are quite a beauty! I should scarcely have known you – you look like a lady now – Isabella Linton is not to be compared with her, is she, Frances?’

‘Isabella has not her natural advantages,’ replied his wife, ‘but she must mind and not grow wild again here. Ellen, help Miss Catherine off with her things – Stay, dear, you will disarrange your curls – let me untie your hat.’

I removed the habit, and there shone forth, beneath a grand plaid silk frock, white trousers, and burnished shoes; and, while her eyes sparkled joyfully when the dogs came bounding up to welcome her, she dare hardly touch them lest they should fawn upon her splendid garments.

She kissed me gently, I was all flour making the Christmas cake, and it would not have done to give me a hug; and, then, she looked round for Heathcliff. Mr and Mrs Earnshaw watched anxiously their meeting, thinking it would enable them to judge, in some measure, what grounds they had for hoping to succeed in separating the two friends.

Heathcliff was hard to discover, at first – If he were careless, and uncared for, before Catherine's absence, he had been ten times more so, since.

Nobody but I even did him the kindness to call him a dirty boy, and bid him wash himself, once a week; and children of his age, seldom have a natural pleasure in soap and water. Therefore, not to mention his clothes, which had seen three months' service, in mire and dust, and his thick uncombed hair, the surface of his face and hands was dismally beclouded. He might well skulk behind the settle, on beholding such a bright, graceful damsel enter the house, instead of a rough-headed counterpart to himself, as he expected.

'Is Heathcliff not here?' she demanded, pulling off her gloves, and displaying fingers wonderfully whitened with doing nothing, and staying indoors.

'Heathcliff, you may come forward,' cried Mr Hindley, enjoying his discomfiture and gratified to see what a forbidding young blackguard he would be compelled to present himself. 'You may come and wish Miss Catherine welcome, like the other servants.'

Cathy, catching a glimpse of her friend in his concealment, flew to embrace him, she bestowed seven or eight kisses on his cheek within the second, and then stopped, and drawing back, burst into a laugh, exclaiming,

'Why, how very black and cross you look! and how – how funny and grim! But that's because I'm used to Edgar, and Isabella Linton. Well, Heathcliff, have you forgotten me?'

She had some reason to put the question, for shame, and pride threw double gloom over his countenance, and kept him immovable.

'Shake hands, Heathcliff,' said Mr Earnshaw, condescendingly; 'once in a way, that is permitted.'

'I shall not!' replied the boy, finding his tongue at last. 'I shall not stand to be laughed at, I shall not bear it!'

And he would have broken from the circle, but Miss Cathy seized him again.

'I did not mean to laugh at you,' she said, 'I could not hinder myself. Heathcliff, shake hands, at least! What are you sulky for? It was only that you looked odd – If you wash your face, and brush your hair it will be all right. But you are so dirty!'

She gazed concernedly at the dusky fingers she held in her own, and also at her dress, which she feared had gained no embellishment from its contact with his.

'You needn't have touched me!' he answered, following her eye and snatching away his hand. 'I shall be as dirty as I please, and I like to be dirty, and I will be dirty.'

With that he dashed head foremost out of the room, amid the merriment of the master and mistress; and to the serious disturbance of Catherine, who could not comprehend how her remarks should have produced such an exhibition of bad temper.

After playing lady's maid to the new comer, and putting my cakes in the oven, and making the house and kitchen cheerful with great fires befitting Christmas eve, I prepared to sit down and amuse myself by singing carols, all alone, regardless of Joseph's affirmations that he considered the merry tunes I chose as next door to songs.

He had retired to private prayer in his chamber, and Mr and Mrs Earnshaw were engaging Missy's attention by sundry gay trifles bought for her to present to the little Lintons, as an acknowledgment of their kindness.

They had invited them to spend the morrow at Wuthering Heights, and the invitation had been accepted, on one condition: Mrs Linton begged that her darlings might be kept carefully apart from that 'naughty swearing boy.'

Under these circumstances I remained solitary. I smelt the rich scent of the heating spices; and admired the shining kitchen utensils, the polished clock, decked in holly, the silver mugs ranged on a tray ready to be filled with mulled ale for supper; and, above all, the speckless purity of my particular care - the scoured and well-swept floor.

I gave due inward applause to every object, and, then, I remembered how old Earnshaw used to come in when all was tidied, and call me a cant lass, and slip a shilling into my hand, as a Christmas box: and from that I went on to think of his fondness for Heathcliff, and his dread lest he should suffer neglect after death had removed him; and that naturally led me to consider the poor lad's situation now, and from singing I changed my mind to crying. It struck me soon, however, there would be more sense in endeavouring to repair some of his wrongs than shedding tears over them - I got up and walked into the court to seek him.

He was not far; I found him smoothing the glossy coat of the new pony in the stable, and feeding the other beasts, according to custom.

'Make haste, Heathcliff!' I said, 'the kitchen is so comfortable - and Joseph is upstairs; make haste, and let me dress you smart before Miss Cathy comes out - and then you can sit together, with the whole hearth to yourselves, and have a long chatter till bed-time.'

He proceeded with his task and never turned his head towards me.

'Come - are you coming?' I continued. 'There's a little cake for each of you, nearly enough; and you'll need half-an-hour's donning.'

I waited five minutes, but getting no answer left him... Catherine supped with her brother and sister-in-law: Joseph and I joined at an unsociable meal, seasoned with reproofs on one side and sauciness on the other. His cake and cheese remained on the table all night, for the fairies. He managed to continue work till nine o'clock, and, then, marched dumb and dour to his chamber.

Cathy sat up late; having a world of things to order for the reception of her new friends: she came into the kitchen, once, to speak to her old one, but he was gone, and she only stayed to ask what was the matter with him, and then went back.

In the morning he rose early; and, as it was a holiday, carried his ill-humour onto the moors not reappearing till the family were departed for church. Fasting and reflection seemed to have brought him to a better spirit. He hung about me for a while, and having screwed up his courage, exclaimed abruptly,

‘Nelly, make me decent, I’m going to be good.’

‘High time, Heathcliff,’ I said; ‘you have grieved Catherine; she’s sorry she ever came home, I dare say! It looks as if you envied her, because she is more thought of than you.’

The notion of envying Catherine was incomprehensible to him, but the notion of grieving her he understood clearly enough.

‘Did she say she was grieved?’ he inquired, looking very serious.

‘She cried when I told her you were off again this morning.’

‘Well, I cried last night,’ he returned, ‘and I had more reason to cry than she.’

‘Yes, you had the reason of going to bed with a proud heart and an empty stomach,’ said I. ‘Proud people breed sad sorrows for themselves – But, if you be ashamed of your touchiness, you must ask pardon, mind, when she comes in. You must go up, and offer to kiss her, and say – you know best what to say, only, do it heartily, and not as if you thought her converted into a stranger by her grand dress. And now, though I have dinner to get ready, I’ll steal time to arrange you so that Edgar Linton shall look quite a doll beside you: and that he does – You are younger, and yet, I’ll be bound, you are taller and twice as broad across the shoulders – you could knock him down in a twinkling; don’t you feel that you could?’

Heathcliff’s face brightened a moment; then it was over-cast afresh, and he sighed.

‘But, Nelly, if I knocked him down twenty times, that wouldn’t make him less handsome, or me more so. I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed, and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!’

‘And cried for mamma, at every turn’ – I added, ‘and trembled if a country lad heaved his fist against you, and sat at home all day for a shower of rain. – Oh, Heathcliff, you are showing a poor spirit! Come to the glass, and I’ll let you see what you should wish. Do you mark those two lines between your eyes, and those thick brows, that instead of rising arched, sink in the middle, and that couple of black fiends, so deeply buried, who never open their windows boldly, but lurk glinting under them, like devil’s spies? Wish and learn to smooth away the surly wrinkles, to raise your lids frankly, and change the fiends to confident, innocent angels, suspecting and doubting nothing, and always seeing friends where they are not sure of foes – Don’t get the expression of a vicious cur that appears to know the kicks it gets are its desert, and yet, hates all the world, as well as the kicker, for what it suffers.’

‘In other words, I must wish for Edgar Linton’s great blue eyes, and even forehead,’ he replied. ‘I do – and that won’t help me to them.’

‘A good heart will help you to a bonny face, my lad,’ I continued, ‘if you were a regular black; and a bad one will turn the bonniest into something worse than ugly. And now that we’ve done washing, and combing, and sulking – tell me whether you don’t think yourself rather handsome? I’ll tell you, I do. You’re fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows, but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week’s income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors, and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer!’

So I chattered on; and Heathcliff gradually lost his frown, and began to look quite pleasant; when all at once our conversation was interrupted by a rumbling sound moving up the road and entering the court. He ran to the window, and I to the door, just in time to behold the two Lintons descend from the family carriage, smothered in cloaks and furs, and the Earnshaws dismount from their horses – they often rode to church in winter. Catherine took a hand of each of the children, and brought them into the house, and set them before the fire, which quickly put colour into their white faces.

I urged my companion to hasten now, and show his amiable humour, and he willingly obeyed: but ill-luck would have it that, as he opened the door leading from the kitchen on one side, Hindley opened it on the other; they met, and the master, irritated at seeing him clean and cheerful, or, perhaps, eager to keep his promise to Mrs Linton, shoved him back with a sudden thrust, and angrily bade Joseph ‘keep the fellow out of the room – send him into the garret till dinner is over. He’ll be cramming his fingers in the tarts, and stealing the fruit, if left alone with them a minute.’

‘Nay, sir,’ I could not avoid answering, ‘he’ll touch nothing, not he – and, I suppose, he must have his share of the dainties as well as we.’

‘He shall have his share of my hand, if I catch him down stairs again till dark,’ cried Hindley. ‘Begone, you vagabond! What, you are attempting the coxcomb, are you? Wait till I get hold of those elegant locks – see if I won’t pull them a bit longer!’

‘They are long enough already,’ observed Master Linton, peeping from the doorway; ‘I wonder they don’t make his head ache. It’s like a colt’s mane over his eyes!’

He ventured this remark without any intention to insult; but Heathcliff’s violent nature was not prepared to endure the appearance of impertinence from one whom he seemed to hate, even then, as a rival. He seized a tureen of hot apple sauce, the first thing that came under his gripe, and dashed it full against the speaker’s face and neck – who instantly commenced a lament that brought Isabella and Catherine hurrying to the place.

Mr Earnshaw snatched up the culprit directly and conveyed him to his chamber, where, doubtless, he administered a rough remedy to cool the fit of passion, for he re-appeared red and breathless. I got the dishcloth, and, rather spitefully, scrubbed Edgar’s nose and mouth, affirming it served him right for meddling. His sister began weeping to go home, and Cathy stood by confounded, blushing for

all.

‘You should not have spoken to him!’ she expostulated with Master Linton. ‘He was in a bad temper, and now you’ve spoilt your visit, and he’ll be flogged – I hate him to be flogged! I can’t eat my dinner. Why did you speak to him, Edgar?’

‘I didn’t,’ sobbed the youth, escaping from my hands, and finishing the remainder of the purification with his cambric pocket-handkerchief. ‘I promised mamma that I wouldn’t say one word to him, and I didn’t.’

‘Well, don’t cry!’ replied Catherine, contemptuously. ‘You’re not killed – don’t make more mischief – my brother is coming – be quiet! Give over, Isabella! Has anybody hurt you?’

‘There, there, children – to your seats!’ cried Hindley, bustling in. ‘That brute of a lad has warmed me nicely. Next time, Master Edgar, take the law into your own fists it will give you an appetite!’

The little party recovered its equanimity at sight of the fragrant feast. They were hungry after their ride, and easily consoled, since no real harm had befallen them.

Mr Earnshaw carved bountiful platefuls; and the mistress made them merry with lively talk. I waited behind her chair, and was pained to behold Catherine, with dry eyes and an indifferent air, commence cutting up the wing of a goose before her.

‘An unfeeling child,’ I thought to myself, ‘how lightly she dismisses her old playmate’s troubles. I could not have imagined her to be so selfish.’

She lifted a mouthful to her lips; then, set it down again: her cheeks flushed, and the tears gushed over them. She slipped her fork to the floor, and hastily dived under the cloth to conceal her emotion. I did not call her unfeeling long, for, I perceived, she was in purgatory throughout the day, and wearying to find an opportunity of getting by herself, or paying a visit to Heathcliff, who had been locked up by the master, as I discovered, on endeavouring to introduce to him a private mess of victuals.

In the evening we had a dance. Cathy begged that he might be liberated then, as Isabella Linton had no partner; her entreaties were vain, and I was appointed to supply the deficiency.

We got rid of all gloom in the excitement of the exercise, and our pleasure was increased by the arrival of the Gimmerton band, mustering fifteen strong; a trumpet, a trombone, clarionets, bassoons, French horns, and a bass viol, besides singers. They go the rounds of all the respectable houses, and receive contributions every Christmas, and we esteemed it a first-rate treat to hear them.

After the usual carols had been sung, we set them to songs and glees. Mrs Earnshaw loved the music, and, so, they gave us plenty.

Catherine loved it too; but she said it sounded sweetest at the top of the steps, and she went up in the dark; I followed. They shut the house door below,

never noting our absence, it was so full of people. She made no stay at the stairs' head, but mounted farther, to the garret where Heathcliff was confined; and called him. He stubbornly declined answering for a while – she persevered, and finally persuaded him to hold communion with her through the boards.

I let the poor things converse unmolested, till I supposed the songs were going to cease, and the singers to get some refreshment: then, I clambered up the ladder to warn her.

Instead of finding her outside, I heard her voice within. The little monkey had crept by the skylight of one garret, along the roof, into the skylight of the other, and it was with the utmost difficulty I could coax her out again.

When she did come, Heathcliff came with her; and she insisted that I should take him into the kitchen, as my fellow-servant had gone to a neighbour's to be removed from the sound of our 'devil's psalmody,' as it pleased him to call it. I told them I intended, by no means, to encourage their tricks; but as the prisoner had never broken his fast since yesterday's dinner, I would wink at his cheating Mr Hindley that once.

He went down; I set him a stool by the fire, and offered him a quantity of good things; but, he was sick and could eat little: and my attempts to entertain him were thrown away. He leant his two elbows on his knees, and his chin on his hands, and remained wrapt in dumb meditation.

On my inquiring the subject of his thoughts, he answered gravely –

'I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it, at last. I hope he will not die before I do!'

'For shame, Heathcliff!' said I. 'It is for God to punish wicked people; we should learn to forgive.'

'No, God won't have the satisfaction that I shall,' he returned. 'I only wish I knew the best way! Let me alone, and I'll plan it out: while I'm thinking of that, I don't feel pain.'

But, Mr Lockwood, I forget these tales cannot divert you. I'm annoyed how I should dream of chattering on at such a rate; and your gruel cold, and you nodding for bed! I could have told Heathcliff's history, all that you need hear, in half a dozen words.

Thus interrupting herself, the housekeeper rose, and proceeded to lay aside her sewing; but I felt incapable of moving from the hearth, and I was very far from nodding.

'Sit still, Mrs Dean,' I cried, 'do sit still, another half hour! You've done just right to tell the story leisurely. That is the method I like; and you must finish in the same style. I am interested in every character you have mentioned, more or less.'

'The clock is on the stroke of eleven, sir.'

'No matter – I'm not accustomed to go to bed in the long hours. One or two is

early enough for a person who lies till ten.'

'You shouldn't lie till ten. There's the very prime of the morning gone long before that time. A person who has not done one half his day's work, by ten o'clock, runs a chance of leaving the other half undone.'

'Nevertheless, Mrs Dean, resume your chair; because to-morrow I intend lengthening the night till afternoon. I prognosticate for myself an obstinate cold, at least.'

'I hope not, sir. Well, you must allow me to leap over some three years; during that space, Mrs Earnshaw -'

'No, no, I'll allow nothing of the sort! Are you acquainted with the mood of mind in which, if you were seated alone, and the cat licking its kitten on the rug before you, you would watch the operation so intently that puss's neglect of one ear would put you seriously out of temper?'

'A terribly lazy mood, I should say.'

'On the contrary, a tiresomely active one. It is mine, at present, and, therefore, continue minutely. I perceive that people in these regions acquire over people in towns the value that a spider in a dungeon does over a spider in a cottage, to their various occupants; and yet the deepened attraction is not entirely owing to the situation of the looker-on. They do live more in earnest, more in themselves, and less in surface change, and frivolous external things. I could fancy a love for life here almost possible; and I was a fixed unbeliever in any love of a year's standing - one state resembles setting a hungry man down to a single dish on which he may concentrate his entire appetite, and do it justice - the other, introducing him to a table laid out by French cooks; he can perhaps extract as much enjoyment from the whole; but each part is a mere atom in his regard and remembrance.'

'Oh! here we are the same as anywhere else, when you get to know us,' observed Mrs Dean, somewhat puzzled at my speech.

'Excuse me,' I responded; 'you, my good friend, are a striking evidence against that assertion. Excepting a few provincialisms of slight consequence, you have no marks of the manners which I am habituated to consider as peculiar to your class. I am sure you have thought a great deal more than the generality of servants think. You have been compelled to cultivate your reflective faculties, for want of occasions for frittering your life away in silly trifles.'

Mrs Dean laughed.

'I certainly esteem myself a steady, reasonable kind of body,' she said; 'not exactly from living among the hills, and seeing one set of faces, and one series of actions, from year's end to year's end: but I have undergone sharp discipline which has taught me wisdom; and then, I have read more than you would fancy, Mr Lockwood. You could not open a book in this library that I have not looked into, and got something out of also; unless it be that range of Greek and Latin, and that of French - and those I know one from another, it is as much as you can expect of a poor man's daughter.'

‘However, if I am to follow my story in true gossip’s fashion, I had better go on; and instead of leaping three years, I will be content to pass to the next summer – the summer of 1778, that is, nearly twenty-three years ago.’

8

On the morning of a fine June day, my first bonny little nursling, and the last of the ancient Earnshaw stock was born.

We were busy with the hay in a far away field, when the girl that usually brought our breakfasts came running, an hour too soon, across the meadow and up the lane, calling me as she ran.

‘Oh, such a grand bairn!’ she panted out. ‘The finest lad that ever breathed! But the doctor says missis must go; he says she’s been in a consumption these many months, I heard him tell Mr Hindley – and now she has nothing to keep her, and she’ll be dead before winter. You must come home directly. You’re to nurse it, Nelly – to feed it with sugar and milk, and take care of it, day and night – I wish I were you, because it will be all yours when there is no missis!’

‘But is she very ill?’ I asked, flinging down my rake, and tying my bonnet.

‘I guess she is; yet she looks bravely,’ replied the girl, ‘and she talks as if she thought of living to see it grow a man. She’s out of her head for joy, it’s such a beauty! If I were her I’m certain I should not die. I should get better at the bare sight of it, in spite of Kenneth. I was fairly mad at him. Dame Archer brought the cherub down to master, in the house, and his face just began to light up, then the old croaker steps forward, and, says he: – “Earnshaw, it’s a blessing your wife has been spared to leave you this son. When she came, I felt convinced we shouldn’t keep her long; and now, I must tell you, the winter will probably finish her. Don’t take on, and fret about it too much, it can’t be helped. And besides, you should have known better than to choose such a rush of a lass!”’

‘And what did the master answer?’ I inquired.

‘I think he swore – but, I didn’t mind him, I was straining to see the bairn,’ and she began again to describe it rapturously. I, as zealous as herself, hurried eagerly home to admire, on my part, though I was very sad for Hindley’s sake; he had room in his heart only for two idols – his wife and himself – he doted on both, and adored one, and I couldn’t conceive how he would bear the loss.

When we got to Wuthering Heights, there he stood at the front door; and, as I passed in, I asked, how was the baby?

‘Nearly ready to run about, Nell!’ he replied, putting on a cheerful smile.

‘And the mistress?’ I ventured to inquire; ‘the doctor says she’s –’

‘Damn the doctor!’ he interrupted, reddening. ‘Frances is quite right – she’ll be perfectly well by this time next week. Are you going upstairs? Will you tell her that I’ll come, if she’ll promise not to talk. I left her because she would not hold her tongue; and she must – tell her Mr Kenneth says she must be quiet.’

I delivered this message to Mrs Earnshaw; she seemed in flighty spirits, and replied merrily -

'I hardly spoke a word, Ellen, and there he has gone out twice, crying. Well, say I promise I won't speak; but that does not bind me not to laugh at him!'

Poor soul! Till within a week of her death that gay heart never failed her; and her husband persisted doggedly, nay, furiously, in affirming her health improved every day. When Kenneth warned him that his medicines were useless at that stage of the malady, and he needn't put him to further expense by attending her, he retorted -

'I know you need not - she's well - she does not want any more attendance from you! She never was in a consumption. It was a fever; and it is gone - her pulse is as slow as mine now, and her cheek as cool.'

He told his wife the same story, and she seemed to believe him; but one night, while leaning on his shoulder, in the act of saying she thought she should be able to get up tomorrow, a fit of coughing took her - a very slight one - he raised her in his arms; she put her two hands about his neck, her face changed, and she was dead.

As the girl had anticipated, the child, Hareton, fell wholly into my hands. Mr Earnshaw, provided he saw him healthy, and never heard him cry, was contented, as far as regarded him. For himself, he grew desperate; his sorrow was of that kind that will not lament, he neither wept nor prayed - he cursed and defied - execrated God and man, and gave himself up to reckless dissipation.

The servants could not bear his tyrannical and evil conduct long: Joseph and I were the only two that would stay. I had not the heart to leave my charge; and besides, you know, I had been his foster sister, and excused his behaviour more readily than a stranger would.

Joseph remained to hector over tenants and labourers; and because it was his vocation to be where he had plenty of wickedness to reprove.

The master's bad ways and bad companions formed a pretty example for Catherine and Heathcliff. His treatment of the latter was enough to make a fiend of a saint. And, truly, it appeared as if the lad were possessed of something diabolical at that period. He delighted to witness Hindley degrading himself past redemption; and became daily more notable for savage sullenness and ferocity.

I could not half tell what an infernal house we had. The curate dropped calling, and nobody decent came near us, at last; unless Edgar Linton's visits to Miss Cathy might be an exception. At fifteen she was the queen of the countryside; she had no peer: and she did turn out a haughty, headstrong creature! I own I did not like her, after her infancy was past; and I vexed her frequently by trying to bring down her arrogance; she never took an aversion to me, though. She had a wondrous constancy to old attachments; even Heathcliff kept his hold on her affections unalterably, and young Linton, with all his superiority, found it difficult to make an equally deep impression.

He was my late master; that is his portrait over the fireplace. It used to hang

on one side, and his wife's on the other; but hers has been removed, or else you might see something of what she was. Can you make that out?

Mrs Dean raised the candle, and I discerned a soft-featured face, exceedingly resembling the young lady at the Heights, but more pensive and amiable in expression. It formed a sweet picture. The long light hair curled slightly on the temples; the eyes were large and serious; the figure almost too graceful. I did not marvel how Catherine Earnshaw could forget her first friend for such an individual. I marvelled much how he, with a mind to correspond with his person, could fancy my idea of Catherine Earnshaw.

'A very agreeable portrait,' I observed to the housekeeper. 'Is it like?'

'Yes,' she answered; 'but he looked better when he was animated; that is his everyday countenance; he wanted spirit in general.'

Catherine had kept up her acquaintance with the Lintons since her five weeks' residence among them; and as she had no temptation to show her rough side in their company, and had the sense to be ashamed of being rude where she experienced such invariable courtesy, she imposed unwittingly on the old lady and gentleman, by her ingenious cordiality; gained the admiration of Isabella, and the heart and soul of her brother – acquisitions that flattered her from the first, for she was full of ambition – and led her to adopt a double character without exactly intending to deceive any one.

In the place where she had heard Heathcliff termed a 'vulgar young ruffian,' and 'worse than a brute,' she took care not to act like him; but at home she had small inclination to practise politeness that would only be laughed at, and restrain an unruly nature when it would bring her neither credit nor praise.

Mr Edgar seldom mustered courage to visit Wuthering Heights openly. He had a terror of Earnshaw's reputation, and shrunk from encountering him, and yet, he was always received with our best attempts at civility: the master himself, avoided offending him – knowing why he came, and if he could not be gracious, kept out of the way. I rather think his appearance there was distasteful to Catherine; she was not artful, never played the coquette, and had evidently an objection to her two friends meeting at all: for when Heathcliff expressed contempt of Linton, in his presence, she could not half coincide, as she did in his absence; and when Linton evinced disgust and antipathy to Heathcliff, she dared not treat his sentiments with indifference, as if depreciation of her playmate were of scarcely any consequence to her.

I've had many a laugh at her perplexities and untold troubles, which she vainly strove to hide from my mockery. That sounds ill-natured – but she was so proud, it became really impossible to pity her distresses, till she should be chastened into more humility.

She did bring herself, finally, to confess, and confide in me. There was not a soul else that she might fashion into an adviser.

Mr Hindley had gone from home, one afternoon; and Heathcliff presumed to give himself a holiday, on the strength of it. He had reached the age of sixteen then, I think, and without having bad features or being deficient in intellect, he contrived to convey an impression of inward and outward repulsiveness that

his present aspect retains no traces of.

In the first place, he had, by that time, lost the benefit of his early education: continual hard work, begun soon and concluded late, had extinguished any curiosity he once possessed in pursuit of knowledge, and any love for books or learning. His childhood's sense of superiority, instilled into him by the favours of old Mr Earnshaw, was faded away. He struggled long to keep up an equality with Catherine in her studies, and yielded with poignant though silent regret: but he yielded completely; and there was no prevailing on him to take a step in the way of moving upward, when he found he must, necessarily, sink beneath his former level. Then personal appearance sympathized with mental deterioration; he acquired a slouching gait, and ignoble look; his naturally reserved disposition was exaggerated into an almost idiotic excess of unsociable moroseness and he took a grim pleasure, apparently, in exciting the aversion rather than the esteem of his few acquaintance.

Catherine and he were constant companions still, at his seasons of respite from labour but he had ceased to express his fondness for her in words, and recoiled with angry suspicion from her girlish caresses, as if conscious there could be no gratification in lavishing such marks of affection on him. On the before-named occasion he came into the house to announce his intention of doing nothing, while I was assisting Miss Cathy to arrange her dress – she had not reckoned on his taking it into his head to be idle and imagining she would have the whole place to herself, she managed, by some means, to inform Mr Edgar of her brother's absence, and was then preparing to receive him.

'Cathy, are you busy this afternoon?' asked Heathcliff. 'Are you going anywhere?'

'No, it is raining,' she answered.

'Why have you that silly frock on, then?' he said. 'Nobody coming here, I hope?'

'Not that I know of,' stammered Miss: 'but you should be in the field now, Heathcliff. It is an hour past dinner time; I thought you were gone.'

'Hindley does not often free us from his accursed presence,' observed the boy, 'I'll not work any more today, I'll stay with you.'

'Oh, but Joseph will tell;' she suggested, 'you'd better go!'

'Joseph is loading lime on the farther side of Pennistow Crag; it will take him till dark, and he'll never know.'

So saying, he lounged to the fire, and sat down. Catherine reflected an instant, with knitted brows – she found it needful to smooth the way for an intrusion.

'Isabella and Edgar Linton talked of calling this afternoon,' she said at the conclusion of a minute's silence. 'As it rains, I hardly expect them; but, they may come, and if they do, you run the risk of being scolded for no good.'

'Order Ellen to say you are engaged, Cathy,' he persisted. 'Don't turn me out for those pitiful, silly friends of yours! I'm on the point, sometimes, of complaining that they – but I'll not –'

'That they what?' cried Catherine, gazing at him with a troubled countenance. 'Oh, Nelly!' she added petulantly, jerking her head away from my hands, 'you've combed my hair quite out of curl! That's enough, let me alone. What are you on the point of complaining about, Heathcliff?'

'Nothing - only look at the almanack, on that wall.' He pointed to a framed sheet hanging near the window, and continued:

'The crosses are for the evenings you have spent with the Lintons, the dots for those spent with me. Do you see? I've marked every day.'

'Yes - very foolish; as if I took notice!' replied Catherine in a peevish tone. 'And where is the sense of that?'

'To show that I do take notice,' said Heathcliff.

'And should I always be sitting with you?' she demanded, growing more irritated. 'What good do I get - what do you talk about? You might be dumb or a baby for anything you say to amuse me, or for anything you do, either!'

'You never told me before that I talked too little, or that you disliked my company, Cathy!' exclaimed Heathcliff, in much agitation.

'It's no company at all, when people know nothing and say nothing,' she muttered.

Her companion rose up, but he hadn't time to express his feelings further, for a horse's feet were heard on the flags, and, having knocked gently, young Linton entered, his face brilliant with delight at the unexpected summons he had received.

Doubtless Catherine marked the difference between her friends as one came in, and the other went out. The contrast resembled what you see in exchanging a bleak, hilly, coal country for a beautiful fertile valley; and his voice and greeting were as opposite as his aspect - He had a sweet, low manner of speaking, and pronounced his words as you do, that's less gruff than we talk here and softer.

'I'm not come too soon, am I?' he said, casting a look at me. I had begun to wipe the plate, and tidy some drawers at the far end in the dresser.

'No,' answered Catherine. 'What are you doing there, Nelly?'

'My work, Miss,' I replied. (Mr Hindley had given me directions to make a third party in any private visits Linton chose to pay.)

She stepped behind me and whispered crossly, 'Take yourself and your dusters off! When company are in the house, servants don't commence scouring and cleaning in the room where they are!'

'It's a good opportunity, now that master is away,' I answered aloud. 'He hates me to be fidgeting over these things in his presence. I'm sure Mr Edgar will excuse me.'

‘I hate you to be fidgeting in my presence,’ exclaimed the young lady imperiously, not allowing her guest time to speak – she had failed to recover her equanimity since the little dispute with Heathcliff.

‘I’m sorry for it, Miss Catherine!’ was my response; and I proceeded assiduously with my occupation.

She, supposing Edgar could not see her, snatched the cloth from my hand, and pinched me, with a prolonged wrench, very spitefully on the arm.

I’ve said I did not love her, and rather relished mortifying her vanity now and then; besides, she hurt me extremely, so I started up from my knees, and screamed out,

‘Oh, Miss, that’s a nasty trick! You have no right to nip me, and I’m not going to bear it!’

‘I didn’t touch you, you lying creature!’ cried she, her fingers tingling to repeat the act, and her ears red with rage. She never had power to conceal her passion, it always set her whole complexion in a blaze.

‘What’s that, then?’ I retorted, showing a decided purple witness to refute her.

She stamped her foot, wavered a moment, and then, irresistibly impelled by the naughty spirit within her, slapped me on the cheek a stinging blow that filled both eyes with water.

‘Catherine, love! Catherine!’ interposed Linton, greatly shocked at the double fault of falsehood and violence which his idol had committed.

‘Leave the room, Ellen!’ she repeated, trembling all over.

Little Hareton, who followed me everywhere, and was sitting near me on the floor, at seeing my tears commenced crying himself, and sobbed out complaints against ‘wicked aunt Cathy,’ which drew her fury on to his unlucky head: she seized his shoulders, and shook him till the poor child waxed livid, and Edgar thoughtlessly laid hold of her hands to deliver him. In an instant one was wrung free, and the astonished young man felt it applied over his own ear in a way that could not be mistaken for jest.

He drew back in consternation – I lifted Hareton in my arms, and walked off to the kitchen with him; leaving the door of communication open, for I was curious to watch how they would settle their disagreement.

The insulted visitor moved to the spot where he had laid his hat, pale and with a quivering lip.

‘That’s right!’ I said to myself, ‘Take warning and begone! It’s a kindness to let you have a glimpse of her genuine disposition.’

‘Where are you going?’ demanded Catherine, advancing to the door.

He swerved aside and attempted to pass.

‘You must not go!’ she exclaimed energetically.

‘I must and shall!’ he replied in a subdued voice.

‘No,’ she persisted, grasping the handle; ‘not yet, Edgar Linton – sit down, you shall not leave me in that temper. I should be miserable all night, and I won’t be miserable for you!’

‘Can I stay after you have struck me?’ asked Linton.

Catherine was mute.

‘You’ve made me afraid, and ashamed of you,’ he continued; ‘I’ll not come here again!’

Her eyes began to glisten and her lids to twinkle.

‘And you told a deliberate untruth!’ he said.

‘I didn’t!’ she cried, recovering her speech. ‘I did nothing deliberately – Well, go, if you please – get away! And now I’ll cry – I’ll cry myself sick!’

She dropped down on her knees by a chair and set to weeping in serious earnest.

Edgar persevered in his resolution as far as the court; there he lingered. I resolved to encourage him.

‘Miss is dreadfully wayward, sir!’ I called out. ‘As bad as any marred child – you’d better be riding home, or else she will be sick, only to grieve us.’

The soft thing looked askance through the window – he possessed the power to depart, as much as a cat possesses the power to leave a mouse half killed, or a bird half eaten.

Ah, I thought, there will be no saving him – He’s doomed, and flies to his fate!

And so it was; he turned abruptly, hastened into the house again, shut the door behind him; and, when I went in a while after to inform them that Earnshaw had come home rabid drunk, ready to pull the old place about our ears (his ordinary frame of mind in that condition), I saw the quarrel had merely effected a closer intimacy – had broken the outworks of youthful timidity, and enabled them to forsake the disguise of friendship, and confess themselves lovers.

Intelligence of Mr Hindley’s arrival drove Linton speedily to his horse, and Catherine to her chamber. I went to hide little Hareton, and to take the shot out of the master’s fowling piece which he was fond of playing with in his insane excitement, to the hazard of the lives of any who provoked, or even attracted his notice too much; and I had hit upon the plan of removing it, that he might do less mischief, if he did go the length of firing the gun.

9

He entered, vociferating oaths dreadful to hear; and caught me in the act of stowing his son away in the kitchen cupboard. Hareton was impressed with a

wholesome terror of encountering either his wildbeast's fondness, or his madman's rage – for in one he ran a chance of being squeezed and kissed to death, and in the other of being flung into the fire, or dashed against the wall – and the poor thing remained perfectly quiet wherever I chose to put him.

'There, I've found it out at last!' cried Hindley, pulling me back by the skin of my neck, like a dog. 'By heaven and hell, you've sworn between you to murder that child! I know how it is, now, that he is always out of my way. But with the help of Satan, I shall make you swallow the carving knife, Nelly! You needn't laugh; for I've just crammed Kenneth, head-down-most, in the Blackhorse marsh: and two is the same as one – and I want to kill some of you, I shall have no rest till I do!'

'But I don't like the carving knife, Mr Hindley,' I answered, 'it has been cutting red herrings – I'd rather be shot if you please.'

'You'd rather be damned!' he said, 'and so you shall, no law in England can hinder a man from keeping his house decent, and mine's abominable! open your mouth.'

He held the knife in his hand, and pushed its point between my teeth: but, for my part, I was never much afraid of his vagaries. I spat it out, and affirmed it tasted detestably – I would not take it on any account.

'Oh!' said he, releasing me, 'I see that hideous little villain is not Hareton – I beg your pardon, Nell – if it be, he deserves flaying alive for not running to welcome me, and for screaming as if I were a goblin. Unnatural cub, come hither! I'll teach thee to impose on a good-hearted, deluded father – Now, don't you think the lad would be handsomer cropped? It makes a dog fiercer, and I love something fierce – Get me a scissors – something fierce and trim! Besides, it's infernal affectation – devilish conceit, it is, to cherish our ears – we're asses enough without them. Hush, child, hush! well, then, it is my darling! wisht, dry thy eyes – there's a joy; kiss me; what! it won't? kiss me, Hareton! Damn thee, kiss me! By God, as if I would rear such a monster! As sure as I'm living, I'll break the brat's neck.'

Poor Hareton was squalling and kicking in his father's arms with all his might, and redoubled his yells when he carried him upstairs and lifted him over the banister. I cried out that he would frighten the child into fits, and ran to rescue him.

As I reached them, Hindley leant forward on the rails to listen to a noise below; almost forgetting what he had in his hands.

'Who is that?' he asked, hearing some one approaching the stair's foot.

I leant forward, also, for the purpose of signing to Heathcliff, whose step I recognized, not to come further; and, at the instant when my eye quitted Hareton, he gave a sudden spring, delivered himself from the careless grasp that held him, and fell.

There was scarcely time to experience a thrill of horror before we saw that the little wretch was safe. Heathcliff arrived underneath just at the critical moment; by a natural impulse he arrested his descent, and setting him on his

feet, looked up to discover the author of the accident.

A miser who has parted with a lucky lottery ticket for five shillings, and finds next day he has lost in the bargain five thousand pounds, could not show a blanker countenance than he did on beholding the figure of Mr Earnshaw above – It expressed, plainer than words could do, the intensest anguish at having made himself the instrument of thwarting his own revenge. Had it been dark, I dare say, he would have tried to remedy the mistake by smashing Hareton's skull on the steps; but, we witnessed his salvation; and I was presently below with my precious charge pressed to my heart.

Hindley descended more leisurely, sobered and abashed.

'It is your fault, Ellen,' he said, 'you should have kept him out of sight; you should have taken him from me! Is he injured anywhere?'

'Injured!' I cried, angrily. 'If he's not killed, he'll be an idiot! Oh! I wonder his mother does not rise from her grave to see how you use him. You're worse than a heathen – treating your own flesh and blood in that manner!'

He attempted to touch the child, who, on finding himself with me, sobbed off his terror directly. At the first finger his father laid on him, however, he shrieked again louder than before, and struggled as if he would go into convulsions.

'You shall not meddle with him!' I continued. 'He hates you – they all hate you – that's the truth! A happy family you have; and a pretty state you're come to!'

'I shall come to a prettier, yet, Nelly!' laughed the misguided man, recovering his hardness. 'At present, convey yourself and him away – And, hark you, Heathcliff! clear you too, quite from my reach and hearing... I wouldn't murder you to-night, unless, perhaps, I set the house on fire; but that's as my fancy goes –'

While saying this, he took a pint bottle of brandy from the dresser, and poured some into a tumbler.

'Nay, don't!' I entreated, 'Mr Hindley, do take warning. Have mercy on this unfortunate boy, if you care nothing for yourself!'

'Any one will do better for him, than I shall,' he answered.

'Have mercy on your own soul!' I said, endeavouring to snatch the glass from his hand.

'Not I! On the contrary, I shall have great pleasure in sending it to perdition, to punish its maker,' exclaimed the blasphemer, 'Here's to its hearty damnation!'

He drank the spirits, and impatiently bade us go, terminating his command with a sequel of horrid imprecations, too bad to repeat, or remember.

'It's a pity he cannot kill himself with drink,' observed Heathcliff, muttering an echo of curses back when the door was shut. 'He's doing his very utmost but

his constitution defies him – Mr Kenneth says he would wager his mare, that he'll outlive any man on this side Gimmerton, and go to the grave a hoary sinner; unless, some happy chance out of the common course befall him.'

I went into the kitchen and sat down to lull my little lamb to sleep. Heathcliff, as I thought, walked through to the barn. It turned out, afterwards, that he only got as far as the other side the settle, when he flung himself on a bench by the wall, removed from the fire, and remained silent.

I was rocking Hareton on my knee, and humming a song that began,

'It was far in the night, and the bairnies grat,

The mither beneath the mools heard that,'

when Miss Cathy, who had listened to the hubbub from her room, put her head in, and whispered,

'Are you alone, Nelly?'

'Yes, Miss,' I replied.

She entered and approached the hearth. I, supposing she was going to say something, looked up. The expression of her face seemed disturbed and anxious. Her lips were half asunder, as if she meant to speak; and she drew a breath, but it escaped in a sigh, instead of a sentence.

I resumed my song, not having forgotten her recent behaviour.

'Where's Heathcliff ?' she said, interrupting me.

'About his work in the stable,' was my answer.

He did not contradict me; perhaps he had fallen into a doze.

There followed another long pause, during which I perceived a drop or two trickle from Catherine's cheek to the flags.

'Is she sorry for her shameful conduct?' I asked myself. 'That will be a novelty, but she may come to the point as she will – I shan't help her!'

No, she felt small trouble regarding any subject, save her own concerns.

'Oh, dear!' she cried at last. 'I'm very unhappy!'

'A pity,' observed I, 'you're hard to please – so many friends and so few cares, and can't make yourself content!'

'Nelly, will you keep a secret for me?' she pursued, kneeling down by me, and lifting her winsome eyes to my face with that sort of look which turns off bad temper, even when one has all the right in the world to indulge it.

'Is it worth keeping?' I inquired, less sulkily.

‘Yes, and it worries me, and I must let it out! I want to know what I should do – To-day, Edgar Linton has asked me to marry him, and I’ve given him an answer – Now, before I tell you whether it was a consent, or denial – you tell me which it ought to have been.’

‘Really, Miss Catherine, how can I know?’ I replied. ‘To be sure, considering the exhibition you performed in his presence, this afternoon, I might say it would be wise to refuse him – since he asked you after that, he must either be hopelessly stupid, or a venturesome fool.’

‘If you talk so, I won’t tell you any more,’ she returned, peevishly, rising to her feet. ‘I accepted him, Nelly. Be quick, and say whether I was wrong!’

‘You accepted him? then, what good is it discussing the matter? You have pledged your word, and cannot retract.’

‘But, say whether I should have done so – do!’ she exclaimed in an irritated tone, chafing her hands together, and frowning.

‘There are many things to be considered, before that question can be answered properly,’ I said sententiously. ‘First and foremost, do you love Mr Edgar?’

‘Who can help it? Of course I do,’ she answered.

Then I put her through the following catechism – for a girl of twenty-two, it was not injudicious.

‘Why do you love him, Miss Cathy?’

‘Nonsense, I do – that’s sufficient.’

‘By no means; you must say why.’

‘Well, because he is handsome, and pleasant to be with.’

‘Bad,’ was my commentary.

‘And because he is young and cheerful.’

‘Bad, still.’

‘And because he loves me.’

‘Indifferent, coming there.’

‘And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband.’

‘Worst of all! And, now, you say how you love him?’

‘As everybody loves – You’re silly, Nelly.’

‘Not at all – Answer.’

'I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says – I love all his looks, and all his actions, and him entirely, and altogether. There now!'

'And why?'

'Nay – you are making a jest of it; it is exceedingly ill-natured! It's no jest to me!' said the young lady, scowling, and turning her face to the fire.

'I'm very far from jesting, Miss Catherine,' I replied. 'You love Mr Edgar because he is handsome, and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves you. The last, however, goes for nothing – You would love him without that, probably, and with it, you wouldn't, unless he possessed the four former attractions.'

'No, to be sure not – I should only pity him – hate him, perhaps, if he were ugly, and a clown.'

'But there are several other handsome, rich young men in the world; handsomer, possibly, and richer than he is – What should hinder you from loving them?'

'If there be any, they are out of my way – I've seen none like Edgar.'

'You may see some; and he won't always be handsome, and young, and may not always be rich.'

'He is now; and I have only to do with the present – I wish you would speak rationally.'

'Well, that settles it – if you have only to do with the present, marry Mr Linton.'

'I don't want your permission for that – I shall marry him; and yet, you have not told me whether I'm right.'

'Perfectly right! if people be right to marry only for the present. And now, let us hear what you are unhappy about. Your brother will be pleased... the old lady and gentleman will not object, I think – you will escape from a disorderly, comfortless home into a wealthy, respectable one; and you love Edgar, and Edgar loves you. All seems smooth and easy – where is the obstacle?'

'Here! and here!' replied Catherine, striking one hand on her forehead, and the other on her breast. 'In whichever place the soul lives – in my soul, and in my heart, I'm convinced I'm wrong!'

'That is very strange! I cannot make it out.'

'It's my secret; but if you will not mock at me, I'll explain it; I can't do it distinctly – but I'll give you a feeling of how I feel.'

She seated herself by me again: her countenance grew sadder and graver, and her clasped hands trembled.

'Nelly, do you never dream queer dreams?' she said, suddenly, after some minutes' reflection.

'Yes, now and then,' I answered.

'And so do I. I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas; they've gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind. And this is one - I'm going to tell it - but take care not to smile at any part of it.'

'Oh! don't, Miss Catherine!' I cried. 'We're dismal enough without conjuring up ghosts, and visions to perplex us. Come, come, be merry, and like yourself! Look at little Hareton - he's dreaming nothing dreary. How sweetly he smiles in his sleep!'

'Yes; and how sweetly his father curses in his solitude! You remember him, I dare say, when he was just such another as that chubby thing - nearly as young and innocent. However, Nelly, I shall oblige you to listen - it's not long; and I've no power to be merry tonight.'

'I won't hear it, I won't hear it!' I repeated, hastily.

I was superstitious about dreams then, and am still; and Catherine had an unusual gloom in her aspect, that made me dread something from which I might shape a prophecy, and foresee a fearful catastrophe.

She was vexed, but she did not proceed. Apparently taking up another subject, she recommenced in a short time.

'If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable.'

'Because you are not fit to go there,' I answered. 'All sinners would be miserable in heaven.'

'But it is not for that. I dreamt, once, that I was there.'

'I tell you I won't harken to your dreams, Miss Catherine! I'll go to bed,' I interrupted again.

She laughed, and held me down, for I made a motion to leave my chair.

'This is nothing,' cried she; 'I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights, where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other, I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire.'

Ere this speech ended, I became sensible of Heathcliff's presence. Having noticed a slight movement, I turned my head, and saw him rise from the bench, and steal out, noiselessly. He had listened till he heard Catherine say it would

degrade her to marry him, and then be stayed to hear no farther.

My companion, sitting on the ground, was prevented by the back of the settle from remarking his presence or departure; but I started, and bade her hush.

‘Why?’ she asked, gazing nervously round.

‘Joseph is here,’ I answered, catching, opportunely, the roll of his cartwheels up the road; ‘and Heathcliff will come in with him. I’m not sure whether he were not at the door this moment.’

‘Oh, he couldn’t overhear me at the door!’ said she. ‘Give me Hareton, while you get the supper, and when it is ready ask me to sup with you. I want to cheat my uncomfortable conscience, and be convinced that Heathcliff has no notion of these things – he has not, has he? He does not know what being in love is?’

‘I see no reason that he should not know, as well as you,’ I returned; ‘and if you are his choice, he’ll be the most unfortunate creature that ever was born! As soon as you become Mrs Linton, he loses friend, and love, and all! Have you considered how you’ll bear the separation, and how he’ll bear to be quite deserted in the world? Because, Miss Catherine –’

‘He quite deserted! we separated!’ she exclaimed, with an accent of indignation. ‘Who is to separate us, pray? They’ll meet the fate of Milo! Not as long as I live, Ellen – for no mortal creature. Every Linton on the face of the earth might melt into nothing, before I could consent to forsake Heathcliff! Oh, that’s not what I intend – that’s not what I mean! I shouldn’t be Mrs Linton were such a price demanded! He’ll be as much to me as he has been all his lifetime. Edgar must shake off his antipathy, and tolerate him, at least. He will when he learns my true feelings towards him. Nelly, I see now, you think me a selfish wretch, but did it never strike you that, if Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars? whereas, if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother’s power?’

‘With your husband’s money, Miss Catherine?’ I asked. ‘You’ll find him not so pliable as you calculate upon: and, though I’m hardly a judge, I think that’s the worst motive you’ve given yet for being the wife of young Linton.’

‘It is not,’ retorted she, ‘it is the best! The others were the satisfaction of my whims; and for Edgar’s sake, too, to satisfy him. This is for the sake of one who comprehends in his person my feelings to Edgar and myself. I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is, or should be an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff’s miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I’m well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath – a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff – he’s always, always in my mind – not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself – but as my own being – so, don’t talk of our separation again – it is impracticable; and –’

She paused, and hid her face in the folds of my gown; but I jerked it forcibly away. I was out of patience with her folly!

‘If I can make any sense of your nonsense, Miss,’ I said, ‘it only goes to convince me that you are ignorant of the duties you undertake in marrying; or else, that you are a wicked, unprincipled girl. But trouble me with no more secrets. I’ll not promise to keep them.’

‘You’ll keep that?’ she asked, eagerly.

‘No, I’ll not promise,’ I repeated.

She was about to insist, when the entrance of Joseph finished our conversation; and Catherine removed her seat to a corner, and nursed Hareton, while I made the supper.

After it was cooked, my fellow servant and I began to quarrel who should carry some to Mr Hindley; and we didn’t settle it till all was nearly cold. Then we came to the agreement that we would let him ask, if he wanted any, for we feared particularly to go into his presence when he had been some time alone.

‘Und hah isn’t that nowt comed in frough th’ field, be this time? What is he abaht? girt eedle seeght!’ demanded the old man, looking round for Heathcliff.

‘I’ll call him,’ I replied. ‘He’s in the barn, I’ve no doubt.’

I went and called, but got no answer. On returning, I whispered to Catherine that he had heard a good part of what she said, I was sure; and told how I saw him quit the kitchen just as she complained of her brother’s conduct regarding him.

She jumped up in a fine fright – flung Hareton onto the settle, and ran to seek for her friend herself, not taking leisure to consider why she was so flurried, or how her talk would have affected him.

She was absent such a while that Joseph proposed we should wait no longer. He cunningly conjectured they were staying away in order to avoid hearing his protracted blessing. They were ‘ill enough for ony fahl manners,’ he affirmed. And, on their behalf, he added that night a special prayer to the usual quarter of an hour’s supplication before meat, and would have tacked another to the end of the grace, had not his young mistress broken in upon him with a hurried command that he must run down the road, and, wherever Heathcliff had rambled, find and make him reenter directly!

‘I want to speak to him, and I must, before I go upstairs,’ she said. ‘And the gate is open, he is somewhere out of hearing; for he would not reply, though I shouted at the top of the fold as loud as I could.’

Joseph objected at first; she was too much in earnest, however, to suffer contradiction; and, at last he placed his hat on his head, and walked grumbling forth.

Meantime, Catherine paced up and down the floor, exclaiming – ‘I wonder where he

is – I wonder where he can be! What did I say, Nelly? I've forgotten. Was he vexed at my bad humour this afternoon? Dear! tell me what I've said to grieve him? I do wish he'd come. I do wish he would!

'What a noise for nothing!' I cried, though rather uneasy myself. 'What a trifle scares you! It's surely no great cause of alarm that Heathcliff should take a moonlight saunter on the moors, or even lie too sulky to speak to us in the hayloft. I'll engage he's lurking there. See if I don't ferret him out!'

I departed to renew my search; its result was disappointment, and Joseph's quest ended in the same.

'Yon lad gets war un war!' observed he on reentering. 'He's left th' yate ut t' full swing, and miss's pony has trodden dahn two rigs uh corn, un plottered through, raight o'er intuh t' meadow! Hahsomdiver, t' maister 'ull play t' devil to-morn, and he'll do weel. He's patience itsseln wi' sich careless, offald craters – patience itsseln he is! Bud he'll nut be soa allus – yah's see, all on ye! Yah mum'n't drive him aht uf his heead fur nowt!'

'Have you found Heathcliff, you ass?' interrupted Catherine. 'Have you been looking for him, as I ordered?'

'Aw sud more likker look for th' horse,' he replied. 'It 'ud be tuh more sense. Bud, aw can look for norther horse, nur man uf a neeght loike this as black as t' chimbley! und Hathecliff's noan t' chap tuh coom ut maw whistle – happen he'll be less hard uh hearing wi' ye!'

It was a very dark evening for summer: the clouds appeared inclined to thunder, and I said we had better all sit down; the approaching rain would be certain to bring him home without further trouble.

However, Catherine would not be persuaded into tranquillity. She kept wandering to and fro, from the gate to the door, in a state of agitation which permitted no repose: and, at length, took up a permanent position on one side of the wall, near the road; where, heedless of my expostulations, and the growling thunder, and the great drops that began to plash around her, she remained calling, at intervals, and then listening, and then crying outright. She beat Hareton, or any child, at a good passionate fit of crying.

About midnight, while we still sat up, the storm came rattling over the Heights in full fury. There was a violent wind, as well as thunder, and either one or the other split a tree off at the corner of the building; a huge bough fell across the roof, and knocked down a portion of the east chimney-stack, sending a clatter of stones and soot into the kitchen fire.

We thought a bolt had fallen in the middle of us, and Joseph swung onto his knees, beseeching the Lord to remember the patriarchs Noah and Lot; and, as in former times, spare the righteous, though he smote the ungodly. I felt some sentiment that it must be a judgment on us also. The Jonah, in my mind, was Mr Earnshaw, and I shook the handle of his den that I might ascertain if he were yet living. He replied audibly enough, in a fashion which made my companion vociferate more clamorously than before that a wide distinction might be drawn between saints like himself, and sinners like his master. But the uproar passed away in twenty minutes, leaving us all unharmed, excepting Cathy, who got

thoroughly drenched for her obstinacy in refusing to take shelter, and standing bonnetless and shawlless to catch as much water as she could with her hair and clothes.

She came in, and lay down on the settle, all soaked as she was, turning her face to the back, and putting her hands before it.

‘Well, Miss!’ I exclaimed, touching her shoulder. ‘You are not bent on getting your death, are you? Do you know what o’clock it is? Half-past twelve. Come! come to bed; there’s no use waiting longer on that foolish boy – he’ll be gone to Gimmerton, and he’ll stay there now. He guesses we shouldn’t wake for him till this late hour; at least, he guesses that only Mr Hindley would be up; and he’d rather avoid having the door opened by the master.’

‘Nay, nay, he’s noan at Gimmerton!’ said Joseph. ‘Aw’s niver wonder, bud he’s at t’ bottom uf a bug-hoile. This visitation worn’t for nowt, und aw wod hev ye tuh look aht, Miss – yah muh be t’ next. Thank Hivin for all! All warks together for gooid tuh them as is choozen, and piked aht froo’ th’ rubbidge! Yah knaw whet t’ Scripture ses –’

And he began quoting several texts, referring us to the chapters and verses, where we might find them.

I, having vainly begged the wilful girl to rise and remove her wet things, left him preaching, and her shivering, and betook myself to bed with little Hareton; who slept as fast as if every one had been sleeping round him.

I heard Joseph read on a while afterwards; then, I distinguished his slow step on the ladder, and then I dropt asleep.

Coming down somewhat later than usual, I saw, by the sunbeams piercing the chinks of the shutters, Miss Catherine still seated near the fire-place. The house door was ajar, too; light entered from its unclosed windows, Hindley had come out, and stood on the kitchen hearth, haggard and drowsy.

‘What ails you, Cathy?’ he was saying when I entered; ‘you look as dismal as a drowned whelp – Why are you so damp and pale, child?’

‘I’ve been wet,’ she answered reluctantly, ‘and I’m cold, that’s all.’

‘Oh, she is naughty!’ I cried, perceiving the master to be tolerably sober; ‘She got steeped in the shower of yesterday evening, and there she has sat, the night through, and I couldn’t prevail on her to stir.’

Mr Earnshaw stared at us in surprise. ‘The night through,’ he repeated. ‘What kept her up, not fear of the thunder, surely? That was over hours since.’

Neither of us wished to mention Heathcliff’s absence, as long as we could conceal it; so, I replied, I didn’t know how she took it into her head to sit up; and she said nothing.

The morning was fresh and cool; I threw back the lattice, and presently the room filled with sweet scents from the garden: but Catherine called peevishly to me.

‘Ellen, shut the window. I’m starving!’ And her teeth chattered as she shrunk closer to the almost extinguished embers.

‘She’s ill –’ said Hindley, taking her wrist; ‘I suppose that’s the reason she would not go to bed – Damn it! I don’t want to be troubled with more sickness, here – What took you into the rain?’

‘Running after t’ lads, as usual!’ croaked Joseph, catching an opportunity, from our hesitation, to thrust in his evil tongue.

‘If Aw wur yah, maister, Aw’d just slam t’ boards i’ their faces all on ’em, gentle and simple! Never a day ut yah’re off, but yon cat uh Linton comes sneaking hither – and Miss Nelly, shoo’s a fine lass! shoo sits watching for ye i’ t’ kitchen; and as yah’re in at one door, he’s aht at t’ other – und, then, wer grand lady goes a coorting uf hor side! It’s bonny behaviour, lurking amang t’ fields, after twelve ut’ night, wi’ that fahl, flaysome divil uf a gipsy, Heathcliff! They think Aw’m blind; but Aw’m noan, nowt ut t’ soart! Aw seed young Linton, boath coming and going, and Aw seed yah’ (directing his discourse to me). ‘Yah gooid fur nowt, slattenly witch! nip up und bolt intuh th’ hahs, t’ minute yah heard t’ maister’s horse fit clatter up t’ road.’

‘Silence, eavesdropper!’ cried Catherine, ‘None of your insolence, before me! Edgar Linton came yesterday, by chance, Hindley: and it was I who told him to be off: because I knew you would not like to have met him as you were.’

‘You lie, Cathy, no doubt,’ answered her brother, ‘and you are a confounded simpleton! But never mind Linton at present – tell me, were you not with Heathcliff last night? Speak the truth, now. You need not be afraid of harming him – though I hate him as much as ever, he did me a good turn a short time since, that will make my conscience tender of breaking his neck. To prevent it, I shall send him about his business, this very morning; and after he’s gone, I’d advise you to look sharp, I shall only have the more humour for you.’

‘I never saw Heathcliff last night,’ answered Catherine, beginning to sob bitterly: ‘and if you do turn him out of doors, I’ll go with him. But, perhaps, you’ll never have an opportunity – perhaps, he’s gone.’ Here she burst into uncontrollable grief, and the remainder of her words were inarticulate.

Hindley lavished on her a torrent of scornful abuse, and bid her get to her room immediately, or she shouldn’t cry for nothing! I obliged her to obey; and I shall never forget what a scene she acted, when we reached her chamber. It terrified me – I thought she was going mad, and I begged Joseph to run for the doctor.

It proved the commencement of delirium; Mr Kenneth, as soon as he saw her, pronounced her dangerously ill; she had a fever.

He bled her, and he told me to let her live on whey, and water gruel; and take care she did not throw herself down stairs, or out of the window; and then he left; for he had enough to do in the parish, where two or three miles was the ordinary distance between cottage and cottage.

Though I cannot say I made a gentle nurse, and Joseph and the master were no better; and though our patient was as wearisome and headstrong as a patient

could be, she weathered it through.

Old Mrs Linton paid us several visits, to be sure, and set things to rights, and scolded, and ordered us all; and when Catherine was convalescent, she insisted on conveying her to Thrushcross Grange; for which deliverance we were very grateful. But the poor dame had reason to repent of her kindness; she, and her husband, both took the fever, and died within a few days of each other.

Our young lady returned to us, saucier, and more passionate, and haughtier than ever. Heathcliff had never been heard of since the evening of the thunderstorm, and, one day, I had the misfortune, when she provoked me exceedingly, to lay the blame of his disappearance on her (where indeed it belonged, as she well knew). From that period for several months, she ceased to hold any communication with me, save in the relation of a mere servant. Joseph fell under a ban also; he would speak his mind, and lecture her all the same as if she were a little girl; and she esteemed herself a woman, and our mistress; and thought that her recent illness gave her a claim to be treated with consideration. Then the doctor had said that she would not bear crossing much, she ought to have her own way; and it was nothing less than murder, in her eyes, for any one to presume to stand up and contradict her.

From Mr Earnshaw, and his companions, she kept aloof, and tutored by Kenneth, and serious threats of a fit that often attended her rages, her brother allowed her whatever she pleased to demand, and generally avoided aggravating her fiery temper. He was rather too indulgent in humouring her caprices; not from affection, but from pride; he wished earnestly to see her bring honour to the family by an alliance with the Lintons, and, as long as she let him alone she might trample us like slaves for aught he cared!

Edgar Linton, as multitudes have been before and will be after him, was infatuated; and believed himself the happiest man alive on the day he led her to Gimmerton Chapel, three years subsequent to his father's death.

Much against my inclination, I was persuaded to leave Wuthering Heights and accompany her here. Little Hareton was nearly five years old, and I had just begun to teach him his letters. We made a sad parting, but Catherine's tears were more powerful than ours – When I refused to go, and when she found her entreaties did not move me, she went lamenting to her husband and brother. The former offered me munificent wages; the latter ordered me to pack up – he wanted no women in the house, he said, now that there was no mistress; and as to Hareton, the curate should take him in hand, by and by. And so, I had but one choice left, to do as I was ordered. I told the master he got rid of all decent people only to run to ruin a little faster; I kissed Hareton good-bye; and since then, he has been a stranger, and it's very queer to think it, but I've no doubt, he has completely forgotten all about Ellen Dean and that he was ever more than all the world to her, and she to him!

At this point of the housekeeper's story, she chanced to glance towards the time-piece over the chimney; and was in amazement, on seeing the minute-hand measure half past one. She would not hear of staying a second longer – in truth, I felt rather disposed to defer the sequel of her narrative, myself: and now, that she is vanished to her rest, and I have meditated for another hour or two, I shall summon courage to go, also, in spite of aching laziness of head and limbs.

A charming introduction to a hermit's life! Four weeks' torture, tossing and sickness! Oh, these bleak winds, and bitter, northern skies, and impassable roads, and dilatory country surgeons! And, oh, this dearth of the human physiognomy, and, worse than all, the terrible intimation of Kenneth that I need not expect to be out of doors till spring!

Mr Heathcliff has just honoured me with a call. About seven days ago he sent me a brace of grouse – the last of the season. Scoundrel! He is not altogether guiltless in this illness of mine; and that I had a great mind to tell him. But, alas! how could I offend a man who was charitable enough to sit at my bedside a good hour, and talk on some other subjects than pills, and draughts, blisters, and leeches?

This is quite an easy interval. I am too weak to read, yet I feel as if I could enjoy something interesting. Why not have up Mrs Dean to finish her tale? I can recollect its chief incidents, as far as she had gone. Yes, I remember her hero had run off, and never been heard of for three years: and the heroine was married: I'll ring; she'll be delighted to find me capable of talking cheerfully.

Mrs Dean came.

'It wants twenty minutes, sir, to taking the medicine,' she commenced.

'Away, away with it!' I replied; 'I desire to have –'

'The doctor says you must drop the powders.'

'With all my heart! Don't interrupt me. Come and take your seat here. Keep your fingers from that bitter phalanx of vials. Draw your knitting out of your pocket – that will do – now continue the history of Mr Heathcliff, from where you left off, to the present day. Did he finish his education on the Continent, and come back a gentleman? or did he get a sizar's place at college? or escape to America, and earn honours by drawing blood from his foster country? or make a fortune more promptly, on the English highways?'

'He may have done a little in all these vocations, Mr Lockwood; but I couldn't give my word for any. I stated before that I didn't know how he gained his money; neither am I aware of the means he took to raise his mind from the savage ignorance into which it was sunk; but, with your leave, I'll proceed in my own fashion, if you think it will amuse, and not weary you. Are you feeling better this morning?'

'Much.'

'That's good news.'

*

I got Miss Catherine and myself to Thrushcross Grange; and to my agreeable disappointment, she behaved infinitely better than I dared to expect. She seemed almost over fond of Mr Linton; and even to his sister, she showed plenty of

affection. They were both very attentive to her comfort, certainly. It was not the thorn bending to the honeysuckles, but the honeysuckles embracing the thorn. There were no mutual concessions; one stood erect, and the others yielded; and who can be ill-natured, and bad-tempered, when they encounter neither opposition nor indifference?

I observed that Mr Edgar had a deep-rooted fear of ruffling her humour. He concealed it from her; but if ever he heard me answer sharply, or saw any other servant grow cloudy at some imperious order of hers, he would show his trouble by a frown of displeasure that never darkened on his own account. He, many a time, spoke sternly to me about my pertness; and averred that the stab of a knife could not inflict a worse pang than he suffered at seeing his lady vexed.

Not to grieve a kind master, I learned to be less touchy; and, for the space of half a year, the gunpowder lay as harmless as sand, because no fire came near to explode it. Catherine had seasons of gloom and silence, now and then: they were respected with sympathizing silence by her husband, who ascribed them to an alteration in her constitution, produced by her perilous illness, as she was never subject to depression of spirits before. The return of sunshine was welcomed by answering sunshine from him. I believe I may assert that they were really in possession of deep and growing happiness.

It ended. Well, we must be for ourselves in the long run; the mild and generous are only more justly selfish than the domineering – and it ended when circumstances caused each to feel that the one's interest was not the chief consideration in the other's thoughts.

On a mellow evening in September, I was coming from the garden with a heavy basket of apples which I had been gathering. It had got dusk, and the moon looked over the high wall of the court, causing undefined shadows to lurk in the corners of the numerous projecting portions of the building. I set my burden on the house steps by the kitchen door, and lingered to rest, and drew in a few more breaths of the soft, sweet air; my eyes were on the moon, and my back to the entrance, when I heard a voice behind me say –

‘Nelly, is that you?’

It was a deep voice, and foreign in tone; yet, there was something in the manner of pronouncing my name which made it sound familiar. I turned about to discover who spoke, fearfully, for the doors were shut, and I had seen nobody on approaching the steps.

Something stirred in the porch; and moving nearer, I distinguished a tall man dressed in dark clothes, with dark face and hair. He leant against the side, and held his fingers on the latch, as if intending to open for himself.

‘Who can it be?’ I thought. ‘Mr Earnshaw? Oh, no! The voice has no resemblance to his.’

‘I have waited here an hour,’ he resumed, while I continued staring; ‘and the whole of that time all round has been as still as death. I dared not enter. You do not know me? Look, I’m not a stranger!’

A ray fell on his features; the cheeks were sallow, and half covered with black

whiskers; the brows lowering, the eyes deep set and singular. I remembered the eyes.

‘What!’ I cried, uncertain whether to regard him as a worldly visitor, and I raised my hands in amazement. ‘What! you come back? Is it really you? Is it?’

‘Yes, Heathcliff,’ he replied, glancing from me up to the windows which reflected a score of glittering moons, but showed no lights from within. ‘Are they at home – where is she? Nelly, you are not glad – you needn’t be so disturbed. Is she here? Speak! I wait to have one word with her – your mistress. Go, and say some person from Gimmerton desires to see her.’

‘How will she take it?’ I exclaimed. ‘What will she do? The surprise bewilders me – it will put her out of her head! And you are Heathcliff? But altered! Nay, there’s no comprehending it. Have you been for a soldier?’

‘Go, and carry my message,’ he interrupted impatiently. ‘I’m in hell till you do!’

He lifted the latch, and I entered; but when I got to the parlour where Mr and Mrs Linton were, I could not persuade myself to proceed.

At length, I resolved on making an excuse to ask if they would have the candles lighted, and I opened the door.

They sat together in a window whose lattice lay back against the wall, and displayed, beyond the garden trees and the wild green park, the valley of Gimmerton, with a long line of mist winding nearly to its top (for very soon after you pass the chapel, as you may have noticed, the sough that runs from the marshes joins a beck which follows the bend of the glen), Wuthering Heights rose above this silvery vapour – but our old house was invisible – it rather dips down on the other side.

Both the room, and its occupants, and the scene they gazed on, looked wondrously peaceful. I shrank reluctantly from performing my errand: and was actually going away, leaving it unsaid, after having put my question about the candles, when a sense of my folly compelled me to return, and mutter:

‘A person from Gimmerton wishes to see you, ma’am.’

‘What does he want?’ asked Mrs Linton.

‘I did not question him,’ I answered.

‘Well, close the curtains, Nelly,’ she said; ‘and bring up tea. I’ll be back again directly.’

She quitted the apartment; Mr Edgar inquired, carelessly, who it was.

‘Some one mistress does not expect,’ I replied ‘That Heathcliff, you recollect him, sir, who used to live at Mr Earnshaw’s.’

‘What, the gipsy – the ploughboy?’ he cried. ‘Why did you not say so to Catherine?’

'Hush! you must not call him by those names, master,' I said. 'She'd be sadly grieved to hear you. She was nearly heartbroken when he ran off; I guess his return will make a jubilee to her.'

Mr Linton walked to a window on the other side of the room that overlooked the court. He unfastened it, and leant out. I suppose they were below, for he exclaimed, quickly:

'Don't stand there, love! Bring the person in, if it be any one particular.'

Ere long, I heard the click of the latch, and Catherine flew upstairs, breathless and wild, too excited to show gladness; indeed, by her face, you would rather have surmised an awful calamity.

'Oh, Edgar, Edgar!' she panted, flinging her arms round his neck. 'Oh, Edgar, darling! Heathcliff's come back - he is!' And she tightened her embrace to a squeeze.

'Well, well,' cried her husband, crossly, 'don't strangle me for that! He never struck me as such a marvellous treasure. There is no need to be frantic!'

'I know you didn't like him,' she answered, repressing a little the intensity of her delight. 'Yet, for my sake, you must be friends now. Shall I tell him to come up now?'

'Here?' he said, 'into the parlour?'

'Where else?' she asked.

He looked vexed, and suggested the kitchen as a more suitable place for him.

Mrs Linton eyed him with a droll expression - half angry, half laughing at his fastidiousness.

'No,' she added, after a while: 'I cannot sit in the kitchen. Set two tables here, Ellen; one for your master and Miss Isabella, being gentry; the other for Heathcliff and myself, being of the lower orders. Will that please you, dear? Or must I have a fire lighted elsewhere? If so, give directions. I'll run down and secure my guest. I'm afraid the joy is too great to be real!'

She was about to dart off again; but Edgar arrested her.

'You bid him step up,' he said, addressing me 'and Catherine, try to be glad, without being absurd. The whole household need not witness the sight of your welcoming a runaway servant as a brother.'

I descended and found Heathcliff waiting under the porch, evidently anticipating an invitation to enter. He followed my guidance without waste of words, and I ushered him into the presence of the master and mistress, whose flushed cheeks betrayed signs of warm talking. But the lady's glowed with another feeling when her friend appeared at the door; she sprang forward, took both his hands, and led him to Linton; and then she seized Linton's reluctant fingers and crushed them into his.

Now fully revealed by the fire and candlelight, I was amazed; more than ever, to behold the transformation of Heathcliff. He had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man, beside whom, my master seemed quite slender and youth-like. His upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army. His countenance was much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr Linton's; it looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation. A half-civilized ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows, and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified, quite divested of roughness though too stern for grace.

My master's surprise equalled or exceeded mine: he remained for a minute at a loss how to address the ploughboy, as he had called him. Heathcliff dropped his slight hand, and stood looking at him coolly till he chose to speak.

'Sit down, sir,' he said, at length. 'Mrs Linton, recalling old times, would have me give you a cordial reception, and, of course, I am gratified when anything occurs to please her.'

'And I also,' answered Heathcliff, 'especially if it be anything in which I have a part. I shall stay an hour or two willingly.'

He took a seat opposite Catherine, who kept her gaze fixed on him as if she feared he would vanish were she to remove it. He did not raise his to her, often; a quick glance now and then sufficed; but it flashed back, each time more confidently, the undisguised delight he drank from hers.

They were too much absorbed in their mutual joy to suffer embarrassment; not so Mr Edgar; he grew pale with pure annoyance, a feeling that reached its climax when his lady rose – and stepping across the rug, seized Heathcliff's hands again, and laughed like one beside herself.

'I shall think it a dream tomorrow!' she cried. 'I shall not be able to believe that I have seen, and touched, and spoken to you once more – and yet, cruel Heathcliff! you don't deserve this welcome. To be absent and silent for three years, and never to think of me!'

'A little more than you have thought of me,' he murmured. 'I heard of your marriage, Cathy, not long since; and, while waiting in the yard below, I meditated this plan – just to have one glimpse of your face – a stare of surprise, perhaps, and pretended pleasure; afterwards settle my score with Hindley; and then prevent the law by doing execution on myself. Your welcome has put these ideas out of my mind; but beware of meeting me with another aspect next time! Nay, you'll not drive me off again – you were really sorry for me, were you? Well, there was cause. I've fought through a bitter life since I last heard your voice, and you must forgive me, for I struggled only for you!'

'Catherine, unless we are to have cold tea, please to come to the table,' interrupted Linton, striving to preserve his ordinary tone, and a due measure of politeness. 'Mr Heathcliff will have a long walk, wherever he may lodge tonight and I'm thirsty.'

She took her post before the urn; and Miss Isabella came, summoned by the bell then, having handed their chairs forward, I left the room.

The meal hardly endured ten minutes – Catherine’s cup was never filled, she could neither eat nor drink. Edgar had made a slop in his saucer, and scarcely swallowed a mouthful.

Their guest did not protract his stay, that evening, above an hour longer. I asked, as he departed, if he went to Gimmerton.

‘No, to Wuthering Heights,’ he answered, ‘Mr Earnshaw invited me when I called this morning.’

Mr Earnshaw invited him! and he called on Mr Earnshaw! I pondered this sentence painfully after he was gone. Is he turning out a bit of a hypocrite, and coming into the country to work mischief under a cloak? I mused – I had a presentiment, in the bottom of my heart, that he had better have remained away.

About the middle of the night, I was awakened from my first nap by Mrs Linton gliding into my chamber, taking a seat on my bed-side, and pulling me by the hair to rouse me.

‘I cannot rest, Ellen,’ she said, by way of apology. ‘And I want some living creature to keep me company in my happiness! Edgar is sulky, because I’m glad of a thing that does not interest him – he refuses to open his mouth, except to utter pettish, silly speeches; and he affirmed I was cruel and selfish for wishing to talk when he was so sick and sleepy. He always contrives to be sick at the least cross! I gave a few sentences of commendation to Heathcliff, and he, either for a headache or a pang of envy, began to cry: so I got up and left him.’

‘What use is it praising Heathcliff to him?’ I answered ‘As lads they had an aversion to each other, and Heathcliff would hate just as much to hear him praised – it’s human nature. Let Mr Linton alone about him, unless you would like an open quarrel between them.’

‘But does it not show great weakness?’ pursued she. ‘I’m not envious – I never feel hurt at the brightness of Isabella’s yellow hair, and the whiteness of her skin; at her dainty elegance, and the fondness all the family exhibit for her. Even you, Nelly, if we have a dispute sometimes, you back Isabella at once; and I yield like a foolish mother – I call her a darling, and flatter her into a good temper. It pleases her brother to see us cordial, and that pleases me. But, they are very much alike: they are spoiled children, and fancy the world was made for their accommodation; and, though I humour both, I think a smart chastisement might improve them, all the same.’

‘You’re mistaken, Mrs Linton,’ said I, ‘They humour you – I know what there would be to do if they did not! You can well afford to indulge their passing whims, as long as their business is to anticipate all your desires – You may, however, fall out, at last, over something of equal consequence to both sides; and, then those you term weak are very capable of being as obstinate as you.’

‘And then we shall fight to the death, shan’t we, Nelly?’ she returned, laughing, ‘No, I tell you, I have such faith in Linton’s love that I believe I might kill him, and he wouldn’t wish to retaliate.’

I advised her to value him the more for his affection.

‘I do,’ she answered; ‘but he needn’t resort to whining for trifles. It is childish; and, instead of melting into tears, because I said that Heathcliff was now worthy of any one’s regard, and it would honour the first gentleman in the country to be his friend; he ought to have said it for me, and been delighted from sympathy – He must get accustomed to him, and he may as well like him – considering how Heathcliff has reason to object to him, I’m sure he behaved excellently!’

‘What do you think of his going to Wuthering Heights?’ I inquired. ‘He is reformed in every respect apparently – quite a Christian – offering the right hand of fellowship to his enemies all around!’

‘He explained it,’ she replied. ‘I wondered as much as you – He said he called to gather information concerning me, from you, supposing you resided there still; and Joseph told Hindley, who came out, and fell to questioning him of what he had been doing, and how he had been living: and finally, desired him to walk in – There were some persons sitting at cards – Heathcliff joined them; my brother lost some money to him, and, finding him plentifully supplied, he requested that he would come again in the evening, to which he consented. Hindley is too reckless to select his acquaintance prudently; he doesn’t trouble himself to reflect on the causes he might have for mistrusting one whom he has basely injured – But, Heathcliff affirms his principal reason for resuming a connection with his ancient persecutor is a wish to install himself in quarters at walking distance from the Grange, and an attachment to the house where we lived together, and, likewise, a hope that I shall have more opportunities of seeing him there than I could have if he settled in Gimmerton. He means to offer liberal payment for permission to lodge at the Heights; and doubtless my brother’s covetousness will prompt him to accept the terms; he was always greedy, though what he grasps with one hand, he flings away with the other.’

‘It’s a nice place for a young man to fix his dwelling in!’ said I. ‘Have you no fear of the consequences, Mrs Linton?’

‘None for my friend,’ she replied, ‘his strong head will keep him from danger – a little for Hindley; but he can’t be made morally worse than he is; and I stand between him and bodily harm – The event of this evening had reconciled me to God, and humanity! I had risen in angry rebellion against Providence – Oh, I’ve endured very, very bitter misery, Nelly! If that creature knew how bitter, he’d be ashamed to cloud its removal with idle petulance – It was kindness for him which induced me to bear it alone: had I expressed the agony I frequently felt, he would have been taught to long for its alleviation as ardently as I – However it’s over, and I’ll take no revenge on his folly – I can afford to suffer anything, hereafter! should the meanest thing alive slap me on the cheek, I’d not only turn the other, but I’d ask pardon for provoking it – and, as a proof, I’ll go make my peace with Edgar instantly – Good night – I’m an angel!’

In this self-complacent conviction she departed; and the success of her fulfilled resolution was obvious on the morrow – Mr Linton had not only abjured his peevishness (though his spirits seemed still subdued by Catherine’s exuberance of vivacity), but he ventured no objection to her taking Isabella with her to Wuthering Heights, in the afternoon; and she rewarded him with such a summer of sweetness and affection, in return, as made the house a paradise for

several days, both master and servants profiting from the perpetual sunshine.

Heathcliff – Mr Heathcliff, I should say in future – used the liberty of visiting Thrushcross Grange cautiously, at first: he seemed estimating how far its owner would bear his intrusion. Catherine, also, deemed it judicious to moderate her expressions of pleasure in receiving him; and he gradually established his right to be expected.

He retained a great deal of the reserve for which his boyhood was remarkable, and that served to repress all startling demonstrations of feeling. My master's uneasiness experienced a lull, and further circumstances diverted it into another channel for a space.

His new source of trouble sprang from the not anticipated misfortune of Isabella Linton evincing a sudden and irresistible attraction towards the tolerated guest – She was at that time a charming young lady of eighteen; infantile in manners, though possessed of keen wit, keen feelings, and a keen temper, too, if irritated. Her brother, who loved her tenderly, was appalled at this fantastic preference. Leaving aside the degradation of an alliance with a nameless man, and the possible fact that his property, in default of heirs male, might pass into such a one's power, he had sense to comprehend Heathcliff's disposition – to know that, though his exterior was altered, his mind was unchangeable, and unchanged. And he dreaded that mind; it revolted him; he shrank forebodingly from the idea of committing Isabella to its keeping.

He would have recoiled still more had he been aware that her attachment rose unsolicited, and was bestowed where it awakened no reciprocation of sentiment; for the minute he discovered its existence, he laid the blame on Heathcliff's deliberate designing.

We had all remarked, during some time, that Miss Linton fretted and pined over something. She grew cross and wearisome; snapping at and teasing Catherine continually, at the imminent risk of exhausting her limited patience. We excused her to a certain extent, on the plea of ill-health – she was dwindling and fading before our eyes – But one day, when she had been particularly wayward, rejecting her breakfast, complaining that the servants did not do what she told them; that the mistress would allow her to be nothing in the house, and Edgar neglected her; that she had caught a cold with the doors being left open, and we let the parlour fire go out on purpose to vex her; with a hundred yet more frivolous accusations; Mrs Linton peremptorily insisted that she should get to bed; and, having scolded her heartily, threatened to send for the doctor.

Mention of Kenneth caused her to exclaim, instantly, that her health was perfect, and it was only Catherine's harshness which made her unhappy.

'How can you say I'm harsh, you naughty fondling?' cried the mistress, amazed at the unreasonable assertion. 'You are surely losing your reason. When have I been harsh, tell me?'

'Yesterday,' sobbed Isabella, 'and now!'

'Yesterday!' said her sister-in-law. 'On what occasion?'

'In our walk along the moor; you told me to ramble where I pleased, while you

sauntered on with Mr Heathcliff!’

‘And that’s your notion of harshness?’ said Catherine, laughing. ‘It was no hint that your company was superfluous; we didn’t care whether you kept with us or not; I merely thought Heathcliff’s talk would have nothing entertaining for your ears.’

‘Oh no,’ wept the young lady, ‘you wished me away, because you know I liked to be there!’

‘Is she sane?’ asked Mrs Linton, appealing to me.

‘I’ll repeat our conversation, word for word, Isabella and you point out any charm it could have had for you.’

‘I don’t mind the conversation,’ she answered: ‘I wanted to be with –’

‘Well!’ said Catherine, perceiving her hesitate to complete the sentence.

‘With him; and I won’t be always sent off!’ she continued, kindling up. ‘You are a dog in the manger, Cathy, and desire no one to be loved but yourself!’

‘You are an impertinent little monkey!’ exclaimed Mrs Linton, in surprise. ‘But I’ll not believe this idiocy! It is impossible that you can covet the admiration of Heathcliff – that you can consider him an agreeable person! I hope I have misunderstood you, Isabella?’

‘No, you have not,’ said the infatuated girl. ‘I love him more than ever you loved Edgar; and he might love me, if you would let him!’

‘I wouldn’t be you for a kingdom, then!’ Catherine declared, emphatically – and she seemed to speak sincerely. ‘Nelly, help me to convince her of her madness. Tell her what Heathcliff is – an unreclaimed creature, without refinement, without cultivation; an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone. I’d as soon put that little canary into the park on a winter’s day as recommend you to bestow your heart on him! It is deplorable ignorance of his character, child, and nothing else, which makes that dream enter your head. Pray, don’t imagine that he conceals depths of benevolence and affection beneath a stern exterior! He’s not a rough diamond – a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic; he’s a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. I never say to him let this or that enemy alone, because it would be ungenerous or cruel to harm them, I say – “Let them alone, because I should hate them to be wronged”: and he’d crush you, like a sparrow’s egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge. I know he couldn’t love a Linton; and yet, he’d be quite capable of marrying your fortune and expectations. Avarice is growing with him a besetting sin. There’s my picture; and I’m his friend – so much so, that had he thought seriously to catch you, I should, perhaps, have held my tongue, and let you fall into his trap.’

Miss Linton regarded her sister-in-law with indignation.

‘For shame! for shame!’ she repeated, angrily. ‘You are worse than twenty foes, you poisonous friend!’

‘Ah, you won’t believe me, then?’ said Catherine. ‘You think I speak from wicked

selfishness?’

‘I’m certain you do,’ retorted Isabella; ‘and I shudder at you!’

‘Good!’ cried the other. ‘Try for yourself, if that be your spirit; I have done, and yield the argument to your saucy insolence.’

‘And I must suffer for her egotism!’ she sobbed, as Mrs Linton left the room. ‘All, all is against me; she has blighted my single consolation. But she uttered falsehoods, didn’t she? Mr Heathcliff is not a fiend; he has an honourable soul, and a true one, or how could he remember her?’

‘Banish him from your thoughts, Miss,’ I said. ‘He’s a bird of bad omen; no mate for you. Mrs Linton spoke strongly, and yet, I can’t contradict her. She is better acquainted with his heart than I, or any one besides; and she never would represent him as worse than he is. Honest people don’t hide their deeds. How has he been living? how has he got rich? why is he staying at Wuthering Heights, the house of a man whom he abhors? They say Mr Earnshaw is worse and worse since he came. They sit up all night together continually: and Hindley has been borrowing money on his land; and does nothing but play and drink, I heard only a week ago; it was Joseph who told me – I met him at Gimmerton:

“‘Nelly,” he said, “we’s hae a Crahn’s ’quest enah, at ahr folks. One on ’em’s a’most gotten his finger cut off wi’ haudin’ t’ other froo’ sticking hisselsn loike a cawlf. That’s maister, yah know, ut’s soa up uh going tuh t’ grand ’sizes. He’s noan feard uh t’ Bench uh judges, norther Paul, nur Peter, nur John, nur Mathew, nur noan on ’em, nut he! He fair likes he langs tuh set his brazened face agean ’em! And yon bonny lad Heathcliff, yah mind, he’s a rare un! He can girn a laugh, as weel’s onybody at a raight divil’s jest. Does he niver say nowt of his fine living amang us, when he goas tuh t’ Grange? This is t’ way on ’t – up at sun-dahn; dice, brandy, cloised shutters, und can’le lught till next day, at nooin – then, t’ fooil gangs banning un raving tuh his cham’er, makking dacent fowks dig thur fingers i’ thur lugs fur varry shaume; un’ th’ knave, wah, he carn cahnt his brass, un’ ate, un’ sleep, un off tuh his neighbour’s tuh gossip wi’ t’ wife. I’ course, he tells Dame Catherine hah hor fathur’s goold runs intuh his pocket, and her fathur’s son gallops dahn t’ Broad road, while he flees afore tuh oppen t’ pikes?” Now, Miss Linton, Joseph is an old rascal, but no liar; and, if his account of Heathcliff’s conduct be true, you would never think of desiring such a husband, would you?’

‘You are leagued with the rest, Ellen!’ she replied. ‘I’ll not listen to your slanders. What malevolence you must have to wish to convince me that there is no happiness in the world!’

Whether she would have got over this fancy if left to herself, or persevered in nursing it perpetually, I cannot say; she had little time to reflect. The day after, there was a justice-meeting at the next town; my master was obliged to attend; and Mr Heathcliff, aware of his absence, called rather earlier than usual.

Catherine and Isabella were sitting in the library, on hostile terms, but silent. The latter alarmed at her recent indiscretion, and the disclosure she had made of her secret feelings in a transient fit of passion; the former, on mature consideration, really offended with her companion; and, if she laughed

again at her pertness, inclined to make it no laughing matter to her.

She did laugh as she saw Heathcliff pass the window. I was sweeping the hearth, and I noticed a mischievous smile on her lips. Isabella, absorbed in her meditations, or a book, remained till the door opened, and it was too late to attempt an escape, which she would gladly have done had it been practicable.

‘Come in, that’s right!’ exclaimed the mistress, gaily, pulling a chair to the fire, ‘Here are two people sadly in need of a third to thaw the ice between them; and you are the very one we should both of us choose. Heathcliff, I’m proud to show you, at last, somebody that dotes on you more than myself. I expect you to feel flattered – nay, it’s not Nelly; don’t look at her! My poor little sister-in-law is breaking her heart by mere contemplation of your physical and moral beauty. It lies in your own power to be Edgar’s brother! No, no, Isabella, you sha’n’t run off,’ she continued, arresting, with feigned playfulness, the confounded girl, who had risen indignantly. ‘We were quarrelling like cats about you, Heathcliff; and I was fairly beaten in protestations of devotion and admiration; and, moreover, I was informed that if I would but have the manners to stand aside, my rival, as she will have herself to be, would shoot a shaft into your soul that would fix you for ever, and send my image into eternal oblivion!’

‘Catherine!’ said Isabella, calling up her dignity, and disdaining to struggle from the tight grasp that held her. ‘I’d thank you to adhere to the truth and not slander me, even in joke! Mr Heathcliff, be kind enough to bid this friend of yours release me – she forgets that you and I are not intimate acquaintances, and what amuses her is painful to me beyond expression.’

As the guest answered nothing, but took his seat, and looked thoroughly indifferent what sentiments she cherished concerning him, she turned, and whispered an earnest appeal for liberty to her tormentor.

‘By no means!’ cried Mrs Linton in answer. ‘I won’t be named a dog in the manger again. You shall stay, now then! Heathcliff, why don’t you evince satisfaction at my pleasant news? Isabella swears that the love Edgar has for me is nothing to that she entertains for you. I’m sure she made some speech of the kind, did she not, Ellen? And she has fasted ever since the day before yesterday’s walk, from sorrow and rage that I despatched her out of your society, under the idea of its being unacceptable.’

‘I think you belie her,’ said Heathcliff, twisting his chair to face them. ‘She wishes to be out of my society now, at any rate!’

And he stared hard at the object of discourse, as one might do at a strange repulsive animal, a centipede from the Indies, for instance, which curiosity leads one to examine in spite of the aversion it raises.

The poor thing couldn’t bear that; she grew white and red in rapid succession, and, while tears beaded her lashes, bent the strength of her small fingers to loosen the firm clutch of Catherine, and perceiving that, as fast as she raised one finger off her arm, another closed down, and she could not remove the whole together, she began to make use of her nails, and their sharpness presently ornamented the detainer’s with crescents of red.

‘There’s a tigress!’ exclaimed Mrs Linton, setting her free, and shaking her hand with pain. ‘Begone, for God’s sake, and hide your vixen face! How foolish to reveal those talons to him. Can’t you fancy the conclusions he’ll draw? Look, Heathcliff! they are instruments that will do execution – you must beware of your eyes.’

‘I’d wrench them off her fingers, if they ever menaced me,’ he answered, brutally, when the door had closed after her. ‘But what did you mean by teasing the creature in that manner, Cathy? You were not speaking the truth, were you?’

‘I assure you I was,’ she returned. ‘She has been pining for your sake several weeks; and raving about you this morning, and pouring forth a deluge of abuse, because I represented your failings in a plain light for the purpose of mitigating her adoration. But don’t notice it further. I wished to punish her sauciness, that’s all – I like her too well, my dear Heathcliff, to let you absolutely seize and devour her up.’

‘And I like her too ill to attempt it,’ said he, ‘except in a very ghoulis fashion. You’d hear of odd things, if I lived alone with that mawkish, waxen face; the most ordinary would be painting on its white the colours of the rainbow, and turning the blue eyes black, every day or two; they detestably resemble Linton’s.’

‘Delectably,’ observed Catherine. ‘They are dove’s eyes – angel’s!’

‘She’s her brother’s heir, is she not?’ he asked, after a brief silence.

‘I should be sorry to think so,’ returned his companion. ‘Half a dozen nephews shall erase her title, please Heaven! Abstract your mind from the subject, at present – you are too prone to covet your neighbour’s goods: remember, this neighbour’s goods are mine.’

‘If they were mine, they would be none the less that,’ said Heathcliff, ‘but though Isabella Linton may be silly, she is scarcely mad; and – in short, we’ll dismiss the matter, as you advise.’

From their tongues, they did dismiss it; and Catherine, probably, from her thoughts. The other, I felt certain, recalled it often in the course of the evening. I saw him smile to himself – grin rather – and lapse into ominous musing whenever Mrs Linton had occasion to be absent from the apartment.

I determined to watch his movements. My heart invariably cleaved to the master’s, in preference to Catherine’s side; with reason, I imagined, for he was kind, and trustful, and honourable; and she – she could not be called the opposite, yet she seemed to allow herself such wide latitude, that I had little faith in her principles, and still less sympathy for her feelings. I wanted something to happen which might have the effect of freeing both Wuthering Heights and the Grange of Mr Heathcliff, quietly, leaving us as we had been prior to his advent. His visits were a continual nightmare to me; and, I suspected, to my master also. His abode at the Heights was an oppression past explaining. I felt that God had forsaken the stray sheep there to its own wicked wanderings, and an evil beast prowled between it and the fold, waiting his time to spring and destroy.