

How Things Came Round

By

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Freeditorial 

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“They say, when cities grow too big,
Their smoke may make the skies look dim;
And so may life hide God from us,
But still it cannot alter Him.
And age and sorrow clear the soul,
As night and silence clear the sky,
And hopes steal out like silver stars,
And next day brightens by and by.”

Isabella Fyvie Mayo.

On the Monday morning, we left Gloucester on horseback, with two baggagehorses beside those we rode. We dined at Worcester, and lay that night at Bridgenorth. On the Tuesday, we slept at Macclesfield; on the Wednesday, at Colne; on the Thursday, at Appleby; and on Friday, about four o'clock in the afternoon, we reached home.

On the steps, waiting for us, stood Father and Sophy.

I had not been many minutes in the house before I felt, in some inward, indescribable way, that things were changed. I wonder what that is by which we feel things that we cannot know? It was not the house which was altered. The old things, which I had known from a child, all seemed to bid me welcome home. It was Father and Sophy in whom the change was. It was not like Sophy to kiss me so warmly, and call me “darling.” And I was not one bit like Father to stroke my hair, and say so solemnly, “God bless my lassie!” I have had many a kiss and a loving word from him, but I never heard him speak of God except when he repeated the responses in church, or when

I wondered what had come to Father. And how I did wonder when after supper Sam brought, not a pack of cards, but the big Bible which used to lie in the hall window with such heaps of dust on it, and he and Maria and Bessy sat down on the settle at the end of the hall, and Father, in a voice which trembled a little, read a Psalm, and then we knelt down, and said the Confession, and the General Thanksgiving, and the Lord's Prayer. I looked at my Aunt Kezia, and saw that this was nothing new to her. And then I remembered all at once that she had hinted at something which we should see when we came home, and had bidden us keep our eyes open.

The pack of cards did not come out at all.

The next morning I was the first to come down. I found Sam setting the table in the parlour. We exchanged goodmorrrows, and Sam hoped I was not very tired with the journey. Then he said, without looking up, as he went on with his work

“Ye’ll ha’e found some changes here, I’m thinking, Miss.”

“I saw one last night, Sam,” said I, smiling.

“There’s mair nor ane,” he replied. “There’s three things i’ this warld that can ne’er lie hidden: ye may try to cover them up, but they’ll ay out, sooner or later. And that’s blood, and truth, and the grace o’ God.”

“I am not so sure the truth of things always comes out, Sam,” said I.

“Ye’ve no been sae lang i’ this warld as me, Miss Cary,” said Sam. “And ’deed, sometimes ’tis a lang while first. But the grace o’ God shows up quick, mostly. ’Tis its nature to be hard at wark. Ye’ll no put barm into a batch o’ flour, and ha’e it lying idle. And the kingdom o’ Heaven is like unto leaven: it maun wark. Ay, who shall let it?”

“Is Mr Liversedge well liked, Sam?” I asked, when I had thought a little.

“He’s weel eneuch liked o’ them as is weel liking,” said Sam, setting his forks in their places. “The angels like him, I’ve nae doubt; and the lost sheep like him: but he does nae gang doun sae weel wi’ the ninety and nine. They’d hae him a bit harder on the sinners, and a bit safter wi’ the saintsspecially wi’ theirsels, wha are the vara crown and flower o’ a’ the saints, and ne’er were sinnersno to speak o’, ye ken, and outside the responses. And he disna gang saft and slippy doun their throats, as they’d ha’e him, but he is just main hard on ’em. He tells ’em gin they’re saints they suld live like saints, and they’d like the repute o’ being saints without the fash o’ living. He did himsel a main deal o’ harm wi’ siclike by a discourse some time ganeye’ll judge what like it was when I tell ye the Scripture it was on: ‘He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.’ And there’s a gey lot of folks i’ this warld ’d like vara weel to abide, but they’re a hantle too lazy to walk. And the minister, he comes and stirs ’em up wi’ the staff o’ the Word, and bids ’em get up and gang their ways, and no keep sat doun o’ the promises, divertin’ theirsels wi’ watching ither folk trip. He’s vara legal, Miss Cary, is the minister; he reckons folk suld be washed all o’er, and no just dip their tongues in the fountain, and keep their hearts out. He disna make much count o’ giving the Lord your tongue, and ay hauding the De’il by the hand ahint your back. And the o’er gude folks disna like that. They’d liever keep friendly wi’ baith.”

“Then you think the promises were not made to be sat on, Sam?” said I, feeling much diverted with Sam’s quaint way of putting things.

Sam settled the creamjug and sugarbowl before he answered.

“I’ll tell ye how it is, Miss. The promises was made to be lain on by weary, heavyladen sinners that come for rest, and want to lay down both theirsels and their burden o’ sins on the Lord’s heart o’ love: but they were ne’er made for auld Jeshurun to sit on and wax fat, and kick the puir burdened creatures as they come toiling up the hill. Last time I was in Carlisle, I went to see a kinsman o’ mine there as has set up i’ the cabinetmaking trade, and he showed me a balk o’ yon bonnie new wood as they ha’e gotten o’er o’ latethe auld Vicar used to ha’e his diningtable on’t; it comes frae some outlandish pairts, and they call it a queer name; I canna just mind it the noo I reckon I’m getting too auld to tak’ in new notions.”

“Mahogany?”

“Ay, maybe that’s it: I ken it minded me o’ mud and muggins. Atweel, my cousin tauld me they’d a rare call for siccan wood, and being vara costly, they’d hit o’ late in the trade on a new way o’ making furniture, as did nae come to sae micklethey ca’ it veneer.”

“Oh yes, I know,” said I.

“Ay, ye’ll hae seen it i’ London toun, I daur say? all that’s bad’s safe to gang there.” I believe Sam thinks all Londoners a pack of thieves. “Atweel, Miss Cary, there’s a gran’ sicht o’ veneered Christians i’ this country. They look as spicspan, and as glossy, and just the richt shade o’ colour, and bonnily grained, and a’ thattill ye get ahint ’em, and then ye see that, saving a thin bit o’ facing, they’re just common deal, like ither folk. Ay, and it’s maistly the warst bits o’ the deal as is used up ahint the veneer. It is, sae! Ye see, ’tis no meant to last, but only to sell. And there’s a monie folks ’ll gi’e the best price for siclike, and fancy they ha’e gotten the true thing. But I’m thinkin’ the King ’ll no gi’e the price. His eyes are as a flame o’ fire, and they’ll see richt through siccan rubbish, and burn it up.”

“And Mr Liversedge, I suppose, is the real mahogany?”

“He is sae: and he’s a gey awkward way of seeing ahint thae bits o’ veneered stuff, and finding out they’re no worth the money. And they dinna like him onie better for ’t.”

“But I hope he does not make a mistake the other way, Sam, and take the real thing for the veneer?”

“You trust him for that. He was no born yestre’en. There’s a hantle o’ folk makes that blunder, though.”

Away went Sam for the kettle. When he brought it back, he said, “Miss Cary, ye’ll mind Annie Crosthwaite, as lives wi’ auld Mally?”

Ah, did I not remember Annie Crosthwaite? poor, fragile, pretty spring flower, that some cruel hand plucked and threw away, and men trod on the bemired blossom as it lay in the mire, and women drew their skirts aside to keep from touching the torn, soiled petals? “Yes, Sam,” I said, in a low voice.

“Ay, the minister brought yon puir lassie a message frae the gude Lord ‘Yet return again to Me’ and she just took it as heartily as it was gi’en, and went and fand restpuir, straying, lost sheep! but when she came to the table o’ the Lord, the ninety and nine wad ha’e nane o’ hershe was gude eneuch for Him in the white robe o’ His richteousness, but she was no near gude eneuch for them, sin she had lost her ainand not ane soul i’ a’ the parish wad kneel down aside o’ her. Miss Cary, I ne’er saw the minister’s e’en flash out sparks o’ fire as they did when he heard that! And what, think ye, said he?”

“I should like to hear, Sam.”

“‘Vara gude,’ says he. ‘I beg,’ he says, ‘that none o’ ye all will come to the Table tomorrow. Annie Crosthwaite and I will gang thither our lane: but there’ll be three,’ says he, ‘for the blessed Lord Himsel’ will come and eat wi’ us, and we wi’ Him, for He receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.’ And he did it, for a’ they tald him the Bishop wad be doun on him. ‘Let him,’ says he, ‘and he shall hear the haill story’: and not ane o’ them a’ wad he let come that morn. They were no worthy, he said.”

“And did the Bishop hear of it?”

“Ay, did he, and sent doun a big chiel, like an auld eagle, wi’ a’ his feathers ruffled the wrang way. But the minister, he stood his ground: ‘There were three, Mr Archdeacon,’ says he, as quiet as a milltarn, ‘and the Lord Himsel’ made the third.’ ‘And how am I to ken that?’ says the big chiel, ruffling up his feathers belike. ‘Will ye be sae gude as to ask Him?’ says the minister. I dinna ken what the big chiel made o’ the tale to the Bishop, but we heard nae mair on’t. Maybe he did ask Him, and gat the auld answer, ‘Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophet no harm.’”

“Still, rules ought to be kept, Sam.”

“Rules ought to be kept in ordinar’. But this was byeordinar’, ye see. If a big lad has been tauld no to gang frae the parlour till his faither comes back, and he sees his little brither drooning in the pond just afore the window, I reckon his faither ’ll no be mickle angered if he jumps out of the window and saves him. Any way, I wad nae like to ha’e what he’d get, gin he said, ‘Faither, ye bade me tarry in this chalmer, and sae I could nae do a hand’s turn for Willie.’ Rules are man’s, Miss Cary, but truth and souls belang to God.”

My Aunt Kezia and Sophy had come in while Sam was talking, and Father and Hatty followed now, so we sat down to breakfast.

“Sam has told you one story, girls,” said my Aunt Kezia, “and I will tell you another. You will find the singers changed when you go to church. Dan Oldfield and Susan Nixon are gone.”

“Dan and Susan!” cried Hatty. “The two best voices in the gallery!”

“Well, you know, under old Mr Digby, there always used to be an anthem before the service began, in which Dan and Susan did their best to show off. The second week that Mr Liversedge was here, he stopped the anthem. Up started the singers, and told him they would not stand it. It wasn’t worth their while coming just for the psalms. Mr Liversedge heard them out quietly, and then said, ‘Do you mean what you have just said?’ Yes, to be sure they meant it. ‘Then consider yourselves dismissed from the gallery without more words,’ says he. ‘You are not worthy to sing the praises of Him before whom multitudes of angels veil their faces. Not worth your while to praise God! but worth your while to show man what fine voices He gave you whom you think scorn to thank for it!’ And he turned them off there and then.”

The next time I was alone with Sophy, she said to me, with tears in her eyes, “Cary, I don’t want you to reckon me worse than I am. That is bad enough, in all conscience. I would have knelt down with Annie Crosthwaite, and so, I am sure, would my Aunt Kezia; but it was while she was up in London with you, and Father was so poorly with the gout, I could not leave him. You see there was nobody to take my place, with all of you away. Please don’t fancy I was one of those that refused, for indeed it was not so.”

“I fancy you are a dear, good Sophy,” said I, kissing her; “and I suppose, if Mr Liversedge asked you to shake hands with a chimneysweep just come down the chimney, you would be delighted to do it.”

“Well, perhaps I might,” said Sophy, laughing. “But that, Cary, I should have done, not for him, but for our Master.”

I found that I liked Mr Liversedge very much, as one would wish to like a brother-in-law that was to be. His whole heart seems to be in his Lord's work: and if, perhaps, he is a little sharp and abrupt at times, I think it is simply because he sees everything quickly and distinctly, and speaks as he sees. I was afraid he would have something of the pope about him, but I find he is not like that at all. He lets you alone for all mere differences of opinion, though he will talk them over with you readily if he sees that you wish it. But let those keen, black eyes perceive something which he thinks sin, and down he comes on you in the very manner of the old prophets. Yet show him that he has made a mistake, and that your action was justified, and he begs your forgiveness in a moment. And I never saw a man who seemed more fitted to deal with brokenhearted sinners. To them he is tenderness and comfort itself.

"He just takes pattern frae his Maister; that's whaur it is," said old Elspie. "Mind ye, He was unco gentle wi' the puir despised publicans, and vara tender to the wife that had been a sinner. It was the Pharisees He was hard on. And that's just what the minister is. Miss Cary, he's just the best blessing the Lord ever sent till Brocklebank!"

"I hardly thought, Elspie," said I, a little mischievously, "to hear you speak so well of a Prelatist clergyman."

"Hoot awa', we a' ha'e our bees in our bonnets, Miss Cary," said the old woman, a trifle testily. "The minister's no pairfect, I daur say. But he's as gran' at praying as John Knox himself and he gars ye feel the loue and louelness o' Christ like Maister Rutherford did. And sae lang 's he'll do that, I'm no like to quarrel wi' him, if he do ha'e a fancy for lawn sleeves and siccan rubbish, I wish him better sense, that's a'. Maybe he'll ha'e it ane o' thae days."

I cannot understand Hatty as she is now. For a while after that affair with the Crosslands she was just like a drooping, brokendown flower; all her pertness, and even her brightness, completely gone. Now that is changed, and she has become, not pert again, but hardhard and bitter. Nobody can do anything to suit her, and she says things now and then which make me jump. Things, I mean, as if she believed nothing and cared for nobody. When Hatty speaks in that way, I often see my Aunt Kezia looking at her with a strange light in her eyes, which seems to be half pain and half hopefulness. Mr Liversedge, I fancy, is studying her; and I am not sure that he knows what to make of her.

Yesterday evening, Fanny and Ambrose came in and sat a while. Fanny is ever so much improved. She has brightened up, and lost much of that languid, limp, fanciful way she used to have; and, instead of writing odes to the stars, she seems to take an interest in

her poultryyard and dairy. My Aunt Kezia says Fanny wanted an object in life, and I suppose she has it now.

When they had been there about an hour, Mr Liversedge came in. He does not visit Sophy often; I fancy he is too busy; but Tuesday evening is usually his leisure time, so far as he can be said to have one, and he generally spends it here when he can. He and Ambrose presently fell into discourse upon the parish, and somehow they got to talking of what a clergyman's duties were. Ambrose thought if he baptised and married and buried people, and administered the sacrament four times a year, and preached every month or so, and went to see sick people when they sent for him, he had done all that could be required, and might quite reasonably spend the rest of his time in hunting either foxes or Latin and Greek, according as his liking led him.

"You think Christ spent His life so?" asked Mr Liversedge, in that very quiet tone in which he says his sharpest things, and which reminds me so often of Colonel Keith.

Ambrose looked as if he did not know what to say; and before he had found out, Mr Liversedge went on,

"Because, you see, He left me an example, that I should follow His steps."

"Mr Liversedge, I thought you were orthodox."

"I certainly should have thought so, as long as I quoted Scripture," said the Vicar.

"But, you know, nobody does such a thing," said Ambrose.

"Then is it not high time somebody should?"

"Mr Liversedge, you will never get promotion, if that be the way you are going on."

"In which world?"

"Which world! There is only one."

"I thought there were two."

Ambrose fidgetted uneasily on his chair.

"I tell you what, my good Sir, you are on the way to preach your church empty. The pews have no souls to be saved, I believe," and Ambrose chuckled over his little joke.

“What of the souls of the absent congregation?” asked Mr Liversedge.

“Oh, they’ll have to get saved elsewhere,” answered Ambrose.

“Then, if they do get saved, what reason shall I have to regret their absence? But suppose they do not, Mr Catterall, is that my loss or theirs?”

“Why couldn’t you keep them?” said Ambrose.

“At what cost?” was the Vicar’s answer.

“A little more music and rather less thunder,” said Ambrose, laughing. “Give us back the anthem you have no idea how many have taken seats at All Saints’ because of that. And do you know your discarded singers are there?”

“All Saints’ is heartily welcome to everybody that has gone there,” replied Mr Liversedge. “If I drive them away by preaching error, I shall answer to God for their souls. But if men choose to go because they find truth unpalatable, I have no responsibility for them. The Lord has not given me those souls; that is plain. If He have given them to another sower of seed, by all means let them go to him as fast as they can.”

“Mr Liversedge, I do believe,” Ambrose drew his chair back an inch “I do almost think you must be a Calvinist.”

“It is not catching, I assure you, Mr Catterall.”

“But are you?”

“That depends on what you mean. I certainly do not go blindly over hedge and ditch after the opinions of John Calvin. I am not sure that any one does.”

“No, but you believe that people are elect or nonelect; and if they be elect, they will be saved, however they live, and if they be not, they must needs be lost, however good they are. Excuse my speaking so freely.”

“I am very much obliged to you for it. No, Mr Catterall, I do not believe anything of the sort. If that be what you mean by Calvinism, I abhor it as heartily as you do.”

“Why, I thought all Calvinists believed that!”

“I answer most emphatically, No. I believe that men are elect, but that they are elected ‘unto sanctification’: and a man who has not the sanctification shows plainly unless he repent and amend that he is not one of the elect.”

“Now I know a man who says, rolling the whites of his eyes and clasping his palms together as if he were always saying his prayers, like the figures on that old fellow’s tomb in the chancel he says he was elected to salvation from all eternity, and cannot possibly be lost: and he is the biggest swearer and drinker in the parish. What say you to that? Am I to believe him?”

“Can you manage it?”

“I can’t: that is exactly the thing.”

“Don’t, then. I could not.”

“But now, do you believe, Mr Liversedge, I have picked up the words from this fellow that God elected men because He foreknew them, or that He foreknew because He had elected them?”

Ambrose gave a little wink at Fanny and me, sitting partly behind him, as if he thought that he had driven the Vicar completely into a corner.

“When the Angel Gabriel is sent to tell me, Mr Catterall, I shall be most happy to let you know. Until then, you must excuse my deciding a question on which I am entirely ignorant.”

Ambrose looked rather blank.

“Well, then, Mr Liversedge, as to freewill. Do you think that every man can be saved, if he likes, or not?”

“Let Christ answer you not me. ‘No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him.’”

“Ah! then man has no responsibility?” And Ambrose gave another wink at us.

“Let Christ answer you again. ‘Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life.’ If they had come, you see, they might have had it.”

“But how do you reconcile the two?” said Ambrose, knitting his brows.

“When the Lord commands me to reconcile them, He will show me how. But I do not expect Him to do either, in this world. To what extent our knowledge on such subjects may be enlarged in Heaven, I cannot venture to say.”

“But surely you must reconcile them?”

“Pardon me. I must act on them.”

“Can you act on principles you cannot reconcile?”

“Certainly if you can put full trust in their proposer. Every child does it, every day. You will be a long while in the dark, Mr Catterall, if you must know why a candle burns before you light it. Better be content to have the light, and work by it.”

“There are more sorts of light than one,” said my Aunt Kezia.

“That is the best light by which you see clearest,” was the Vicar’s answer.

“What have you got to see?” asked Ambrose.

“Your sins and your Saviour,” was the reply. “And till you have looked well at both those, Mr Catterall, and are sure that you have laid the sins upon the Sacrifice, it is as well not to look much at anything else.”

I think Ambrose found that he was in the corner this time, and just the kind of corner that he did not care to get in. At any rate, he said no more.

Sophy’s wedding, which took place this evening, was the quietest I ever saw. She let Mr Liversedge say how everything should be, and he seemed to like it as plain and simple as possible. No bridesmaids, no favours, no dancing, no throwing the stocking, no fuss of any sort! I asked him if he had any objection to a cake.

“None at all,” said he, “so long as you don’t want me to eat it. And pray don’t let us have any sugary Cupids on the top, nor any rubbish of that sort.”

So the cake was quite plain, but I took care it should be particularly good, and Hatty made a wreath of spring flowers to put round it.

The house feels so quiet and empty now, when all is over, and Sophy gone. Of course she is not really gone, because the Vicarage is only across a couple of fields, and ten minutes will take us there at any time. But she is not one of us any longer, and that always feels sad.

I do feel, somehow, very sorrowful tonightmore, I think, than I have any reason. I cannot tell why sometimes a sort of tired, sad feeling comes over one, when there seems to be no cause for it. I feel as if I had not something I wanted: and yet, if anybody asked me what I wanted, I am not sure that I could tell. Or rather, I am afraid I could tell, but I don't want to say so. There is something gone out of my life which I wanted more of, and since we came home I have had none of it, or next to none. No, little book, I am not going to tell you what it is. Only there is a reason for my feeling sad, and I must keep it to myself, and never let anybody know it. I suppose other women have had to do the same thing many a time. And some of them, perhaps, grow hard and cold, and say bitter things, and people dislike and avoid them, not knowing that if they lifted up the curtain of their hearts they would see a grave there, in which all their hopes were buried long ago. Well, God knows best, and will do His best for us all. How can I wish for anything more?

When we went up to bed last night, to my surprise Hatty came to me, and put her arms round me.

"There are only us two left now, Cary," she said. "And I know I have been very bitter and unloving of late. But I mean to try and do better, dear. Will you love me as much as you can, and help me? I have been very unhappy."

"I was afraid so, and I was very sorry for you," I answered, kissing her. "Must I not ask anything, Hatty?"

"You can ask what you like," she replied. "I think, Cary, that Christ was knocking at my door, and I did not want to open it; and I could not be happy while I knew that I was keeping Him outside. And at last it was last night, in the sermon He spoke to me, as it were, through that closed door; and I could not bear it any longer I had to rise and open it, and let Him in. And before that, with Him, I kept everybody out; and now I feel as if, with Him, I wanted to take everybody in."

Dear Hatty! She seems so changed, and so happy, and I am so thankful. But my prospect looks very dark. It ought not to do so, for I let Him in before Hatty did; and I suppose some day it will be clearer, and I shall have nobody but Him, and shall be satisfied with it.

You thought you knew a great deal of what was going to happen, did you not, Cary Courtenay? Such a wise girl you were! And how little you did know!

This evening, Esther Langridge came in, and stayed to supper. She said Ephraim had gone to the Parsonage on business, and had promised to call for her on his way home. He came rather later than Esther expected. (We have only seen him twice since we returned from London, except just meeting at church and so forth: he seemed to be always busy.) He said he had had to see Mr Liversedge, and had been detained later than he thought. He sat and talked to all of us for a while, but I thought his mind seemed somewhere else. I guessed where, and thought I found myself right whet after a time, when Father had come in, and Ambrose with him, and they were all talking over the fire, Ephraim left them, and coming across to my corner, asked me first thing if I had heard anything from Annas.

I have not had a line from her, nor heard anything of her, and he looked disappointed when I said so. He was silent for a minute, and then he said,

“Cary, what do you think I have been making up my mind to do?”

“I do not know, Ephraim,” said I. I did not see how that could have to do with Annas, for I believed he had made up his mind on that subject long ago.

“Would you be very much surprised if I told you that I mean to take holy orders?”

“Ephraim!” I was very, very much surprised. How would Annas like it?

“Yes, I thought you would be,” said he. “It is no new idea to me. But I had to get my father’s consent, and smooth away two or three difficulties, before I thought it well to mention it to any one but the Vicar. He will give me a title. I am to be ordained, Cary, next Trinity Sunday.”

“Why, that is almost here!” cried I.

“Yes, it is almost here,” he replied, with that faraway look in his eyes which I had seen now and then.

Then Annas had been satisfied, for of course she was one of the difficulties which had to be smoothed away.

“I shall hope to see more of my friends now,” he went on, with a smile. “I know I have seemed rather a hermit of late, while this matter has been trembling in the balance. I

hope the old friend will not be further off because he is the curate. I should not like that.”

“I do not think you need fear,” said I, trying to speak lightly. But how far my heart went down! The future master of the Fells Farm was a fixture at Brocklebank: but the future parson of some parish might be carried a hundred miles away from us. A few months, and we might see him no more. Just then, Father set his foot on one of the great logs, and it blazed and crackled, sending a shower of sparkles up the chimney, and a ruddy glow all over the room. But my fire was dying out, and the sparkles were gone already.

Perhaps it was as well that just at that moment a rather startling diversion occurred, by the entrance of Sam with a letter, which he gave to Flora.

“Here’s ill tidings, Sir!” said Sam to Father. “Miss Flora’s letter was brought by ane horseman, that’s ridden fast and far; the puir beastie’s a’ o’er foam, and himsel’s just wornout. He brings news o’ a gran’ battle betwixt the Prince and yon loon they ca’ Cumberland, ma certie, but Cumberland’s no mickle beholden to ’em! and the Prince’s army’s just smashed to bits, and himsel’ a puir fugitive in the Highlands. Ill luck tak’ ’em! though that’s no just becoming to a Christian man, but there’s times as a chiel disna stop to measure his words and cut ’em off even wi’ scissors. ’Twas at a place they ca’ Culloden, this last week gane: and they say there’s na mair chance for the Prince the now than for last year’s Christmas to come again.”

Father, of course, was extreme troubled by this news, and went forth into the hall to speak with the horseman, whom Sam had served with a good supper. Ambrose followed, and so did my Aunt Kezia, for she said men knew nought about airing beds, and it was as like as not Bessy would take the blankets from the wrong chest if she were not after her. Hatty was not in the room, and Flora had carried off her letter, which was from my Uncle Drummond. So Ephraim and I were left alone, for, somewhat to my surprise, he made no motion to follow the rest.

“Cary,” he said, in a low tone, as he took the next chair, “I have had news, also.”

It was bad news in a moment I knew that. His tone said so. I looked up fearfully. I felt, before I heard, the terrible words that were coming.

“Duncan Keith rests with God!”

Oh, it was no wonder if I let my work drop, and hid my face in my hands, and wept as if my heart were breaking. Not for Colonel Keith. He should never see evil any more. For Annas, and for Flora, and for the stricken friends at Monksburn, and for my Uncle

Drummond, who loved him like another son, and yes, let me confess it, for Cary Courtenay, who had just then so much to mourn over, and must not mourn for it except with the outside pretence of something else.

“Did you care so much for him, Cary?”

What meant that intense pain in Ephraim’s voice? Did he fancy And what did it matter to him, if he did? I tried to wipe away my tears and speak.

“Did you care so little?” I said, as well as I could utter. “Think of Annas, and his parents, and And, Ephraim, we led him to his death you and I!”

“Nay, not so,” he answered. “You must not look at it in that light, Cary. We did but our duty. It is never well to measure duties by consequences. Yes, of course I think of his parents and sister, poor souls! It will be hard for them to bear. Yet I almost think I would change with them rather than with Angus, when he comes to know. Cary, somebody must write to Miss Keith: and it ought to be either Miss Drummond or you.”

I felt puzzled. Would he not break it best to her himself? If all were settled betwixt them, and it looked as if it were, was he not the proper person to write?

“You have not written to her?” I said.

“Why, no,” he answered. “I scarce like to intrude myself on her. She has not seen much of me, you know. Besides, I think a woman would know far better how to break such news. Men are apt to touch a wound roughly, even when they wish to act as gently as possible. No, Cary I am unwilling to place such a burden on you, but I think it must be one of you.”

Could he speak of Annas thus, if I felt bewildered.

“Unless,” he said, thoughtfully, looking out of the window, where the moon was riding like a queen through the somewhat troubled sky, “unless you think for you, as a girl, can judge better than I that Raymond would be the best breaker. Perhaps you do not know that Raymond is not at home? My Lady Inverness writ the news to him, and said she had not spoken either to Mrs Raymond or Miss Keith. She plainly shrank from doing it. Perhaps he would help her to bear it best.”

“How should he be the best?” I said. “Mrs Raymond might”

“Why, Cary, is it possible you do not know that Raymond and Miss Keith are trothplight?”

“Trothplight! Mr Raymond! Annas!”

I started up in my astonishment. Here was a turning upside down of all my notions!

“So that is news to you?” said Ephraim, evidently surprised himself. “Why, I thought you had known it long ago. Of course I must have puzzled you! I see, now.”

“I never heard a word about it,” I said, feeling as though I must be dreaming, and should awake byandby. “I always thought”

“You always thought what?”

“I thought you cared for Annas,” I forced my lips to say.

“You thought I cared for Miss Keith?” Ephraim’s tone was a stronger negative than any words could have been. “Yes, I cared for her as your friend, and as a woman in trouble, and a woman of fine character: but if you fancied I wished to make her my wife, you were never more mistaken. No, Cary; I fixed on somebody else for that, a long while agobefore I ever saw Miss Keith. May I tell you her name?”

Then we were right at first, and it was Fanny. I said, “Yes,” as well as I could.

“Cary, I never loved, and never shall love, any one but you.”

I cannot tell you, little book, either what I said, or exactly what happened after that. I only know that the moaning wind outside chanted a triumphal march, and the dying embers on my hearthstone sprang up into a brilliant illumination, and I did not care a straw for all the battles that ever were fought, and envied neither Annas Keith nor anybody else.

“Well, Hatty! I did not think you were going to be the old maid of the family!” said my Aunt Kezia.

“I did not, either, once,” was Hatty’s answer, in a low tone, but not a sad one. “Perhaps I was the best one for it, Aunt. At any rate, you and Father will always have one girl to care for you.”

We did not see Flora till the next morning. I knew that my Uncle Drummond's letter must be that in which he answered the news of Angus's escape, and I did not wonder if it unnerved her. She let me read it afterwards. The Laird and Lady Monksburn had plainly given up their son for ever when they heard what he had done. And knowing what I knew, I felt it was best so. I had to tell Flora my news: to see the light die suddenly out of her dear brown velvet eyes, will it ever come back again? And I wondered, watching her by the light of my own newborn happiness, whether Duncan Keith were as little to her as I had supposed.

I knew, somewhat later, that I had misunderstood her, that we had misinterpreted her. Her one wish seemed to be to get back home. And Father said he would take her himself as far as the Border, if my Uncle Drummond would come for her to the place chosen.

When the parting came, as we took our last kiss, I told her I prayed God bless her, and that some day she might be as happy as I was. There was a moment's flash in the brown eyes.

"Take that wish back, Cary," she said, quietly. "Happy as you are, the woman whom Duncan Keith loved can never be, until she meet him again at the gates of pearl."

"That may be a long while, dear."

"It will be just so long as the Lord hath need of me," she answered: "and I hope, for his sake, that will be as long as my father needs me. And then Oh, but it will be a blithe day when the call comes to go home!"

The Fells Farm, September 25th.

Five months since I writ a word! And how much has happened in them so much that I could never find time to set it down, and now I must do it just in a few lines.

I have been married six weeks. Father shook his head with a smile when Ephraim first spoke to him, and said his lass was only in the cradle yesterday: but he soon came round. It was as quiet a wedding as Sophy's, and I am sure I liked it all the better, whatever other people might think. We are to live at the Fells Farm during the year of Ephraim's curacy, and then Father thinks he can easily get him a living through the interest of friends. Where it will be, of course we cannot guess.

Flora has writ thrice since she returned home. She says my Uncle Drummond was very thankful to have her back again: but she can see that Lady Monksburn is greatly

changed, and the Laird has so failed that he scarce seems the same man. Of herself she said nothing but one sentence,

“Waiting, dear Cary, always waiting.”

From Angus we do not hear a word. Mr Raymond and Annas are to be married when their year of mourning is out. I cannot imagine how they will get alonge a Whig clergyman, and she a Tory Presbyterian! However, that is their affair. I am rather thankful 'tis not mine.

My Aunt Dorothea has writ me one letter very kind to me (it was writ on the news of my marriage), but very stiff toward my Aunt Kezia. I see she cannot forgive her easily, and I do not think Grandmamma ever will.

Grandmamma sent me a large chest from London, full of handsome presents, a fine set of Dresden tea china (which travelled very well only one saucer broke); a new hoop, so wide round that methinks I shall never dare to wear it in the country; a charming piece of dove coloured damask, and a petticoat, to wear with it, of blue quilted satin; two calico gowns from India, a beautiful worked scarf from the same country, six pair pearl coloured silk stockings, a new fan, painted with flowers, most charmingly done, a splendid piece of white and gold brocade, and a superb set of turquoise and pearl jewellery. I cannot think when or how I am to wear them; they seem so unfit for the wife of a country curate.

“Oh, wait till I am a bishop,” says Ephraim, laughingly; “then you can make the Dean’s lady faint away for envy of all your smart things. And as to the white and gold brocade, keep it till the King comes to stay with us, and it will be just the thing for a state bed for him.”

“I wonder what colour it will be!” said I. “Which king?”

Ephraim makes me a low bow over the water bottle. (Note 1.)

I must lay down my pen, for I hear a shocking smash in the kitchen. That girl Dolly is so careless! I don’t believe I shall ever have much time for writing now.

Langbeck Rectory, under the Cheviots, August the 28th, 1747.

Nearly a whole year since I writ one line!

Our lot is settled now, and we moved in here in May last. I am very thankful that the lines have fallen to me still in my dear North I have not pleasant recollections of the South. And I fancy but perhaps unjustly that we Northerners have a deeper, more yearning love for our hills and dales than they have down there. We are about midway between Brocklebank and Abbotscliff, which is just where I would have chosen to be, if I could have had the choice. It is not often that God gives a man all the desires of his heart; perhaps to a woman He gives it even less often. How thankful I ought to be!

My Aunt Kezia was so good as to come with us, to help me to settle down. I should not have got things straight in twice the time if she had not been here. Sophy spent the days with Father while my Aunt Kezia was here, and just went back to the Vicarage for the night. Father is very much delighted with Sophy's child, and calls him a bouncing boy, and a credit to the family; and Sophy thinks him the finest child that ever lived, as my Aunt Kezia saith every mother hath done since Eve.

The night before my Aunt Kezia went home, as she and I sat together, it was not yet time for Ephraim to come in from his work in the parish, for he is one of the few parsons who do work, and do not pore over learned books or go a hunting, and leave their parishes to take care of themselves well, as my Aunt and I sat by the window, she said something which rather astonished me.

"Cary, I don't know what you and Ephraim would say, but I am beginning to think we made a mistake."

"Do you mean about the Chinese screens, Aunt?" said I. "The gold lacquer would have gone very well with the damask, but"

"Chinese screens!" saith my Aunt, with a hearty laugh. "Why, whatever is the girl thinking about? No, child! I mean about the Prince."

"Aunt Kezia!" I cried. "You never mean to say we did wrong in fighting for our King?"

"Wrong? No, child, for we meant to do right. I gather from Scripture that the Lord takes a deal more account of what a man means than of what he does. Thank God it is so! For if a man means to come to Christ, he does come, no matter how: ay, and if a man means to reject Christ, he does that too, however fair and orthodox he may look in the eyes of the world. Therefore, as to those matters that are in doubt, and cannot be plainly judged by Scripture, but Christian men may and do lawfully differ about them, if a man honestly meant to do God's will, so far as he knew it, I don't believe he will be judged as if he had not cared to do it. But what I intend to say is this that it is plain to me now that the Lord hath repealed the decree whereby He gave England to the House of Stuart.

There is no right against Him, Cary. He doeth as He will with all the kingdoms of the world. Maybe it's not so plain to you if so, don't you try to see through my eyes. Follow your own conscience until the Lord teaches yourself. If our fathers had been truer men, and had passed the Bill of Exclusion in 1680, the troubles of 1688 would never have come, nor those of 1745 neither. They ate sour grapes, and set our teeth on edge, and their own too, poor souls! It was the Bishops and Lord Halifax that did it, and the Bishops paid the wyte, as Sam says. It must have been a bitter pill to those seven in the Tower, to think that all might have been prevented by lawful, constitutional means, and that they their Order, I mean had just pulled their troubles on their own heads."

"Aunt Kezia," I cried in distress, "you never mean to say that Colonel Keith died for a wrongful cause?"

"God forbid!" she said, gravely. "Colonel Keith did not die for that Cause. He died for right and righteousness, for truth and honour, for faithfulness, for loyalty and love no bad things to die for. Not for the Prince only for God and Flora, and a little, perhaps, for Angus. God forbid that I should judge any true and honourable man most of all that man who gave his life for those we love. Only, Cary, the Cause is dead and gone. The struggle is over for ever: and we may thank God it is so. On the wreck of the old England a new England may arise an England standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made her free, free from priestly yoke and priestridden rulers, free not to revolt but to follow, not to disobey, but to obey. If only ah! if only she resolve, and stand to it, never to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage, never to forget the lessons which God has taught her, never again to eat the sour grapes, and set the children's teeth on edge. Let her once begin to think of the tiger's beauty, and forget its deathly claws once lay aside her watchword of 'No peace with Rome' and she will find it means no peace with God, for His scourge has always pursued her when she has truckled to His great enemy. Eh, but men have short memories, never name short sight. Like enough, by a hundred years are over, they'll be looking at Roman sugarsticks as the Scarlet Woman holds them out, and thinking that she is very fair and fine spoken, and why shouldn't they have a few sweets? Well! it is well the government of the world isn't in old Kezia's hands, for if it were, some people would find themselves uncommonly uncomfortable before long."

"You don't mean me, I hope?" I said, laughing.

"Nay, child, I don't mean you, nor yet your husband. Very like you'll not see it as I do. But you'll live to see it if only you live long enough."

Well, my Aunt Kezia may be right, though I do not see it. Only that I do think it was a sad blunder to throw out the Bill of Exclusion. It had passed the Commons, so they were not to blame. But one thing I should like to set down, for any who may read this book a

hundred years hence, if it hath not been tore up for wastepaper long ere thatthat we Protestants who fought for the Prince never fought nor meant to fight for Popery. We hated it every bit as much as any who stood against him. We fought because the contrary seemed to us to be doing evil that good might come. But I won't say we may not live to be thankful that we lost our cause.

It has been a warm afternoon, and I sat with the window open in the parlour, singing and sewing; Ephraim was out in the parish. I was turning down a hem when a voice in the garden spoke to me,

“An't like you, Madam, to give a drink of whey to a poor soldier?”

There was a slight Scots accent with the words.

“Whence come you?” I said.

“I fought at Prestonpans,” he answered. He looked a youngish man, but very ragged and bemired.

“On which side?” I said, as I rose up. Of course I was not going to refuse him food and drink, however that might be, but I dare say I should have made it a little more dainty for one of Prince Charlie's troops than for a Hanoverian, and I felt pretty sure he was the former from his accent.

I fancied I saw a twinkle in his eyes.

“The side you are on, Madam,” said he.

“How can you know which side I am on?” said I. “Come round to the backdoor, friend, and I will find you a drink of whey.”

“I suppose,” said my beggar, looking down at himself, “I don't look quite good enough for the front door. But I am an officer for all that, Madam.”

“Sir, I beg your pardon,” I made answer. “I will let you in at the front,” for when he spoke more, I heard the accent of a gentleman.

“Pray don't give yourself that trouble, Cousin Cary.”

And to my utter amazement, the beggar jumped in at the window, which was low and easily scaled.

“Angus!” I almost screamed.

“At your service, Madam.”

“When did you leave France? Where are you come from? Have you been to Abbotscliff? Are”

“Halt! Can’t fight more than three men at once. And I won’t answer a question till I have had something to eat. Forgive me, Cary, but I am very nearly starving.”

I rushed into the kitchen, and astonished Caitlin by laying violent hands on a pan of broth which she was going to serve for supper. I don’t know what I said to her. I hastily poured the broth into a basin, and seizing a loaf of bread and a knife, dashed back to Angus.

“Eat that now, Angus. You shall have something better byandby.”

He ate like a man who was nearly starving, as he had said. When he had finished, he said,

“Now! I left France a fortnight since. I have not been to Abbotscliff. I know nothing but the facts that you are married, and where you live, which I learned by accident, and I instantly thought that your house, if you would take me in, would be a safer refuge than either Brocklebank or Abbotscliff. Now tell me some thing in turn. Are my father and Flora well?”

“Yes, for anything I know.”

“And all at Brocklebank?”

“Quite.”

“And the Keiths? Has Annas bagged her pheasant?”

“What do you mean, Angus?”

“Why, is she Mrs Raymond? I saw all that. I suppose Duncan got away without any difficulty?”

“Annas is Mr Raymond’s wife,” I said. “But, Angus, I cannot think how it is, but I am afraid you do not understand.”

“Understand what?”

“Is it possible you do not know what price was paid for your ransom?”

Angus rose hastily, and laid his hand on my arm.

“Speak out, Cary! What do I not know?”

“Angus, Colonel Keith bought your life with his own.”

In all my life I never saw a man’s face change as the face of Angus Drummond changed then. It was plainly to be read there that he had never for a moment understood at what cost he had been purchased. A low moan of intense sorrow broke from him, and he hid his face upon the table.

“I think he paid the price very willingly, Angus,” I said, softly. “And he sent Annas a last message for you he bade you, to the utmost of what your opportunities might be, to be to God and man what he hoped to have been.”

“O Duncan, Duncan!” came in anguish from the white lips. “And I never knew I never thought”

Ah, it was so like Angus, “never to think.”

He lifted his head at last, with the light of a settled purpose shining in his eyes.

“To man I can never be what he would have been. I am a proscribed fugitive. You harbour me at a risk even now. But to God! Cary, I have been a rebel: but I never was a deserter from that service. God helping me, I will enlist now. If my worthless life have cost the most precious life in Scotland, it shall not have been given in vain.”

“There was Another who gave His life for you, Angus,” I could not help saying.

“Ay, I have been bought twice over,” was the trembling answer. “God help me to live worthy of the cost!”

We all keep the name of Duncan Keith in our inmost hearts unspoken, but very dear. But I think it is dearest of all in a little house in the outskirts of Amsterdam, where, now that

my Uncle Drummond has been called to his reward, our Flora keeps home bright for a Protestant pastor who works all the day through in the prisons of Amsterdam, among the lowest of the vile; who knows what exile and imprisonment are; and who, once in every year, as the day of his substitute's death comes round, pleads with these prisoners from words which are overwhelming to himself, "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price."

Many of those men and women sink back again into the mire. But now and then the pastor knows that a soul has been granted to his pleadings, that in one more instance, as in his own case, the price was not paid in vain.

The End

Freeditorial 