



***EMILY  
SARAH HOLT***

***JOYCE  
MORRELL'S  
HARVEST***

**Emily Sarah Holt**

# **Joyce Morrell's Harvest**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Preface.](#)

[Chapter One.](#)

[Chapter Two.](#)

[Chapter Three.](#)

[Chapter Four.](#)

[Chapter Five.](#)

[Chapter Six.](#)

[Chapter Seven.](#)

[Chapter Eight.](#)

[Chapter Nine.](#)

[Chapter Ten.](#)

[Chapter Eleven.](#)

# Preface.

## [Table of Contents](#)

Those to whom “Lettice Eden” is an old friend will meet with many acquaintances in these pages. The lesson is partly of the same type—the difference between that which seems, and that which is; between the gold which will stand the fire, and the imitation which the flame will dissolve in a moment; between the true diamond, small though it be, which is worth a fortune, and the glittering paste which is worth little more than nothing.

But here there is a further lesson beyond this. It is one which God takes great pains to teach us, and which we, alas! are very slow to learn. “Tarry thou the Lord’s leisure.” In the dim eyes of frail children of earth, God’s steps are often very slow. We are too apt to forget that they are very sure. But He will not be hurried: He has eternity to work in, “If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.” How many of us, who fancied their prayers unheard because they could not see the answer, may find that answer, rich, abundant, eternal, in that Land where they shall know as they are known! Let us wait for God. We shall find some day that it was worth while.

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# Chapter One.

## Table of Contents

### The Dwellers at Selwick Hall.

“He would be on the mountain’s top, without the toil and travail of the climbing.”—Tupper.

*Selwick Hall, Lake Derwentwater, October ye first, Mdlxxix.*

It came about, as I have oft noted things to do, after a metely deal of talk, yet right suddenly in the end.

Aunt *Joyce*, *Milly*, *Edith*, and I, were in the long gallery. We had been talking a while touching olden times (whereof Aunt *Joyce* is a rare hand at telling of stories), and *Mother’s* chronicle she was wont to keep, and hath shown us, and such like matter. When all at once quoth *Edith*—

“Why should not *we* keep a chronicle?”

“Ay, why not?” saith Aunt *Joyce*, busied with her sewing.

*Milly* fell a-laughing.

“Dear heart, *Edith*, and what should we put in a chronicle?” saith she. “‘*Monday*, the cat washed her face. *Tuesday*, it rained. *Wednesday*, *Nell* made a tansy pudding. *Thursday*, I lost my temper. *Friday*, I found it again. *Saturday*, *Edith* looked in the mirror, and Aunt *Joyce* made an end of a piece of sewing.’ Good lack, it shall be a rare jolly book!”

“Nay, I would never set down such stuff as that,” answered *Edith*.

“Why, what else is there?” saith *Milly*. “We have dwelt hither ever since we were born, saving when we go to visit Aunt *Joyce*, and one day is the very cut of an other. Saving

when Master *Stuyvesant* came hither, nought never happened in this house since I was born.”

“Would’st love better a life wherein matters should happen, *Milly?*” saith Aunt *Joyce*, looking up at her, with a manner of face that I knew. It was a little mirthful, yet sorrowful withal.

“Ay, I would so!” quoth she.

“Child,” Aunt *Joyce* makes answer, “happy is the man that hath no history.”

“But things do happen, *Milly,*” saith *Edith*. “Thou hast forgot *Anstace* her wedding.”

“*That* something happening!” pouts *Milly*. “Stupid humdrum business! Do but think, to wed a man that dwelleth the next door, which thou hast known all thy life! Why, I would as lief not be wed at all, very nigh.”

“It seemed to suit *Anstace,*” puts in *Edith*.

“Aught should do that.”

“Ay,” saith Aunt *Joyce*, something drily, “godliness is great riches, if a man be content with that he hath.” (Note 1.)

“Easy enough, trow, when you have plenty,” quoth *Milly*.

“Nay, it is hardest then,” saith she. “Much would have more.”

“What wist Aunt *Joyce* thereabout?” murmurs *Milly*, so that I could just hear. “She never lacked nought she wanted.”

“Getting oldish, *Milly,* but not going deaf, thank God,” saith Aunt *Joyce*, of her dry fashion. “Nay, child, thou art out there. Time was when I desired one thing, far beyond all other things in this world, and did not get it.”

“Never, *Aunt?*”

“Never, *Milly.*” And a somewhat pained look came into her face, that is wont to seem so calm.

“What was it, *Aunt Joyce*, sweet heart?”

“Well, I took it for fine gold, and it turned out to be pinchbeck,” saith she. “There’s a deal of that sort of stuff in this world.”

Methought *Milly* feared to ask further, and all was still till *Edith* saith—

“Would you advise us, *Aunt Joyce*, to keep a chronicle, even though things did not happen?”

“Things will happen, trust me,” she made answer. “Ay, dear maids, methinks it should be profitable for you.”

“Now, *Aunt Joyce*, I would you had not said that!”

“Why, *Milly?*”

“By reason that things which be profitable be alway dry and gloomsome.”

“Not alway, *Lettice Eden’s* daughter.”

I could not help but smile when *Aunt Joyce* said this. For indeed, *Mother* hath oft told us how, when she was a young maid like *Milly*, she did sorely hate all gloom and sorrowfulness, nor could not abide for to think thereon. And *Milly* is much of that turn.

“Then which of us shall keep the grand chronicle?” saith *Edith*, when we had made an end of laughing.

“Why not all of you?” quoth *Aunt Joyce*. “Let each keep it a month a-piece, turn about.”

“And you, *Aunt Joyce?*”

“Nay, I will keep no chronicles. I would not mind an’ I writ my thoughts down of the last page, when it was finished.”

“But who shall read it?” said I.

“There spake *Nell!*” quoth *Milly*. ““Who shall read it?’ Why, all the world, for sure, from the Queen’s Majesty down to Cat and Kitling.”

These be our two serving-maids, *Kate* and *Caitlin*, which *Milly* doth affect dearly to call Cat and Kitling. And truly the names come pat, the rather that *Kate* is tall and big, and fair of complexion, she being *Westmoreland* born; while *Caitlin*, which is *Cumberland* born, is little and wiry, and of dark complexion. “The Queen’s Majesty shall have other fish to fry, I reckon,” saith Aunt *Joyce*. “And so shall *Kate* and *Caitlin*,—if they could read.”

“But who is to make a beginning of this mighty chronicle?” saith *Edith*. “Some other than I, as I do trust, for I would never know what to set down first.”

“Let *Nell* begin, then, as she is eldest of the three,” quoth Aunt *Joyce*.

So here am I, making this same beginning of the family chronicle. For when *Father* and *Mother* heard thereof, both laughed at the first, and afterward grew sad. Then saith *Mother*—

“Methinks, dear hearts, it shall be well for you,—at the least, an’ ye keep it truly. Let each set down what verily she doth think.”

“And not what she reckons she ought to think,” saith Aunt *Joyce*.

“Then, *Father*, will it please you give us some pens and paper?” said I. “For I see not how, otherwise, we shall write a chronicle.”

“That speech is right, *Nell!*” puts in *Milly*.



“Why, if we dwelt on the banks of the *Nile*, in *Egypt*,” saith *Father*, “reeds and bulrushes should serve your turn: or, were ye old *Romans*, a waxen tablet and iron stylus. But for *English* maidens dwelling by Lake *Derwentwater*, I count paper and pens shall be wanted—and ink too, belike. Thou shalt have thy need supplied, *Nell!*”

And as this morning, when he came into the parlour where we sat a-sewing, what should *Father* set down afore me, in the stead of the sheets of rough paper I looked to see, but this beautiful book, all full of fair blank paper ready to be writ in,—and an whole bundle of pens, with a great inkhorn. *Milly* fell a-laughing.

“Oh dear, dear!” saith she. “Be we three to write up all those? Verily, *Father*, under your good pleasure, but methinks you should pen a good half of this chronicle yourself.”

“Nay, not so much as one line,” saith he, “saving those few I have writ already on the first leaf. Let *Nell* read them aloud.”

So I read them, as I set them down here, for without I do copy them, cannot I put in what was said.

*“Fees and Charges of the Chronicle of Selwick Hall.—Imprimis, to be writ, turn about, by a month at each, by Helen, Milisent, and Editha Louvaine.”*

*Milly* was stuffing her kerchief into her mouth to let her from laughing right out.

*“Item, the said Helen to begin the said book.*

*“Item, for every blot therein made, one penny to the poor.”*

“Oh, good lack!” from *Milly*.

"I care not, so *Father* give us the pennies," from *Edith*.

"I reckon that is what men call a dividing of labour," saith *Father* in his dry way. "I to pay the pennies, and *Edith* to make the blots. Nay, my maid: the two must come of one hand."

"Then both of yours, *Father*," saith *Milly*, saucily.

*"Item, for every unkind sentence touching an other, two pence to the poor."*

"Lack-a-daisy!" cries *Milly*; "I shall be ruined!"

"Truth for once," quoth Aunt *Joyce*.

"I am sorry to hear it, my maid," saith *Father*.

*"Item, for every sentence disrespectful to any in lawful authority over the writer thereof, sixpence to the poor."*

"*Father*," quoth *Milly*, "by how much mean you to increase mine income while this book is a-writing?"

*Father* smiled, but made no further answer.

*"Item, for a gap of so much as one week, without a line herein writ, two pence to the poor."*

"That is it which shall work my ruin," saith *Edith*, a-laughing.

"Therein art thou convict of laziness," quoth *Father*.

*"Item, on the ending of the said book, each of them that hath writ the same shall read over her own part therein from the beginning: and for so many times as she hath gainsaid her own words therein writ, shall forfeit each time one penny to the poor."*

"That will bring both *Edith* and me to beggary," quoth *Milly*, "Only *Nell* shall come off scot-free. *Father*, have you writ nought that will catch her?"

*"Item, the said book shall, when ended, but not aforetime, be open to the reading of Aubrey Louvaine, Lettice Louvaine, Joyce Morrell, and Anstace Banaster."*

"And none else? Alack the day!" saith *Milly*.

"I said not whom else," quoth *Father*. "Be that as it like you."

But I know well what should like me,—and that were, not so much as one pair of eyes beyond. *Milly*, I dare reckon—but if I go on it shall cost me two pence, so I will forbear.

"Well!" saith *Edith*, "one thing will I say, your leave granted, *Father*: and that is, I am fain you shall not read my part till it be done. I would lief be at my wisest on the last page."

"Dear heart! I look to be wise on no page," cries *Milly*.

"Nay," said I, "I would trust to be wise on all."

"There spake our *Nell*!" cries *Milly*. "I could swear it were she, though mine eyes were shut close."

"This book doth somewhat divert me, *Joyce*," quoth *Father*, looking at her. "Here be three writers, of whom one shall be wise on each page, and one on none, and one on the last only. I reckon it shall be pleasant reading."

"And I reckon," saith Aunt *Joyce*, "they shall be reasonable true to themselves an' it be thus."

"And I," saith *Milly*, "that my pages shall be the pleasantest of any."

"*Ergo*," quoth *Father*, "wisdom is displeasent matter. So it is, *Milly*,—to unwise folks."

"Then, *Father*, of a surety my chronicling shall ill please you," saith she, a-laughing.

*Father* arose, and laid his hand upon *Milly's* head as he passed by her.

"The wise can love the unwise, my maid," saith he. "How could the only wise God love any one of us else?"

*Selwick Hall, October ye ii.*

*Milly* saith, and *Edith* likewise, that I must needs set down somewhat touching all us,—who we be, and how many, and our names, and such like. Truly, it seemeth me somewhat lost labour, if none but ourselves are to read the same. But as *Milly* will have it the Queen's Majesty and all her Council shall be highly diverted thereby (though little, as methinks, they should care to know of us), I reckon, to please these my sisters, I must needs do their bidding.

We therefore, that dwell in *Selwick Hall*, be Sir *Aubrey Louvaine*, the owner thereof (that is *Father*), and Dame *Lettice* his wife, and us their daughters, *Helen*, *Milisent*, and *Editha*. Moreover, there is Aunt *Joyce Morrell*, that dwelleth in *Oxfordshire*, at *Minster Lovel*, but doth once every five year tarry six months with us, and we with her the like: so that we see each the other once in every two or three years. 'Tis but a week Aunt *Joyce* hath been hither, so all the six months be to run. And here I should note she is not truly our aunt, but *Father's* cousin, her mother being sister unto his mother: but *Father* had never no brother nor sister, and was bred up along, with these his cousins, Aunt *Joyce* and Aunt *Anstace*, after whom mine eldest sister hath her name: but Aunt *Anstace* hath been dead these many years, afore any of us were born. I would I had known her; for to hear them talk of her,—*Father*, and *Mother*, and Aunt *Joyce*,—I could well-nigh think her an angel in human flesh. Now, wherefore

is it, for I have oft-times marvelled, that we speak more tenderly and reverently of folk that be dead, than of the living? Were I to die a young maid, should *Milly* (that loves to mock me now) tell her children henceforward of their Aunt *Helen*, as though she had been somewhat better than other women? May-be. If we could only use folks we love, while they do live, with the like loving reverence as we shall do after they be dead, if we overlive them! Wherefore do we not so? We do seem for to forget then all that we loved not in them. Could we not essay to do the same a little sooner?

And when *Milly* cometh hither in her reading, as sure as her name is *Milisent*, shall she say,—“Now, Mistress *Nell*, there you go, a-riding your high horse of philosophy! Prithee, keep to common earth.”

Beside those I have named, in the house dwelleth Mynheer *Floris Stuyvesant*, a *Dutch* gentleman that did flee from his country when the persecution was in *Holland*, eleven years gone: and *Father*, which had a little known him aforetime when he made the grand tour, did most gladly welcome him hither, and made him (of his own desire) governor to *Ned* and *Wat*, our brothers. These our brothers dwell not now at home, for *Wat* is squire unto my very good Lord of *Oxenford*, that is *Father's* kinsman: and *Ned* is at sea with Sir *Humphrey Gilbert*. We therefore see them but rarely. Then, beyond, there is likewise in the house Mistress *Elizabeth Wolvercot*, that is a cousin of *Mother*, whom all we do alway call Cousin *Bess*; she dwelleth with us at all times. Also be *Kate* and *Caitlin*, of whom I have aforetime spoken: and old *Matthias*, our serving-man; and the boy, *Adam* o' Bill's o' old Mall's.

And here I should note that once were two of us more, *Aubrey* and *Julian*: of whom *Aubrey* died a babe, three years afore I was born, and *Julian* a little maid of eleven years, between *Milly's* birth and *Edith's*. I mind her well, for she was two years elder than I, so that I was nine years old when she departed; but *Milly*, that was only three, cannot remember her.

Our eldest of all, *Anstace*, is wife unto Master *Henry Banaster*, and dwelleth (as *Milly* saith) next door, he having the estate joining *Father's* own. She hath two children, *Aubrey*, that is of seven years, and *Cicely*, that is four; beside her eldest, *Lettice*, which did decease in the cradle.

I reckon I have told all now, without I name the cows, which be *Daisy*, and *Molly*, and *Buttercup*, and *Rose*, and *Ladybird*, and *June*; and the great house-dog, which is *Clover*; and the cat, which is a *Spanish* cat (a tortoise-shell cat, then a rarity), her name *Hermosa* (the which *Ned* gave her, saying a *Spanish* cat should have a *Spanish* name, and *Hermosa* signifieth beautiful in that tongue), but *Caitlin* will make it *Moses*, and methinks she is called *Moses* more than aught else. She hath two kits, that be parti-coloured like herself, their names (given of *Milly*) *Dan* and *Nan*.

And now I feel well-nigh sure I have said all.

Nay, and forgot the horses! *Milly* will laugh at me, for she dearly loveth an horse. We have six riding-horses, with two baggage-horses, but only four of them have names,—to wit, *Father's*, that is *Favelle*, because he is favel-colour (chestnut); and *Mother's*, *Garnet*; and mine, *Cowslip*; and the last, that *Milly* or *Edith* doth commonly ride when we journey, is called *Starlight*.

And now I have verily told every thing.

*(At this point the handwriting of the chronicle changes.)*

'Tis not yet my turn to write, but needs must, or it shall cause me to split in twain with laughter. Here is our *Nell*, reckoning three times o'er that she hath told all, and finding somewhat fresh every time, and with all her telling, hath set down never a note of what we be like, nor so much as the colour of one of our eyes. So, having gat hold of her chronicle, I shall do it for her. I dare reckon she was feared it should cost her two pence each one. But nothing venture, nothing have; and *Mother* laid down that we should write our true thoughts. So what I think shall I write; and how to make *Father's* two pence rhyme with *Mother's* avisement, I leave to Mistress *Nell* and her philosophy.

*Father* is a gentleman of metely good height, and well-presented, but something heavy built: of a dark brown hair, a broad white brow, and dark grey eyes that be rare sweet and lovesome. Of old time was he squire of the body unto my right noble Lord of *Surrey*, that was execute in old King *Henry's* days. Moreover, he is of far kin (yet not so far, neither) unto my most worthy Lord of *Oxenford*. Now, sithence I am to write my thoughts, I must say that I would *Father* had a better nose. I cannot speak very truth and set down that I did ever admire *Father's* nose. But he hath good white teeth, and a right pleasant smile, the which go far to make amends for his nose.

*Mother* was right fair when she was a young maid, and is none so ill now. She is graceful of carriage, very fair of complexion, and hath the sweetest, shining golden hair was ever seen. Her eyes be pale grey (blue), right like the sky.

Of us three maids, *Edith* is best-favoured, and all that see her do say she is right the very picture of *Mother*, when she was young. Next her am I; for though I say it, I am a deal fairer than either *Anstace* or *Nell*, both which favour (resemble) *Father*, though *Nell* is the liker, by reason she hath his mind as well as his face. Now, *Nell* is all ways slower than *Edith* and me, and nothing like so well-favoured.

But for beauty, the least I did ever see in any man is in Mynheer *Stuyvesant*, which hath a flat nose and a stoop in the shoulders, and is high and thin as a scarecrow. Cousin *Bess* is metely well,—she is rosy and throddy (plump). For Aunt *Joyce*, I do stand in some fear of her sharp speeches, and will say nought of her, saving that (which she can not deny) she hath rosy cheeks and dark brown hair (yet not so dark as *Father's*), and was, I guess, a comely young maid when she were none elder than we. As for *Ned* and *Wat*, *Ned* is the better-favoured, he having *Mother's* nose and the rest of him *Father*; but *Wat* (which favoureth *Mother* of his colouring, yet is not so comely) a deal the courtlier.

Now when they shall all come to read this same, trow, shall they know their own portraits? or shall they every one cry out, “This is not me!”

So now I leave the rest to Mistress *Helen*, till it shall come to me next month, when I will say what I think yet again.

*Selwick Hall, October ye v.*

*(In Helen's handwriting.)*

Dear heart, but what hath *Milly* been a-doing! I could not think last night where was my book, but I was rare sleepy, and let it a-be. And here this morrow do I find a good two



pages all scribbled o'er of *Milly's* writing. Well! 'tis not my fault, so I trust shall not be my blame.

And it is true, as *Milly* saith, that she is better-favoured than I. As for *Anstace*, I wis not, only I know and am well assured, that I am least comely of the four. But she should never have writ what she did touching *Father's* nose, and if it cost me two pence, that must I say. I do love every bit of *Father*, right down to the tip of his nose, and I never thought if it were well-favoured or no. 'Tis *Father*, and that is all for me. And so should it be for *Milly*,—though it be two pence more to say so.

*Selwick Hall, October ye vi.*

We had been sat at our sewing a good hour this morrow,—that is, *Mother*, and Aunt *Joyce*, and we three maids,—when all at once *Milly* casts hers down with a sigh fetched from ever so far.

“Weary of sewing, *Milly*?” saith *Mother* with a smile.

“Ay—no—not right that, *Mother*,” quoth she. “But here have I been this hour gone, a-wishing I had been a man, till it seemed me as if I could not abide for to be a woman no longer.”

“The general end of impossible wishes,” saith *Mother*, laughing a little.

“Well!” quoth Aunt *Joyce*, a-biting off her thread, “in all my wishing never yet wished I that.”

“Wherefore is it, *Milly*?” saith *Mother*.

“Oh, a man has more of his own way than a woman,” *Milly* makes answer. “And he can make some noise in the world. He is not tied down to stupid humdrum matters, such like as sewing, and cooking, and distilling, and picking of

flowers, with a song or twain by now and then to cheer you. A man can preach and fight and write books and make folk listen."

"I misdoubt if thou art right, *Milly*, to say that a man hath the more of his own way always," saith *Mother*. "Methinks there be many women get much of that."

"Then a man is not tied down to one corner. He can go and see the world," saith *Milly*.

"In short," quoth Aunt *Joyce*, "the moral of thy words, *Milly*, is—'Untie me.'"

"I wish I were so!" mutters *Milly*.

"And what should happen next?" saith Aunt *Joyce*.

"Why, I reckon I could not do much without money," answereth *Milly*.

"Oh, grant all that," quoth Aunt *Joyce*,—"money, and leave, and all needed, and Mistress *Milisent* setting forth to do according to her will. What then?"

"Well, I would first go up to *London*," saith she, "and cut some figure in the Court."

Aunt *Joyce* gave a dry little laugh.

"There be figures of more shapes than one, *Milly*," saith she. "Howbeit—what next?"

"Why, then, methinks, I would go to the wars."

"And bring back as many heads, arms, and legs, as thou tookest thither?"

"Oh, for sure," saith *Milly*. "I would not be killed."

"Just. Very well,—Mistress *Milisent* back from the wars, and covered with glory. And then?"

"Well—methinks I would love to be a judge for a bit."

"Dry work," saith Aunt *Joyce*. "And then a bishop?"

“Ay, if you will.”

“And then?”

“Why, I might as well be a king, while I went about it.”

“Quite as well. I am astonished thou hast come thither no sooner. And then?”

“Well,—I know not what then. You drive one on, Aunt *Joyce*. Methinks, then, I would come home and see you all, and recount mine adventures.”

“Oh, mightily obliged to your Highness!” quoth Aunt *Joyce*. “I had thought, when your Majesty were thus up at top of the tree, you should forget utterly so mean a place as *Selwick* Hall, and the contemptible things that inhabit there. And then?”

“Come, I will make an end,” saith *Milly*, laughing. “I reckon I should be a bit wearied by then, and fain to bide at home and take mine ease.”

“And pray, what hindereth that your Grace should do that now?” saith Aunt *Joyce*, looking up with a comical face.

“Well, but I am not awearied, and have no adventures to tell,” *Milly* makes answer.

“Go into the garden and jump five hundred times, *Milly*, and I will warrant thee to be awearied and thankful for rest. And as to adventures,—eh, my maid, my maid!” And Aunt *Joyce* and *Mother* smiled one upon the other.

“Now, *Mother* and *Aunt*, may I say what I think?” cries *Milly*.

“Prithee, so do, my maid.”

“Then, why do you folks that be no longer young, ever damp and chill young folks that would fain see the world and have some jollity?”

“By reason, *Milly*, that we have been through the world, and we know it to be a damp place and a cold.”

“But all folks do not find it so?”

“God have mercy on them that do not!”

“Now, *Aunt*, what mean you?”

“Dear heart, the brighter the colour of the poisoned sweetmeat, the more like is the babe to put in his mouth.”

“Your parable is above me, *Aunt Joyce*.”

“*Milly*, a maiden must give her heart to something. The Lord’s word unto us all is, Give Me thine heart. But most of us will try every thing else first. And every thing else doth chill and disappoint us. Yet thou never sawest man nor Woman that had given the heart to God, which could ever say with truth that disappointment had come of it.”

“I reckon they should be unready to confess the same,” saith she.

“They be ready enough to confess it of other things,” quoth *Aunt Joyce*. “But few folks will learn by the blunders of any but their own selves. I would thou didst.”

“By whose blunders would you have me learn, *Aunt*?” saith *Milly* in her saucy fashion that is yet so bright and coaxing that she rarely gets flitten (scolded) for the same.

“By those of whomsoever thou seest to blunder,” quoth she.

“That must needs be thee, *Edith*,” saith *Milly* in a demure voice. “For it standeth with reason, as thou very well wist, that I shall never see mine elders to make no blunders of no sort whatever.”

“Thou art a saucy baggage, *Milly*,” quoth *Aunt Joyce*. “That shall cost thee six pence an’ it go down in the

chronicle.”

“Oh, ’tis not yet my turn for to write, *Aunt*. And I am well assured *Nell* shall pay no sixpences.”

“Fewer than thou, I dare guess,” saith *Aunt Joyce*. “Who has been to visit old *Jack Benn* this week?”

“Not I, *Aunt*,” quoth *Edith*, somewhat wearily, as if she feared *Aunt Joyce* should bid her go.

“Oh, I’ll go and see him!” cries *Milly*. “There is nought one half so diverting in all the vale as old *Jack*. *Aunt*, be all *Brownists* as queer as he?”

“Nay, I reckon *Jack* hath some queer notions of his own, apart from his *Brownery*,” quoth she. “But, *Milly*,—be diverted as much as thou wilt, but let not the old man see that thou art a-laughing at him.”

“All right, *Aunt*!” saith *Milly*, cheerily. “Come, *Nell*. *Edith* shall bide at home, that can I see.”

So *Milly* and I set forth to visit old *Jack*, and *Mother* gave us a bottle of cordial water, and a little basket of fresh eggs, for to take withal.

He dwells all alone, doth old *Jack*, in a mud cot part-way up the mountain, that he did build himself, ere the aches in his bones ’gan trouble him, that he might scantly work. He is one of those queer folk that call themselves *Brownists*, and would fain have some better religion than they may find at church. *Jack* is nigh alway reading of his Bible, but never no man could so much as guess the strange meanings he brings forth of the words. I reckon, as *Aunt Joyce* saith, there is more *Jack* than *Brownist* in them.

We found *Jack* sitting in the porch, his great Bible on his knees. He looked up when he heard our voices.

“Get out!” saith he. “I never want no women folk.”

’Tis not oft we have fairer greeting of *Jack*.

“Nay, truly, *Jack*,” saith *Milly* right demurely. “They be a rare bad handful,—nigh as ill as men folk. What thou lackest is eggs and cordial water, the which women can carry as well as jackasses.”

She held forth her basket as she spake.

“Humph!” grunts old *Jack*. “I’d liever have the jackasses.”

“I am assured thou wouldst,” quoth *Milly*. “Each loveth best his own kind.”

Old *Jack* was fingering of the eggs.

“They be all hens’ eggs!”

“So they be,” saith *Milly*. “I dare guess, thou shouldst have loved goose eggs better.”

“Ducks’,” answereth old *Jack*.

“The ducks be gone a-swimming,” saith she.

I now drew forth my bottle of cordial water, the which the old man took off me with never a thank you, and after smelling thereto, set of the ground at his side.

“What art reading, *Jack*?” saith *Milly*.

“What *Paul*’s got to say again’ th’ law,” quoth he. “’Tis a rare ill thing th’ law, Mistress *Milisent*. And so be magistrates, and catchpolls (constables) and all the lawyer folk. Rascals, Mistress *Milisent*,—all rascals, every man Jack of ’em. Do but read *Paul*, and you shall see so much.”

“Saith the Apostle so?” quoth *Milly*, and gave me a look which nigh o’erset me.

“He saith ‘the law is not given unto a righteous man,’ so how can they be aught but ill folk that be alway a-poking in it? Tell me that, Mistress. If ‘birds of a feather will flock

together,' then a chap that's shaking hands every day wi' th' law mun be an ill un, and no mistake."

"Go to, *Jack*: it signifies not that," *Milly* makes answer. "Saint *Paul* meant that the law of God was given for the sake of ill men, not good men. The laws of *England* be other matter."

"Get out wi' ye!" saith *Jack*. "Do ye think I wis not what *Paul* means as well as a woman? It says th' law, and it means th' law. And if he'd signified as you say, he'd have said as th' law wasn't given again' a righteous man, not to him. You gi'e o'er comin' a-rumpagin' like yon."

For me, I scarce knew which way to look, to let me from laughing. But *Milly* goes on, sad as any judge.

"Well, but if lawyers be thus bad, *Jack*—though my sister's husband is a lawyer, mind thou—"

"He's a rascal, then!" breaks in *Jack*. "They're all rascals, every wastrel (an unprincipled, good-for-nothing fellow) of 'em."

"But what fashion of folk be better?" saith *Milly*. "Thou seest, *Jack*, we maids be nigh old enough for wedding, and I would fain know the manner of man a woman were best to wed."

"Best let 'em all a-be," growls *Jack*. "Women's always snarin' o' men. Women's bad uns. Howbeit, you lasses down at th' Hall are th' better end, I reckon."

"Oh, thank you, *Jack*!" cries *Milly* with much warmth. "Now do tell me—shall I wed with a chirurgeon?"

"And take p'ison when he's had enough of you," quoth *Jack*. "Nay, never go in for one o' them chaps. They kills folks all th' day, and lies a-thinkin' how to do it all th' night."

“A soldier, then?” saith *Milly*.

“Hired murderers,” saith *Jack*.

“Come, *Jack*, thou art hard on a poor maid. Thou wilt leave me ne’er a one. Oh, ay, there is the parson.”

“What!” shrieks forth *Jack*. “One o’ they *Babylonian* mass-mongers? Hypocrites, wolves in sheep’s clothing a-pretending for to be shepherds! Old *’Zekiel*, he’s summut to say touching them. You get home, and just read his thirty-fourth chapter; and wed one o’ them wastrels at after, if ye can! Now then, get ye forth; I’ve had enough o’ women. I telled ye so.”

“Fare thee well, *Jack*,” quoth *Milly* in mocking tribulation. “I see how it is,—I shall be forced to wed a lead-miner.”

I was verily thankful that *Milly* did come away, for I could bear no longer. We ran fast down the steep track, and once at the bottom, we laughed till the tears ran down. When we were something composed, said I—

“Shall we look in on old *Isaac Crewdson*?”

“Gramercy, not this morrow,” quoth *Milly*. “*Jack*’s enough for one day. Old *Isaac* alway gives me the horrors. I cannot do with him atop of *Jack*.”

So we came home. But if *Milly* love it not, then will I go by myself to see old *Isaac*, for he liketh me well.

*Selwick Hall, October ye ix.*

Aunt *Joyce* went with me yesterday to see *Isaac*. We found him of the chimney-corner, whence he seldom stirreth, being now infirm. Old *Mary* had but then made an end of her washing, and she was a-folding the clean raiment to put by. I ran into the garden and gathered sprigs of rosemary, whereof they have a fine thriving bush.



“Do tell me, *Mall*,” said I, “how thou orderest matters, for to have thy rosemary thrive thus? Our bush is right stunted to compare withal.”

“I never did nought to it,” quoth old *Mall*, somewhat crustily. She is *Jack Benn’s* sister, and truly they be something like.

“Eh, Mistress *Nell*, dunna ye know?” saith *Isaac*, laughing feebly. “Th’ rosemary always thrives well where th’ missis is th’ master. Did ye never hear yon saying?”

“Shut up wi’ thy foolish saws!” saith *Mall*, a-turning round on him. “He’s a power of proverbs and saws, Mistress *Nell*, and he’s for ever and the day after a-thrustin’ of ’em in. There’s no wit i’ such work.”

“Eh, but there’s a deal o’ wit in some o’ they old saws!” *Isaac* makes answer, of his slow fashion. “Look ye now, —‘*Brag’s* a good dog, but *Holdfast’s* better’—there’s a true sayin’ for ye. Then again look ye,—‘He that will have a hare to breakfast must hunt o’er night.’ And ‘A grunting horse and a groaning wife never fails their master.’ Eh, but that’s true!” And old *Isaac* laughed, of his feeble fashion, yet again.

“There be some men like to make groaning wives,” quoth *Mall*, crustily. “They sit i’ th’ chimney-corner at their ease, and put ne’er a hand to the work.”

“That is not thy case, *Mall*,” saith Aunt *Joyce*, cheerily. “So long as he were able, I am well assured *Isaac* took his share of the work. And now ye be both infirm and stiff of the joints, what say ye to a good sharp lass that should save your old bones? I know one that should come but for her

meat,—a good stirring maid that should not let the grass grow under her feet. What sayest, *Mall*?”

“What, me?” saith *Mall*. “Eh, you’d best ask th’ master. I am none th’ master here, howso the rosemary may thrive. I would say she should ne’er earn the salt to her porridge; but I’m of no signification in this house, as I well wis. You’d best ask o’ them as is.”

“Why, then, we mun gi’e th’ porridge in,” quoth *Isaac*. “Come, *Mall*, thou know’st better, lass.”

But old *Mary*, muttering somewhat we might not well hear, went forth to fetch in a fresh armful of linen from the hedge.

“What hath put her out, *Isaac*?” asks Aunt *Joyce*.

“Eh, Mistress *Joyce*, there’s no telling!” saith he. “’Tis not so much as puts her in. She’s easy put out, is *Mall*: and ’tis no good on earth essaying to pull her in again. You’d best let her be. She’ll come in of hersen, when she’s weary of threapin’.” (Grumbling, fault-finding.)

“I reckon thou art weary first, most times,” saith *Aunt*.

“Well! I’ve ay kept a good heart up,” quo’ he. “The still sow eateth all the draff,’ ye ken. I’ve bore wi’ *Mall* for fifty year, and it comes easier than it might to an other man. And the Lord has bore wi’ me for seventy odd. If He can bear wi’ me a bit longer, I reckon I can wi’ *Mall*.”

Aunt *Joyce* smiled on old *Isaac* as she rose up.

“Ay, Goodman, that is the best way for to take it,” saith she. “And now, *Nell*, we must hurry home, for I see a mighty black cloud o’er yonder.”

So we home, bidding God be wi’ ye to old *Mall*, in passing, and had but a grunt in answer: but we won home