

Session 2

Comparisons between Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot using 'The Moorland Cottage' and The Mill on the Floss.

But their tête-à-tête was curtailed by the appearance of Mrs Deane with little Lucy; and Mrs Tulliver had to look on with a silent pang while Lucy's blond curls were adjusted. It was quite unaccountable that Mrs Deane, the thinnest and sallowest of all the Miss Dodsons, should have had this child, who might have been taken for Mrs Tulliver's any day. And Maggie always looked twice as dark as usual when she was by the side of Lucy.

She did to-day, when she and Tom came in from the garden with their father and their uncle Glegg. Maggie had thrown her bonnet off very carelessly, and coming in with her hair rough as well as out of curl, rushed at once to Lucy, who was standing by her mother's knee. Certainly the contrast between the cousins was conspicuous, and to superficial eyes was very much to the disadvantage of Maggie though a connoisseur might have seen "points" in her which had a higher promise for maturity than Lucy's natty completeness. It was like the contrast between a rough, dark, overgrown puppy and a white kitten. Lucy put up the neatest little rosebud mouth to be kissed; everything about her was neat,—her little round neck, with the row of coral beads; her little straight nose, not at all snubby; her little clear eyebrows, rather darker than her curls, to match hazel eyes, which looked up with shy pleasure at Maggie, taller by the head, though scarcely a year older. Maggie always looked at Lucy with delight.

She was fond of fancying a world where the people never got any larger than children of their own age, and she made the queen of it just like Lucy, with a little crown on her head, and a little sceptre in her hand—only the queen was Maggie herself in Lucy's form....

Maggie said nothing, but turned away from her with a deeper frown. As long as Tom seemed to prefer Lucy to her, Lucy made part of his unkindness. Maggie would have thought a little while ago that she could never be cross with pretty little Lucy, any more than she could be cruel to a little white mouse; but then, Tom had always been quite indifferent to Lucy before, and it had been left to Maggie to pet and make much of her. As it was, she was actually beginning to think that she should like to make Lucy cry by slapping or pinching her, especially as it might vex Tom, whom it was of no use to slap, even if she dared, because he didn't mind it. And if Lucy hadn't been there, Maggie was sure he would have got friends with her sooner.

Tickling a fat toad who is not highly sensitive is an amusement that it is possible to exhaust, and Tom by and by began to look round for some other mode of passing the time. But in so prim a garden, where they were not to go off the paved walks, there was not a great choice of sport. The only great pleasure such a restriction suggested was the pleasure of breaking it, and Tom began to meditate an insurrectionary visit to the pond, about a field's length beyond the garden.

"I say, Lucy," he began, nodding his head up and down with great significance, as he coiled up his string again, "what do you think I mean to do?"

"What, Tom?" said Lucy, with curiosity.

"I mean to go to the pond and look at the pike. You may go with me if you like," said the young sultan.

"Oh, Tom, dare you?" said Lucy. "Aunt said we mustn't go out of the garden."

"Oh, I shall go out at the other end of the garden," said Tom. "Nobody 'ull see us. Besides, I don't care if they do,—I'll run off home."

"But I couldn't run," said Lucy, who had never before been exposed to such severe temptation.

"Oh, never mind; they won't be cross with you," said Tom. "You say I took you."

Stephen, Lucy's prospective husband comments:

A man likes his wife to be accomplished, gentle, affectionate, and not stupid; and Lucy had all these qualifications. Stephen was not surprised to find himself in love with her, and was conscious of excellent judgment in preferring her to Miss Leyburn, the daughter of the county member, although Lucy was only the daughter of his father's subordinate partner; besides, he had had to defy and overcome a slight unwillingness and disappointment in his father and sisters,—a circumstance which gives a young man an agreeable consciousness of his own dignity. Stephen was aware that he had sense and independence enough to choose the wife who was likely to make him happy, unbiassed by any indirect considerations. He meant to choose Lucy; she was a little darling, and exactly the sort of woman he had always admired.

And later from Philip

... "Well, perhaps you will avenge the dark women in your own person, and carry away all the love from

your cousin Lucy. She is sure to have some handsome young man of St Ogg's at her feet now; and you have only to shine upon him—your fair little cousin will be quite quenched in your beams.”

“Philip, that is not pretty of you, to apply my nonsense to anything real,” said Maggie, looking hurt. “As if I, with my old gowns and want of all accomplishments, could be a rival of dear little Lucy,—who knows and does all sorts of charming things, and is ten times prettier than I am,—even if I were odious and base enough to wish to be her rival. Besides, I never go to aunt Deane's when any one is there; it is only because dear Lucy is good, and loves me, that she comes to see me, and will have me go to see her sometimes.”

Philip's words are a foreshadowing of what is to come when Maggie has to make a moral choice.

“It is not so, Stephen; I'm quite sure that is wrong. I have tried to think it again and again; but I see, if we judged in that way, there would be a warrant for all treachery and cruelty; we should justify breaking the most sacred ties that can ever be formed on earth. If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment.”

“But there are ties that can't be kept by mere resolution,” said Stephen, starting up and walking about again. “What is outward faithfulness? Would they have thanked us for anything so hollow as constancy without love?”

Maggie did not answer immediately. She was undergoing an inward as well as an outward contest. At last she said, with a passionate assertion of her conviction, as much against herself as against him,—

“That seems right—at first; but when I look further, I'm sure it is not right. Faithfulness and constancy mean something else besides doing what is easiest and pleasantest to ourselves. They mean renouncing whatever is opposed to the reliance others have in us,—whatever would cause misery to those whom the course of our lives has made dependent on us. If we—if I had been better, nobler, those claims would have been so strongly present with me,—I should have felt them pressing on my heart so continually, just as they do now in the moments when my conscience is awake,—that the opposite feeling would never have grown in me, as it has done; it would have been quenched at once, I should have prayed for help so earnestly, I should have rushed away as we rush from hideous danger. I feel no excuse for myself, none. I should never have failed toward Lucy and Philip as I have done, if I had not been weak, selfish, and hard,—able to think of their pain without a pain to myself that would have destroyed all temptation. Oh, what is Lucy feeling now? She believed in me—she loved me—she was so good to me. Think of her——”

Maggie's voice was getting choked as she uttered these last words.

“I can't think of her,” said Stephen, stamping as if with pain. “I can think of nothing but you, Maggie. You demand of a man what is impossible. I felt that once; but I can't go back to it now. And where is the use of your thinking of it, except to torture me? You can't save them from pain now; you can only tear yourself from me, and make my life worthless to me. And even if we could go back, and both fulfil our engagements,—if that were possible now,—it would be hateful, horrible, to think of your ever being Philip's wife,—of your ever being the wife of a man you didn't love. We have both been rescued from a mistake.”

A deep flush came over Maggie's face, and she couldn't speak. Stephen saw this. He sat down again, taking her hand in his, and looking at her with passionate entreaty.

“Maggie! Dearest! If you love me, you are mine. Who can have so great a claim on you as I have? My life is bound up in your love. There is nothing in the past that can annul our right to each other; it is the first time we have either of us loved with our whole heart and soul.”

Maggie was still silent for a little while, looking down. Stephen was in a flutter of new hope; he was going to triumph. But she raised her eyes and met his with a glance that was filled with the anguish of regret, not with yielding.

“No, not with my whole heart and soul, Stephen,” she said with timid resolution. “I have never consented to it with my whole mind. There are memories, and affections, and longings after perfect goodness, that have such a strong hold on me; they would never quit me for long; they would come back and be pain to me—repentance. I couldn't live in peace if I put the shadow of a wilful sin between myself and God.”

The Moorland Cottage

“Don't you like swinging?” asked Erminia.

“Yes! but Edward would like it now.” And Edward accordingly took her place. Frank turned away, and would not swing him. Maggie strove hard to do it, but he was heavy, and the swing bent unevenly. He scolded her for what she could not help, and at last jumped out so roughly, that the seat hit Maggie's face, and knocked her down. When she got up, her lips quivered with pain, but she did not cry; she only looked anxiously at her frock.

There was a great rent across the front breadth. Then she did shed tears--tears of fright. What would her

mother say? Erminia saw her crying.

“Are you hurt?” said she, kindly. “Oh, how your cheek is swelled! What a rude, cross boy your brother is!”

“I did not know he was going to jump out. I am not crying because I am hurt, but because of this great rent in my nice new frock. Mamma will be so displeased.”

“Is it a new frock?” asked Erminia.

“It is a new one for me. Nancy has sat up several nights to make it. Oh! what shall I do?”

Erminia’s little heart was softened by such excessive poverty. A best frock made of shabby old silk! She put her arms round Maggie’s neck, and said:

“Come with me; we will go to my aunt’s dressing-room, and Dawson will give me some silk, and I’ll help you to mend it.”

“That’s a kind little Minnie,” said Frank. Ned had turned sulkily away. I do not think the boys were ever cordial again that day; for, as Frank said to his mother, “Ned might have said he was sorry; but he is a regular tyrant to that little brown mouse of a sister of his.”

Erminia and Maggie went, with their arms round each other’s necks, to Mrs. Buxton’s dressing-room. The misfortune had made them friends. Mrs. Buxton lay on the sofa; so fair and white and colorless, in her muslin dressing-gown, that when Maggie first saw the lady lying with her eyes shut, her heart gave a start, for she thought she was dead. But she opened her large languid eyes, and called them to her, and listened to their story with interest.

... “Have you told your father?” asked Maggie; a dim anxiety lurking in her heart. “Yes,” said Frank. He did not go on; and she feared to ask, although she longed to know, how Mr. Buxton had received the intelligence.

“What did he say?” at length she inquired.

“Oh! it was evidently a new idea to him that I was attached to you; and he does not take up a new idea speedily. He has had some notion, it seems, that Erminia and I were to make a match of it; but she and I agreed, when we talked it over, that we should never have fallen in love with each other if there had not been another human being in the world. Erminia is a little sensible creature, and says she does not wonder at any man falling in love with you. Nay, Maggie, don’t hang your head so down; let me have a glimpse of your face.”

“I am sorry your father does not like it,” said Maggie, sorrowfully.

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Points to Ponder

Looking at the above extracts, what is the role of Lucy in *The Mill on the Floss* and how does she differ from Erminia in Gaskell’s novella?

What are the differences in the way the love relationships are played out in these texts? Are there any similarities?

How do the writers present their final chapters? What is similar and what is different? Think about:

- a) The events.
- b) The style in which the writer presents the story.

Why do you think Eliot can see no facility for a happy outcome yet Gaskell gives her Maggie the chance of a happy marriage?

Gaskell is very keen on redemption-why do you feel there is no redemption for Edward?

Are Tom and Maggie redeemed in Eliot’s work?

Which ending do you find the most satisfactory and why?

Apart from the respective length of these works, what other reasons can you suggest for the differences in presentation?

The Last Conflict

In the second week of September, Maggie was again sitting in her lonely room, battling with the old shadowy enemies that were forever slain and rising again. It was past midnight, and the rain was beating heavily against the window, driven with fitful force by the rushing, loud-moaning wind. For the day after Lucy's visit there had been a sudden change in the weather; the heat and drought had given way to cold variable winds, and heavy falls of rain at intervals; and she had been forbidden to risk the contemplated journey until the weather should become more settled. In the counties higher up the Floss the rains had been continuous, and the completion of the harvest had been arrested. And now, for the last two days, the rains on this lower course of the river had been incessant, so that the old men had shaken their heads and talked of sixty years ago, when the same sort of weather, happening about the equinox, brought on the great floods, which swept the bridge away, and reduced the town to great misery. But the younger generation, who had seen several small floods, thought lightly of these sombre recollections and forebodings; and Bob Jakin, naturally prone to take a hopeful view of his own luck, laughed at his mother when she regretted their having taken a house by the riverside, observing that but for that they would have had no boats, which were the most lucky of possessions in case of a flood that obliged them to go to a distance for food.

But the careless and the fearful were alike sleeping in their beds now. There was hope that the rain would abate by the morrow; threatenings of a worse kind, from sudden thaws after falls of snow, had often passed off, in the experience of the younger ones; and at the very worst, the banks would be sure to break lower down the river when the tide came in with violence, and so the waters would be carried off, without causing more than temporary inconvenience, and losses that would be felt only by the poorer sort, whom charity would relieve.

All were in their beds now, for it was past midnight; all except some solitary watchers such as Maggie. She was seated in her little parlour toward the river, with one candle, that left everything dim in the room except a letter which lay before her on the table. That letter, which had come to her to-day, was one of the causes that had kept her up far on into the night, unconscious how the hours were going, careless of seeking rest, with no image of rest coming across her mind, except of that far, far off rest from which there would be no more waking for her into this struggling earthly life.

Two days before Maggie received that letter, she had been to the Rectory for the last time. The heavy rain would have prevented her from going since; but there was another reason. Dr Kenn, at first enlightened only by a few hints as to the new turn which gossip and slander had taken in relation to Maggie, had recently been made more fully aware of it by an earnest remonstrance from one of his male parishioners against the indiscretion of persisting in the attempt to overcome the prevalent feeling in the parish by a course of resistance. Dr Kenn, having a conscience void of offence in the matter, was still inclined to persevere,—was still averse to give way before a public sentiment that was odious and contemptible; but he was finally wrought upon by the consideration of the peculiar responsibility attached to his office, of avoiding the appearance of evil,—an “appearance” that is always dependent on the average quality of surrounding minds. Where these minds are low and gross, the area of that “appearance” is proportionately widened. Perhaps he was in danger of acting from obstinacy; perhaps it was his duty to succumb. Conscientious people are apt to see their duty in that which is the most painful course; and to recede was always painful to Dr Kenn. He made up his mind that he must advise Maggie to go away from St Ogg's for a time; and he performed that difficult task with as much delicacy as he could, only stating in vague terms that he found his attempt to countenance her stay was a source of discord between himself and his parishioners, that was likely to obstruct his usefulness as a clergyman. He begged her to allow him to write to a clerical friend of his, who might possibly take her into his own family as governess; and, if not, would probably know of some other available position for a young woman in whose welfare Dr Kenn felt a strong interest.

Poor Maggie listened with a trembling lip; she could say nothing but a faint “Thank you, I shall be grateful”; and she walked back to her lodgings, through the driving rain, with a new sense of desolation. She must be a lonely wanderer; she must go out among fresh faces, that would look at her wonderingly, because the days did not seem joyful to her; she must begin a new life, in which she would have to rouse herself to receive new impressions; and she was so unspeakably, sickeningly weary! There was no home, no help for the erring; even those who pitied were constrained to hardness. But ought she to complain? Ought she to shrink in this way from the long penance of life, which was all the possibility she had of lightening the load to some other sufferers, and so changing that passionate error into a new force of unselfish human love? All the next day she sat in her lonely room, with a window darkened by the cloud and the driving rain, thinking of that future, and wrestling for patience; for what repose could poor Maggie ever win except by wrestling?

And on the third day—this day of which she had just sat out the close—the letter had come which was lying on the table before her.

The letter was from Stephen. He was come back from Holland; he was at Mudport again, unknown to any of his friends, and had written to her from that place, enclosing the letter to a person whom he trusted in St Ogg's. From beginning to end it was a passionate cry of reproach; an appeal against her useless sacrifice of him, of herself, against that perverted notion of right which led her to crush all his hopes, for the sake of a mere idea, and not any substantial good,—his hopes, whom she loved, and who loved her with that single overpowering passion, that worship, which a man never gives to a woman more than once in his life.

“They have written to me that you are to marry Kenn. As if I should believe that! Perhaps they have told you some such fables about me. Perhaps they tell you I've been ‘travelling.’ My body has been dragged about somewhere; but I have never travelled from the hideous place where you left me; where I started up from the stupor of helpless rage to find you gone.

“Maggie! whose pain can have been like mine? Whose injury is like mine? Who besides me has met that long look of love that has burnt itself into my soul, so that no other image can come there? Maggie, call me back to you! Call me back to life and goodness! I am banished from both now. I have no motives; I am indifferent to everything. Two months have only deepened the certainty that I can never care for life without you. Write me one word; say ‘Come!’ In two days I should be with you. Maggie, have you forgotten what it was to be together,—to be within reach of a look, to be within hearing of each other's voice?”

When Maggie first read this letter she felt as if her real temptation had only just begun. At the entrance of the chill dark cavern, we turn with unworn courage from the warm light; but how, when we have trodden far in the damp darkness, and have begun to be faint and weary; how, if there is a sudden opening above us, and we are invited back again to the life-nourishing day? The leap of natural longing from under the pressure of pain is so strong, that all less immediate motives are likely to be forgotten—till the pain has been escaped from.

For hours Maggie felt as if her struggle had been in vain. For hours every other thought that she strove to summon was thrust aside by the image of Stephen waiting for the single word that would bring him to her. She did not read the letter: she heard him uttering it, and the voice shook her with its old strange power. All the day before she had been filled with the vision of a lonely future through which she must carry the burthen of regret, upheld only by clinging faith. And here, close within her reach, urging itself upon her even as a claim, was another future, in which hard endurance and effort were to be exchanged for easy, delicious leaning on another's loving strength! And yet that promise of joy in the place of sadness did not make the dire force of the temptation to Maggie.

It was Stephen's tone of misery, it was the doubt in the justice of her own resolve, that made the balance tremble, and made her once start from her seat to reach the pen and paper, and write “Come!”

But close upon that decisive act, her mind recoiled; and the sense of contradiction with her past self in her moments of strength and clearness came upon her like a pang of conscious degradation. No, she must wait; she must pray; the light that had forsaken her would come again; she should feel again what she had felt when she had fled away, under an inspiration strong enough to conquer agony,—to conquer love; she should feel again what she had felt when Lucy stood by her, when Philip's letter had stirred all the fibres that bound her to the calmer past.

She sat quite still, far on into the night, with no impulse to change her attitude, without active force enough even for the mental act of prayer; only waiting for the light that would surely come again. It came with the memories that no passion could long quench; the long past came back to her, and with it the fountains of self-renouncing pity and affection, of faithfulness and resolve. The words that were marked by the quiet hand in the little old book that she had long ago learned by heart, rushed even to her lips, and found a vent for themselves in a low murmur that was quite lost in the loud driving of the rain against the window and the loud moan and roar of the wind. “I have received the Cross, I have received it from Thy hand; I will bear it, and bear it till death, as Thou hast laid it upon me.”

But soon other words rose that could find no utterance but in a sob,—“Forgive me, Stephen! It will pass away. You will come back to her.”

She took up the letter, held it to the candle, and let it burn slowly on the hearth. To-morrow she would write to him the last word of parting.

“I will bear it, and bear it till death. But how long it will be before death comes! I am so young, so healthy. How shall I have patience and strength? Am I to struggle and fall and repent again? Has life other trials as hard for me still?”

With that cry of self-despair, Maggie fell on her knees against the table, and buried her sorrow-stricken face.

Her soul went out to the Unseen Pity that would be with her to the end. Surely there was something being taught her by this experience of great need; and she must be learning a secret of human tenderness and long-suffering, that the less erring could hardly know? "O God, if my life is to be long, let me live to bless and comfort——"

At that moment Maggie felt a startling sensation of sudden cold about her knees and feet; it was water flowing under her. She started up; the stream was flowing under the door that led into the passage. She was not bewildered for an instant; she knew it was the flood!

The tumult of emotion she had been enduring for the last twelve hours seemed to have left a great calm in her; without screaming, she hurried with the candle upstairs to Bob Jakin's bedroom. The door was ajar; she went in and shook him by the shoulder.

"Bob, the flood is come! it is in the house; let us see if we can make the boats safe."

She lighted his candle, while the poor wife, snatching up her baby, burst into screams; and then she hurried down again to see if the waters were rising fast. There was a step down into the room at the door leading from the staircase; she saw that the water was already on a level with the step. While she was looking, something came with a tremendous crash against the window, and sent the leaded panes and the old wooden framework inward in shivers, the water pouring in after it.

"It is the boat!" cried Maggie. "Bob, come down to get the boats!"

And without a moment's shudder of fear, she plunged through the water, which was rising fast to her knees, and by the glimmering light of the candle she had left on the stairs, she mounted on to the window-sill, and crept into the boat, which was left with the prow lodging and protruding through the window. Bob was not long after her, hurrying without shoes or stockings, but with the lanthorn in his hand.

"Why, they're both here,—both the boats," said Bob, as he got into the one where Maggie was. "It's wonderful this fastening isn't broke too, as well as the mooring."

In the excitement of getting into the other boat, unfastening it, and mastering an oar, Bob was not struck with the danger Maggie incurred. We are not apt to fear for the fearless, when we are companions in their danger, and Bob's mind was absorbed in possible expedients for the safety of the helpless indoors. The fact that Maggie had been up, had waked him, and had taken the lead in activity, gave Bob a vague impression of her as one who would help to protect, not need to be protected. She too had got possession of an oar, and had pushed off, so as to release the boat from the overhanging window-frame.

"The water's rising so fast," said Bob, "I doubt it'll be in at the chambers before long,—th' house is so low. I've more mind to get Prissy and the child and the mother into the boat, if I could, and trusten to the water,—for th' old house is none so safe. And if I let go the boat—but you," he exclaimed, suddenly lifting the light of his lanthorn on Maggie, as she stood in the rain with the oar in her hand and her black hair streaming.

Maggie had no time to answer, for a new tidal current swept along the line of the houses, and drove both the boats out on to the wide water, with a force that carried them far past the meeting current of the river.

In the first moments Maggie felt nothing, thought of nothing, but that she had suddenly passed away from that life which she had been dreading; it was the transition of death, without its agony,—and she was alone in the darkness with God.

The whole thing had been so rapid, so dreamlike, that the threads of ordinary association were broken; she sank down on the seat clutching the oar mechanically, and for a long while had no distinct conception of her position. The first thing that waked her to fuller consciousness was the cessation of the rain, and a perception that the darkness was divided by the faintest light, which parted the overhanging gloom from the immeasurable watery level below. She was driven out upon the flood,—that awful visitation of God which her father used to talk of; which had made the nightmare of her childish dreams. And with that thought there rushed in the vision of the old home, and Tom, and her mother,—they had all listened together.

"O God, where am I? Which is the way home?" she cried out, in the dim loneliness.

What was happening to them at the Mill? The flood had once nearly destroyed it. They might be in danger, in distress,—her mother and her brother, alone there, beyond reach of help! Her whole soul was strained now on that thought; and she saw the long-loved faces looking for help into the darkness, and finding none.

She was floating in smooth water now,—perhaps far on the overflowed fields. There was no sense of present danger to check the outgoing of her mind to the old home; and she strained her eyes against the curtain of gloom that she might seize the first sight of her whereabouts,—that she might catch some faint suggestion of the spot toward which all her anxieties tended.

Oh, how welcome, the widening of that dismal watery level, the gradual uplifting of the cloudy firmament, the slowly defining blackness of objects above the glassy dark! Yes, she must be out on the fields; those were the tops of hedgerow trees. Which way did the river lie? Looking behind her, she saw the lines of black trees;

looking before her, there were none; then the river lay before her. She seized an oar and began to paddle the boat forward with the energy of wakening hope; the dawning seemed to advance more swiftly, now she was in action; and she could soon see the poor dumb beasts crowding piteously on a mound where they had taken refuge. Onward she paddled and rowed by turns in the growing twilight; her wet clothes clung round her, and her streaming hair was dashed about by the wind, but she was hardly conscious of any bodily sensations,—except a sensation of strength, inspired by mighty emotion. Along with the sense of danger and possible rescue for those long-remembered beings at the old home, there was an undefined sense of reconciliation with her brother; what quarrel, what harshness, what unbelief in each other can subsist in the presence of a great calamity, when all the artificial vesture of our life is gone, and we are all one with each other in primitive mortal needs? Vaguely Maggie felt this, in the strong resurgent love toward her brother that swept away all the later impressions of hard, cruel offence and misunderstanding, and left only the deep, underlying, unshakable memories of early union.

But now there was a large dark mass in the distance, and near to her Maggie could discern the current of the river. The dark mass must be—yes, it was—St Ogg's. Ah, now she knew which way to look for the first glimpse of the well-known trees—the gray willows, the now yellowing chestnuts—and above them the old roof! But there was no colour, no shape yet; all was faint and dim. More and more strongly the energies seemed to come and put themselves forth, as if her life were a stored-up force that was being spent in this hour, unneeded for any future.

She must get her boat into the current of the Floss, else she would never be able to pass the Ripple and approach the house; this was the thought that occurred to her, as she imagined with more and more vividness the state of things round the old home. But then she might be carried very far down, and be unable to guide her boat out of the current again. For the first time distinct ideas of danger began to press upon her; but there was no choice of courses, no room for hesitation, and she floated into the current. Swiftly she went now without effort; more and more clearly in the lessening distance and the growing light she began to discern the objects that she knew must be the well-known trees and roofs; nay, she was not far off a rushing, muddy current that must be the strangely altered Ripple.

Great God! there were floating masses in it, that might dash against her boat as she passed, and cause her to perish too soon. What were those masses?

For the first time Maggie's heart began to beat in an agony of dread. She sat helpless, dimly conscious that she was being floated along, more intensely conscious of the anticipated clash. But the horror was transient; it passed away before the oncoming warehouses of St Ogg's. She had passed the mouth of the Ripple, then; now, she must use all her skill and power to manage the boat and get it if possible out of the current. She could see now that the bridge was broken down; she could see the masts of a stranded vessel far out over the watery field. But no boats were to be seen moving on the river,—such as had been laid hands on were employed in the flooded streets.

With new resolution, Maggie seized her oar, and stood up again to paddle; but the now ebbing tide added to the swiftness of the river, and she was carried along beyond the bridge. She could hear shouts from the windows overlooking the river, as if the people there were calling to her. It was not till she had passed on nearly to Tofton that she could get the boat clear of the current. Then with one yearning look toward her uncle Deane's house that lay farther down the river, she took to both her oars and rowed with all her might across the watery fields, back toward the Mill. Colour was beginning to awake now, and as she approached the Dorlcote fields, she could discern the tints of the trees, could see the old Scotch firs far to the right, and the home chestnuts,—oh, how deep they lay in the water,—deeper than the trees on this side the hill! And the roof of the Mill—where was it? Those heavy fragments hurrying down the Ripple,—what had they meant? But it was not the house,—the house stood firm; drowned up to the first story, but still firm,—or was it broken in at the end toward the Mill?

With panting joy that she was there at last,—joy that overcame all distress,—Maggie neared the front of the house. At first she heard no sound; she saw no object moving. Her boat was on a level with the upstairs window. She called out in a loud, piercing voice,—

“Tom, where are you? Mother, where are you? Here is Maggie!”

Soon, from the window of the attic in the central gable, she heard Tom's voice,—

“Who is it? Have you brought a boat?”

“It is I, Tom,—Maggie. Where is mother?”

“She is not here; she went to Garum the day before yesterday. I'll come down to the lower window.”

“Alone, Maggie?” said Tom, in a voice of deep astonishment, as he opened the middle window, on a level with the boat.

“Yes, Tom; God has taken care of me, to bring me to you. Get in quickly. Is there no one else?”

"No," said Tom, stepping into the boat; "I fear the man is drowned; he was carried down the Ripple, I think, when part of the Mill fell with the crash of trees and stones against it; I've shouted again and again, and there has been no answer. Give me the oars, Maggie."

It was not till Tom had pushed off and they were on the wide water,—he face to face with Maggie,—that the full meaning of what had happened rushed upon his mind. It came with so overpowering a force,—it was such a new revelation to his spirit, of the depths in life that had lain beyond his vision, which he had fancied so keen and clear,—that he was unable to ask a question. They sat mutely gazing at each other,—Maggie with eyes of intense life looking out from a weary, beaten face; Tom pale, with a certain awe and humiliation. Thought was busy though the lips were silent; and though he could ask no question, he guessed a story of almost miraculous, divinely protected effort. But at last a mist gathered over the blue-gray eyes, and the lips found a word they could utter,—the old childish "Magsie!"

Maggie could make no answer but a long, deep sob of that mysterious, wondrous happiness that is one with pain.

As soon as she could speak, she said, "We will go to Lucy, Tom; we'll go and see if she is safe, and then we can help the rest."

Tom rowed with untired vigor, and with a different speed from poor Maggie's. The boat was soon in the current of the river again, and soon they would be at Tofton.

"Park House stands high up out of the flood," said Maggie. "Perhaps they have got Lucy there."

Nothing else was said; a new danger was being carried toward them by the river. Some wooden machinery had just given way on one of the wharves, and huge fragments were being floated along. The sun was rising now, and the wide area of watery desolation was spread out in dreadful clearness around them; in dreadful clearness floated onward the hurrying, threatening masses. A large company in a boat that was working its way along under the Tofton houses observed their danger, and shouted, "Get out of the current!"

But that could not be done at once; and Tom, looking before him, saw death rushing on them. Huge fragments, clinging together in fatal fellowship, made one wide mass across the stream.

"It is coming, Maggie!" Tom said, in a deep, hoarse voice, loosing the oars, and clasping her.

The next instant the boat was no longer seen upon the water, and the huge mass was hurrying on in hideous triumph.

But soon the keel of the boat reappeared, a black speck on the golden water.

The boat reappeared, but brother and sister had gone down in an embrace never to be parted; living through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together.

CHAPTER XI.

Maggie sat on deck, wrapped in her duffel-cloak; the old familiar cloak, which had been her wrap in many a happy walk in the haunts near her moorland home. The weather was not cold for the time of year, but still it was chilly to any one that was stationary. But she wanted to look her last on the shoals of English people, who crowded backward and forward, like ants, on the pier. Happy people! who might stay among their loved ones. The mocking demons gathered round her, as they gather round all who sacrifice self, tempting. A crowd of suggestive doubts pressed upon her. "Was it really necessary that she should go with Edward? Could she do him any real good? Would he be in any way influenced by her?" Then the demon tried another description of doubt. "Had it ever been her duty to go? She was leaving her mother alone. She was giving Frank much present sorrow. It was not even yet too late!" She could not endure longer; and replied to her own tempting heart.

"I was right to hope for Edward; I am right to give him the chance of steadiness which my presence will give. I am doing what my mother earnestly wished me to do; and what to the last she felt relieved by my doing. I know Frank will feel sorrow, because I myself have such an aching heart; but if I had asked him whether I was not right in going, he would have been too truthful not to have said yes. I have tried to do right, and though I may fail, and evil may seem to arise rather than good out of my endeavor, yet still I will submit to my failure, and try and say 'God's will be done!' If only I might have seen Frank once more, and told him all face to face!"

To do away with such thoughts, she determined no longer to sit gazing, and tempted by the shore; and, giving one look to the land which contained her lover, she went down below, and busied herself, even through her blinding tears, in trying to arrange her own cabin, and Edward's. She heard boat after boat arrive loaded with passengers. She learnt from Edward, who came down to tell her the fact, that there were upwards of two hundred steerage passengers. She felt the tremulous shake which announced that the ship was loosed from her moorings, and being tugged down the river. She wrapped herself up once more, and came on deck, and sat down among the many who were looking their last look at England. The early winter evening was darkening in, and shutting out the Welsh coast, the hills of which were like the hills of home. She was thankful when she became too ill to think and remember.

Exhausted and still, she did not know whether she was sleeping or waking; or whether she had slept since she had thrown herself down on her cot, when suddenly, there was a great rush, and then Edward stood like lightning by her, pulling her up by the arm.

"The ship is on fire--to the deck, Maggie! Fire! Fire!" he shouted, like a maniac, while he dragged her up the stairs--as if the cry of Fire could summon human aid on the great deep. And the cry was echoed up to heaven by all that crowd in an accent of despair.

They stood huddled together, dressed and undressed; now in red lurid light, showing ghastly faces of terror--now in white wreaths of smoke--as far away from the steerage as they could press; for there, up from the hold, rose columns of smoke, and now and then a fierce blaze leaped out, exulting--higher and higher every time; while from each crevice on that part of the deck issued harbingers of the terrible destruction that awaited them.

The sailors were lowering the boats; and above them stood the captain, as calm as if he were on his own hearth at home--his home where he never more should be. His voice was low--was lower; but as clear as a bell in its distinctness; as wise in its directions as collected thought could make it. Some of the steerage passengers were helping; but more were dumb and motionless with affright. In that dead silence was heard a low wail of sorrow, as of numbers whose power was crushed out of them by that awful terror. Edward still held his clutch of Margaret's arm.

"Be ready!" said he, in a fierce whisper.

The fire sprung up along the main-mast, and did not sink or disappear again. They knew then that all the mad efforts made by some few below to extinguish it were in vain; and then went up the prayers of hundreds, in mortal agony of fear:

"Lord! have mercy upon us!"

Not in quiet calm of village church did ever such a pitiful cry go up to heaven; it was like one voice--like the day of judgment in the presence of the Lord.

And after that there was no more silence; but a confusion of terrible farewells, and wild cries of affright, and purposeless rushes hither and thither. The boats were down, rocking on the sea. The captain spoke:

"Put the children in first; they are the most helpless."

One or two stout sailors stood in the boats to receive them. Edward drew nearer and nearer to the gangway, pulling Maggie with him. She was almost pressed to death, and stifled. Close in her ear, she heard a woman praying to herself. She, poor creature, knew of no presence but God's in that awful hour, and spoke in a low voice to Him.

"My heart's darlings are taken away from me. Faith! faith! Oh, my great God! I will die in peace, if Thou wilt but grant me faith in this terrible hour, to feel that Thou wilt take care of my poor orphans. Hush! Dearest Billy," she cried out shrill to a little fellow in the boat waiting for his mother; and the change in her voice from despair to a kind of cheerfulness, showed what a mother's love can do. "Mother will come soon. Hide his face, Anne, and wrap your shawl tight round him." And then her voice sank down again in the same low, wild prayer for faith. Maggie could not turn to see her face, but took the hand which hung near her. The woman clutched at it with the grasp of a vice; but went on praying, as if unconscious. Just then the crowd gave way a little. The captain had said, that the women were to go next; but they were too frenzied to obey his directions, and now pressed backward and forward. The sailors, with mute, stern obedience, strove to follow out the captain's directions. Edward pulled Maggie, and she kept her hold on the mother. The mate, at the head of the gangway, pushed him back.

"Only women are to go!"

"There are men there."

"Three, to manage the boat."

"Come on, Maggie! while there's room for us," said he, unheeding. But Maggie drew back, and put the mother's hand into the mate's. "Save her first!" said she. The woman did not know of anything, but that her children were there; it was only in after days, and quiet hours, that she remembered the young creature who pushed her forward to join her fatherless children, and, by losing her place in the crowd, was jostled--where, she did not know--but dreamed until her dying day. Edward pressed on, unaware that Maggie was not close behind him. He was deaf to reproaches; and, heedless of the hand stretched out to hold him back, sprang toward the boat. The men there pushed her off--full and more than full as she was; and overboard he fell into the sullen heaving waters.

His last shout had been on Maggie's name--a name she never thought to hear again on earth, as she was pressed back, sick and suffocating. But suddenly a voice rang out above all confused voices and moaning hungry waves, and above the roaring fire.

"Maggie, Maggie! My Maggie!"

Out of the steerage side of the crowd a tall figure issued forth, begrimed with smoke. She could not see, but she knew. As a tame bird flutters to the human breast of its protector when affrighted by some mortal foe, so Maggie fluttered and cowered into his arms. And, for a moment, there was no more terror or thought of danger in the hearts of those twain, but only infinite and absolute peace. She had no wonder how he came there: it was enough that he was there. He first thought of the destruction that was present with them. He was as calm and composed as if they sat

beneath the thorn-tree on the still moorlands, far away. He took her, without a word, to the end of the quarter-deck. He lashed her to a piece of spar. She never spoke:

"Maggie," he said, "my only chance is to throw you overboard. This spar will keep you floating. At first, you will go down--deep, deep down. Keep your mouth and eyes shut. I shall be there when you come up. By God's help, I will struggle bravely for you."

She looked up; and by the flashing light he could see a trusting, loving smile upon her face. And he smiled back at her; a grave, beautiful look, fit to wear on his face in heaven. He helped her to the side of the vessel, away from the falling burning pieces of mast. Then for a moment he paused.

"If--Maggie, I may be throwing you in to death." He put his hand before his eyes. The strong man lost courage. Then she spoke:

"I am not afraid; God is with us, whether we live or die!" She looked as quiet and happy as a child on its mother's breast! and so before he lost heart again, he heaved her up, and threw her as far as he could over into the glaring, dizzying water; and straight leaped after her. She came up with an involuntary look of terror on her face; but when she saw him by the red glare of the burning ship, close by her side, she shut her eyes, and looked as if peacefully going to sleep. He swam, guiding the spar.

"I think we are near Llandudno. I know we have passed the little Ormes' head." That was all he said; but she did not speak.

He swam out of the heat and fierce blaze of light into the quiet, dark waters; and then into the moon's path. It might be half an hour before he got into that silver stream. When the beams fell down upon them he looked at Maggie. Her head rested on the spar, quite still. He could not bear it. "Maggie--dear heart! speak!"

With a great effort she was called back from the borders of death by that voice, and opened her filmy eyes, which looked abroad as if she could see nothing nearer than the gleaming lights of Heaven. She let the lids fall softly again. He was as if alone in the wide world with God.

"A quarter of an hour more and all is over," thought he. "The people at Llandudno must see our burning ship, and will come out in their boats." He kept in the line of light, although it did not lead him direct to the shore, in order that they might be seen. He swam with desperation. One moment he thought he had heard her last gasp rattle through the rush of the waters; and all strength was gone, and he lay on the waves as if he himself must die, and go with her spirit straight through that purple lift to heaven; the next he heard the splash of oars, and raised himself and cried aloud. The boatmen took them in--and examined her by the lantern--and spoke in Welsh--and shook their heads. Frank threw himself on his knees, and prayed them to take her to land. They did not know his words, but they understood his prayer. He kissed her lips--he chafed her hands--he wrung the water out of her hair--he held her feet against his warm breast.

"She is not dead," he kept saying to the men, as he saw their sorrowful, pitying looks.

The kind people at Llandudno had made ready their own humble beds, with every appliance of comfort they could think of, as soon as they understood the nature of the calamity which had befallen the ship on their coasts. Frank walked, dripping, bareheaded, by the body of his Margaret, which was borne by some men along the rocky sloping shore.

"She is not dead!" he said. He stopped at the first house they came to. It belonged to a kind-hearted woman. They laid Maggie in her bed, and got the village doctor to come and see her.

"There is life still," said he, gravely.

"I knew it," said Frank. But it felled him to the ground. He sank first in prayer, and then in insensibility. The doctor did everything. All that night long he passed to and fro from house to house; for several had swum to Llandudno. Others, it was thought, had gone to Abergele.

In the morning Frank was recovered enough to write to his father, by Maggie's bedside. He sent the letter off to Conway by a little bright-looking Welsh boy. Late in the afternoon she awoke.

In a moment or two she looked eagerly round her, as if gathering in her breath; and then she covered her head and sobbed.

"Where is Edward?" asked she.

"We do not know," said Frank, gravely. "I have been round the village, and seen every survivor here; he is not among them, but he may be at some other place along the coast."

She was silent, reading in his eyes his fears--his belief.

At last she asked again.

"I cannot understand it. My head is not clear. There are such rushing noises in it. How came you there?" She shuddered involuntarily as she recalled the terrible where.

For an instant he dreaded, for her sake, to recall the circumstances of the night before; but then he understood

how her mind would dwell upon them until she was satisfied.

“You remember writing to me, love, telling me all. I got your letter—I don’t know how long ago--yesterday, I think. Yes! in the evening. You could not think, Maggie, I would let you go alone to America. I won’t speak against Edward, poor fellow! but we must both allow that he was not the person to watch over you as such a treasure should be watched over. I thought I would go with you. I hardly know if I meant to make myself known to you all at once, for I had no wish to have much to do with your brother. I see now that it was selfish in me. Well! there was nothing to be done, after receiving your letter, but to set off for Liverpool straight, and join you. And after that decision was made, my spirits rose, for the old talks about Canada and Australia came to my mind, and this seemed like a realization of them. Besides, Maggie, I suspected--I even suspect now—that my father had something to do with your going with Edward?”

“Indeed, Frank!” said she, earnestly, “you are mistaken; I cannot tell you all now; but he was so good and kind at last. He never urged me to go; though, I believe, he did tell me it would be the saving of Edward.”

“Don’t agitate yourself, love. I trust there will be time enough, some happy day at home, to tell me all. And till then, I will believe that my father did not in any way suggest this voyage. But you’ll allow that, after all that has passed, it was not unnatural in me to suppose so. I only told Middleton I was obliged to leave him by the next train. It was not till I was fairly off, that I began to reckon up what money I had with me. I doubt even if I was sorry to find it was so little. I should have to put forth my energies and fight my way, as I had often wanted to do. I remember, I thought how happy you and I would be, striving together as poor people ‘in that new world which is the old.’ Then you had told me you were going in the steerage; and that was all suitable to my desires for myself.”

“It was Erminia’s kindness that prevented our going there. She asked your father to take us cabin places unknown to me.”

“Did she? dear Erminia! it is just like her. I could almost laugh to remember the eagerness with which I doffed my signs of wealth, and put on those of poverty. I sold my watch when I got into Liverpool--yesterday, I believe--but it seems like months ago. And I rigged myself out at a slop-shop with suitable clothes for a steerage passenger. Maggie! you never told me the name of the vessel you were going to sail in!”

“I did not know it till I got to Liverpool. All Mr. Buxton said was, that some ship sailed on the 15th.”

“I concluded it must be the Anna-Maria, (poor Anna-Maria!) and I had no time to lose. She had just heaved her anchor when I came on board. Don’t you recollect a boat hailing her at the last moment? There were three of us in her.”

“No! I was below in my cabin--trying not to think,” said she, coloring a little.

“Well! as soon as I got on board it began to grow dark, or, perhaps, it was the fog on the river; at any rate, instead of being able to single out your figure at once, Maggie--it is one among a thousand--I had to go peering into every woman’s face; and many were below. I went between decks, and by-and-by I was afraid I had mistaken the vessel; I sat down--I had no spirit to stand; and every time the door opened I roused up and looked—but you never came. I was thinking what to do; whether to be put on shore in Ireland, or to go on to New York, and wait for you there;--it was the worst time of all, for I had nothing to do; and the suspense was horrible. I might have known,” said he, smiling, “my little Emperor of Russia was not one to be a steerage passenger.”

But Maggie was too much shaken to smile; and the thought of Edward lay heavy upon her mind.

“Then the fire broke out; how, or why, I suppose will never be ascertained. It was at our end of the vessel. I thanked God, then, that you were not there. The second mate wanted some one to go down with him to bring up the gunpowder, and throw it overboard. I had nothing to do, and I went. We wrapped it up in wet sails, but it was a ticklish piece of work, and took time. When we had got it overboard, the flames were gathering far and wide. I don’t remember what I did until I heard Edward’s voice speaking your name.”

It was decided that the next morning they should set off homeward, striving on their way to obtain tidings of Edward. Frank would have given his only valuable, (his mother’s diamond-guard, which he wore constantly,) as a pledge for some advance of money; but the kind Welsh people would not have it. They had not much spare cash, but what they had they readily lent to the survivors of the Anna-Maria. Dressed in the homely country garb of the people, Frank and Maggie set off in their car. It was a clear, frosty morning; the first that winter. The road soon lay high up on the cliffs along the coast. They looked down on the sea rocking below. At every village they stopped, and Frank inquired, and made the driver inquire in Welsh; but no tidings gained they of Edward; though here and there Maggie watched Frank into some cottage or other, going to see a dead body, beloved by some one: and when he came out, solemn and grave, their sad eyes met, and she knew it was not he they sought, without needing words.

At Abergele they stopped to rest; and because, being a larger place, it would need a longer search, Maggie

lay down on the sofa, for she was very weak, and shut her eyes, and tried not to see forever and ever that mad struggling crowd lighted by the red flames.

Frank came back in an hour or so; and soft behind him--laboriously treading on tiptoe--Mr. Buxton followed. He was evidently choking down his sobs; but when he saw the white wan figure of Maggie, he held out his arms.

"My dear! my daughter!" he said, "God bless you!" He could not speak more--he was fairly crying; but he put her hand in Frank's and kept holding them both.

"My father," said Frank, speaking in a husky voice, while his eyes filled with tears, "had heard of it before he received my letter. I might have known that the lighthouse signals would take it fast to Liverpool. I had written a few lines to him saying I was going to you; happily they never reached--that was spared to my dear father."

Maggie saw the look of restored confidence that passed between father and son.

"My mother?" said she at last.

"She is here," said they both at once, with sad solemnity.

"Oh, where? Why did not you tell me?" exclaimed she, starting up. But their faces told her why.

"Edward is drowned--is dead," said she, reading their looks.

There was no answer.

"Let me go to my mother."

"Maggie, she is with him. His body was washed ashore last night. My father and she heard of it as they came along. Can you bear to see her? She will not leave him."

"Take me to her," Maggie answered.

They led her into a bed-room. Stretched on the bed lay Edward, but now so full of hope and worldly plans.

Mrs. Browne looked round, and saw Maggie. She did not get up from her place by his head; nor did she long avert her gaze from his poor face. But she held Maggie's hand, as the girl knelt by her, and spoke to her in a hushed voice, undisturbed by tears. Her miserable heart could not find that relief.

"He is dead!--he is gone!--he will never come back again! If he had gone to America--it might have been years first--but he would have come back to me.

But now he will never come back again;--never--never!"

Her voice died away, as the wailings of the night-wind die in the distance; and there was silence--silence more sad and hopeless than any passionate words of grief.

And to this day it is the same. She prizes her dead son more than a thousand living daughters, happy and prosperous as is Maggie now--rich in the love of many. If Maggie did not show such reverence to her mother's faithful sorrows, others might wonder at her refusal to be comforted by that sweet daughter. But Maggie treats her with such tender sympathy, never thinking of herself or her own claims, that Frank, Erminia, Mr. Buxton, Nancy, and all, are reverent and sympathizing too.

Over both old and young the memory of one who is dead broods like a dove--of one who could do but little during her lifetime--who was doomed only to "stand and wait"--who was meekly content to be gentle, holy, patient, and undefiled--the memory of the invalid Mrs. Buxton.

"THERE'S ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE."