THE TAYLORS OF ONGAR

Portrait of an English Family of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. Drawn from Family Records by the Great-great Niece of Ann and Jane Taylor.

DORIS MARY ARMITAGE

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ANN AND JANE TAYLOR

By their father, the Rev. Isaac Taylor of Ongar.

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To My Mother,
Grand-daughter of
Jemima Taylor

With gratitude to all those members of the Taylor and Gilbert families who have so generously lent me their treasures and helped me with suggestions.

My thanks are also due to Mr. F. Lingard Ranson for permission to reproduce two of his photographs of Lavenham, and for information about the history of the little town.

D. M. A.

December, 1938.

FOREWORD

MORE than a hundred years ago an old man sat down to write his memories of a beloved sister.

Distinguished son of a family whose name was a household word in English artistic and literary circles of the day, Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers, philosopher, man of letters, artist, inventor, wished to leave his record of an age and outlook that he loved. For times were changing: it seemed to him that life was losing its tranquillity; his fellow-beings their sense of values.

> "The ordinary incidents of an everyday lot," he wrote, "may be worth the relating when they are of a kind that are characteristic of a gone-by era, and when they serve to give vividness to our conception of the doings and fashions of such an era—a time seventy, eighty, years ago, and of which few vivid recollections are extant."

His eldest sister, towards the end of her long life, wrote for her children her own 'treasury of recollections;' and now to us for whom life has changed beyond all recognition, it may not be without interest to draw from these and other family records a picture of life as lived long ago in the English countryside by THE TAYLORS OF ONGAR.

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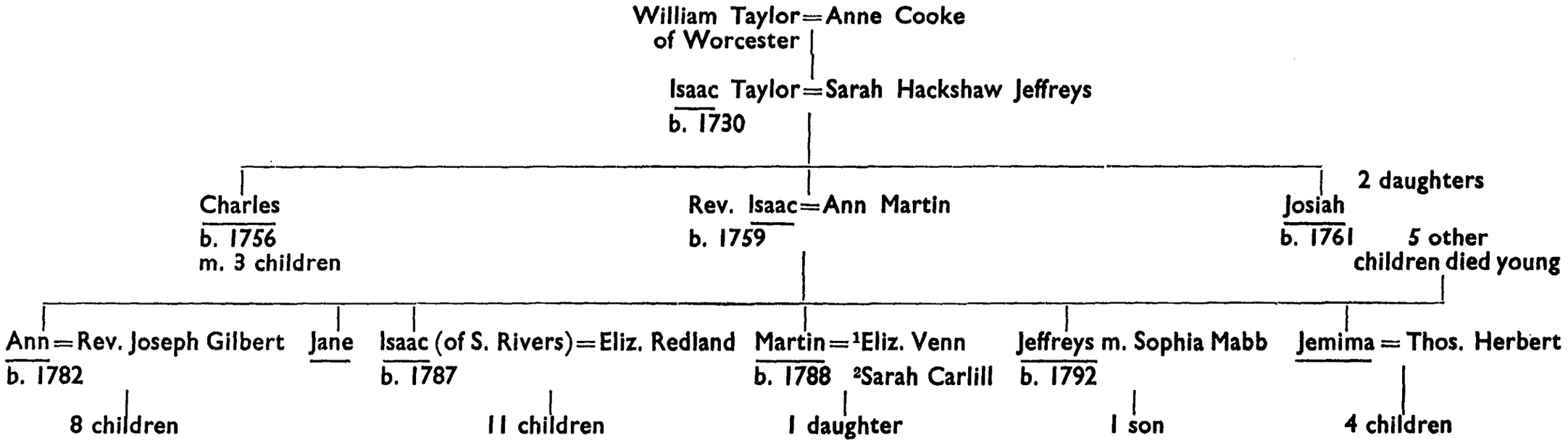


INTRODUCTION

THE TAYLORS

THE first known Isaac Taylor, grandfather of Ann and Jane, was the son of a brass-founder in Worcester, and born early in the reign of George II. He showed an early talent for engraving, and on his father's death, whilst still a youth, came to London from Worcester, paying two shillings and six pence for leave to walk beside the stage waggon. He entered the cutlery works of Josiah Jeffreys, and also obtained instruction in the newly-imported mystery of copper-plate engraving.

Josiah Jeffreys had married a Miss Hackshaw, and Isaac Taylor married their daughter, Sarah Hackshaw Jeffreys, in 1754. The Hackshaws, or Hawkshaws, were of Dutch extraction, or at any rate belonged to the Puritan immigration. Mrs. Isaac Taylor's grandfather, Robert Hackshaw, came to England with William III, and was called the 'Orange Skipper,' having carried dispatches backwards and forwards, before the Revolution, concealed in his walking-cane.

Isaac had engraved crests and other devices at Worcester, and so distinguished himself in this branch of Josiah Jeffreys' work that he now adopted art engraving as his profession, presently adding the business of an art publisher. He soon won a reputable place among the English artists who, with their sons and pupils, brought line engraving to a pitch of excellence that challenges comparison with the artists of Germany, Italy, and France. His house was the

resort of several personages of note in art and literature. Goldsmith,[1] the illustrations of whose works are often signed 'Isaac Taylor,' was frequently there. Bartolozzi, Fuseli and Smirke were among his friends; and he was one of the original founders of the Royal Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain, from which sprang the Royal Academy. The celebrated Mollett was for many years secretary of the Society, Isaac Taylor eventually succeeding him in that office.

The new secretary was of some note not only in the world of art but also that of politics, taking an active part in Wilkes' election, whereby he lost more than a thousand pounds. He was comfortably independent, and died in 1807, the tombstone of 'Isaac Taylor, Gent,' marking his resting-place in Edmonton burial ground.

He had three sons and two daughters. Of the sons Charles was the learned editor of *Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible*, its translation, commentary, and the illustration being the great work of his life. He also edited and published several works of art, including the Artists Repository five vols., and *Oval Plates for Shakespeare*. In addition, Charles was an engraver; but his younger and more famous brother speaks of him as 'having artistical feeling, but no delicacy of tool.' He afterwards became librarian to the London Library, the books being kept in his own home at Hatton Garden. He married, and had two sons and a daughter.

Isaac became the Reverend Isaac Taylor of Ongar, and Josiah was a publisher of architectural works. The second of the three sons, Isaac, received a regular

[1] On one occasion, consulted upon the title of a book with an apology for troubling him on so trifling a matter, he replied, "The title! the title, sir, is everything!"

education as an engraver and soon surpassed his father. In his early twenties he executed (for his father) scientific engravings for *Chambers's Cyclopædia*, then under Dr. Abraham Rees' editorship; thereby adding greatly to his scientific, as well as his artistic knowledge. He also engraved what were called 'bookplates,' chiefly for a small edition of Shakespeare published by his brother Charles. About the year 1786 Mr. Alderman Boydell, the publisher, undertook a series of illustrations of Shakespeare (and others), engaging for this the first English painters and engravers. Isaac Taylor, then a young country artist, called at the great house to show his work, and was at once engaged for an engraving from Opie—"The Death of Rizzio."

"I remember to have heard him say," records his eldest daughter, "with what a feeling almost of dismay he contemplated the undertaking. . . . But his was not the heart to despond. What man hath done, man might do. When the plate was finished, beside the sum of 250 guineas, the payment from Boydell, he received a prize for the best engraving submitted that year to the Adelphi Society for the Promotion of Art; . . . and the further sum of ten guineas, together with a small golden palette. With love and reverence I, his eldest child, leave on record these memories of a Father—no common man! He was at this time Isaac Taylor, Jr. His father, then surviving, was among the first to bring the book engraving of England into a respectable style. He, as far as we know, was the first Isaac Taylor of the family."

Boydell's work had a large sale on the Continent until all business was brought to an end by the French war. Mr. Taylor was fortunate in having other

resources to fall back upon, and shortly commissioned by Boydell for a five hundred guinea portrait engraving, escaped the ruin which this war brought to hundreds of his fellow artists.

An early biographer of the family comments: "The long association with metal working of both the Jeffreys and Taylor families throws an interesting light on the engraving talent which the first and second Isaac Taylors developed; and the connection with Holland and the Revolution suggests early preferences for Nonconformity."

In 1781 Isaac Taylor married Ann Martin, the daughter of one of Mr. Whitfield's early converts, a gentleman thus happily prepared for early death. Mr. Martin's religious preferences were not, it seems, shared by his family, for upon one occasion, having taken his little girl to hear Mr. Whitfield, the future mother of Ann and Jane Taylor suddenly stood up in the pew and exclaimed, "What have you brought me here for, among a pack of Whitfieldites?"

Isaac Taylor's first child, Ann, who became Mrs. Gilbert, was born on her father's twenty-second birthday, 30th January, 1782, and on 23rd September of the following year Jane first saw the light. Nine other children were born, of whom four survived: Isaac, Martin, Jeffreys, and Jemima.

SOME WORKS BY THE TAYLOR FAMILY

BY THE REV. ISAAC TAYLOR OF ONGAR. Born 1759.

European Biography (Early, Middle and Latter Ages); Beginnings of British Biography; The Wonders of Nature and Art, etc., etc.

BY MRS. TAYLOR OF ONGAR. Born 1757.

Maternal Solicitude; Retrospection; Reciprocal Duties of Parents and Children, etc., etc.

BY ANN AND JANE TAYLOR.

Hymns for Infant Minds; Original Poems for Infant Minds; By Several Young Persons, 1806; *Original Hymns for Sunday Schools; Rural Scenes; City Scenes; London Cries; The World Turned Topsy Turvey; Limed Twigs to Catch Young Birds.*

BY ANN TAYLOR (MRS. GILBERT). Born in Islington, 1782.

The Convalescent; The Wedding Amongst the Flowers; Anniversary Hymns; Hymns for Infant Schools; Memorials of Rev. Joseph Gilbert.

BY JANE TAYLOR. Born in Islington, 1783.

Essays in Rhyme; Display; Contributions of Q.Q.

BY ISAAC TAYLOR OF STANFORD RIVERS. Born in Lavenham, 1787.

Natural History of Enthusiasm[1]; *Physical Theory of Another Life; Wesley and Methodism; Elements of Thought; Ancient Christianity; Restoration of Belief; The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry; Memoir of Jane Taylor, etc., etc.*

BY JEFFREYS TAYLOR. Born 1792.

Æsop in Rhyme; Old English Sayings; Ralph Richards the Miser, etc., etc.

BY JOSIAH GILBERT. Born 1814.

Cadore, or Titian's Country; Lectures on Art; Part Author of *The Dolomite Mountains.*

Josiah Gilbert was also a portrait painter of some note.

[1] Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers has been described as the most brilliant member of the family. *The Natural History of Enthusiasm* was published anonymously in 1829, and at once placed its author in the front rank of contemporary literature. Avowal of authorship was only made seven years later when Isaac Taylor allowed himself to be brought forward as a candidate for the chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh. (He lost the election by three votes to Sir William Hamilton.) Sir James Stephen, in an essay on the works of the author of *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, remarked that from this work its author received his 'literary peerage.'

THE TAYLORS AND THEIR CIRCLE

In the ancient town of Lavenham in Suffolk there is a fifteenth-century half-timbered house fronting on to Shilling Street, and known as Shilling Grange.

Shilling Grange it may be, officially, but in Lavenham it is also known and loved as The Twinkle House, for it was the early home of Ann and Jane Taylor. Many stars have twinkled since the two little sisters paced hand in hand, the green walks of their father's garden, reciting their joint verses, or drove home from tea at The Bull at Melford in a post-chaise with its bob up and down postilion. Many 'travellers in the dark' have 'thanked you for your tiny spark'[1] since Isaac Taylor, fulfilling his engagement to supply for Gedge's Pocket Book drawings and engravings of the gentlemen's seats of the county, drove safely through the Suffolk lanes in the perilous quarter cart.[2] But the Twinkle House has been restored and is something of a landmark, for it was the home not merely of two

[1] Jane Taylor's poem 'The Star' appears on p. 201.

[2] "For the clay roads and among the foot-deep ruts of Suffolk a light vehicle called a 'whiskey' or 'quarter cart' was in use. This was constructed to run beside the ruts, and the horse did not occupy the middle of either carriage or road, but ran in shafts on one side so as just to escape the heavy dragging fissure made by the waggon wheels. So long as the animal kept the track, and especially so long as the side on which he ran did not suddenly sink, all was safe, the weight of the horse counterbalancing the sway, but if suddenly raised on the opposite side, horse and chaise would go over together. To drive a 'quarter cart' along a Suffolk road required some skill." Mr. Taylor never met with an accident.

sisters who were to win fame, but of a distinguished family, rich also in the possession of qualities and an atmosphere that to-day are far to seek. Ann herself (Mrs. Gilbert) is waiting to tell us of the home of her childhood, and her loving hand shall draw her father's portrait:

> "Your dear grandfather" (she is writing for her children) "was an unusually single-hearted man and Christian. His life till nearly thirty was spent in London, but he caught not a taint of its atmosphere. His love of knowledge was early, strong and universal. Nothing was uninteresting to him that he had opportunity to acquire, and when acquired his delight was to communicate. Apt to teach he certainly was, and ingenious as apt; all his methods were self-devised, and the life of few men devoted to teaching as a profession would have accomplished more than he attained by husbanding the half-hours of his own. . . . Method, arrangement, regularity in everything, were the characteristics of his mind; as were a tranquil hoping for, and believing in the best, those of his heart. The future he could at all times cheerfully commit to his heavenly Father; the present had ever some bright spot for which to be thankful, and on this his eye, as by a natural attraction, fixed itself, while his wit or humour could strike a spark out of the dullest circumstance. Few perhaps have ever moved in active life for seventy years retaining a tendency to judge so favourably of all he met with. Hope and cheerfulness were as the air he breathed, and these were confirmed and rendered habitual principles by a faith in the providence and promises of God, often tried, but

never observed to fail. For nearly half a century he was the lover as well as the husband, alive to all the impressions of tenderness, and constantly devising with considerate affection pleasant little surprises for my dear mother. Her forty years of incessant bodily suffering afforded ample field for such a heart to adorn with the flowers and evergreens of love, and with ingenious tenderness he did so to the last."

Married at twenty-one, his first child born on his twenty-second birthday and others following in quick succession, Isaac Taylor had early to face heavy responsibilities on limited means. His certain income was half a guinea weekly for three days' work for his brother Charles (the engraver and publisher); added to what he could earn during the remaining three days. He had thirty pounds in cash, and Mrs. Taylor her dowry of one hundred pounds stock, and the furniture for the first floor at Islington where they began their married life. Writing sixty years later in what she calls 'these days of aim and show,' Mrs. Gilbert speaks of her delight in reverting to 'the days of small things.'

'The days of small things' had their charm but also, for the young parents, their difficulties, and Isaac Taylor must make the most of every hour. His habit of early rising broken by disturbed nights during his children's infancy, an unexpected call on his purse led him to drastic measures to lengthen his working day. Ann writes:

"He had received a call from a poor minister with the request that he would purchase from him a small hymn book, beautifully bound in morocco. The

price was half a guinea, a larger sum than he could prudently afford, but his open heart could not refuse the aid, and the little volume proved in the end of incalculable value to him for, sensible of his indiscretion, he resolved to cover the loss by making a longer day for labour. This he resolutely accomplished, starting from his bed at a quarter before six every morning, till within a short period of his death. It was not managed without difficulty. At first an alarum clock at the head of his bed was sufficient, but becoming accustomed to the monotony, he placed a pair of tongs across the weight of the alarum, so disposed that when it began to move the sudden fall of the tongs would surely move him also."

This is not the end of the tale.

"Another expedient dwells in family tradition which probably succeeded the above, to the horrid clatter of which there may have been domestic objections. He placed his watch under the weight of the alarum in such a position as to require energetic action on the part of the awakened sleeper to save it from utter destruction as the weight descended. The habit once formed, these extreme measures were discarded."

Mr. Taylor's habits of devotion "were a valuable part of his example. Rising thus early, the time from six to seven o'clock was always spent in his closet—really a closet—enclosed by double doors. But though thus secluded and in a remote part of the house we were, at times, near enough in a room below to be aware of the earnestness of his prayers,

REV. ISAAC TAYLOR OF ONGAR

which were uttered aloud.[1] He always preferred articulate prayer, and when retirement can really be secured it is a habit I should warmly recommend. It prevents in some degree the vagrancy of thought which so often interferes with mental prayer, and it reacts upon the mind, deepening the impressions from which it springs. After a day of continual labour, such as my father's always was, he was again in his closet from eight till nine: occasionally when work had to be sent off to London by the night mail he might be prevented from devoting the full hour, but I do not remember the time when the season of retirement was wholly omitted. How much of the excellence of his own character, of the providential mercy that so often appeared for him, and may I not add, how many of the blessings enjoyed by his children and by theirs may not have been the gracious answer to this life of supplication?"

This remarkable man had a no less remarkable wife. Mrs. Taylor[2] shall draw her own portrait in her account of the family's early years:

"As wife and mother I felt the duties of these important relations excite all my energies and engross all my thoughts. What was on the whole the best regimen for my children, with all the pros and cons which I could muster from books and other

[1] Josiah Gilbert adds: "A hymn sung aloud accompanied this private morning worship, and I remember when the voice was cracked with age, hearing the cheerful though quaking notes—cheerful, whether heard through the open window of the study in summer time, or in the darkness and chill of winter mornings."

[2] "My father was a man of talent, but my mother was a woman of genius," wrote Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers.

sources, underwent the most laborious investigation. Our medical attendant, however, judiciously hinted to me that children might even be injured by too much care, and cautioned me against the trying of experiments with them, as nature dictated the most simple processes."

The Taylors were not rich in this world's goods, and the mother found herself much harassed. A candid friend was, of course, at hand and spoke her mind. "Your husband," said she, "may have got a housekeeper and a nurse for his children, but I am sure he has no companion: it will be well if in due time he does not grow tired of you. The affections of a man of taste cannot fix permanently on a mere plod, and you are certainly nothing better!"

But Mrs. Taylor was not one to take offence lightly.

"The homely truth," she related, "darted into my mind and carried conviction with the rapidity of a flash of lightning. Already my husband had begun to read to himself at breakfast and tea time, and thus far social converse was at a stand. But what was to be done? I had not a moment's time to spare from those plodding duties with which I had been charged by my friend, for I could not afford, like her, to keep two servants. I viewed the matter in all its bearings, and saw the impending danger without any apparent means of averting it. At length—This will I do, thought I. I will propose to read to him at breakfast time and tea time, by which means I may at once revive my own dormant taste, cultivate a mind now rapidly degenerating to its former state of ignorance, divert myself from those harassing cares which beset me on every side;

and thus subjects may be brought before us on which we can converse with mutual advantage. My proposal was cordially received, and the plan instantly adopted. But the children—what was to be done with the children? For alas! there was no nursery! Nothing at all was done with them. They quickly acquired the habit of sitting quietly during the time, without any apparent uneasiness from the restraint. Thus commenced a custom of more than forty years' duration, with very partial interruptions, which may fairly be recorded as one of the important events of my life. It has rescued a mind from inanity, which was rapidly degenerating, and losing the few attainments it had acquired; it has beguiled many a care, and diverted many a pain, even affording energy to weakness and languor, which, in most cases, would have been deemed insurmountable obstacles to such a custom. Besides this must be taken into account the incalculable benefit arising to the children of the family from the volumes they have thus heard read, in addition to their own individual reading. It is scarcely conceivable at what an early age they thus obtained gleanings of knowledge, from subjects becoming familiar to them of which they must otherwise have remained ignorant till the regular process of education had directed attention to them. In a word, this custom has proved one of the prominent blessings of our lives."

"My dear mother," writes Mrs. Gilbert in her Autobiography, "always had the strongest objection to leaving her little girls to the care of servants, and seldom visited where we were not invited—we were but two, not troublesome, perhaps something of favourites, so that completely social as these and

similar parties were, we were often admitted to them at an age when now we should scarcely have emerged from the nursery. But nurseries at Lavenham, and at that time of day, I do not remember. The parlour and the best parlour were all that was known besides the kitchens, and thus parents and children formed happily but one circle. Of course, it was necessary under the circumstances that the latter should be submissive to good regulation, or domestic comfort must have been sacrificed; but my father and mother were soon noted as good managers of their children; for little as either of them had experienced of a wise education themselves, they had formed a singularly strong resolve to train their young ones with the best judgment they could exercise, and not to suffer *humoured* children to disturb either themselves or their friends. There is scarcely an expression so fraught to my earliest recollection with ideas of disgrace and misery, as that of a 'humoured child,' and I should have felt truly ashamed to exhibit one of my own at my father's table. . . . Happy the mother who can hold an even balance between the *strict* and the *lenient*, for, perhaps, on this ability depends the characters of her children more than on any other part of her conduct. The aim is all I can boast of; to inspire the confidence of love by kindness, and to secure obedience by adhering steadily to principles, or regulations once laid down."

The Islington countryside had early been exchanged for an address nearer to brother Charles in Holborn, and in 1786 the expenses of a rapidly increasing family caused a further move to Lavenham, in Suffolk. The

From a photograph by] [*F. Lingard Ranson*

THE FLEMISH WEAVERS' COTTAGES AT LAVENHAM—C.1340

staple industry of this little town was wool, which in those days was combed by hand, given out about the country to be spun, sent to Holland to be woven, and returned to England ready for sale. On summer afternoons the streets of Lavenham were lined with spinning-wheels—'not spinning-jennies, but Jennies spinning; everywhere without the whir of the wheels, and within, the scrape of the shuttle, the clatter and thump of the loom at which the men were at work.' And through these same streets came at time the horror and terror of a bull-baiting. 'After due notice from the bellman, and with a hideous hubbub of yells, screams, and the barking of dogs, came the bull at a rolling trot, with a pertinacious cur or two swinging from his lip and nostril, a dozen at his heels, his scarlet eye-balls ogling from side to side as he goes—no help or mercy for him, for it is his doom's day! Torment to the death is the reason for all this hubbub.' (The present writer understands that Mr. Taylor made an uncompromising stand against this revolting 'sport' thereby earning great unpopularity among those neighbours who saw in his attitude a threat to their town's amenities. Bull-baiting regularly celebrated Guy Fawkes' Day, and did not end until 1842.)

At this time neither coach road nor canal approached Lavenham, and the town was neither paved nor lit. The postman's cart, a vehicle covered in for passengers, made its enlivening entrée every day from Sudbury, seven miles distant, and the London waggon nodded and grated in about once a week. Here, in 'the first grand house in Shilling Street,' Nancy and Jenny, aged six and five, began their education. In the little back parlour they learnt their ABC and multiplication tables, and under their parents' eyes, in the garden

and elsewhere, their young minds absorbed much that is not included in an ordinary education. The house was full of well-read books: there was reading aloud at breakfast and tea: they listened to every well-informed conversation, and 'we were always picking up something.' Ann's perpetual amusement was to scribble, and large literary projects occupied her mind. A poem intended as antecedent to the Iliad; a new version of the Psalms, and an argumentative reply to Winchester on future punishment were, she tells us, among those early projects 'more or less executed.'

The little girls were early taught to exercise their own ingenuity: a small room was allotted to them and here they dressed their dolls, whipped their tops and lived in a fairyland of the imagination. Perhaps ingenuity and the art of listening were cultivated rather to the exclusion of that of conversation; but the children who had early learned to develop their own resources and to be content in solitude found, as life went on, that they had priceless possessions not shared by all.

Cooke's House, that 'spacious but out of the way domain,'[1] was obtained for a yearly rental of six pounds, and the Taylors joined the little band of Dissenters who worshipped in a small Meeting House nearby.

At seven o'clock on a Sabbath morning Ann—perhaps to be out of the way of pressing duties at home—would accompany her father to the early prayer meeting in Water Street, remembering, half a century later, only the astonishing noise made by the blower in raising the vestry fire, and the assiduities of Mrs. Snelling, the pew-opener. In winter, at least, the street of the water-course well deserved its name,

[1] Now known as Shilling Grange.

and the gentlemen must wear their pattens. Did they carry their companions, or how else did the ladies reach, dry shod, the little house of worship standing back amongst the walnut trees?

Let us meet some members of the 'friendly and intelligent congregation of this reviled conventicle.' There are Mr. and Mrs. Perry Branwhite of St. Ann's Charity School, and the little Perry Branwhites; Mr. Stribbling, the blacksmith, 'stone deaf and very ugly,' present with precocious text-hunting offspring to criticise the minister's orthodoxy; blue-eyed Mr. Meeking, the kindly baker, rotund, bewigged, and duly shaven once a week; wealthy Friend Watkinson, with his quiverful, and Mr. Buck, the linen draper, whose daughter Betsy could imitate all manner of fabrics in darning. The 'Squire's Pew,' containing the small gentry of the neighbourhood, is carefully screened at each end from the vulgar gaze, and we will not intrude on their privacy. In the 'table pew' is William Meeking, bassoon to lips, with half a dozen country beaux ready to raise the psalm; and cock-robin Peter Hitchcock, the clerk, as 'much a character as could be found in the congregation;' he who, snugly independent, yet saved expense by clipping his grass-plots with a pair of scissors.

The poor of the congregation, with the boys and girls of the Sunday School,[1] sit in the galleries, men

[1] This Sunday School owed its origin largely to Mr. Taylor. In the *Sunday School Magazine* of 1848 Mrs. Gilbert, referring to Mr. Raikes, the reputed founder of these institutions, wrote:—"At the remote little town of Lavenham in Suffolk there was at least as early as the year 1790 a happy, well-regulated Sunday School; so that if Gloucester should ever think of erecting a monument to the founder, it might do well to inquire whether or not the first thought were really there?"

one side, women the other. The sexton—'Old Orford,'—was so sharply outlined on a child's mind that fifty years later she wrote:—"Where shall we find him? Not in a pew—it may have been a half a century since he sat in one—but high up on the pulpit stairs, for he is very deaf and does not, I fear, contrive to hear much, even with his conspicuous trumpet; but he tries. His aged features, surmounted by a red nightcap, are among a set of pencil studies still extant by my father. How old he really was I cannot say; but, as long as I remember him, Old Orford was popularly reputed to be a hundred years old, though, I suppose, he moved among the figures at about the same rate as most of us." A similar aged worthy lives again through the vivid pen of the little girl's son. "He," we are told, "occupied a seat at the top of the pulpit stairs at Ongar during my grandfather's pastorate there. Leaning against the pulpit door he looked like the minister's henchman. His venerable and rheumy countenance, his drab knee breeches gaping above his corded grey stockings, are deeply graven on my memory; and not less so a certain occasion when his huge tin snuff-box slipped from his pottering fingers and rolled bump, bump, down the uncarpeted stairs with portentous noise. John Day, no whit disconcerted, watched its course; and then, with his heavy highlows, descended after it, one stair at a time, returning in like manner. The whole operation took nearly a quarter of an hour; yet the sermon halted not, nor did devout devotion fail. In those days, if anyone suffered from drowsiness under the subdivided discourse, he would rise and stand in his place. Several grave elders, in an afternoon, might be seen thus upon their legs, and it is recorded that my

OLD ORFORD

From a pencil sketch by the Rev. Isaac Taylor.

mother's great grandfather, Martin, leaning, unluckily, upon his pew-door in Kensington Church, it opened suddenly, compelling him to follow its semicircular movement at a sharp trot, till brought up sharp against the pew side. Then the grave figure in snuff-coloured suit and protuberant wig, took it in hand and walked back into his place, with probably no visible disturbance of the congregation."

It was Mr. Watkinson[1] 'in his pattens full three

[1] Mr. Watkinson was one of the master woolcombers of Lavenham; tall, sedate, immovable, distinguished by the formality and reserve of the Friends, of whose Society he was at one time a member, and never guilty, if he knew it, of saying or doing a droll thing. Mrs. Gilbert describes his wife as 'a plain, sensible, domestic woman, of perhaps the fewest words that in such a family could be done with.' Anne and Jane, the two youngest of their twelve children, were intimate friends of Ann and Jane Taylor; and when the aftermath in this country of the French Revolution caused the 'wealthy' Watkinsons, accompanied by sixty other inhabitants of the neighbourhood, to seek a home of safety in America, the families corresponded until the deaths of Anne Watkinson and of Jane Taylor. On leaving Lavenham Mr. Watkinson bequeathed his pattens to Mr. Taylor.

Mrs. Gilbert records that "of Anne, my own companion, though she left England with her family for America at fourteen, I have heard Mr. Hickman" (their minister) "say that he always felt something like respectful awe in her presence." Ann Taylor not unnaturally attracted other serious-minded little girls. The following astonishing letter from a child of fourteen is written in an exquiste copperplate hand by Ann Hinton to her cousin Ann Taylor:

OXFORD,
Mar. 28, 1809.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

The excellence of your letter almost discourages your young correspondent from attempting an answer, but trusting in your goodness to forgive the defects which you must perceive,

inches high, that carried him, bright shoe buckles and all, clear of the mud,' who at Lavenham first availed himself 'on Sunday, at least, of a happy novelty of that age of marvels—an umbrella. And what sort of a thing was this . . . a handle it had like the mast of a yacht, and a covering of oilskin tarpauling, and whale-bone ribs. The weight must have exceeded that of a soldier's musket.' And Mrs. Gilbert tells of a friend that, on the Sunday of her bridal appearance, twenty years earlier than the time of which we are now speaking, "the party, being discomforted by a heavy shower, it was opportunely recollected that an elegant convenience called an umbrella had been seen in one of the shops, and this was sent for and borrowed for the occasion. It was, however, deemed an ill-omened assumption of style on the part of the bride. At Lavenham, even in my time, it was considerd a mark of luxurious refinement for a man to carry one."

and to aid as you have often done the "Infant mind," I will try to gain your approbation.

We are all very much obliged to you for the "Essay on Gumption." I wish the quality, the talent, the—what shall I call it? . . . the thing itself if not the word, were more general in what you style our "Learned City." I assure you it is an article of which there is often a great scarcity even in our School, though we are directed by a Lady of the Gumption family.

With respect to my occupation, I am afraid a detail of the School routine will not afford you either instruction or amusement. I attend a French and Drawing Master each one hour three times a week. Music twice a week, and practise every day. Dancing and Latin once a week. Greek usually two or three times a week. Once a week I translate a piece of French or Latin into English. Papa delivers a lecture (every week) on Geography, Astronomy, or Philosophy. Afternoons are devoted to needlework.

Old Orford and John Day, Mrs. Watkinson of the few words and little bride sheltering under your 'elegant convenience,' what would you think of our age of marvels?

Mr. Taylor's reputation as an artist now well established by the engravings he had executed for Boydell, he found himself loaded with commissions. The pictures at Mr. Taylor's, we are told, became the lions of Lavenham: apprentices were taken, and prospects were bright. But trouble was on the way. The rector, Mr. Cooke, landlord of 'the first grand house in Shilling Street,' requiring the use of his property, a new home had to be found; and after much anxiety a neighbouring house, much dilapidated, was eventually purchased and repaired at a total cost of £500. While the work was in hand Mr. Taylor developed rheumatic fever, and for weeks his life was

Your kind enquiries, my dear Cousin, whether I have entered that path which leads to supreme happiness, I am aware require serious consideration. I hope I may say I have often thought very seriously on this subject, and I sometimes hope that I have set out for Heaven, yet I often fear I have not. I wish not to deceive myself, and mistake those impressions which the Religious Education I have from my very infancy enjoyed would naturally make, for the work of Divine Grace on the Heart.

Yet I trust it is my sincere desire to be a humble follower of Jesus Christ. Can this desire be natural? I think not. It must then be implanted in my mind by the great Ruler of all Hearts.

You have probably heard of the Fire at Ch. Ch. Coll. Thro' mercy, tho' very near, we were not injured.

Receive, Dear Cousin, the love of all your Oxford relatives, and especially that of

Yr affect. Cousin,

ANN HINTON.

despaired of. No provision had yet been made for the family: two apprentices were idle, and the sky looked black indeed. But five months later the father appeared again in the family circle and 'nothing dismayed, took his place amongst various and pressing duties with thankfulness, faith and hope.' Bills were gradually paid off, work resumed on the new house, and in the summer of 1793, the family moved into what, in expectation of a life-long residence, had been made a comfortable home.[1]

During the ten years of the Taylors' life at Lavenham (1786–96) the thunder of the French Revolution was felt even in obscure English villages. The Dissenters, looked upon as the friends of liberty, were hated and feared, and party feeling ran high. Even quiet Lavenham was paraded by disorderly folk crying 'No Press! No Press!' (No Presbyterians.) Opposition and espionage sprang up, and—as in some European countries to-day—no one felt safe in expressing a political opinion even at his own table, if a servant stood behind his chair. People of independent views began to look to America as a home of safety; and many who were in a position to do so emigrated with their families.

Mrs. Taylor's readings included the weekly newspaper, and the narrative of horrors fell on the excited minds of the children, "some of whom," relates Isaac in his *Memoir of Jane Taylor* "'were gifted with the unenviable faculty of giving reality to dark and sanguinary recitals. The reign of terror painted itself bit by bit upon the fancy of some of us. I shall not forget the terrible impression made on my own mind by hearing the news of the death of the French King.

[1] Arundel House—next door to 'Cooke's house.'

SHILLING STREET, LAVENHAM

Showing the two Taylor homes—"Cooke's House" (Shilling Grange) and Arundel House.

Isaac Taylor writes of this period—"From the time of their removal to Lavenham, Jane and her sister were indulged with a small room, not used as a nursery, but given up to them as their exclusive domain, and furnished with all their little apparatus of amusement. And either abroad, or in this apartment, they learned to depend upon their own invention for their diversions, for it was always a part of their parents' plan of education to afford to their children both space and materials for entertaining themselves. And so much were they all accustomed to exercise invention for filling up agreeably the hours of liberty, that I doubt if either their father or mother was ever applied to with the listless inquiry—What shall I play at?"

It was a dismal winter's afternoon when a neighbour suddenly broke in upon our games with the exclamation 'They have cut off the King's head!' Then followed narratives in long continuity which, listened to weekly, from year to year, did not fail to shed a gloom even upon the thoughtlessness of childhood."

Mr. Taylor was no political agitator, but as a prominent member of the Meeting House he was an object of party virulence with his 'Church and King' neighbours, and his son Isaac thus recounts the family's experience at this time:

"There had been riots in many places; and the Lavenham mob, well understanding the temper and inclination of their superiors—the clergy and gentry—coveted a share in these forays upon the 'Meetingers.' I remember an afternoon when a neighbour, wishing us well, came in breathless to give us the warning that a furious mob, with flags flying and drums beating, was then filling the market place, and had vowed that they would burn Mr. Taylor's house[1] over his head.

"The affrighted children of the family had taken position at a side window, and I recollect—never to forget it—seeing the van of the mob, brandishing pitchforks and mattocks, making its appearance at the head of the street. At that time Dissenters had nothing to hope from justices of the peace, or their underlings. Yet at this moment deliverance came: as the mob advanced along the street, Mr. Cooke, a portly wig-bearing clergyman, came forth upon the doorstep, lifted his hand, summoned to him the leaders of these his loyal friends, and addressed to

[1] The second house above mentioned.

them a few words which we did not hear, but the meaning of which we divined from the effect which ensued—for the mob retired, and Mr. Taylor and his family breathed again, and that night they rested quietly upon their beds once more.

"The next morning my father, in his simplicity, thought it incumbent upon him to present himself at the door of his benefactor—there to offer an expression of his heartfelt gratitude for the intervention on his behalf. He did so; but in uttering what he had intended to say was cut short by the stately rector in this fashion—'Well, Mr. Taylor, you may spare your thanks, for to tell you the truth, Mrs. Cook's sister is at this time very ill; we fear dangerously ill; and we thought that so much noise and confusion as would have ensued if the people had effected their purpose *so near to us*, might have been prejudicial to her in her weak state.' This was doing the part of a neighbour and Christian minister gracefully—but such were those times."

Being his own landlord, Mr. Taylor spent much thought and ingenuity on the development of his new house and its pleasant garden, and the family viewed their surroundings with great contentment. We can picture them at work in the long upper room—almost a gallery—that superseded the old Twinkle House workroom: the father's high desk at one end; the row of windows facing the yard occupied by the apprentices; another window, over the garden, filled with the children at their lessons. The door opens, and Mr. Hickman, the minister, irked by quarter day's long tarrying, exhibits five or ten fingers on the edge of Mr. Taylor's desk. His appeal is adroitly responded

to, and he leaves the room with apparently but one sharer of his secret. Perhaps Mrs. Taylor, plying her busy needle, has seen and understood, but she gives no sign, for the Taylors do not discuss their neighbours' affairs in the children's presence.[1] The apprentices hardly raise their heads; and Ann and Jane continue to wrestle with the double problems of fortification and of verse.

The sisters' early education was carried out entirely at home. 'Reading, the Needle and the Catechism were taught by their mother, the father superintending the rest.'

The Taylor home was remarkable even in those days. Before breakfast in the candlelight of the winter's mornings, the father was at work on his astonishing scheme for his children's education, and in the development of this scheme the children played their part as a matter of course: everyone was at work from morn till eve.

> "I have never," related Isaac, "been a visitor in any family in which the occupation of *every moment* of the day, by every member of it, was carried to so high a pitch as it was under my father's roof. I have nowhere else seen the merest fragments of time so

[1] "My father and mother made early confidants of us in their own affairs, but they held it to be neither kind nor wise to be equally frank with the affairs of others. My mother had a truly Christian delicacy in these respects, and used frequently to say 'People excuse themselves by saying "It was only my husband, or only my child, to whom I told it"; but unless it were *your* husband or *your* child, this renders it not a whit more agreeable to the confiding friend.' My mother, who was anything but reserved, made a strong distinction between concerns simply her own and those with which she might be entrusted." Mrs. Gilbert's Autobiography.

sedulously employed. I should fear not to be believed if I were to describe in detail the voluminousness of his educational course. No doubt some branches of this scheme might have been lopped off without much damage to the culture of his daughters' minds. For example, it can scarcely be thought *indispensable* to the intellectual training of girls in their teens, that they should be familiar with the terms and principles of Fortification! But I have now before me some of the first rough copies of the "Original Poems" and the "Hymns for Infant Minds." These world-wide compositions were first written on the margins of engraved plans of fortified towns; and Jane's own hand had duly filled in the words—'glacis''counterscarp,' 'bastions,' 'fosses,' 'lines of circumvalation,' and the rest.

"The method of treating any subject—Geography, Anatomy, Fortification, or what not—was this: a plate, quarto size, was engraved from a drawing that had been carefully made by my father. Reams, and reams again, of paper were printed from these plates; the prints were done up in books of a dozen each, and a book was given to each pupil, girls and boys alike; these engravings were blank outlines; each of the dozen was coloured, and then the names were written in. By the time a pupil had filled in two or three of these books it might be presumed that he or she had acquired a tolerable familiarity with the nomenclature of the particular subject in hand. Just now some of these copperplates are before me; the human skeleton; is it likely that after such a drilling, continued year after year, I should have forgotten the relative position of Tibia, or Fibula, or Patella, or should possibly confound

the Ulna with the Radius, the Sternum with the Clavicle?

"In entering the breakfast room, my father brought under his arm a drawing case, which he lodged on a side table. The moment that he had finished his own breakfast, and while my mother continued her reading aloud, he commenced drawing—probably a flower from nature, just brought in from the garden: his performances in this line were of great excellence: this drawing lesson, when completed, went to its place in a folio with many like it, in its turn to be duly copied by ourselves in some future drawing hour. So it was in everything, great and small; so it is that I find among the family stores of years past, roses—cowslips—pinks—beautifully depicted; and also, which were the labours of years, copybooks filled with careful construings of the Hebrew of almost every text from the Old Testament which my father commented upon in the pulpit. Thus it was that in our home life, and in all that concerned it, *instants* were made the most of! All these things we witnessed, and we took our part in them; and in our simplicity we believed that the world around us was travelling along parallel roads, at the same speed!

"Nearly the whole of my sisters' part in the 'Original Poems,' the 'Nursery Rhymes,' and the rest of their early work, were written in minutes, or in half-hours, redeemed from other occupations to which much more importance was attached in their own view, as well as that of their parents."

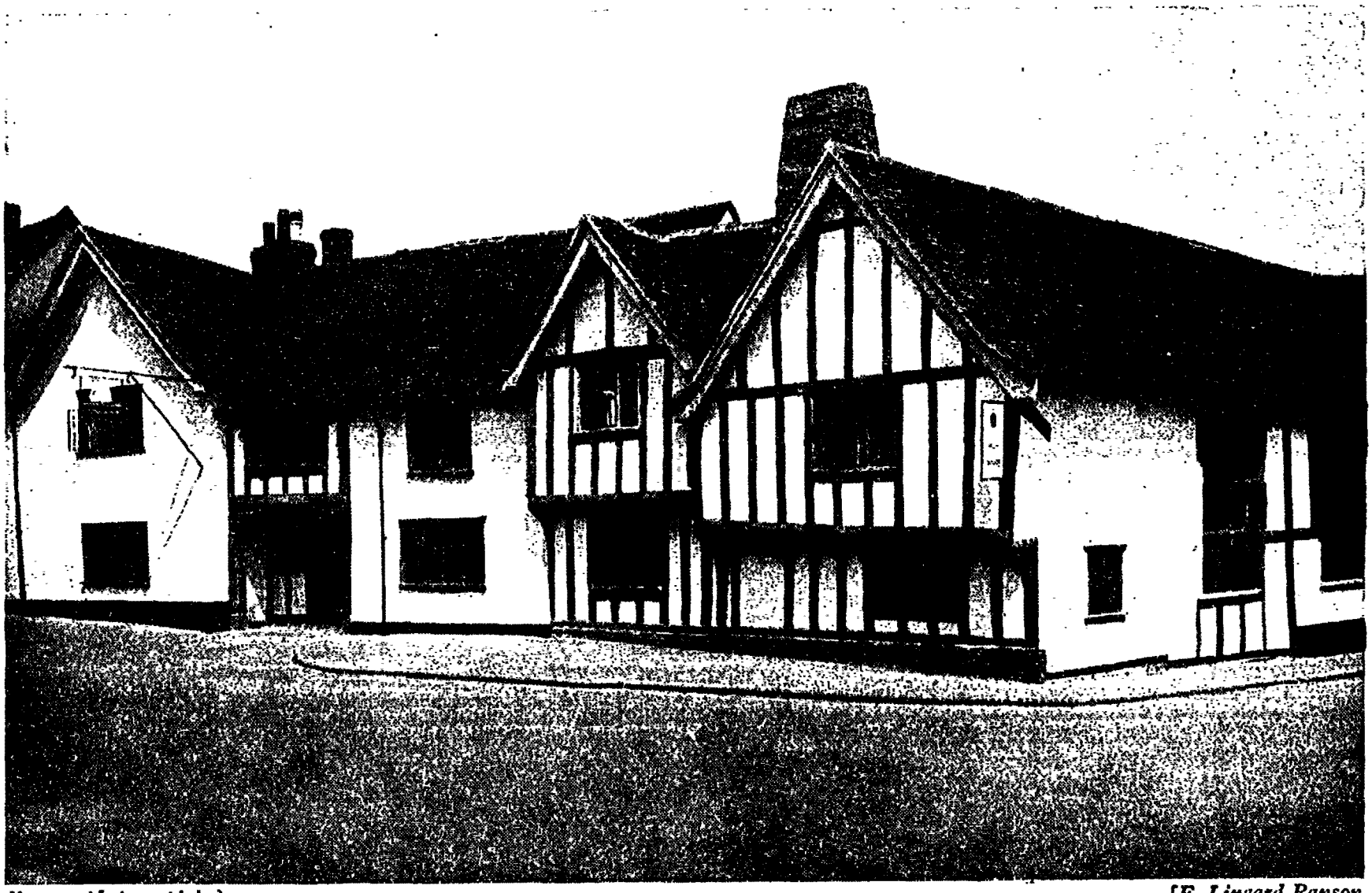
Perhaps these serious young people would have enjoyed some fuller share in the decorous amusements

of their friends, but they were carefully watched by their anxious parents. Certainly a dancing class was attended:

"Our fat dancing master—for light as might be his professional step, his reputed weight was eighteen stone—came over weekly from Bury to the Swan Inn;"[1] and here they met others of the same age, though of different outlook. In the Favell family, wrote Mrs. Gilbert: "while the elders took their evening game of cards, the children amused themselves with an old pack in the corner, and I became exceedingly fond of the diversion. About the same time an elderly lady, a relative of my mother, whose sources of amusement lay in narrow compass, visited us, and we were allowed to borrow a pack of cards for her entertainment. They were returned as soon as she left, not without urgent entreaty on our part that we might have a pack of our own. My wise father firmly refused. He believed in the 'stitch in time.'

"Bury St. Edmunds fair was a mart for all the surrounding country. There, not 'dresses' but 'gowns' were bought, destined not for the dress-maker, but the 'mantua-maker.' Prints of 3s. 6d. per yard, calendered, as we now do our chintzes and curtains, made handsome 'gowns' for a married lady, a square neck-handkerchief of book muslin, duly clear-starched, being pinned over the dress. It was one of our autumn holidays to drive over in a post-chaise and spend the day at Bury fair, making

[1] The "Swan" is a late fourteenth-century building, and the oldest inn in Lavenham. Here, in the days of the stage-coach, horses were changed for the cross-country route, and the local coach started.



From a photograph by] *[F. Lingard Ranson*

THE SWAN INN, LAVENHAM

necessary purchases. There our winter clothing, as well as my first wax doll, were bought. On one occasion when, after dining at an inn, our chaise was ordered for the return, troops of enviable holiday-makers were flocking into the theatre opposite. We were urgent again, 'Just for once'—but again my father refused. In these cases the narrow end of the wedge may have been in his mind, and the remembrance may be worth preserving. . . . On one occasion, however, we were allowed, under my mother's wing, to go to what was called a dance. It was at a farm-house, to the family of which we had been introduced under circumstances illustrating the habits of the place and time. The smallpox was not allowed to make its appearance within an inhabited district. A singularly deplorable building, at a short distance on the road to Bury, was appropriated to the reception of cases occurring among the poor of Lavenham; nor shall I forget the feeling of mingled terror and mystery with which we regarded it, if ever we passed within sight of this forlorn receptacle of disease and misery. But from the same rule, when respectable families had resolved on inoculation, it was necessary to take lodgings for the purpose at a distance from the town. Mr. Coe, of the farm-house referred to, was about to inoculate his own family, and it was decided that my mother and I should remove thither in charge of my three young brothers, and that they should submit to the anxious process. (My sister and I had passed favourably through it in London.)

"As none of the household were seriously ill the sojourn amongst them was more of a holiday than

anything else; and now at Christmas time we were invited to the dance, where no less than sixty rural belles and beaux assembled. The chamber of arrival was thickly strewed with curl papers; my own hair was dressed as a wig two or three inches deep, hanging far down the back and covering the shoulders from side to side, a singular fasion which I have lived to see re-appear among my grandchildren."

But the new house was to have its interesting tenants for barely three years, as an unexpected call came to the father. Early in life Isaac Taylor had decided on a pupilage at Homerton College, but threatened illness changed his plans. Strength restored by riding and country air, his thoughts turned to engraving, and his success in this field and the responsibilities of an early marriage confirmed his choice of a career. At Lavenham he served the small Independent Church as a deacon and did duty in the Sunday Schools; so making his mark in what might have been his profession that when the minister received a call elsewhere Mr. Taylor was recommended to succeed him in the pulpit.

This, however, was not to be; but a more urgent call came from Colchester, and thither, in January, 1796, the family removed, and Mr. Taylor was ordained to the ministry on 21st April. Dissent in Colchester was now at a low ebb, its followers 'men more of habit than of piety, few knowing or thinking why they dissented.' Mr. Taylor was called, not to the influential 'Round Meeting,' but to a small Presbyterian congregation, cold and unintellectual, its only assets a good building in Bucklersbury Lane, some

small endowment, and two or three substantial families. He had much to contend with, but he made his mark; his Sunday evening lectures were crowded, and he undertook village preaching.

Removal from Lavenham's seclusion to the gaiety of Colchester—a garrison town—marked for Ann, now aged fourteen, a turning-point in life. One of her's and Jane's first cares on arrival had been the fitting up of a dolls' closet in their bedroom; and she records the pang of regret and disappointment with which, the work completed, she realised that dolls and dolls' houses did not maintain their interest for ever. The lingering staple industry of Colchester at this period was the manufacture of 'says' and baize, the former a wool serge used abroad by the 'religious' for shirts and by English Quakers for aprons; relic of the 'bay and say' manufacture brought by eleven Dutch families flying from the Alva persecution in 1570. Mrs. Gilbert tells of efforts made to revive the wool trade: by Act of Parliament it was decreed that every one must be buried in wool. A thin white glazed woollen fabric was used for shrouds, and the manufacture was considerable.

> "I remember," she records, "on a dark evening stopping at a lone house between Melford and Sudbury, where shroud-making was carried on. We were ushered into a large and lofty room, surrounded by something like dressers or counters on which, at full length, were laid out the shrouds in all their grim neatness of plaitings, stomachers, ruffles and gimping, while others hung on the walls. It was about as much as nerves could endure by candlelight. But here were residing three solitary

sisters, apparently unconscious of any speciality in their employment."

Under the Reverend Isaac Taylor's hand a new home[1] 'among the excellent houses but not one of them' is made comfortable, and a garden developed with, among other delights, 'laburnums and lilacs that warm my heart to think of even now.' We read of a home 'just respectable and just holding us'; nevertheless, a new workroom is contrived, with sash windows to light the entire length, and, as before, Mr. Taylor stands at his desk at the end. Isaac and Martin are now at work as well as Ann and Jane and the two apprentices (though the future author of the *Natural History of Enthusiasm* must divide his time between the workroom and a dame school, his mother finding his initiation into the distinguished art of reading a matter of quite unusual difficulty); and a second row of tables is occupied two or three days a week by pupils.

"I must have scribbled a good deal," writes Ann, "but about this time, being accused of literary vanity—perhaps justly, or the suffering would have been less—I made a magnanimous conflagration of all my MSS., and resolved to go humbly all my days. For a time my favourite amusement was laid aside, but it could not be for long. It was, I think, in 1797 that I made my first poetical appearance in print on the occasion of a contested election, when Robert Thornton being the Tory candidate and a Mr. Shipley the Whig, I ventured an election song for home reading solely. But it happened to be seen, and was speedily printed, a distinction that no doubt I felt as somewhat dazzling. The production,

[1] In Angel Lane now called West Stockwell Street.

THE TAYLOR HOME IN ANGEL LANE, COLCHESTER

I am constrained to say, exhibits sadly little wit, and much more than was appropriate of the moral lecture. I knew, by report, the excellence of the Thornton family, and felt aggrieved by his taking, as it appeared to me, the wrong side!"

In 1798 the young writer entered with great zeal into the formation of a literary society 'intended to improve the talent for composition, and let us hope, the ability to think also,' suggested, surely, by Mr. Taylor. 'The Umbelliferous Society,' composed of the little Taylors and their friends, met once a month. It produced original work, and held readings in 'useful authors.' All writing was done in over-hours, and thus its members—if they needed it—were at least excited to habits of industry.

In July, 1797, the long considered plan of educating the two girls to engraving as a profession is finally decided upon, and work begins in real earnest.

"Happy days—mornings, evenings. Happy years, have I spent in that shabby old workroom," writes Ann. "From the windows we could just see over the garden, and beyond the roofs, Mile End Church and Parsonage in the pretty distance, reminding us of the evening walk by which the day's business was so often closed. Our many callers in after years never thought of finding us in the parlour, like many other young ladies, but regularly turned into a back yard from the street; ascended the short flight of brick stairs, and placed themselves each on some wooden stool beside Jane and myself, watching what they were sometimes pleased to call our elegant art.' I must say we were never ashamed of it, and why need we have been?

We had, I might almost say, the honour of stepping first on a line now regarded as nearly the one thing to be accomplished, the respectable, remunerative, appropriate employment of young women. It was not the provision of such a course by which we were led, but happy domestic circumstances brought us into it, and thankful should I be if opportunities such as we enjoyed were more generally available. . . . We always breakfasted at eight o'clock, were allowed an hour's interval for dinner, half an hour for tea, and closed the daily routine in 'that dear old workroom' (as more than one of our friends called it) at eight in the evening. It was chiefly, therefore, or according to the letter of the law, *only* by rising early and supping as late as half-past nine, that we could affect anything. But I must confess to having had pencil and paper generally so near at hand that a flying thought could be caught by a feather, even when engraving or biting was going on; or, in cases of extremity, when it was to be feared that all would escape me before eight o'clock came, I have made a sudden exit, and in honest haste and unintelligible scribble, pinioned the fancy or the lines to the first slip of waste paper I could find, there to abide till happy evening. Instead of engraving I was going to say etching, but this would be scarcely correct, for while etching it was generally desirable to keep the point unchanged on the fingers from meal to meal. Only a very beautiful point indeed would be so exquisitely true that no inequality of stroke would result from changing it. To render the point perfect by grinding all the angles was often not a little difficult and would cost much time: as a hone for this purpose, a fragment of Roman brick, picked

up among the ruins of the town, proved the finest and hardest substance we could meet with. And if I have said 'bitings,' it must be understood to mean at times when the water was off, and the plate safely dry.

"It had always been the custom to sup at nine; but when writing became most unexpectedly a business as well as a pleasure, we petitioned for an additional half-hour; and considering the perfect regularity of my father's habits, I feel that we owed much to his good nature in granting it. Nor should I, perhaps, refrain from mentioning that of this precious hour and a half, part was occupied by a short devotional retirement which, won by the example of our parent, we rarely omitted."

With all their close work, time was found for holidays: there were delightful visits to Suffolk, exciting ones to London.

And there were home holidays, too: in winter the 'Parnassian evening,' when Mrs. Taylor, with a special book, took the head of the table while the father had his pencil, and the children each their drawing or needlework; the evening ending with a little festive supper. "Much, very much, did we enjoy these healthful festivities."

Summer brought the 'Gypsy Ramble'; and now Mr. Taylor of seeing eye and busy pencil, the mother with book or needle, and the family joined, perhaps by twenty or thirty young people, picnicked in the High Woods or on some common; taking tea at an inn at East Bergholt or Heckford, and coming home, tired and happy, as the curfew rang from Old Saint Nicholas. Happy days, indeed.

About this time a change, blighting to the prospects of artists, was passing over Europe. Just before the French War engraving had offered so good an opening that almost every family, having a son who could draw, hastened to place him with an engraver. But suddenly the foreign market closed: the larger works shut down, and book-engraving was carried on in a very small way, the tiny market flooded by troops of young men glad to engage in it at almost any price. Isaac Taylor suffered a grievous reverse of fortune, and to feed his large family and keep out of debt was all he could hope for. Showing in later years his fine engraving, the 'Ann Boleyn,' he remarked, "Yes, and the hand that did that was once glad to engrave a dog collar."

Fortunately, his reputation as an educationist brought help at this time, several families placing their young people under his charge: "a signal mercy," reports his eldest daughter, "for by the addition thus made to his income he was able to withstand the pressure of many trying years." At this time a course of lectures on astronomy was delivered in the Old Moot Hall, and to prepare his pupils—his own children and others—for this, Mr. Taylor gave an introductory lecture at home. This proving a success, he continued to lecture once a month for three or four years on such subjects as geometry, astronomy, geography, mechanics, history and anatomy, to an audience of sixty or seventy young folk and their friends. Diagrams, 'rough but vigorous and picturesque,' were prepared by Ann (sometimes a three-day job); Mr. Taylor's aim in teaching being, when possible, to address the eye as more retentive than the ear.

In 1798 Ann began to work for Darton and Harvey: she contributed regularly to the *Minor's Pocket Book*, and finally became its editor. The sisters were also employed on small prints for juvenile works, and in 1800 Ann visited London and was introduced by her father to several artists of note. Writing was as yet only the amusement of her limited leisure; and the London visit so stimulated her zeal as to render art for a time her favourite pursuit.

By her new artist friends she was lent engravings in different styles to copy; and so enthralled was she that on returning home she began her day at five-thirty, for—

> "We had the workroom then to ourselves till eight o'clock; and even on winter mornings we felt sufficient stimulus, from either drawing or writing, to pursue these favourite employments during that uninterrupted, unrivalled hour—clothed, of course, as warmly as could be, for the fire was not lighted till we left the room for breakfast."

Realising the necessity of a room of one's own if work is to be done or study undertaken, Mr. Taylor did what he could to provide this boon for his children in the small house in Angel Lane.

> "Let those who possess it" writes his eldest daughter, "remember that it is a talent for the use of which they are accountable. Isaac and Martin here contrived, each for himself, a small 'sanctum,' composed chiefly of pasteboard, and secluded by a humble door. It was in an unoccupied room through which we had to pass continually. Of this, Isaac enclosed for himself the small window, and Martin secured sufficient light by removing a few

bricks and inserting a pane or two of glass. *Contrivance* might have been our family motto. It was longer before Jane and I succeeded in making a similar arrangement. We had hitherto occupied the same room, in which was a small dark closet . . . but there was a not very desirable attic, used as a lumber room, on which she cast a thoughtful contriving gaze, and by vigorous measures she managed to fit it up. From its window it had a 'peep of landscape over the roofs'—and this, by night as by day, was a boon to her—

'When in my attic, with untold delight,
I watched the changing splendours of the night.' "

But Mrs. Taylor, delicate and harassed by many cares, needs help, and Ann and Jane must learn the domestic as well as the engraver's art. So the sisters take turn and turn about: 'Supra' at the work-table, 'Infra' below stairs. To Infra and her mother comes welcome help from kindly members of the congregation: a neighbour's maid 'with a pleased prim look' brings under a napkin a little delicacy for the minister's supper: or comes with her mistress's kind respects to fetch and get up the family's fine linen: welcome help indeed in such a household as Mrs. Taylor's.

New friends spring up, and we are introduced to 'the plain and respectable household of the Keeps'; to the Strutts, friends of Crabbe Robinson; to the charming Stapletons—'among the first to become my father's pupils'; to lovely Fanny Hills, whose trembling 'Not at home' to a persistent suitor so scandalised the truthful Ann. Through the Stapletons, Ann is introduced to the Constable family at Flatford Mill and meets John—'so finished a model of what is reckoned

Engraving by Ann Taylor

manly beauty I never met with.' Mr. Constable is credited—or discredited—with the intention of making his son a miller: 'simply barbarous' is the verdict of Ann and her friends, who had seen the young painter's work.

A sidelight on Ann's character is given in her comment (about 1798) on one of the friends of this period.

> "Anna Forbes[1] was within a year of my own age . . . possessing an intense vitality that left me far in the rear. A few among my associates, and she was one, have so far exceeded me in speed of wing, elegance of plumage, in, if I may say so, ethereal buoyancy, that I have always felt in their society less like a bird of kindred feather than a lame chicken, expected to accompany a lark in its flight.'

Until nearly the end of the year 1800 the sisters spent only alternate weeks in the workroom; but Mr. Taylor now engaging to supply monthly portraits to the *Theological Magazine*, they were both withdrawn from domestic work and until they left Colchester for Ongar in 1811 were fully occupied in engraving, one day in a fortnight being allowed them for their own needlework.

On the face of it, there was little opportunity for the development of literary talent. "As to literary ambition," says Isaac, "or any eagerness to venture into print, such impulses were far from the minds alike of parents and of children." Certainly a contrary feeling was strong with both parents. The early scribblings of

[1] Anna Forbes was perhaps the dearest friend of her life, and more than sixty years later Ann Gilbert's son Henry (Sir J. Henry Gilbert, F.R.S.) married Anna Forbes Laurie's daughter Eliza.

Ann and Jane were known to them and were not actually prohibited, yet were never encouraged. Jane, in her earliest years, had amused herself with the project of writing and publishing a book[1]; but this was only a pastime of childhood, forgotten at an after-time along with other games and romances. There is a portrait by their father of the two sisters hand in hand,[2] pacing the broad green path of the garden at Lavenham. The girls, nine and seven, are supposed to be reciting, as was their wont, some couplets of their joint composition. On his side, the intelligence of the father went in the direction of sober information: it was knowledge and science, rather than literature or taste, that prevailed with him. On the mother's side, though from her teens she had been scribbling verse and although she was herself so dependent for her daily comfort on books, she had

[1] Amongst her childish scribblings was found a five-verse preface apparently written when she was nine years old, and concluding:

"Have patience yet I pray, peruse my book;
Although you smile when on it you do look:
I know that in't there's many a shocking failure,
But that forgive—the author is Jane Taylor."

Certainly one embryo novel, dealing in a highly romantic way with the love affairs of a Spanish gentleman of noble birth, carefully written in a very childish hand on four double sheets of writing paper secured by a rusty pin, exists to-day. Apparently the writer at that time held no decided views about the difficult choice between 'something' and 'somethink,' and also felt other misgivings as to her powers, for in the illustrated preface she "begs the reader to excuse every imperfection that will doubtless appear . . . and to consider that the author was but a child who knew nothink of the world."

[2] Now in the National Portrait Gallery (see Frontispiece).

a decisive feeling of antagonism towards authorship. "Lady authors," she often said, "would have been better to employ themselves in mending the family stockings." Yet at fifty-six, a manuscript of her own found its way to the printers, and she herself started on a ten years' course of authorship. That she took this authorship seriously the following letter, written in October, 1813, to her daughter Jane, referring to their joint production, "Correspondence between a Mother and her Daughter," seems to leave little doubt. The letter is so characteristic that it may be quoted in full:

"My good Daughter,

"My cordial acknowledgments are due to you for ye office wherewith you this morning invested me, whereby I was authorized to rummage your closet, or bookshelves, or *somewhere* for what, if I could have found *nowhere*, would have been no reflection on my conjurorship. The copy book containing extracts from several books I could *not* find, the nearly an hour of my *precious* time was spent in ye hunt. The rest of your orders I have punctually obeyed, tho' not without great reluctance do I part with ye view of ye room and harbour at Ilfracombe.[1] Fail to return it at your peril. Mr. Gilbert's letter which you say you have received was torn by ye seal, but it arrived in that state. We feared you might suspect us of trying to look into it.

"I wonder, notwithstanding your professed hurry, that you took no notice of an event which never happened before in Jeff's life and will never occur again, namely—his coming of age to-morrow; but I

[1] See p. 73.

shall not let it pass so tamely for I shall treat him with a piece of roast veal, a rich plumb pudding, and an apple pie for supper. Moreover, I have purchased him a superb (——?).

"So you really are not ashamed, *you* who are 'the first female of ye age,' of appearing before ye public with *my* name attached to yours!! Well—that ever I should have your name attached to mine in that way is such a miracle that I am prepared for all manner of improbabilities, and in future, like other fashionable people, shall wonder at nothing. Tell Jemima that there is one thing that I expressly require of her during her stay in London; and as young people are apt to be forgetful, you will do well to remind her of it daily. It is that she does not fail to enjoy herself. . . . Ye proof sheets are travelling backwards and forwards rapidly, and anon I shall walk on tip-toe with crest erect; or be ashamed of putting my head out of doors. Yet I trust my disgrace will never be so complete as to render you indifferent when I profess myself.

"Your affectionate mother,

"A. TAYLOR."

The early years of the nineteenth century brought their share of alarms and excursions to the inhabitants of Colchester. A French landing was expected on the Essex coast, and general panic ensued, those who could afford to pay for immediate flight making off in every direction. The most the Taylors could do was to remove a part of their large family back to the comparative safety of Lavenham; and Jane, now aged twenty, was in charge of this little band. Letters passing between her and her mother in Colchester,

and Ann in London give an idea of these days. From Jane, to her mother:

"We are all safe and well this morning, which is a matter to me both of thankfulness and surprise. We had, indeed, a sorry journey, upwards of twenty inside; and each woman had a young child. They were, indeed, of the lowest sort, but they were civil creatures. Our party seemed to excite some surprise among them. But what we suffered with heat, smells, and bad language during the day was nothing to what we suffered when night came on.[1] The road bad—the waggon so loaded that we expected to break down, and the horses so tired that they could scarcely get on. The drivers were frightened, and you may be sure the passengers were so. Pray let us know how the alarm goes on."

Mrs. Taylor writes to Ann in London:

"On Friday last the principal inhabitants of Colchester waited on General Craig, the commander here, and received from him the most solemn and decisive warning of our danger, and of the absolute necessity of the female part of the population, with their children, and what effects they could convey, leaving the town with all speed. You will not be surprised to hear that we are all in the utmost distress and consternation. Every face gathers blackness, and our knees smite together. The Rounds are all going to Bath. Lawyer Daniel is packing up all his writings in sacks, and, with his family, will send them to Halstead. The East Hill people are flying

[1] The journey took eleven and a half hours. "No air in the waggon, and our family mounted up at the very back, and the very top, on our great red chest, which was piled on the other goods!"

thicker and faster. And now, in this conjecture, what is your advice to us? Shall we tarry or flee? and if the latter, pray whither? Do give us your advice by return of post. You know it is not uncommon to ask advice, and then to take our own; nor am I sure that to do it *after* we have taken our own is without precedent. Know, then, that this morning our dear Jane, Isaac, Jeff, and Jemima, with a considerable portion of our property, set off in Filcham's waggon for Lavenham. Oh! could you have seen us yesterday; the confusion we were in from the top of the house to the bottom, and our feelings so harrowed that we were actually ready to fight one another! I was up last night till midnight, packing, etc.; and this morning such a parting! Oh, how poor Jane did cry! They are now, poor hearts, on the road, wedged in with chairs, tables, beds, soldiers' wives, etc., etc. May the God of providence watch over them, and bring them safe to their journey's end!

"And now, lest you should think we have taken a needless step, know that before we took it we all united round the throne of grace together, to beg direction, and since then your father's mind has been made up. I confess I rather hung back, but he says he knows the worst of this step, but he does not know the worst that might happen should our fears be realized. I am not a little alarmed at hearing that should the French land, London will be fortified and close shut up, none coming out or going in! Pray, run no hazard, but fly if there is the least danger."

(Though always delicate and of an anxious nature, Mrs. Taylor had an ample fund of racy humour and

sound common sense. Later in the same year she wrote from London to her loved ones at Colchester:

"Sorry I am to say my nervous symptoms increase. I know it is a great deal in ye imagination; but when I lie down in bed I often think I shall not see ye morning, and when I go out alone, tho' I do not much fear a lyon in ye way, I often fear I shall be slain in ye streets. I have the constant fear of palsy, apoplexy, inflammation, mortification, and twenty other fears, all of which my better judgement tells me are groundless."

In much later years her eldest daughter was to write:

"The prospect before me presses upon me sadly, and occasions that doleful, indescribable, gnawing distress in what poets call the heart, but which is certainly the stomach, of which, on first waking, my poor mother (who had more causes than I) used to complain. I was going to say 'All these things are against me,' but I desire to withdraw that foolish word. I desire to 'trust and not be afraid,' but when my elasticity yields I am sadly weak. Faith is better than elasticity. I wish I had more of the right sort!"

She had about this time—1850–51—many anxieties which had told heavily on her and had confessed "I cannot trundle my soul before me and run after it quite so alertly as I used to do.")

In July, 1811, Mr. Taylor received a call to Ongar.[1] So farewell is said to Colchester—Colchester, 'very dear to us'; and on Saturday, August 31st,

"Jane and I closed the labours of fourteen years

[1] Spelt in Domesday Book "Angra."

in the workroom. . . . On the Monday we began all the packing, and now collect all the ideas that make up confusion! Think of huge packing cases, hampers, straw, ropes, nails and shavings; of dust and litter; of piles of china and furniture in every corner of the house; of knocking, hammering, calling and scolding; of a gradual diminution of the commonest necessaries and of the consequent shifts we had to make—an inverted extinguisher for candlestick, a basin or a teacup for a wineglass, one's lap for a dining-table, the floor for a bedstead—think of carpenters, brokers, and waggoners, and after all you will have but a faint idea of that memorable week!"

On Monday the Prince Regent is to pass through the town, so all hands strike,

"and throwing on our habits we sallied forth, like most loyal and loving subjects . . . and after waiting two hours . . . the royal carriage at length appeared and we could just discern three plainly drest gentlemen in it as it passed, and then went home again."

On Tuesday comes the waggon, and

"I wish you could have seen us, and it, as it went nodding and waving from our door! We were all at the upper windows, and all our neighbours were in the street, looking alternately at us and at it, as it groaned up the lane; for indeed, it was packed to such an unusual height that it attracted general attention and apprehension."

During the remaining eighteen years of his life Mr. Taylor was the 'assiduous and beloved pastor' of

Ongar's small Meeting House. To individuals of the little congregation we are not introduced, the family historian of the time contenting herself with writing briefly of 'friendly and pious, though plain, people; not but that we have some dashing silk pelisses and feathers on a fine afternoon.'

Engraving, as a daily employment, is now given up, though if Mr. Taylor needs assistance Ann is to give it when at home. The suggestion first made during the difficult years at Colchester, that Mr. Taylor's daughters should devote themselves to education is again considered; but the sisters' attitude towards it still one of misgiving and reluctance, the idea, after much anxious thought, is finally abandoned. Ann writes thankfully—"The suggestion so long urged upon us, the difficulties afterwards thrown in our path, resulted in leaving us at liberty to pursue other and more congenial occupations. It would not be easy to express the relief we experienced in turning away from an undertaking so perilous, and retreating to hide ourselves behind the paper screen which seemed so clearly granted to us."

High in one of the Castle House turrets she had her own sanctum, and here, overlooking the beautiful country ' a new life was to begin, and the employment more delightful to me than any other was henceforward to be mine without let or hindrance.' In 1807 she had again visited London and seen poetry in the flesh, meeting amongst other literary lights, Dr. Aitkin and Mrs. Barbauld. A new field opened to her: she was asked to write an article for the *Eclectic Review* and

> "with anxiety, excitement and delight, I undertook it. After writing every morning till about weary, I

used to take the MS. to a clump of trees, and sitting beneath them, read it aloud, for until able to judge from the ear I could never form an opinion of what I had written. It appeared in in the *Eclectic* for June, and being favourably received, I was forthwith continually employed. The next review was of Miss Edgeworth's Tales, sent up in August of the same year. . . . I was captivated by art in my visit of 1800, but I was now wedded to literature, so far as literature would condescend to the alliance, and a turn was given, or rather confirmed, which influenced my course for several succeeding years."

Isaac and Martin are now at work in London, the former making a name for himself as a miniaturist, the latter engaged at a publishing house in Paternoster Row.

In 1812 an alarming breakdown in Isaac's health had necessitated sojourn in a milder climate, and for the next three or four years he, with Jane, and—until her marriage—sometimes Ann also, was much in Devon and Cornwall. Work for Boydell interrupted, the anxious father writes to Jane, comfortably established at Mrs. Blackmore's at Ilfracombe:

"Tell Isaac the second ten Boydells will be on copper next week. Six are bit, three I call done, and hope to get on better than with the first set. He is getting on with the third ten, but how far are they all outlined? Are they finished? So much delay arises from their repeated inspection that I begin to be anxious; for as soon as the second ten are bit I shall write for the next set, that Jefferys may get on. I say this in confidence that Isaac's health is equal to to the exertion. If it is not, I will wait patiently,

THE CASTLE HOUSE AT ONGAR

"The mount is surrounded by a deep moat on which, when we inhabited the Castle House, were moor fowl and a pair of stately swans (Pen and Cob); rabbits, rooks and ring-doves tenanted the mount and its trees. The only access across the moat (said to be twelve feet deep) was in an old beer cooler, suffered to float there."

Note in Mrs. Gilbert's Album.

but as far as he is able both his interest and mine call for promptness.[1] . . . When once they begin to publish they will begin to hurry us all, so let the fire begin to burn the stick and the stick begin to beat the dog, etc., etc., so that the poor cold creature may get home at last."

And then a homelier touch:

"You must be sure to air your habiliments well. Consider how long they have lain by. Please don't leave cookery book behind when you pack up for travelling."

For the first three years after leaving Colchester 'home' is the dear Castle House—'the Moated Grange'; and here, one December night, came a strange visitor.

The Rev. Joseph Gilbert, Classical Tutor at Rotherham Technical College, a childless widower of thirty-three, impressed by Miss Taylor's writings and by what he had heard of her character, had written without seeing her, to enquire whether 'any peremptory reasons existed which might lead him to conclude that a journey, undertaken with the purpose of soliciting her heart and hand, could not possibly be successful.' To 'this extraordinary letter,' as she terms it, Ann, from Ilfracombe, returned a brief and distant answer. However, it was speedily intimated that the writer was coming to Devonshire to see her, and the lady 'thought it proper to allow an interview, because it is the only way to effect a speedy cure—if cure is to be effected.' The unknown suitor first

[1] In addition to miniature painting, Isaac was at this time busy with his design for Boydell's Bible. In originality and conceptive power his work was likened by Rosetti to that of Blake.

visited Ongar, and Mrs. Taylor, in a letter to Ann at Ilfracombe, is very much herself:

"We had the sweeps, and were in the back parlour, which was also in the usual litter preceding Christmas. Your father was out, and we, in great *dishabille*, had just sat down to tea, when Jemima exclaimed with a look of dismay, 'there's a *fourble* knock at the door.' Immediately I decamped into the store room, and was speedily followed by a ludicrous procession. However, I determined to carry it off with address, so having slipt upstairs and hastily adjusted myself, I returned and I believe received him with tolerable ease. I just said slightly that we had had the sweeps, etc., but I soon perceived that he was not the man to be impressed with unfavourable ideas from such trifling circumstances. He was one of the favoured few with whom I could immediately assimilate, and could freely converse. We presently commenced an animated conversation, chiefly on literary subjects—Montgomery, Edinburgh Review, etc., etc., but I could see he was constantly verging towards the main subject, which at length we entered upon very fully and frankly.

"But as to the man, it would be vain and fruitless for me to say 'like or dislike him.' Your own observations, your own eyes, your own heart, must be your directors. But I may say, I like him, and that he grows upon me most rapidly. Poor fellow! There was no place inside, and he had to travel on the roof in this bitter weather, and was so absorbed in love and learning that he had left behind his warm travelling cap and, but for your father, would have

gone away again without his overalls. Now, my dear Ann, I have but one request to make, which, after all, I daresay is needless. It is not that you would marry, or even like him; but simply that, after having travelled so far on your account, you should show every hospitality, and he will the more deserve it if you reject him."

A week after Christmas, Ann describes the result of the singular visit:

"The first time he introduced the subject, which was the first morning, I declined entering upon it entirely, as a total stranger. The second, I settled preliminaries; that is, explained to him that he must consider himself as under no kind of engagement to proceed a single step, but that all he now said or did must be without any reference to the past."

But she reports him as 'intellectual and cultivated'; and that 'in conversation with Isaac and Mr. Gunn he discovered himself to be competent both as a philosopher and a scholar'; 'an agreeable, intelligent companion,' who 'really enlivened our fireside.'

These early impressions deepened into warm regard: she consented to a correspondence; and finally, in August of the next year (1813), Mr. Gilbert followed her to Ongar and received the answer for which he hoped. They were married on the 24th December.

A characteristic letter from her mother was put into Ann's hands on leaving home:

"My dear child,

"The time is now probably at hand when you and I must separate, and the nearer its approach, ye more precious every remaining moment becomes. My

feelings would be soothed by spending the residue of it in your society; but as this cannot be the case, I frequently indulge them by retracing ye years that are past. Happy days, to us, were those of your infancy! 'Nancy and Jenny' beguiled many a heavy hour, and cheered our spirits under many a severe trial. It was to the promotion of their ultimate happiness that ye chief of our youthful exertions were directed. In schemes to this end a great proportion of our retired hours were spent. If those schemes were not always wisely laid, our own disadvantages must plead our excuse, for we had little to assist us but a very small stock of experience, and a great deal of affection. Now you are about to enter a state which must determine the future happiness of your life; and I feel urged to avail myself of the relation in which I stand to suggest a few hints which, by a wise application of them may prove of more intrinsic value than a marriage portion, which, alas! we have not to give.

"That the man on whom you are going to bestow yourself possesses all ye amiable qualities which his friends have ascribed to him, I readily believe; but I will never believe that he is perfect; in whatever respect he is otherwise must be deeply interesting to the being who is to become a part of himself, nor ought it to be deemed an unnecessary anticipation of evil so to expect some imperfections, as to be in a degree prepared to meet them.

"Those little eccentricities which mark families are rarely visible to the parties themselves. This may account for their proving so obstinate and incurable in many who possess good sense sufficient to put much more formidable enemies than these to

flight. Such family traits are often so indefinable that no title or name can be applied to them but that of the family to which they belong. Accordingly when we say Watkinsonish or Taylorish we are in general sufficiently understood. Now, from the little I have observed of Mr. Gilbert (and I have made the most of my opportunities), I should imagine that his disposition would not at all assimilate with some peculiarities of the sort to which I have alluded. That he is of a frank and open temper little doubt can be entertained, and, if a man of strong and ardent feelings, he will naturally demand much sympathy; and here, my dear Ann, I think that you are sometimes under a mistake when you maintain that it does no good to talk about certain evils. To those who are in ye habit of talking about them, assuredly it does do good. It is true that every day brings its troubles, but an indulgent providence does not every day exercise us with what may be termed calamities. It is but seldom, therefore, that ye sympathy which is such an embellishment to human nature, and which is as essential to ye Christian as the gentleman, could be brought into action were it not called upon by those petty ills which annoy us every hour, and which, if they do annoy, establish our claim upon those around us for an attention proportioned, not, perhaps, to the circumstances, but to ye pain which they excite. There are few who are disposed to brood over their ills in silence. *I should say it does no good so to do.* The opposite conduct is a principle so engrafted in human nature that philosophy in vain endeavours to extinguish it, and Christianity does not attempt it. The crew of a sinking ship

could do *no good* by all their clamours and vociferation, and they might just as well sit quiet in the cabin and ride composedly to ye bottom. Yet such circumstances, I presume, would put even the self-command of the Watkinsons to flight. When complaint is exhorted, from the scratch of a pin to ye wound of a broadsword, it is in ye power of sympathy to mitigate ye one and make us forget the other.

"I would add another caution, which it would be well if every couple would take into consideration. I refer to that spirit of *disputation* which, for aught I see, pervades almost every family. It is a matter of no moment what weapon they choose whereby to out to flight domestic peace. They will maintain endless arguments about a pin or a straw, till they have rendered those desperate for whom they would sacrifice their lives. My dear girl, remember your mother's parting injunction—*Beware of the first dispute.*

". . . This epistle is ye result of my anxiety, and a duty which my conscience would not suffer me to dispense with. What benefit you may derive from it I know not; I only know how highly prized, how very salutary such a proof of maternal solicitude would have been to me. . . . My dear, dear child! 'my first-born, and ye beginning of my strength'! may I not add, 'ye excellence of dignity, and ye excellence of power'! Never, my beloved Ann, have I willingly inflicted one pang upon you. Whatever you may have occasionally suffered from ye imperfection of my temper has invariably recoiled on myself, and inflicted a yet deeper wound. And, now that we are about to part, can I utter a word

that is not fraught with maternal affection? Three times have I penned this epistle, so careful have I been not to utter a word inadvertently, and three times have I sprinkled the paper with my tears.

"Farewell, my dear child, farewell. 'Be perfect, be of *one mind*, and the God of peace shall be with you.' To Him you were dedicated in baptism. To Him I make a fresh surrender of you, now that you are about to leave ye paternal roof. You will find an altar already raised to His praise under that you are going to; there you will often be joined in spirit by your affectionate mother

ANN TAYLOR.

Dec. 12, 1813."

The reader of the Autobiography, *The Family Pen*, and the family Album[1] is impressed by the intense mutual devotion of the Taylors; a devotion fostered by their parents and the circumstances of their early life and treasured as a priceless possession, a bulwark against those 'fatigues and crosses' of life of which these capable, self-reliant men and women had their

[1] To this album, whose earliest entry is signed "A.G.," and dated December 24th, 1813; and latest by a grand-daughter of Mrs. Gilbert in June, 1936, all the original members of the family contributed: Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Taylor, Ann, Jane, Isaac, Martin, Jefferys and Jemima each brought his or her offering of pen or brush. (Some of the latter, showing the family homes, are reproduced in this little volume.) During Ann's married life the book was kept, first and foremost, as her treasury of domestic recollections: family events were noted; and those meeting under one roof on occasions of joy or sorrow all signed a family autograph. As Mrs. Gilbert and those dear to her went down the years together, she made her careful entries; and so characteristic are these moving little records that two of them must be quoted. Thus ends her summary of the year

full share. Separation—and it was such in those times when what is now a few hours' journey was a matter of days—was keenly felt. When, in the year 1809, the long united family was separated by the removal of two of its members to London, Jane wrote:

> "I regard this separation as one of the greatest sorrows I have known. I cannot view it merely as a parting with a friend whom I may hope to meet again in a few months; for though our interviews may be frequent, our separation as companions is final. We are to travel different roads; and all the time we may actually pass together in the course of occasional meetings during our whole future lives may not amount to more than a year or two of constant intercourse. . . . I do not mean it reproachfully when I say that you will soon learn to do without us; it is the natural consequence of your situation, and we ought to be reconciled to the common lot. But how can I forget the happy years when we were everything to each other? . . . I ought to be thankful that we have passed so large

1850—"Another Christmas! and after an eventful and a shaking year; yet here we are again, living to welcome it!—On Tuesday evening, December 21st, on which day we had been married thirty-seven years, our children began to arrive. . . . On Christmas Day their dear father, though unwell, formed one of the party at table, but retired early to his study and did not return during the evening. Of such lights and shadows are the years composed, and we do not look for much brighter days when the leaves are falling. God of our fathers! Be thou the God of their children, and of ours. 'Guide us by thy counsel, and afterwards receive us to thy glory!' "

And a year later:—"With deep gratitude I desire to record the mercies of the year past, and with humble confidence to commit the unknown future to the same gracious care!"

a portion of our life in company, and as to the future, if I could be sure that years of separation would not in the least estrange our affections from each other, I would be content. But the idea of becoming such brothers and sisters as we see everywhere is incomparably more painful than that of a final banishment, in which we should love each other as we do now. I am willing to believe that the scenes you have passed through since you left your home have rather increased than lessened your attachments to it. It must be delightful, cheering, soothing, to turn from the chilling selfishness of those with whom you must often have to do, to the affection of your family and friends; to know that there are those who do, and who always will love you—whose happiness in a great measure, depends upon yours, and who consider your interests to be the same as their own.

"But oh! what fears and anxieties arise! It may well be that our minds are not capable of measuring the vast disproportion between the concerns of this life and those of eternity, or we should not be able to give sufficient degree of attention to our present duties. Could we view the most important events that can ever occur to us here in the same light as we shall look back upon them from the other world, we should scarcely be able to exert a proper degree of energy in the pursuit or management of them."

(The writer of this letter was sixteen year old. Four years later, on the occasion of her sister's romantic marriage to Mr. Gilbert, she wrote from Devonshire to her mother at Ongar:

"I hope that, even so soon as this, Time has

performed his kind office, and taken the edge off your sorrow. If I did not know that he can perform wonders, even in a few days, I should not venture to say so. I was grieved indeed, but not much surprised to hear that you felt the parting so acutely; and when reading your description of it, almost congratulated myself that I was so far off. Now, however, I would gladly come, and be your comforter if I could. My dear father and mother, we have felt much for you—believe that you have the love and prayers of your absent children. I seldom close my eyes without thinking of you, and hoping you are comfortable. I feel the separation more this time than I did before, though in all other respects I enjoy as much comfort as I expect to in this world".)

"With the strong affection that distinguished the members of the now widely separated Taylor family," writes Mrs. Gilbert's eldest son, "they had agreed, on the night of every full moon at nine o'clock, weather permitting, to look at it alone, and meet in thought."

To Ann, the first occasion was on the night of their visit to Montgomery's, when she says she was 'permitted to retire behind the curtain to think her own thoughts, but could do nothing else, since the moon was invisible.'

With his usual thoroughness, her father had provided his children with a list of the full-moon nights for the year, and, contriving time for everything, had accompanied it with an ode to the moon, thirty-two stanzas long, and consecrating the appointed hour. It contains several fine lines and closes with the

solemn yet happy thought, as he surveys the band of loving ones:

"Who first dies
Is first to live!"

How faithfully he kept the tryst himself is shown by one of his letters from the 'Moated Grange' at Ongar:

> "Castle House. It is nine o'clock, the full moon shines delightfully into my study, and the duty (for so we have agreed, and therefore it is a duty)—the pleasing duty calls me to think of my absent children; not that there would be any danger of my forgetting them, but I love to look at the bright moon, and to recollect what dear eyes are looking at the same object, what precious bosoms are beating, at thought of their father, their mother, their home."

From the same strong family feeling, each of the absent ones had to furnish the circle at Ongar with the most exact particulars of their different homes, even to plans of rooms and gardens; and in a letter to her father Ann gives these with such detail that everybody's accustomed chair is indicated, as well as the colours and pattern of carpet and wall. There is promise, too, of a sketch from the window, when the snow is gone. Amongst the loose sheets in the Taylor album are found two of these plans; each a folded paper model of a room with furniture, pictures, etc., beautifully drawn in Indian ink. Ann's brings to her parents at Ongar an exact replica of the parlour in her first married home at Rotherham. A miniature of her husband's first wife is shown over the mantel shelf; the tea table and chairs of Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert are indicated by the fireplace, and 'a large, convenient

china closet' at the other side. Chintz curtains are specified, and through the large window the distant view is clearly drawn.

The second of these two plans appears to be by Jane, and is inscribed "a real view of Mrs. Blackmore's drawing room" in Ilfracombe, where Ann, Jane and Isaac spent the winter of 1812–13. Here they met (and worshipped) the redoubtable Mr. Gunn[1] of whom Ann wrote to her mother:

> "Mr. Gunn, the noble Highlander, adds greatly to the pleasure we here enjoy. He spends his evenings with us more frequently than not, and by the animation, the philosophical cast, the perspicuous style of his conversation, renders our fireside most delightful. His person, air and manners, are

[1] The Rev. Daniel Gunn, at this time pastor of the Independent Church at Ilfracombe, became Minister of Christchurch Congregational Church in 1817. An uncompromising Dissenter and eloquent Preacher, he was also the founder of a Sunday School so famous that Lord John Russell spent a weekend at Christchurch to see it at work. It appears to have met three times on Sundays, and a visitor sent down by the Sunday School Union reported on a wet day in July no less than 400 children present at nine o'clock and still more in the afternoon. Dr. J. D. Jones, C.H., M.A., writes that: "The spread of Congregationalism in Western Hants was largely due to him. For thirty-three years he laboured at Christchurch respected by all, and beloved of his own people. His last words for his people were: 'Tell them to hold fast the faith when my lips are closed in death.' " Of a disapproving Cambridge dignitary who wrote of Mr. Gunn as "the man," Ann writes: "I only wish he could once see and converse with him, and he would perceive how emphatically he is 'the man'—in person, in manner, in character, and in principles." On Mr. Gunn's resignation from Ilfracombe Independent Church, the young Isaac Taylor was invited to succeed him.

ISAAC TAYLOR OF STANFORD RIVERS

those of a military man of rank; but the graceful ease and candid frankness of his conversation remove any embarrassment in his company, although Jane and I had mutually determined to say nothing in his presence but "Yes, if you please, sir," or "No, thank you, sir." Father will be pleased to hear he is making us dissenters to the backbone."

Jane's plan[1] is no less detailed than her sister's. At the fireside is Mr. Gunn's seat; at a slight but respectful distance, the table where sat his three worshippers. Opposite the fireplace are two large windows through which the harbour and its vessels are shown[2]; so near that sometimes 'tons of water broke against the chamber windows.' On one wall hang maps of Europe and the British Isles; opposite, above a table strewn with books, Jane's drawing of the Castle House at Ongar. Half a dozen Chippendale chairs line the walls; there is a little footstool 'which Jane has almost always'; and the bellows and toasting-fork have their appointed places by the fireside, over which hangs a mezzotint.

Naturally these devoted people dreaded the longer separation that must eventually come.

"With all the cheerfulness of Ann Taylor's nature," writes her son, "there was associated a strong vein of melancholy which led her too often

[1] See letter from Mrs. Taylor to Jane 29.10.1813, page 49.

[2] "Isaac's friend, Mr. Gunn, had engaged apartments for us on the quay, a first floor; two windows in front looked over the basin, so full of shipping that on the further side of the room, nothing but masts were visible. There, in employment, in recreation, in society quite to our taste and altogether interesting, we spent the entire winter."

Mrs. GILBERT.

into the neighbourhood of death and the grave. . . . The thought of a family broken, and perhaps forever, was one of the tortures of her heart, and the prayer that hers and all dear to her should meet 'unbroken in the skies,' was the oftenest upon her lips."

Of what avail the beauties around if those she loved were no longer there to share them? Yet she who, dreading this time had written in an early poem[1]

"To sorrow's ear, to sorrow's eye,
How mute the forms of beauty lie!"

was also very practical. "It is not my custom to bury living pleasures in the grave of dead ones," she once remarked; and when the dreaded hour came and she had to part with those dearest to her, she was able, after a time, to throw herself wholeheartedly into what remained to her of joy and gladness. Facing the move —always a trial to her—from one of the happy homes of her married life, she wrote:

"Tell Jane I do not intend to take her advice; I am not subject to dangerous excesses of such feelings, and I like, therefore, to enjoy them to the full; especially as at these times there is always sober business enough to do and arrange, and a sufficiency of common-place about chairs and china, and bread and beer, and cheese, and string, and straw, to reduce the fine edge of romantic suffering to a very endurable degree of bluntness. The very simple but supposable circumstance of being qualmy in a coach is quite antidote sufficient for enervating grief. The few parting looks I may be able to take

[1] "Domestic Farewell to Summer" published in the *Associate Minstrels*.

without interruption I shall not, I think, be afraid to indulge."

And Jane herself, who so greatly dreaded a break up of the family circle, yet wrote (at the time of Ann's marriage) to her friend Mr. Condor:

"After walking so far through the vale of tears, inseparable companions, Ann and Jane are at last divided; a few short intervals is all, perhaps, we shall ever more see of each other on this side of the grave. We are both still in the vale of tears, and shall continue to weep and to smile as heretofore; but not together; our way will still be chequered by cloud and sunshine; but it may often be stormy weather with one while the other is enjoying a clear sky. But tears will not always flow; the heart-rending feelings once over, the common temperature of happiness returns. It is but occasionally that I have leisure to ruminate upon our separation, and then it is difficult fully to realize it. It is very true that we cannot always be as miserable as we wish—cheerfulness steals upon us insensibly, and we are surprised to find ourselves tolerably happy again, in spite of our heroic resolutions to the contrary. You will think these reflections unsuitable to the occasion, and perhaps say that I am too inexperienced in suffering to offer remarks on the subtect; of this, however, I must be allowed to be the best judge; though I have hitherto been mercifully preserved from the severer and more sudden strokes of the rod, I am not unacquainted with sorrow; and it is consequence of what has passed in my own mind that I am sceptical as to the existence of such a thing as incurable grief, though it is often talked of."

In 1814 comes a move to The Peaked Farm, an old house a mile away in the fields, 'half seen through the arch'd Yew tree.' The day of pupils and apprentices is past, but this family must still pursue its several crafts, and their house is again a literary and artistic workshop. Ann writes of 'mother with a tale completely written, the production of three weeks' mental fever: father just in receipt of seventy pounds for another book.' Mr. Taylor's time is divided between his well-furnished study and the 'brown room . . . redolent of oil and asphaltum, acquafortis and copperplate'; for he has commissions for Boydell and he and Isaac are hard at work. Mrs. Taylor, newly established authoress, dispenses wisdom and good advice from her little sanctum over the vine-clad porch: Jane, quiet in her room, courts her muse: Isaac in his study, 'not unpleasantly perfumed with Indian ink,' is absorbed in illustrating and in miniatures, literary work at present hidden away under lock and key: Jefferys, in a remote attic of 'the old rabbit-warren' divided between *Aesop in Rhyme* and his turning lathe, with 'numerous odd bits of machinery.'

Each absorbed in his or her own avocations during the day, meal times (described as 'very lively') and evenings find the family together in a large, low, wainscotted parlour. Let us look in on one of these gatherings:

> "The father sits in an armchair on one side the fire, the mother on the other, leaning with her hand behind her ear to catch the sounds; Isaac, Jane, Jefferys and Jemima complete the circle. Some one might read then the last composition amid a running fire of comments—sarcastic from the mother, genial

THE PEAKED FARM, ONGAR. *From a water colour drawing by the Rev. Isaac Taylor*

[*See overleaf*

The Peaked Farm. Entered June, 1814. Quitted May, 1822.

. . .

"Well I remember all that art can mark:
The Vine-leaved porch, the Yew tree gateway dark.
Each window has a tale for love to hear,
and carries fervid thoughts to inmates dear;
Th' excursive mind essays, almost to peep, and hark."

. . .

Ongar,
Nov., 1820.

ISAAC TAYLOR.

from the father, acute from Jane, sedate, though not without humour from Isaac, droll from Jefferys; Jemima, the youngest of the circle, joining in occasionally with quiet little hits that left their mark. When Ann is of the party, pun and repartee abound more than ever.[1] Jefferys read the *Tolling Bell* one winter night:

"Now stir the fire—the candles snuff,
And pray be sure they're long enough
To last while I a tale recite,
Which scarce would please without a light,
If you, like those of whom I tell,
Would fear a midnight tolling bell."

[1] Here is one of her earliest.

In July, 1789, journeying by postman's cart to meet the London mail in order to take part in the rejoicings following the King's (George III) recovery from mental illness, Ann, aged seven, "soon began to feel very sick, and being asked how I was, replied 'I am inclined for what I have no inclination for.' "

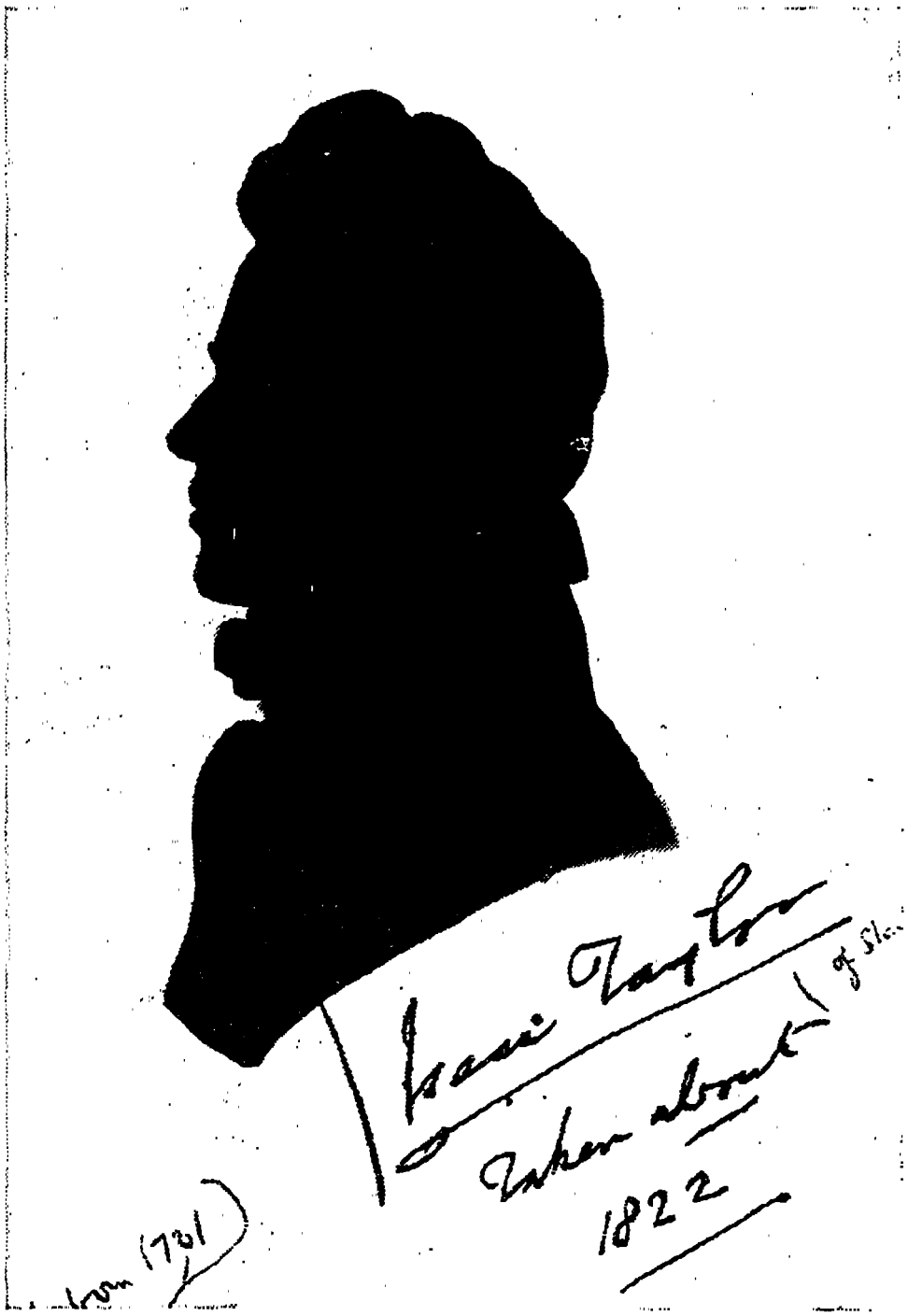
Recalling this 'early sprout of a pun' more than half a century afterwards, Mrs. Gilbert confesses that "of London, and its brilliant doings, I can recall but here and there a shred." Amongst the shreds are the ladies in whose company they watched the procession, 'many in full dress with their hair curled and powdered, and head-dresses adorned with white ribbons carrying in gold letters the words 'God Save the King.'

And the illuminations next day—or, more particularly, their result. "My poor mother was induced reluctantly to accompany a party to the India House, which was reported particularly brilliant; and from that night dated much of her after life of suffering. Whether from fear of fire, or some local accident, the plugs in that neighbourhood were up and the streets under water; while, to make matters worse, in the midst of the overwhelming crowd both my mother's shoes were trodden off. Many others, it seems, were equally unfortunate, for in the midst of the night she met a woman with a barrowful of lost shoes, amongst which she had the strange luck to pick out first one, and then the other of her own!"

the wind roaring in the chimney and wailing among the tall poplars outside, 'so that it became quite impossible' (for a little boy) 'to go to bed up the black oak creaking staircase, except well-accompanied, and with a candle left in the room till sleep should come.'

Of holidays, as holidays, we hear little; but in 1819 Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, recommended to try sea air and bathing, visit Ann in Yorkshire, and together they go to Hornsea.

"We all enjoy ourselves very much," writes Mrs. Taylor. "You may think of us from ten to one every day walking or riding; and again in afternoon or evening, when the tide is up. I ride on a donkey almost every day, and am become so good a horsewoman as to keep my seat when the animal is sinking in the sand, struggling, and kicking. We have, too, a donkey cart, which carries the whole party, your father excepted. This all adds to the expense, and extorts from me many a sigh and groan, and I fear when the fun is over, like ye children, I shall cry for my money again: yet we are willing to avail ourselves of such an opportunity, and not to spoil a ship for a halfpenny-worth of tar. Plunging headlong, however, into the sea, does not well suit my nerves. "Take your time, ma'am," the women say when I am clambering up the ladder from the waves: but you can guess how it is, I daresay, as well as if you saw me. Yet I had rather bathe in the sea ten times than once seethe and roll about on the surface of a warm bath like a bottle! We hope to hear from you now—now, not every post, but every errand cart. Let me hear how you all are in plain



ISAAC TAYLOR OF STANFORD RIVERS

truth, and no lies. Also how the maid goes on; whether she is gone, or going, and what else is gone, stolen, or strayed."

The following year Mr. Taylor, with Jane and Isaac in charge, goes to Margate to recuperate from dangerous illness, and Ann writes anxiously from Hull—"Of course you will not venture home by steam-packet, except in calm weather. They are perhaps less manageable even than sailing vessels, when the weather is so rough as to leave one wheel out of the water." "Singular apprehension," comments Josiah Gilbert, "but no doubt expressing the nautical opinion of Hull at that time."

In 1822 comes a wrench: the beloved Peaked Farm must be given up and the final move faced. Ann writes from Hull:

> "It seems to me a sort of dream that you are going to leave the house, and how to think of you in the course of a few months I cannot tell. Yet Providence has always favoured your particular tastes and allowed you something better than brick and mortar to look at, and I hope you may be equally favoured now. It will be in some respects no disadvantage to have both house and garden on a smaller scale, and if a little more airtight within doors, so much the better also. So that it may happen, as when you left the Castle, that you will not really regret the change, though the parting must be painful. Oh, that low white porch where the vine leaves cling! I shall never forget it."

A new house, unpicturesque, and with but a small garden, is bought on the outskirts of Ongar: a sad exchange, from which Jane, now in failing health,

suffers keenly. But Mr. Taylor's cheerful spirit conquers all: he builds a study, a cabinet for the pictures collected during his long art life, adapts an outbuilding for his 'brown room,' and does wonders with the garden.

Let us visit the Ongar family in their new home with a traveller who in 1824—nine years after Ann's marriage—came from Yorkshire to visit them.

> "Between the Bull Inn and Ongar, I marked nothing worth going to see. We met lots of calves, and on the whole I did think that a netted calf is a more respectable mode of conveying these creatures to market than the Yorkshire fashion of carrying them across the horse's neck, with their throats cut and their tongues lolling out."

In the dark and cold the coach stopped at the Inn, and the traveller enquired for Mr. Taylor's. The Miss Taylors, he was told, were taking tea over the way, and would be glad to see him there.

> "So over the way I went . . . and having thrown off hat, gloves, greatcoat, I went into the room and shook hands with the ladies whom I knew. The fire was brisk, and tea things on the table, and fine large cakes on the fender. The pleasant look of Jane, the honest, innocent (smile?) of Jemima, together with the hospitality of the good lady of the house, made me feel quite at home. They were all hard at work making cloaks for charity girls out of the vilest grey cobweb stuff you ever saw. I was right glad to observe a stir among the cloaks about nine o'clock that gave me some hope we were about to be off; and so it came to pass.
>
> "From the lady's door we took to the right, and

finding the footpath too narrow for three abreast, Jemima led us to Mr. Taylor's very comfortable and genteel dwelling. There were Joe (Mrs. Gilbert's eldest son Josiah who was then living with his grandparents), Isaac, and I think Mrs. Taylor. Mr. Taylor came down soon after with a candle in his hand; and soon the bell rang for worship. Mr. Taylor prayed as a patriarch can pray.

"At ten, Mrs. Taylor said good-night; at about half past ten, Mr. T. did the same. To prevent my visit being an intrusion upon the regular habits of the family, I begged Mr. T. would tell me at what time the young folks retired. 'Well,' said he, 'there is a passage which says "Now is the appointed time"!' "

The next day was spent in walks and talks. Jokes were cracked, at which 'Joe laughed; and Isaac did something like it.' In the afternoon

"we all, except Mr. Taylor, sat together in Isaac's study and conversed about the want of good preachers and of learned men among the dissenters; and the return of the Jews to Palestine. The habits of Locke and of Lord Bacon came into our talk some way or other. But Thursday was a deeply interesting day to me. Till that morning I had only seen Mrs. Taylor, but I did not know her before. She *is* a fine character. She remained with me I should think two hours and conversed with me in the most sensible, tender, and maternal manner. How fond she seems of trouble! The afflicted are her friends. I shall never forget the pleasure of that morning. I never met with a person so truly great and yet so affectionately tender as Mrs. Taylor. Mrs. Gilbert is more like her than any other of the family. . . .

"There is considerable variety of mind and of disposition in the family; each of them is clever in a different way. All spread their charms, but charms not all alike. Isaac I cannot exactly make out. He is not exactly that bland sort of creature which one could very soon make free with, and yet somehow I like him. It happened that he and I sat at opposite sides of the room. Once or twice as I was chatting away to Jane and Jemima I caught him looking through his tufty eyebrows at me as if he were intent on some microscopic investigation and I the creeping thing or butterfly. He frequently smiled . . ."

Ann is no longer within the circle, and the shadows have fallen upon Jane, but life still holds much that is good; much to call for thankful hearts.

And so, chatting, laughing, discussing, busy as ever, together as they loved to be, we leave them; happy in their home.

ANN

After the removal to Ongar, Ann Taylor's thoughts had taken a new direction. Only two years remained before marriage was to claim her, but it was long enough for her to make her mark in a new field—that of literary criticism. Her brother Isaac—no mean judge—always held that her chief talents lay in this branch of literature, while the poet Montgomery referred to her 'as a rare instance of one whose style was conspicuous and beautiful, without, so far as he knew, having had the assistance of a classical education.'

Articles from her pen appeared in the *Eclectic Review*, one on Hannah More's *Christian Morals* attracting much attention. The famous authoress, then at the zenith of her fame, is accused by her realistic and fearless young critic of looseness of style and lack of originality of thought.

> "If we may venture on such an allusion, Mrs. More, after lighting her candle, puts it under a bushel—and, not seldom, by unmeaning tautology, under half a dozen bushels successively, for many of her illustrations are so nearly synonymous that they rather exercise the reader in discovering or inventing distinctions, than assist him in attaining a complete idea. This, instead of indicating mental exuberance, is usually the resort of conscious failure, labouring to express what it cannot condense; or of indecisive judgment, which is unable to select.
>
> "Genius feels and decides with prompt correctness, places its ideas in the most striking attitude,

in the broad daylight of expression, and presents to a glance, 'The fairest, loftiest countenance of things.' Industry walks carefully round its subject, holding a light now on this side, now on that, in every direction till, notwithstanding the general obscurity, every part has been successfully discerned. This fatiguing endeavour is perceived, upon many occasions, in the style of Mrs. More. We should call it, if allowed the expression, 'much ado about—*something*.' "

On discovering the writer, Mrs. More, unused to such criticism, is reported as expressing herself in a manner 'unworthy of her genius.'

It was no unknown bride who accompanied the Rev. Joseph Gilbert back to Rotherham in the New Year of 1814. Ann Taylor's fame had preceded her; and her husband's students, bent on a Yorkshire welcome, filled all the available windows to greet her. Her appearance was evidently something of an anti-climax, for "How little she is!" they exclaimed as the slight figure stepped from the coach.

Life was now filled to the brim with varied interests and duties. "I am getting on," writes the young wife, "with Mrs. Hamilton's *Popular Essays*, though I cannot apply as I used to do, and I have in the house for reviewing Miss Edgeworth's *Patronage* and two or three other things."

"Characteristically," reports her son Josiah, "it was the special duties of her new position that began to absorb her attention. In letters to her mother she enters into details of household economy, requesting advice from that first-rate authority upon 'ironing and getting up'; 'the composition of those

ANN TAYLOR

mince-pies with which you have sometimes contrived to finish a piece of boiling beef; and the history and mystery of your delicate little bread puddings for the sick.'

We read of matutinal quarters of an hour in her own room, safe and sound over the cookery book—'my guardian angel, oracle and bosom friend.' But a wild duck had preceded the guardian angel:

"Mary had never dressed one, and I was looked to for the entire orders. All that I could remember was put into requisition, and I did right in all respects—did not stuff it, did not cook the giblets, did truss it right—did rejoice when all was over! I was told too, that when the students came to tea there must be a plum cake—cookery book a month on the road! Was obliged to postpone the visit till it arrived—managed extremely well when it did. Although I manage very tolerably, and what with my 'bosom friend,' some recollection, and a spice of ingenuity, can give my directions, I assure you, in good style. Whenever I can—but there is always 'some bed or some border to mend, or something to tie or to stick'—I endeavour to get to writing about eleven, and write during the morning, more or less, as I am able."

But the Classical Tutor of Rotherham College was anxious that Mrs. Gilbert should be as well known as Miss Taylor; and his wife's response was characteristic. At this time her husband held a pastorate at Sheffield, and there they spent their week-ends; or, when spring came on, walked together before breakfast the six miles between the towns. "I hope," wrote Ann, "by prudence and activity to be able in time to unite the

different occupations and characters, so as not greatly to injure any, but if one must suffer, it should certainly be the literary."

In October, 1814, her first child was born, and from that hour gone was all hope of freedom for literary work. 'As to Miss Edgeworth, I feel in despair, for I cannot seclude myself and nurse up my mind as I have always found necessary to composition.' But to remonstrances about the idleness of her pen, her reply is unhesitating: 'Never mind, the dear little child is worth volumes of fame.'

Time brings it changes. Rotherham College and the ministry at Sheffield are exchanged for Hull, where Mr. Gilbert is appointed to the pastorate of Fish Street Chapel. Here are lived eight strenuous and happy years, satisfying to husband and wife, but taking heavy toll of the husband's strength. In 1825 comes the inevitable break: less exacting work is offered and accepted, and in November the tent-pegs are taken up, and the family, now including eight children, moves to Nottingham. Here 'with hands full of practical business and heart full of practical kindness and practical religion,' Ann Gilbert was to spend the rest of her life. Her hands were indeed full of practical business, and in the early years she was 'driven at full trot.' . . .

> ' If a letter is to be written I must write it when I *can* and not when I would—not to a nicety when the frame comes over me, but when there are no stockings to mend, or closets to clean, or meat to buy, or maids to scold; or worse still, when one is tired to death with doing all of them."

She was to experience a difficulty new to her, for in

manufacturing towns maids were scarce even in those days. Letters tell of a fresh arrival

> 'who will be the ninth I have had, either as help or hindrance, within the last two months': of 'living in the streets in despairing search after a decent servant': and again, 'I look, as everyone says, very miserably; and if there is any cause beyond natural wear and tear, it must be the perpetual worry of spirit in which my domestic department has kept me for the last year.'

Yet she seems to have kept her serenity.

> "I am content to like disagreeable things if I can" she once wrote. "It is the only way in my power of making them agreeable, and there are very few things I have met with that have not something or other about them better than might have been."

At six o'clock she was up and attacking the family mending—no light task; and with her time for reading sadly curtailed, her husband remarked, "Though Ann seldom indulges herself in looking at a book, I don't know how it is, she is always up to everything that is going on in the literary world." Her natural gaiety made her quick at repartee and ready with puns. "Nottingham," she once said, "is an immoral town. On one side of the market place we have Tarry, Late and Gamble. Then you cross over and find one Trueman, one Innocent and then you've Dunn."

When freedom from family cares brought at length more leisure, she threw herself into various branches of civic and religious work. The local Provident Society—the Free Library—the Blind Asylum—the

factory hands—each and all had cause to call her friend. She took the keenest interest in all that went on around her,

> "rejoicing in all conquests of mind, and in all quickened energies of life. The old coach made part of a picturesqueness she enjoyed, but when she ran to a garden gate to see it pass along a country road, or watched the laden mail with scarlet coat and sound of horn, rattle through the streets of Nottingham, tears came to her eyes as much from sympathy with the stir and movement of life and business as from any other feeling. And so with the railway works now pushing everywhere; true, the sod of a sweet pasture was turned up by the ruthless navvy, but it was to make way for the triumph of steam which was conquering time and space, was weaving together all the towns and peoples of the land; and more than all to her, destroying that long and bitter separation of families from which in earlier days she had suffered so much."

She responded in her own way in the 'Song of the Tea-Kettle,' which first appeared in the *London University College Magazine*:

"Since first began my ominous song,
Slowly have moved the ages long;
There I hung, or there I stood,
Giving what sign my nature could,
Content till man the hint should catch,
To purr to the lift of the cottage latch.

Fraught with the weal of kingdoms vast,
I sighed as the simpleton man went past;
Vainly I gave significant proof
By thrusting high my prisoning roof,
My lips uncouth their witness bore,
But inarticulate, could no more.

. . .

At length the day in its glory rose
And off in its speed the engine goes!

. . .

Mountain and precipice melt away,
The mind's high sorcery who can stay?
Who to her necromancy cry,
Hither come up, but pass not by?
No, she has felt her strength, her force,
And springs abroad to a limitless course.
Simpleton man! Why, who would have thought
To this the song of a tea-kettle brought!

No longer continuously 'driven at full trot' she once more took up her pen, to the great contentment of one who had mourned her long silence.

"Ever since I saw the announcement of your little book," (*The Convalescent*), wrote Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers, "I have felt as if I ought as well to congratulate you as to express my particular pleasure in finding that you have at length returned to your vocation, and left (as I heartily hope for ever) the mending of stockings to hands that cannot so well handle the pen. Some of your mended stockings have metaphorically, and perhaps literally, cost more than the silk hose which they say were presented to Queen Bess. That you will

go on writing I take as a matter of course; write for grown folks, on the most comprehensive subjects. I will not speak of the little book—the precursor—until I have taken a quiet Sunday evening upon it."

On public occasions the services of her pen were not seldom asked for. Would she alter the National Anthem? She would; and here is her final stanza:

"O Lord our God arise,
Bless every enterprise
Worthy her reign.
Grant her a people free,
Men as such men should be,
Women as fair as she:
God save the Queen!"

One of the first excursion trains brought hundreds of holiday-makers from Leicester to visit its old rival Nottingham. Nothing could suit her better. "It was a beautiful day and scene," she writes. "Upwards of a thousand arrived at ten o'clock in thirty-four carriages, with colours flying and hats and handkerchiefs out of the windows as they swept into the station, where were gentlemen of the town with a number of flags and a band of music, to welcome their arrival. It was supposed that twenty thousand people[1] were in the meadows to see them, and if they did not count *me*, there were twenty thousand and *one*! The town was alive the whole day. It is just the thing that I like."

She loved market day; the roads crammed with incoming villagers; quaint vehicles of antique pattern, ranging from what she likened to a 'stage-coach run

[1] In short, what she called 'The entire ragtailia of the good town of Nottingham.'

to seed,' down to a rickety donkey cart; and thus expressed her joy:

"I love to see the country folk come in,
Daughter and dame, on sunny market days,
Laden from field and dairy, farm and bin,
And glorious flowers, whole baskets in a blaze!"

She loved a day's outing to some village on the Trent, jogging home sometimes in what, with a droll wink, she would call 'a light conveyance'—to wit, a market cart.

She loved, too, visits to her husband's Lincolnshire relatives, and once rode behind him on an ancient pillion. Some they visited were Wesleyans. Mr. Gilbert's father, 'who had allowed his barn to be used by Mr. Wesley on one of his preaching tours, was in consequence dragged through a pond by the mob; the rector, it is said, surveying the sport from the belfry.'

In the Corn Law controversy Mrs. Gilbert sided warmly with the Free Traders, and voiced the deep distress she saw around her in the memorial to the Queen which she drew up in the name of the women of Nottingham. She took eager interest in the Anti-Slavery contests of her time, using her talent freely to help a cause so near her heart. Vigorous in support of causes that touched her sympathy, her views on the position of women were not those of to-day. In a review contributed to the *Eclectic*, she wrote:

> "The Christian woman who can reflect upon a laborious life of domestic duty, looks back upon a scene of true virtue; and if in order to perform the whole of her allotted task, she was obliged to repress a taste for pursuits more intellectual, the character

of magnanimity is inscribed upon her conduct; however retired, or in human estimation insignificant, may have been the daily exercises to which she was appointed."

This was written in her early married days, when she deliberately turned from the artistic and literary occupations which had hitherto filled so much of her life. Much later—in 1849—when replying to some papers that had been sent to her advocating the rights of women, particularly on the elective franchise, she wrote what her son calls 'a very characteristic letter,' concluding thus:

"You have stated your opinions at length, I mine briefly, and if either is unconvinced, we should not perhaps effect much by saying more. I do (woman though I am) feel a lively interest in great rights and wrongs, and rejoice in the belief that ultimately *wrong* will have the worst of it! We are going forward, but I should not expect much advantage from taking the other half of every fireside into the quarrel. My left hand has much to complain of—never either wears a thimble or holds a pen! But I don't find myself injured by this partial arrangement; one has the work, the other the needle, and so I manage between them. Will you excuse me for having spoken thus freely? I think yours is a false movement, and thus far I put in my protest against it."

"Thoroughly, indeed," continues her son, "the writer carried out in practice her ideal of 'women's work': real work of any kind indeed, as in the old 'bib and apron days' she truly enjoyed." Upon a change of servants she writes:

"This week I am up to my ears—rather above, as the crown of my cap will testify—among pots and pans, and dirt holes unimaginable. In my rummagings I have found the handles of ten of our vanished knives and forks! Oh, it is this, and more of the same, that makes that pitiable compound, a cross old woman!"

She seemed at her most vigorous, though about this time she wrote to a friend:

"You know I was taken with an attack of sixty-four in January, and I do not think I have altogether recovered yet. Take care you do not catch the infection. I never saw it in any case completely got over."

Something of her father's Puritan severity of outlook shows itself, at any rate in earlier years, in her dislike of outward form. When it touched the life of the Church with which she was associated, she threw the whole weight of her influence against 'beggarly elements' repugnant to her realism[1]; while in a narrower

[1] In 1827 she wrote from Ongar to her husband at Nottingham warning against the possible erection of an organ gallery in the new chapel. "I am—you do not know *how* solicitous that your prosperity should be *pure*, and of good report—not attributable to the pomp that charms the eye or 'pipes adorned with gold!' How could we ever sing without a blush those proud lines 'How decent and how wise' if you betray your suspicion of the aid of God's blessing by praying the good offices of an organ? Do not, pray do not *you*, be reduced to such 'beggarly elements!'"

But during later years she listened quietly enough to organ strains, and even said nothing at the introduction of chants. There might have been a sigh for the old ways, but everybody was against her, and in a strife of tongues she always sheltered herself in silence.

circle it governed her attitude to her own and her children's dress. Throughout her life she had to face times of spiritual trouble, during which she felt herself a wanderer from whom light was withheld. But

> "there is reason to believe," wrote her son, "that at eventide it was again light with this conscientious, self-distrusting, deeply humble spirit. Those who witnessed her constant cheerfulness and youthful enjoyment of simple pleasures, little suspected this anxiety of soul, especially as she was always reserved in conversation upon personal experience. It is undeniable that some of the most eminent saints have passed through similar spiritual trials, notably Madame Guyon, who for a series of years endured what she calls her 'state of probation and desolation.' "

Practical and resourceful as Ann Gilbert was, quick, in a difficulty, to turn to 'Hook, Crook & Co.,' she inherited much of her mother's sensitiveness. Knowing so well the trials of a fearful looking forward, she fought to discourage, in herself and others, the loading of both shoulders, one with the ills of to-day and the other, of to-morrow.

> "Why be so constantly diving into a future which we cannot penetrate, even the real colour of which may be wholly different from that with which we tint or shade our horizon? To live *by the day* is the secret of cheerful living, always remembering that our times are in God's hands and always aiming to leave them there. How useless long plannings may be! I am sorely sensible of having injured myself, expending thought and interest to worse than no

purpose in perpetual forecastings. Even my mind has been debilitated by the unprofitable habit. There are turns in Providence on which we are called to deliberate and choose; but otherwise we do but exhaust strength and spirits by endeavouring to act out paths which we may find at right angles with those we have to tread." Again, she wrote: "I do wonder at established Christians . . . when they are overwhelmed with temporal anxieties, and seem as careful, and sorrowing, and even despairing, as if they had to choose their own path, and be sun, and shield, and rock, and staff, and God, to themselves. . . . It is a humbling proof of the weakness of faith, even in the liveliest Christians, that they cannot *composedly* trust in God for so much as a crumb of bread. If He but lay a finger upon their earthly comfort or hide their path for a few moments behind a sharp turning, they begin doubting and wailing as if He were some God whose kindness they did not know, whose power they dare not trust; and the poor prayers by which they think they evince their faith are little better than impatient sallies, half fear, half anger. As to a cheerful dependence and humble resignation, they seldom come till their petition is granted; and then a great deal of gladness, and a little thankfulness, are too often mistaken for them."

She had much to say on the subject of building castles in the air:

"What a ruinous pre-occupation of mind does it imply! The habit itself, whatever be its object, is so grievously injurious that I could leave it, stamped with double earnestness, as a charge to my children

and to theirs never to indulge in it; the best way being never to begin. How must they be characterized who, passing like shadows only among the realities of living duty inhabit hourly, daily, and for years, a world of imagined interests, wasting mental vigour upon exertions never made, and dimming common comforts by an ever-hovering mist of vain imaginings!"

Perhaps she spoke so strongly because severe struggles were needed to 'disentangle myself from the snare in which for so many years I had been a prisoner.' Her younger sister also shared and lamented the same leaning. "I do believe," wrote Jane Taylor, "that this habit of castle-building is very injurious to the mind. I know I have sometimes lived so much in a castle as almost to forget that I lived in a house."

As their circle changed and widened and life became more complex, Mrs. Gilbert was deeply conscious of her responsibilities.

"There are," she wrote, "few things in the treatment of a family requiring more of that wisdom which cometh from above, than the decision continually to be made between exposure and exclusiveness. To act out either principle fully would be almost equally injurious. God has placed us in a world requiring the discharge of active duties amid its innumerable temptations, and if we cannot defend our children from all, the best we can do is to arm them with principles for the unavoidable encounter—perhaps padding the shield on the inside with *habits*. We cannot watch over them till all dangers are past, but a steady eye upon the *chief* good will steer us safely through many.

"Do you remember the enquiry made of good old Thomas Scott on his death-bed? In his own large family he had been greatly favoured, and they, having now children of their own to rear, asked their dying father whether he could name any special course or principle to which this success could be attributed. He replied, with the humility of an aged Christian, that he was sensible of many defects and errors; but that one thing he had aimed at, and to that only he could refer the blessing that had distinguished his labours—his uniform endeavour, both for his children and himself to 'seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness.' So much had everything else been regarded as subordinate that the Rev. John Scott, his eldest son and biographer, adds that he believes not one among them would have ventured to inform his father that he was about to marry a rich wife! How strangely diverse from the ruling principle now, even among those who profess to be not of this world!"

The mutual devotion which was so marked a characteristic of the Taylor family distinguished no less the home which grew up around its eldest daughter.

"I please myself," writes Mrs. Gilbert in her Autobiography, "in the belief that among you, dear children, there is a feeling too deeply fraternal and sisterly to fear much from the blights of time or circumstance. Still, who shall predict the irritations, supposed or actual wrongs which, as life sweeps roughly over you, may interrupt the harmony! 'The mother of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing,' and, as in a sea-bank you would dread

a fissure, however small, rid yourselves with loving ingenuity, speed, or sacrifice, of the first feeling of suspicion, of jealousy, or any of the thousand wedges, hot from a forge below, by which hearts and families are sundered—above all, dreading the 'wedge of gold.' Habitate yourselves to realize the feelings natural to those around you, and deal as tenderly with them as with your own. Above all, and may that be the master-key to all your hearts, 'Be tender, be pitiful, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.' So prays your mother, living and amongst you; so, with intensity of emphasis, would she pray if allowed to address you from her final resting-place."

With her grandchildren, at whose advent she was always chief minister, she often resumed her old practice of the 'art and mystery of discipline.' When a son of her youngest sister spent some weeks with her she wrote:

"He is, and has been, quite well, and very generally good, though every now and then we have a pull for it. I endeavour to evade a contest whenever possible, and I assure you it costs me not a little thought to meet the prevailing tendency with all needful wisdom, and in the way most likely to overcome it. I charge you to keep an attentive eye upon him, or he may become unmanageable, sweet and reasonable as he is. My present conclusion is—first, avoid direct opposition where it can be done honourably and unperceived; second, make, when necessary, a speedy and sharp appeal to the body, adding as soon as convenient, a few reason-

JEMIMA TAYLOR

able words[1]; and, thirdly, in case of failure, leave him wholly unnoticed, as much as if he were not in the room. Let everything go on, and even go out, at the proper time, without reference of any kind to the culprit, and I think it both brings to, and brings *down*, more surely than any method I have yet devised—and I have devised many."

Her firm, yet gentle, discipline seems to have been understood, for it is reported by a lady who was for long an inmate of her house that she trained the youngest child

"at but a year old, to sit quite still on her knee during family worship, and to understand that the toy or biscuit which might be in the hand, must be laid aside till the conclusion of the service; and this was universally done without a murmer."

Of another grandchild she wrote:

"Yesterday, before he was brought as usual to my room, he indulged in a long continued, violent, thoroughly *manufactured* scream. Hitherto I have greeted his arrival with truly grandmotherly demonstrations of love and joy, but on this occasion I felt it wise to wear the calm appearance of deep silent sorrow, not bestowing a word or a smile! I do wish that you, or any unprejudiced person, could have seen the sad, motionless, enquiring, or rather conscious gaze which he fixed upon me. It was

[1] One of the little boys was 'difficult,' and after a special outburst of temper she sent for the doctor. Was the trouble of physical origin? He was bound to say it was not. "Thank you, doctor. Then I shall know how to deal with him," was her reply.

strangely touching, but by dint of great self-sacrifice I maintained the same imperturbable wisdom till my own toilet was ended and I could leave the room. He knew perfectly well what was meant. This morning I made myself as agreeable as possible, proving to him the difference between a bad boy and a good one. I am still active enough to be a very harlequin of a grandmama. Tell M. that books, and especially library books, should never be within reach of mischievous fingers. *My* mother's boast was that she never allowed a child to have anything it ought not to play with. Are there better fashions now?"

Each year on her husband's birthday in March, they walked together in the purple crocus meadows between the town and the Trent, and gathered the first blooms of crocus and violet.[1]

The year of her 70th birthday—that in which her husband died—they went together for the last time to the meadows for the time-honoured handful. Already the lakes of purple were invaded by inclosure; and she who loved them had voiced their farewell in

THE LAST DYING SPEECH OF THE CROCUSES

"Ye tender-hearted gentlefolks of Nottingham's fair town,
And you who long have loved us, from the Poet to the Clown,

[1] In the neighbourhood of Nottingham, the vernal crocus presents a most beautiful appearance, covering many acres of meadow with its bloom, rivalling whatever has been sung of the fields of Etna, showing, at a distance like a perfect flood of lilac, and tempting every merry little heart and many graver ones also, to go out and gather.—WILLIAM HOWITT.

Attend our sore complainings, while with one accord we weep,
From mossy beds uprising, where we sought our summer sleep!

How many a pleasant spring-tide, ere a blossom peeped of May,
Not yet a stealthy violet its dwelling did betray,
And scarce the winter flood had left the lowlands to the sky,
We came in thronging multitudes to gladden every eye!

We came—a simple people, in our little hoods of blue,
And a blush of living purple o'er earth's green bosom threw,
All faces smiled a welcome, as they gaily passed along,
And "have you seen the crocuses?" was everybody's song.

Forth came the happy children, to their revel in the flowers—
Forth came the weary working man, to that sweet show of ours:
Forth came the lace-girl cheerily, the common joy to share;
And e'en the stately gentlefolks were glad to see us there.

Spirit of giant trade! We go; on wings of night we fly,
Some far sequestered spot to seek, where loom may never ply.
Come line and rule, come board and trick—all dismal things in one—
Dread spirit of Inclosure come—thy wretched will be done!"

The wisdom which enabled her to take a balanced view of life she strove to pass on to her children. "Learn proportion, dear J., learn proportion. Never forget the difference between time and eternity." And—"Be very explicit; make him understand distinctions," she urged one charged to advocate in high places an unpopular cause.[1] Looking back in after years to this time of difficulty, she wrote:

"Great causes seldom fly. They emerge from a few thoughtful minds, possibly from a solitary monk in a solitary cell. By degrees they gather strength; they work their way into public notice; move into first this quarter, then into that; for a while it may be, take a long sleep, or hide in prisons—carrying the brand of disloyalty, disturbance, revolution on their foreheads; and for years—it may be many—continue the quiet testimony, the holy remonstrance under as much opprobium as interest, ignorance, or prejudice can heap upon them; the first movers being always 'men wondered at.' But that the progress of great causes is thus unequal, or for a time, even retrograde, is no proof that they

[1] She was here writing to Mr. Gilbert, then a deputy in London in the cause of Church Disestablishment, which in the popular mind was mistaken for an attack upon the Church.

are not good as well as great, and destined to ultimate success; and whenever that day comes, first movers obtain their late honours; history will reward them. Her laurels, usually, are planted on the grave."

. . . . .

"Yes, eighty years! They did not crawl,
Nor, as we fancy, fly;
They kept their pace with Time's foot-fall
And slid in silence by."

—ANN GILBERT

Ann Gilbert kept her happy outlook on life to the end.

"I have often thought," she wrote, "that as a family we were (I was going to say are) younger than our years. Even now, whether at sixty-six, as when I first began this, or at eighty, as I am now, the feeling of being a grown woman, to say nothing of an *old* woman, does not come naturally to me. I arrive at the conclusion rather by a process of reflection than as a felt fact."

Yet a few years earlier she had written:

"Even in early autumn the leaves begin to fall *around us*, and should we ourselves chance to be evergreens, we may be left bleakly standing. Just fancy yourselves, children, standing alone among the graves of a generation. Not one left to whom you could say, 'Don't you remember that?' "

After the great sorrow of her life—her husband's death in December, 1852—was passed, Mrs. Gilbert had recovered health and spirits, and travelled widely in her own country, enjoying nature and art with a keen relish and a youthful enthusiasm which her

children envied. She spent the winter of 1853 at the house of her brother Isaac at Stanford Rivers; and on the anniversary of her wedding day she walked alone to Ongar. We seem to hear her quiet voice:

> "I made my way to the Castle House, then to the church . . . and finding the door open . . . I went in and stood at the altar. Very, very strange! sad, and yet merciful, at the end of forty years, to stand on the same spot and see everything just as it looked then! to feel myself embosomed in the love of a new generation, near and distant, and to visit the many dear graves, at that time little thought of. God finds sorrow for us; we make regrets for ourselves, and may those who are young enough to profit by experience take care that the sorrows are kept pure."

The old-fashioned farm-house at Stanford Rivers—Isaac Taylor's home for more than forty years—became another 'heart home' for his eldest sister. At this time—1853—Isaac was much in Manchester, carrying out the application of his mechanical ideas in regard to the engraving of calico patterns and the process of calico printing.

"What unlikely things come about," he wrote to his sister, "in your journey!—in mine! Four and twenty years ago nothing would have seemed more strangely improbable than the facts of the present—at Manchester, living apart from wife and children, and spending my days in the rumbling intestines of this world of machinery!" For he was by nature a recluse, happiest amongst his own books in the quiet home where came to visit him one and another of the group of thinkers he had gathered around him in

England, Scotland and America. Himself a vigorous thinker whose sympathies led him away from that school of thought to which his father belonged to membership of the Established Church, there were during twenty or more years perpetual sharp passages of warfare between him and his eldest sister. In 1833 he had written, "I know no one like you—so wrong in matters ecclesiastical, so uniformly on the right side in all matters of the heart!"

But there was never a break in the love that bound them; and now, each nearing the end of the journey, the bonds grew but closer. The sister records:

> "His inventive faculty is wonderful. It appears as if all machineries were within compass of his powers. The variety of lines in which he has excelled astonishes me. Many of his early drawings, designs and miniatures, are beautifully executed; his domestic poetry is touching; we know his works, we see his machines. Yesterday he went to London to arrange for a very important adjudication in connection with Henry Rogers and Professor Baden Powell of Oxford. Two hundred and thirty essays were sent in. One considerable volume was blank paper, ruled, with only this at the beginning—'The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God';—'if there be a greater fool, it is he who sets about to prove that there is!'—witty and wise too."

And at a later date:

> "Isaac is all day at mechanics; at every meal one of the MS. volumes, on which he has to adjudicate, is laid on the table; at ten, when we go to bed, he sits closely at them till twelve, and the third part of *Restoration of Belief* is just advertised! It is killing work."

When, years before, she had expressed surprise at the amount of work her brother could accomplish, he had replied:

> "There is no real mystery in getting through with a good deal in the year; or if there be, one Taylor need not explain it to another. Only observe the simple rule of staying at home, and sitting so many hours every day to the business in hand, and the thing is done. If free from care and well in health, I should not scruple to undertake getting out two bouncing octavos per annum, and all original!"

But at another time he confessed the strain of this continual brain work.

> "I am compelled to use my cranial machinery very cautiously, and if I could, would take a year's rest. But who can do as he would? I have some doubts whether Gabriel can."

In 1854, when she was nearly 73, Mrs. Gilbert moved into a newly-built house, and rejoiced in reducing to order 'the absolute insurrection of chairs, tables, sofas, and everything which we ought to keep under.' "It is," she said, "a pleasant spot to call home. I do so enjoy it daily and hourly, often opening a door, or looking out of my window, for the simple pleasure of seeing how pleasant it is! Really the children think I am getting gay."

With her old friend Mrs. Forbes she renewed her youth in constant summer journeys. The sea did not greatly appeal to her, and she wrote from Blackpool:

> "Shall I confess to you that the astronomical punctuality of the tide is a monotony which always wearies me! Not that I complain of it as peculiar

Affectionately Yours,
Ann Gilbert

MRS. GILBERT AT 73

to Blackpool, but as just the one disadvantage which the beautiful sea obliges us to put up with. I have the same complaint to make of a fountain—always playing! Up and down, up and down! always playing! It tires me."

Nothing seemed to disturb her equanimity. From South Wales:

'We found ourselves at a sort of Land's End station—no flys, no lodgings, and through wind and rain we had to traipse up the road to an immense hotel; twelve new bedrooms just built, scarcely finished, the mortar mixed with salt water, so that every wall was oozing with damp and salt! I never slept among so much wetness. However, I did sleep well, and got no harm."

She was then 78. The following year she crossed the Border for the first time, and in Edinburgh received a visit from the author of *Rab and his Friends*,–

"so I have seen one of the pleasantest looking men I ever did see. He says, too, that his father had known me, which I was obliged to confess myself old enough to forget! Very impolite, but I cannot help it. I often commit such mistakes now."

In 1861 she wrote to her brother:

"I do feel it a great, I am disposed to think it an uncommon privilege, to remain so long within a family circle which, whether near or distant, is, without exception, a loving one, 'neither screw nor cratchel wrong.' Happily there has been no great Will case to disturb us, and we are not sorry for that! Never yet has the wedge of gold made entry

amongst us, or who knows how many screws would have been cracked by this time!"

Giving thanks always for all things was her motto.

"I am glad to see immense importations of foreign corn, so that housekeeping will be a little better for us all. But I am anxious about the war (with Russia) are not you?—though fully approving it as unavoidable and greatly admiring the modern patience and caution with which it has been entered upon, so different from the word and blow system—blow first—of our forefathers." [*Sic.*]

When over eighty she watched the struggles of Italy and America with keen interest, writing of the latter:

"I wonder whether the thought ever occurs to the North that the South has as much right to separate from them as they had to separate from *us*? —within my own memory too, for I distinctly recollect standing at the best parlour window in Red Lion Street, Holborn, to witness rejoicings on the proclamation of peace with America! and I think it was on the 23rd of September, 1783, the day on which Aunt Jane was born, but this I do not say on oath."

She was not far wrong. It was signed at Paris on September 3rd, 1783.

Increasing deafness and rheumatism were accepted with her usual cheerfulness.

"In the course of time, should time be allowed me, I shall, I hope, accept the inevitables of age as such, and therefore to be borne patiently, as all

trials should be."[1] . . . Yet—"My knee does not in the least improve, and now that spring says 'just step out and shake hands with me,' I feel it the more trying. . . . But what right have I, in my eighty-third year, to wonder at anything, or to expect much improvement? The earthly house of this tabernacle must dissolve, and at present it is doing it gently. One thing I am, or ought to be, very thankful for, that the rheumatism does not trouble me in the night. Very generally when a chronic rheumatism attacks old people, it makes its headquarters between the blankets."

In the bright evening of her days her heart was full of thankfulness. "A stream of comfort has flowed *uphill* from the low levels of Lavenham," she wrote. "When I reflect on our dear parents' mutual disadvantages, I wonder! They extracted good out of much evil . . . and I own most thankfully how much of any right views I have, is due to them. . . . I do love and revere their memories."

She had her father's trustfulness, and it grew with the years, upholding and supporting her in times of trial "I felt sure good was on the way," she once wrote, "but the night was too dark to see, and the storm too loud to hear." Facing changed circumstances at seventy-two—"At such times, and at all times, I can only say 'Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.' "

And ten years later, quietly awaiting what might

[1] To an old friend she sent this message: "Tell her I can now better sympathise with her deafness than when I last saw her. It is like living in a house with the blinds always down; so cut off from the world we have lived in. But spring seems a new thing; old as it is, it never comes amiss."

come—"I form no plans; for me a plan was formed in January, 1782, which I have learned to trust to."

She and Isaac were faithful correspondents in these last years. Wrote the brother:

> "It should not be so, my dear sister, and I often feel it, that our correspondence should be so infrequent as it is—we travelling on so far toward the end of a long journey! But you know that penny post has ended the dispensation of *letters*, bringing in the dispensation of scores of notes, each as brief as Saxon may make it. The locust swarm of scraps in an envelope has eaten up almost every green thing in the fields and gardens of soul-land. This is what we have come to under Whig administration!"

Asking for her photograph, which had been applied for by a friend in America, he added:

> "You are in high regard throughout the Northern States. It is true of each of us, that for one reader in England we have ten or twenty in America. Among all sorts of regrets in looking back through years past, we may be thankful thus far that we have not been *allowed* to spend seventy or eighty years in filling cabinets with coins, moths, botanic samples. Something has been done which has gone far, and already effected good. Something which may speak when we are gone. NOTHING to be proud of, something to be thankful for. Is it not so?"

Of his own infirmities he spoke in a spirit that matched hers.

> "My answer lately to a very kind invitation was this, 'Whoever asks *me* must invite me *and* my

ISAAC TAYLOR OF STANFORD RIVERS

infirmities, which invitation includes more than it did twelve months ago.' So it is, my dear sister, that the pins are taking out, and the screw heads losing their hold. I distinctly know this, and think of it daily, hourly."[1]

DECEMBER, 1866

"About a week before the *end*,"—it is Josiah Gilbert speaking—"my mother received one of those little leaflets which some are in the habit of enclosing in their letters. She had been reading it to herself, and then, evidently touched with its appropriateness, brought it to her daughters, saying: 'I rather like this.' It contained these two verses, the full significance of which a few more days revealed:

The way is long, my Father! and my soul
Longs for the rest and quiet of the goal;
While yet I journey through this weary land,
Keep me from wandering. Father! take my hand,
Quickly and straight
Lead to Heaven's gate
Thy child.

'The way *is* long, my child! but it shall be
Not one step longer than is best for thee;
And thou shalt know, at last, when thou shalt stand
Close to the gate, how I did take thy hand,
And quick and straight
Lead to Heaven's gate
My child.'

[1] Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers died in June, 1865. His constant companion during the months of his last illness was the hymn book whose purchase had led to his father's early rising, and out of which he had daily sung his morning hymn.

"On Sunday, December 16th, she did not feel very well, and remained at home all day. In the evening one of her daughters read from Rayleigh's *Quiet Resting Places*, the sermon that came in course—that noble one, 'The Kingdom and the Keys;' and my mother, leaning forward, listened intently to the words of peace:

> " 'Fear not for *thyself*. I will console thee in trouble, strengthen thee for duty, open a way for thee amidst life's perplexities, pitch thy tent in safe places, and be around thy tabernacle with my sheltering presence until it is taken down, and thou art called to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Thy path may seem rugged and cheerless; but it is open and onward; and I will pass with thee myself along all its length, nor leave thee in the shades which hang over its close. I will be with thee in the dark valley to support thy trembling steps with my rod and staff; I will softly unlock the awful door and usher thee into Hades, where a thousand sights of beauty will fill thy delighted eye, and a thousand voices of welcome will hail thy coming.' "

The next day she fell asleep, never to wake again in this world; and at dawn on Wednesday morning a single sigh closed her long life.

"O tender and most loving mother!" wrote her son. "The cold daylight opened on a forlorn world to us her children, but she had been taken

> 'Quick and straight
> To Heaven's gate.' "

On her grave were inscribed two quotations, the first written nearly seventy years earlier by a child who little thought it was to be her own epitaph:

"Lord, what is Life?—if spent with Thee
In duty, praise and prayer,
However short, or long, it be,
We need but little care,
Because Eternity will last
When Life and death itself are past."[1]

"In Psalms and Hymns and spiritual songs,
She being dead yet speaketh."

[1] *Hymns for Infant Minds.*

JANE

"Thy wrinkles, and thy locks of snow
(The choicest gifts thy hands bestow)
At these I do not start:
But come not thou, a treacherous guest,
To steal those feelings, dearest, best,
That glow that warms the youthful breast:
With these I cannot part."

—*Remonstrance to Time.*

"She has since written nothing more characteristic of herself, or perhaps more beautiful, than the *Remonstrance to Time*," writes Isaac Taylor of his sister Jane.

> "In this piece specially, and in the *Birthday Retrospect*, she has given the portrait of her own mind with such vivid truthfulness that those who knew her seem to see and converse with her while perusing them. To portray itself, her mind needed only the mild excitement of her habitual feelings. But to display its force it required the stimulus of the strongest extraneous motives. The productions of her pen under these different impulses are widely dissimilar."

The *Remonstrance to Time* was one of Jane's contributions to *The Associate Minstrels*; early work, written with no thought of publication, and before she developed the power that a few years later showed itself in *Essays in Rhyme*. But the little child whose busy mind worked out its poetic fancies as she whipped her top in the early Lavenham home, living in a world of her own creation as real to her as life itself; so

retiring and sensitive to people and things that no true estimate of her talents was formed until much later, grew into the thoughtful girl who

"—used to roam and revel 'mid the stars:
When in my attic, with untold delight,
I watched the changing splendours of the night"—;

and from girlhood to a maturity blessed with the sense of values and penetrating insight into human nature and human motives that shows itself in *Prejudice*, *The World in the House*, and *The World in the Heart*.

But though shy, she was by no means always serious. Ann, her childhood's close companion, recalls her as a

> "saucy, lively, entertaining little thing; the amusement and favourite of all who knew her. At the baker's shop she used to be placed on the kneading board in order to preach, recite, narrate—to the great entertainment of his many visitors; and she was ever the foremost petitioner for family holidays."

As the quiet child amused—and studied—her neighbours—

("I laugh and talk, and preach a sermon well;
Go about begging, and your fortune tell:")

and grew towards womanhood, spending hours each day as her mother's close companion while subjects of all kinds were discussed, there developed that gift for observation and humorous satire that years later described in *Recreation* the ladies' tea-party; and the quiet fun of *The Toad's Journal*.

She was destined to become no mere literary lady. With her sister, she was brought up as her mother's companion, 'accustomed to attend and assist her in

every domestic duty, learning at once the reason and practice of all that was to be done'; and the twenty-three year old (part) author of *Original Poems* and *Rhymes for the Nursery* thus wrote from Colchester to her friend Luck Condor:

"In truth, Jane Taylor of the morning and Jane Taylor of the evening are as different people, in their feelings and sentiments, as two such intimate friends can possibly be. The former is an active, handy little body who can make beds or do plain work, and now and then takes a fancy for drawing, etc. But the last-mentioned lady never troubles her head with these menial affairs;—nothing will suit her but the *pen*;—and though she does nothing very extraordinary in this way, yet she so far surpasses the first-named gentlewoman that anyone who had received a letter from both would immediately distinguish between the two, by the difference of the style. But to drop this ingenious allegory, I assure you it represents the truth and I am pretty well determined not again to attempt letter-writing before breakfast. For really I am a mere machine—the most stupid and dronish creature you can imagine, at this time. The unsentimental realities of breakfast may claim some merit in restoring my mental faculties, but its effects are far surpassed by the evening's tea: after that comfortable, social, invigorating meal I am myself, and begin to think the world a pleasanter place, and my friends more agreeable people and, *entre nous*, myself a much more respectable personage, than they have seemed during the day; so that by eight o'clock I am just worked up to a proper state of mind for

JANE TAYLOR

From a miniature by her brother Isaac

writing." And—"At *my age*, you know, I go soberly on, doing my proper business in its regular routine. Will you believe that I ever suffer my thoughts to wander from the employment of my hands? If, for example, I am making tea, I think about the tea, the tea-pot, the water, the sugar, the cream, the bread, the butter, and the plate, all in regular succession; then of the company, when it is proper to make the customary inquiries—and, think you, at any other times? In short, I am now a discreet personage, having left all the follies of sixteen far in the background."

Two years later, writing of a friend 'soaring above the common pleasures of a mere housewife,' she added:

"No reflection, by the by, upon that respectable character; believe me, I reverence it, and always regard with respect a woman who performs her difficult, complicated, and important duties with address and propriety. Yet I see no reason why the best housewife in the world should take more pleasure in making a curious pudding than in reading a fine poem; or feel a greater pride in setting out an elegant table than in producing a well-trained child. I daresay you read a paper in the *Christian Observer* on Female Education. I feel grateful to the sensible and liberally-minded author. I do believe the reason why so few men, even among the intelligent, wish to encourage the mental cultivation of women, is their excessive love of the *good things* of this life; they tremble for their dear stomachs, concluding that a woman who could taste the pleasures of poetry or sentiment would never descend to pay due attention to those

exquisite flavours in pudding or pie that are so gratifying to their philosophic palates; and yet, poor gentlemen, it is a thousand pities they should be so mistaken; for, after all, who so much as a woman of taste and cultivation will feel the real importance of domestic duties; or who will so well, so cheerfully, perform them?"

The years 1812 to 1816, during which on account of Isaac's delicacy Jane and he were constant companions in Devon and Cornwall, were those of Jane's chief literary activity; and he who knew so well her inmost mind, records that she was now writing under a powerful sense of duty as regards the exercise of her talent.

"I know it was her constant practice, whenever she took up the pen to write for the press, to ask guidance and assistance from Him from whom 'every good and every perfect gift descends.' Yet she never enjoyed the comfort of believing that she had done well in the charge committed to her, for both constitutional diffidence and Christian humility inclined her to renounce every assumption of merit."

She found—in those days when it was possible to ramble over rocks and hills with little chance of meeting a human creature—the inspiration she needed in the wild secluded beauty of the north Devon coast. She loved

"—those gay watery grots—
Small excavations on a rocky shore,
That seem like fairy baths, or mimic wells,
Richly emboss'd with choicest weeds and shells:
As if her trinkets Nature chose to hide
Where nought invaded but the flowing tide,"

and sought them almost daily; but

"when she returned to her little study and took pen in hand, she thought no longer of herself, but only of her reader—and especially of her *young* reader. At the time of our sojourn in Devon and Cornwall there had come upon her a breadth of feeling as to the discharge of what I venture to call her *ministry* through the press. A ten years of this ministry, with an ever increasing extension of its field, had at length availed to put her constitutional diffidence out of countenance, for there could be no longer room to doubt that an opportunity was presented to her—a door was opened—and it was a wide door, and a sense of responsibility thence ensued:—it was as if, when she had pen in hand, a great congregation of the young—from childhood up to riper years, had come within reach of her vision and her voice—even of so feeble a voice. Was it fame that she cared for? I find in her home letters of this date frequent expressions of this kind: a warm commendation of a new volume had appeared in some monthly publication; she asks to see it, and says, 'I am much more anxious to see blame than praise, and the thought that you may keep back anything of that kind would fidget and discourage me beyond measure.' "

"Sometimes," runs a letter, "I write pretty fast, but often sit whole mornings without a word. One trick of the trade, which I have found very useful myself I daresay you are up to—that is, in discussing any fault in a character to have the *real* fault of a real character in my eye; which prevents the advice from being too general, and is more likely to make it come home to the conscience and feelings.

This, I think, I can do without uncharitableness; it is only studying Nature, and without it I could do nothing. If you are at a loss for a character, take mine; and you will find faults enough to last out the whole volume. I assure you that I take greater liberties with myself in that way than with any of my friends or neighbours; and have really found, so far, the beam in my own eye makes me see more clearly to take the mote out of others. The moment that I leave off looking at some original I find I am writing what is tame and unnatural, or general and unimpressive."

And some years later she assures a friend:

"It is more from a knowledge of my own heart than from observation of the failings of others, that I have written on the subjects I have chosen."

Let her describe types familiar to-day as when she turned her scalpel of a pen in their direction. Here are two from "Prejudice" (*Essays in Rhyme*):—

"Much of the light and soundness of our creed
Whate'er it be, depends on what we read.
How many clamour loudly for their way
Who never heard what others have to say!
Fixt where they are, determin'd to be right,
They fear to be disturb'd by further light;
And where the voice of argument is heard,
Away they run, and will not hear a word.
From notions vague, and gather'd up by chance,
Or mere report, of what you might advance;
Resolve the old frequented path to tread,
And still to think as they were born and bred.

Besides this blind devotion to a sect,
Custom produces much the same effect.
Our desks with piles of controversy grown;
But still, alas! each party's with its own.
Each deems his logic must conviction bring,
If people would but read,—but there's the thing!

The sermons, pamphlets, papers, books, reviews,
That plead our own opinions, we peruse;
And these alone,—as though the plan had been
To rivet all our prejudices in.
'Tis really droll to see how people's shelves,
Go where you will, are labell'd like themselves.
Ask if your neighbour—he whose party tone,
Polemic, or political, is known—
Sees such a publication—naming one
That takes a different side, or sides with none;
And straight in flat, uncomfortable-wise,
That damps all further mention, he replies,
'No, sir, we do not see that work—I know
Its general views,—*we* take in so and so.'
Thus each retains his notions, every one,
Thus they descend complete from sire to son;
And hence, the blind contempt so freely shown
For everyone's opinions but our own.

How oft from public or from private pique,
Conscience and truth are not allowed to speak:
Reasons might weight that now are quite forgot
If such a man or party urged them not;
But oh! what logic strong enough can be,
To prove that *they* have clearer views than we!" . . .

". . . The few ideas moving, slow and dull,
Across the sandy desert of her skull,
Still the same course must follow, to and fro,
As first they travers'd three-score years ago;
From whence, not all the world could turn them back,
Or lead them out upon another track.
What once was right or wrong, or high or low
In her opinion, always must be so:—
You might, perhaps, with reasons new and pat,
Have made Columbus think the world was flat;
There might be times of energy worn out,
When his own theory would Sir Isaac doubt;
But not the powers of argument combin'd,
Could make this dear good woman change her mind,
Or give her intellect the slightest clue
To that vast world of things she never knew.
Were but her brain dissected, it would show
Her stiff opinions fastened in a row,
Rang'd duly, side by side, without a gap,
Much like the plaiting on her Sunday cap."

And this, from "The World in the Heart":

"For instance—yonder matron who appears
Softly descending in the vale of years;
And yet, with health, and constant care bestow'd,
Still comely, *embonpoint*, and *à la mode*.
Once, in her youthful days, her heart was warm;
At least, her feelings wore devotion's form;
And ever since, to quell the rising doubt,
She makes that grain of godliness eke out.
With comfort still, the distant day she sees,
When grief or terror brought her to her knees;

When Christian friends rejoic'd at what she told,
And bade her welcome to the church's fold.
There still she rests, her words, her forms, the same;
There holds profession's lamp without the flame:
Her Sabbaths come and go, with even pace;
Year after year you find her in her place,
And still no change apparent, saving that
Of time and fashion, in her face and hat.
She stands or kneels as usual, hears and sings;
Goes home and dines, or talks of other things;
Enjoys her comforts with as strong a *goût*
As if they were not fading from her view;
And still is telling what she means to do;
Talks of events that happen to befall,
Not like a stranger, passing from it all,
But eager, anxious in their issue still,
Hoping this will not be, or that it will;
Getting, enjoying, all that can be had;
Amus'd with trifles, and at trifles sad;
While hope still whispers in her willing ears,
'Soul, thou hast laid up goods for many years.'
A few, brief words her character portray—
This would content her, if she might but stay."

In her *Contributions of Q.Q.*[1] there is, besides much improving advice designed for the reading of a long-passed generation, some very shrewd observation.

[1] *The Contributions of Q.Q.* were published in 1824. In the Advertisement to the First Edition Isaac Taylor explains that "the pieces now collected together, with the exception of two or three not before published, appeared during the course of seven years in the *Youth's Magazine*. The first of them was printed in the number for February, 1816; from which time they were continued, with few interruptions, till the end of the year 1822, when Miss Taylor's declining health obliged her to

"I assure you," said Benevolence ("Pleasure and Happiness") "that if I do but fall asleep for a few minutes, there are two officious beings called Ostentation and Party Spirit, who have the impudence to wear my dress: however, it must be confessed that these impertinent fellows work very hard and do a great deal of business for me, so that I should sometimes scarcely know how to get on without them; and till I have more of my own family grown up I am obliged to wink at their intrustion: sometimes, indeed, I am quite ashamed to see how much more they can accomplish than I do myself."

Of the impatience towards her fellow-beings that she sometimes confessed, Isaac writes:

"Her abhorrence of every kind of pretension, of fraud, of injustice, was indeed strong; and this feeling, added to her piercing discernment of the secret motives of those with whom she had to do, often occasioned her much fruitless uneasiness, and might sometimes give to her manner an air of constraint; for to seem to accept as genuine either actions or words which she suspected to be spurious,

desist entirely from literary occupations. Very soon after the commencement of her regular contributions to the *Youth's Magazine*, my sister had reason to believe that, through the medium of its pages, she had succeeded in gaining, to a high degree, the attention of a very large number of young persons. . . . Her friends have generally concurred in the opinion that many of these pieces are among the happiest efforts of her pen, and that a republication of them was due to their merit. In compliance with this opinion she had revised and prepared for the press the greater part of the papers, not long before her last illness; and she left with me instructions for the publication of the whole."

believe me ever

affectionately yours

Jane Taylor

required a degree of self-command of which she was hardly capable."

At Marazion she had the experience of a year's contact with Lydia Grenfell, whose rare spiritual gifts and quality of devotedness—a quality which Jane herself possessed in a marked degree—were bound to appeal strongly to the younger woman. The result was a deepened sense of responsibility for the talent entrusted to her: literary reputation—and she had now achieved considerable success in her own sphere—was seen as of secondary importance to the quality of the gift she had to offer. Into *Essays in Rhyme*—perhaps her most famous work—she put her very self; but the bent of her mind is also clearly shown in her stories "How it Strikes a Stranger," "The Wise Man," "The Clever Fool" (from *The Contributions of Q.Q.*), and in her poem "The Remonstrance to Time" (from *The Associate Minstrels*).

Essays in Rhyme were finished in the spring of 1816; and Isaac relates that

> "Jane never wrote anything with so much zest and excitement as these pieces. While employed on them she was almost lost to other interests; even her prevailing domestic tastes seemed forgotten, and in our daily walks she was often distracted from the scene around her. She had stepped upon ground new to herself, and felt an impulse that gave an unwonted vigour to her mind. Her impatience of pretension and perversity in matters of religion and her piercing discernment of the deceptions of the heart give a peculiar force and pungency to many passages in the *Essays in Rhyme*; while others are distinguished by the same interchanging pathos and

playfulness which had been displayed in her earlier writings. A few lines, perhaps, in this volume, may have seemed too pungent to some readers. This she fully anticipated, but would not shrink from the hazard. Her feelings and judgment were averse to compromise, or the cautious concealment of opinion."

Her keen observation of human nature and her sarcastic humour find full expression in "Recreation" (*Essays in Rhyme*). This little domestic satire, says the late E. V. Lucas,[1] "stands alone: neither Pope nor Cowper had covered that ground, nor has anyone since, so neatly as Jane Taylor":

"We took our work, and went, you see,
To take an early cup of tea.
We did so now and then, to pay
The friendly debt, and so did they.
Not that our friendship burned so bright
That all the world could see the light;
'Twas of the ordinary genus,
And little love was lost between us.
We loved, I think, about as true
As such near neighbours mostly do.

At first, we all were somewhat dry;
Mamma felt cold, and so did I:
Indeed that room, sit where you will,
Has draught enough to turn a mill.

[1] In the Introduction to his Centenary Issue (3rd Edition, 1925) of the *Original Poems and Others*, by Ann and Jane Taylor and Adelaide O'Keefe.

'I hope you're warm' says Mrs. G.
'O, quite so," says Mamma, says she;
'I'll take my shawl off by and by'—
'This room is always warm,' says I.

At last the tea came up, and so
With that our tongues began to go.
Now in that house you're sure of knowing
The smallest scrap of news that's going;
We find it *there* the wisest way
To take some heed of what we say.

. . . . .

'Miss F,' says I, 'is said to be
A sweet young woman, is not she?'
'O, excellent, I hear,' she cried;
'O, truly so!' Mamma replied.
'How old should you suppose her, pray?
She's older than she looks, they say.'
'Really,' says I, 'she seems to me
Not more than twenty-two or three.'
'O, there you're wrong,' says Mrs. G.
'Their upper servant told our Jane
She'll not see twenty-nine again.'
'Indeed, so old! I wonder why
She does not marry then,' said I;
'So many thousands to bestow
And such a beauty too, you know.'
'A beauty! O, my dear Miss B.
You must be joking, now,' says she;
'Her figure's rather pretty,'—'Ah!
That's what I say,' replied Mamma.

'Miss F,' says I, 'I've understood
Spends all her time in doing good.
The people say her coming down
Is quite a blessing to the town.'
At that our hostess fetched a sigh
And shook her head; and so says I,
'It's very kind of her, I'm sure,
To be so generous to the poor.'
'No doubt,' says she, "tis very true;
Perhaps there may be *reasons* too:—
You know some people like to pass
For patrons with the lower class.'

And here I break my story's thread,
Just to remark that what she said,
Although I took the other part,
Went like a cordial to my heart.

Some innuendoes more had passed,
When out the scandal came at last.
'Come then, I'll tell you something more,'
Says she,—'Eliza, shut the door.—
I would not trust a creature here,
For all the world, but you, my dear.
Perhaps it's false—I wish it may,
—But let it go no further, pray!'
'O,' says mamma, 'you need not fear,
We never mention what we hear.'
And so we drew our chairs the nearer,
And whispering, lest the child should hear her,
She told a tale, at least too long
To be repeated in a song;
We, panting every breath between,
With curiosity and spleen.

And how we did enjoy the sport!
And echo every faint report,
And answer every candid doubt,
And turn her motives inside out,
And holes in all her virtues pick,
Till we were sated, almost sick.

—Thus having brought it to a close,
In great good humour, we arose.
Indeed, 'twas more than time to go,
Our boy had been an hour below.
So warmly pressing Mrs. G.
To fix a day to come to tea,
We muffled up in cloak and plaid,
And trotted home behind the lad."

And the quiet fun of "The Toad's Journal":[1]

"—Crawled forth from some rubbish, and wink'd with one eye;
Half opened the other, but could not tell why;
Stretched out my left leg, as it felt rather queer,
Then drew all together, and slept for a year.
Awakened, felt chilly—crept under a stone;
Was vastly contented with living alone.
One toe became wedged in the stone like a peg,
Could not get it away—had the cramp in my leg;
Began half to wish for a neighbour at hand
To loosen the stone, which was fast in the sand;
Pull'd harder—then dozed, as I found 'twas no use;—
Awoke the next summer, and lo! it was loose.
Crawled forth from the stone, when completely awake;

[1] *Contributions of Q.Q.*

Crept into a corner, and grinned at a snake.
Retreated, and found that I needed repose;
Curled up my damp limbs and prepared for a doze;
Fell sounder to sleep than was usual before,
And did not awake for a century or more;
But had a sweet dream, as I rather believe:—
Methought it was light, and a fine summer's eve;
And I in some garden deliciously fed,
In the pleasant moist shade of a strawberry bed.
There fine speckled creatures claimed kindred with me,
And others that hopped, most enchanting to see.
Here long I regaled with emotion extreme;—
Awoke—disconcerted to find it a dream;
Grew pensive;—discovered that life is a load;
Began to be weary of being a toad:
Was fretful at first, and then shed a few tears.
Here ends the account of the first thousand years."

She cannot resist pointing the moral—

". . . our ancient friend
Seems to have lived to little end;
This must be granted; nay, the elf
Seems to suspect as much himself.
Refuse not then to find a teacher
In this extraordinary creature;
And learn at least, whoe'er you be,
To moralize as well as he.
It seems that life is all a void,
On selfish thoughts alone employed;
That length of days is not a good,
Unless their use be understood.

While if good deeds one year engage,
That may be longer than an age;
But if a year in trifles go,
Perhaps you'd spend a thousand so. . . ."

In a different vein is her charming—

THE SQUIRE'S PEW

A slanting ray of evening light
Shoots through the yellow pane;
It makes the faded crimson bright,
And gilds the fringe again:
The window's gothic frame-work falls
In oblique shadow on the walls.

And since those trappings first were new,
How many a cloudless day,
To rob the velvet of its hue,
Has come and pass'd away!
How many a setting sun hath made
That curious lattice-work of shade!

Crumbled beneath the hillock green
The cunning hand must be,
That carv'd this fretted door, I ween,
Acorn, and *fleur-de-lis*;
And now the worm hath done her part
In mimicking the chisel's art.

—In days of yore (that now we call)
When the first *James* was king,
The courtly knight from yonder hall
Hither his train did bring;
All seated round in order due,
With broider'd suit and buckled shoe.

On damask cushions, set in fringe,
All reverently they knelt:
Prayer-books, with brazen hasp and hinge,
In ancient English spelt,
Each holding in a lily hand,
Responsive at the priest's command.

—Now, streaming down the vaulted isle,
The sunbeam, long and lone,
Illumes the characters awhile
Of their inscription stone;
And there, in marble hard and cold,
The knight and all his train behold.

Outstretch'd together, are express'd
He and my lady fair,
With hands uplifted on the breast,
In attitude of prayer;
Long visag'd, clad in armour, he,—
With ruffled arm and bodice, she.

Set forth, in order as they died
The numerous offspring bend;
Devoutly kneeling side by side,
As though they did intend
For past omissions to atone,
By saying endless prayers in stone.

Those mellow days are past and dim,
But generations new,
In regular descent from him,
Have fill'd the stately pew;
And in the same succession go,
To occupy the vault below.

And now, the polish'd, modern squire,
And his gay train appear,
Who duly to the hall retire,
A season, every year,—
And fill the seats with belle and beau,
As 'twas so many years ago.

Perchance, all thoughtless as they tread
The hollow sounding floor,
Of that dark house of kindred dead,
Which shall, as heretofore,
In turn, receive, to silent rest,
Another, and another guest,—

The feather'd hearse and sable train,
In all its wonted state,
Shall wind along the village lane,
And stand before the gate;
—Brought many a distant county through,
To join the final rendezvous.

And when the race is swept away
All to their dusty beds,
Still shall the mellow evening ray
Shine gaily o'er their heads;
While other faces, fresh and new,
Shall occupy the squire's pew.

To the reader of Isaac Taylor's Memoir of Jane (in *The Family Pen*), it seems that her outlook on life and on the responsibility that, in her gift, was hers, is

summed up in one stanza of "The World in the Heart":[1]

"What if, mistrustful of its latent worth
We hide our single talent in the earth!
And what if self is pampered, not denied!
What if the flesh is never crucified!
What if the world be hidden in the heart,—
Will it be 'Come, ye blessed!'—or 'Depart!'?"

Her single talent was not hidden. Used in childhood for her own and her friends' pleasure; in girlhood,—when, in her nineteenth year and before she had won repute, she was introduced in London to a circle of brilliant culture and deep religious conviction —to increase the regard of the few friends she loved; and finally—the compelling urge of her short maturity —to record her steadfast Christian witness, it gave the answer to her anxious question as to the value of her own life.

To what wider uses she might have put it had she been able to view her world from a different angle; what her powers of observation, wit and humour could have achieved unhampered by her too conscious rôle of moralist, the reader of some of her character sketches and poems can picture for himself.

We know that the years in Cornwall had broadened and deepened her rather limited human contacts; we know, too, that her brain was teeming with unfulfilled projects when she had to lay down the family pen; but, had she lived longer, it seems unlikely that her angle of approach would materially have changed.

[1] *Essays in Rhyme.*

She was of Puritan heritage,[1] the child of her age, and of her environment; and wish as we may for the lighter touch that so surely lay within her grasp, we cannot doubt her sincerity.

'Those feelings, dearest, best,' reflected the inmost mind of one who ever rated love higher than admiration. She was happiest in companionship with those dearest to her. In 1808 she wrote from Colchester:

> "We have had some delightful evening rambles. When we are all out together on these happy occasions I forget all my troubles, and feel as light-hearted as I can remember I used to do some seven or eight years ago when I scarcely knew what was meant by depression. If I should ever lose my relish for these simple pleasures,—if I thought, by growing older, my feelings would no longer be

[1] Replying to some criticism of her short novel *Display*, she says: "Go where you will, it is the worldly who dance; the serious do not. E. is an instance of what is said about Emily; her newly acquired religion is so far from having made her dull or precise that there are many whom I have seen shake their heads at her youthful sprightliness. Yet since she has been a Christian, she says she does not wish to dance, especially as it could not be without associating with those who think only about this world. As to what Mr. Leddenhurst says about 'dancing through the world,' it is a remark I have heard made by those who are very far from being puritanical in their manners, or narrow in their views; and I merely understand by it that a person of a contemplative and serious turn of mind, impressed with the grand realities of religion, and intent upon remedying as far as possible the sin and misery of the world, will not be disposed to go 'dancing through it!' " Urged by her friends to choose a wider field for her next undertaking, soon after the publication of *Display*, its author settled down to *Essays in Rhyme*, welcoming the comparative cover of verse for the freer expression of her thought and feelings.

alive to them, I should be ready, indeed, to cling to youth, and petition old Time to take a little rest, instead of working so indefatigably, night and day, upon me."

And so one whose childhood's treat had been a country ramble in company with a father blessed with the seeing eye ("Well I remember his signal for attracting our notice to any slip of the picturesque—'Lookye, lookye there!'" wrote her sister in later years), grew into the woman who thus voiced her inmost heart:

"That I have an eye to see, and a heart to feel the beauties of nature, I acknowledge with gratitude, because they afford me constant and unsatiating pleasure, and form almost my only recreation. And I hope that, having acquired a love for these simple enjoyments, I shall never lose it; but that in seasons of solitude or of sorrow I shall continue to find a sweet solace in them. When I am low in spirits, weary, or cross—or especially when worried by some of the teasing realities of life, one glance at the landscape from the window of my attic never fails to produce a salutary effect on me."

For her, if might be, the quiet life: like her uncle Charles Taylor,[1] she asked only to be let alone; to be

[1] The learned editor of Calmet, 'the artist-scholar'; of whom Isaac Taylor (of Stanford Rivers) writes—"It must have been while 108, Hatton Garden was crammed with books—upstairs, downstairs, in the hall and passages—that I saw my learned uncle and was admitted to his study. Alas that photography was not practised fifty years ago! The tables—the library-counters—the cheffoniers—the shelves and the floor (who shall say if the floor had a carpet?), all heaped with books: books of all

allowed to go on with her work 'in the silence, peace and quiet for which I feel my heart and soul are made.' And to a literary friend she wrote:

> "One of my first engagements on my return home was to fit up an unoccupied attic, hitherto devoted only to household lumber; this I removed by the most spirited exertions, and supplied its place by all the apparatus necessary for a poet, which, you know, is not of a very extensive nature; a few bookshelves, a table for my writing desk, one chair for myself, and another for my muse, is a pretty accurate inventory of my furniture."

sizes and sorts—books open, one upon another—books with a handful of leaves doubled in to keep the place—books in piles, that had slid down from chairs or stools and had rested unmoved until a deep deposit of dust had got a lodgment upon them! Quires of proof sheets and revises, folded and unfolded. On the table usually occupied by the writer there was just room for an inkstand, and for a folded sheet of demy or foolscap. But the genius of this chaos! . . . a man, then just past middle life, powerful . . . erect in walk . . . teeming with repressed energy: always equal to more work than he actually had in hand: impatient to be 'at it again.' Work was his play; rest his work: moments of intermission cost him an effort: hours of labour none; and he made the effort when he came forth to take his seat at the family table. Here, my learned uncle was urbane; perhaps he would be jocose; but he never discoursed of the matters wherewith his brain was then teeming. His table talk was an illustration of Talleyrand's reply to an impertinent physician who tried to lead him into state affairs—'Sir, I never talk of things that I understand.' It might seem as if the chief person at the tea-table was not used to give those around him credit for as much intelligence as they actually possessed. . . . His deportment appeared to have been framed upon the hypothesis of unmeasured spaces intervening between the study table and the tea-table."

A wholesome touch of 'Martha' in her nature, aided as it was by a steady sense of values, could not, however, save her from periods of deep depression. All her life she was unusually subject to impressions of fear, from both real and imaginary dangers; and, in later years, saddened by the circumstances of an attachment for which, owing to the illness that came upon her, she felt there could be no happy ending. In her sister's album a water-colour drawing of a withered oak-leaf and acorn, distinguished by minute truthfulness and delicacy, is signed J. T. And overleaf, the significant lines:

"A faded leaf;—and need the hand that drew
Say why from autumn's store it made this choice?
Stranger, the reason would not interest you,
And friends, to you the emblem has a voice.

I might have plucked from rich October's bower
A fairer thing to grace this chosen spot;
A leaf still verdant, or a lingering flower;—
I might have plucked them—but they pleased me not.

A flower, though drooping, far too gay were found,
A leaf still verdant,—O, it would not do!
But autumn shed a golden shower around,
And gave me this, and this I give to you.

But should these tints, these rich autumnal dyes
Appear too gay to suit the emblem well,
They are but dying tints, the verse replies,—
A faded leaf, that withered ere it fell."

—JANE TAYLOR. Ongar, Oct. 1820.

Beneath the drawing, in the faint pencilling of a hundred years ago, is 'our dear Montgomery's' comment:

"It faded ere it fell to earth,
But 'twas the weight of fruit
That brought it down,—to second birth
The acorn soon will shoot,
And ages shall rejoice to see
The glory of the future Tree."

The welfare of those she loved ever her chief concern, the shyness and diffidence of childhood, the anxiety and illness of her last years, were alike set aside to serve them. Yet this gifted woman who won and kept the devotion of many friends mistrusted her own social powers. After fame had come to her she wrote—

"I am surrounded by those who know I am 'Miss Taylor,' but known not that I am 'Jane'; and it sometimes makes me sigh for . . . those who, for that simple reason, have yielded me an unmerited share of their regard. I would rather be with those who 'with all my faults, have loved me still.' . . . I have learned to value a little *love* more than many times the quantity of *praise*: and when I receive expressions of affection from anyone who I know in some degree understands me . . . I feel both obliged and comforted."

Jane Taylor had now her public, and large editions of her work came out from year to year. Fame was hers, and she could not remain hidden. In 1816 she wrote to a friend:

"We stayed a fortnight longer with Ann than we

proposed; the time passed very pleasantly, and we were unwilling to part. I think, however, you who know my taste for retirement and my dislike of general company, would have pitied me if you had seen the continual bustle of visiting in which my time was occupied. The contrast with our mode of life at Marazion was as great as it could be; perhaps the total change of scene was what I needed."

Essays in Rhyme had been recently published, and its author was much sought after in the large circle that surrounded her sister in Yorkshire. Fluent and ready for controversy with her pen, she was rather chary of speech and not easily drawn out, but when occasion arose, she was equal to it. "What do you consider the principal defect in the Quaker system?" was rather formally demanded of her, in a large company in Sheffield. "Expecting women to speak in public, sir," came the prompt reply.

But fame could not spoil her.

"Known or unknown to the world, she was always sober-minded, she was always willing to abide in the shade, she was always near at hand for any work of friendship or of charity; to the very end —I mean to the day of her last attendance at public worship—she was a diligent Sunday School teacher. She was at once provident, exact, and liberal; her tastes and habits made her utterly averse to the care of accumulating money. Her feelings in writing were dissociated from the idea of gain; and she would neither personally interfere to secure what she might deem her rights nor suffer her mind to be long disturbed by solicitudes of this sort. She

received, with gratitude to the Giver of all good, whatever share she actually obtained of the proceeds of her writing, and strove as far as possible to put away from her thoughts the disquieting recollection of what that share might have been. There was a season in her literary course when fame—such as might seem to be her due—was within her reach; and if it came, it came; but she was not a listener for it. As to the fruits of authorship in a commercial sense, her motto, if so one might call it, was this: 'My income, whether it be more or less, is the exact sum yearly with which it pleases God to entrust me.' "

Deeply religious, she wrote in 1822: "What, for instance, could the utmost powers of language add in force to that question 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' "; and thus recorded her own belief in

"daily, constant, private prayer. If there is one thing more than another among the privileges of a religious education for which I feel thankful, it is the having been trained from my early years to retire, morning and evening, for that purpose. I found that a habit, thus early and strongly formed, was not easily broken through, notwithstanding all the vanity of my youthful years."

But, like her sister, she had her bitter struggles. In an undated letter we read:

"Prayer is to me so difficult a task that when I have performed it with any degree of correctness I rise from my knees exhausted both in body and mind; every power is on full stretch, and I have to

labour and toil in order to gain but a glimpse of Him whose face I desire to see; and to realise His presence, and even His existence; and, if I relax for a moment this painful exertion, then all is lost, and I seem to be addressing a shadow; indeed, I fear that I never did address a single petition, or direct a single thought to God. Do you know what I mean by saying that my prayers seem to fall short of the object to whom I would offer them?"

To do quietly the duties of the day, without ambition and without anxiety, was life as she now saw it. Of her everyday philosophy, she herself shall speak.

"We may have to encounter those who are officious, unreasonable, monopolising, ambitious, and overbearing, and if any similar tempers are indulged in ourselves, continual contention must ensue. The only way is to rise superior to those petty jealousies and inferior motives; to do good for its own sake alone, and to persevere in a quiet, forbearing, yielding line of conduct, which never fails to disappoint and weary out the most troublesome at last."

Is there not a touch of her mother's dry humour here? Again,

"A cheerful temper, once acquired, is the greatest of blessings. Mirth and levity take wings and fly away at the first appearance of calamity or disappointment, but cheerfulness may be our companion in sorrow—will attend upon us in sickness, support us in poverty—enliven our old age, and smile upon the end of it."

Her unerring instinct for essentials showed her this world as a preparation for the coming life: and the sight of age 'tenaciously clinging to the receding world' filled her with pitying contempt. In 1817 she wrote:

> ". . . How strange that those who know they must die should ever feel indifferent about the future world![1] It is one of the strongest marks of a depraved nature—one of the greatest wonders of the present state. I have sometimes thought that more might be done than is commonly attempted in education to familiarize the idea of death to the minds of children, by representing it as the grand event for which they were born; and thus making a future state the object of their chief interest and ambition. Perhaps something more might be done; but, after all, we know and feel that nothing but the mighty power of God can overcome the earthliness of the mind, and give it the discernment of things spiritual."

All her life nervous and apprehensive, in her lingering illness she was not spared the fear of death. Her many friends did all they could to cheer and help her by invitations to visit them; but in 1821, though she had not given up hope of recovery and felt that change of scene would help her, she decided now to remain at home, where she was still able to carry on the ordinary pursuits of a quiet life. For she had heard 'the murmuring of the deep waters,' and wished to call home her thoughts.

[1] She publicly expressed her feelings on this subject in her story. "How it Strikes a Stranger" (*Contributions of Q.Q.*).

"I find," she often said, "that *home* is the place that suits me best."

"It was therefore," relates her brother, "with a free and deliberate preference of the interests of the soul to those of this life, that she returned to seclusion and to the offices of Christian charity, when she had every facility and strong motives for pursuing a different course."

To Ann she wrote:

"You may judge then, dear Ann, what my expectations are, when I calmly and steadily view my present circumstances. Of late, too, I have felt my general health more affected than hitherto. But it requires *much* utterly to extinguish the hope of recovery; with God nothing is impossible. Besides, it is really difficult, while occupied with the usual pursuits of life, and while able to go in and out much as usual—it is difficult to realise the probability of death at hand. But it comes strangely across me at times when, forgetting it, I have been planning as usual for the future. Then a dark cloud overshadows me and hides all earthly concerns from my sight, and I hear the murmuring or the deep waters. I expect I shall have deep waters to pass through—already I feel the sting of death, but am not without hope that it may be taken away.

The Pilgrims then, especially Christian, began to despond in his mind, and looked this way and that, but no way could be found by them, by which they might escape the River. Then they asked the men if the Waters were all of a depth? They said, No; yet they could not help them in that case, for said they: You shall find it deeper or shallower, as you believe in the King of the place.

MEETING HOUSE AND BURIAL GROUND AT ONGAR

For another two and a half years, during which she wrote, "I am endeavouring, but with small success, 'to forget the things that are behind, and to press forward,' " her life ran its quiet course in the beloved surroundings of Ongar. Suffering little but weakness and weariness, her mind still bright and clear, the common engagements of life and occasional visits to friends were possible until almost the end; neither she nor those nearest to her realised how close she was drawing to the dark waters. A fortnight before she died she wrote to Ann, "What I am most thankful for is that the prospect of death is less formidable to me;" though she still had to contend with what she acknowledged to be terrors of the imagination.

But when they were come even almost at him, he cried with a most vehement voice, I will walk in the strength of the Lord God; so they gave back and came no further.

Up to the last she was brought downstairs, calm in spirit; and the day before she died she spent what strength remained in a farewell letter.

"I fear I cannot finish. Oh, my dear friends, if you knew what thoughts I have now, you would see as I do, that the whole business of life is preparation for death! . . . . May God bless you all. Farewell! Farewell! Yours till death, and after that, I hope,—JANE TAYLOR."

And on the morrow,[1] sitting in her chair, she, like another pilgrim, cried, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for

[1] Jane Taylor died 13th April, 1824.

Thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

And with that, Christian brake out with a loud voice, Oh, I see him again! and he tells me, When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the Rivers, they shall not overflow thee.

And by and by the day broke: then said Christian, He hath turned the shadow of death into the morning.

ANN AND JANE AT WORK

"We said to Time, 'twas long ago,
'Old man, thy daughters bless';
He did not say exactly—'No,'
Nor yet exactly—'Yes.'
He smiled, 'tis said to be his way
When children thus request;
He then no promise breaks, and they,
Believe as suits them best."—ANN GILBERT.

In the year 1798 Ann Taylor began to make contributions, under the name of 'Juvenilia,' to the *Minor's Pocket Book*, published by Darton and Harvey. Later, she wrote in her own name to ask if they had engraving to dispose of—a suggestion with which they at once fell in; and finally, the following letter[1] reached Isaac Taylor.

"London, 1st 6 mo. 1803.

"Isaac Taylor.

"Respected Friend,

"We have received some pieces of poetry from some branches of thy family for the *Minor's Pocket Book*, and we beg that the enclosed trifles may be divided among such as are most likely to be pleased with them. My principal reason for writing now is to request that when any of their harps be tuned and their muse in good humour; if they could give me some specimens of easy poetry for young

[1] Mrs. Gilbert describes this letter as resulting in 'that occupation of our pens which for many years formed the delightful, as well as profitable employment of our limited leisure, and which placed Jane especially upon a track which through life she never abandoned.'

children, I would endeavour to make a suitable return in cash, or in books. If something in the way of moral songs (though not songs), or short tales turned into verse, or—but I need not dictate. What would be most likely to please little minds must be well known to everyone of those who have written such pieces as we have already seen from thy family. Such pieces as are short, for little children would be preferred.

"For self and partner, very respectfully,

"DARTON AND HARVEY."

"The 'pieces' referred to," relates Mrs. Gilbert, "were by Jane and me, hers a poetical solution of the enigmas and charades of the year, prettily written in the character of a little beggar with wares to sell, beginning:

'I'm a poor little beggar, my mammy is dead,'[1]

and mine, entitled the 'Crippled Child's Complaint,'[2]

'Kind Christians have pity, I'm helpless and lame,'

which was suggested by the suffering and lameness of my brother Jeffreys.

"I well remember the arrival of this letter, and can see now the flocking to papa's high desk to read, enter fully into, comprehend, and calculate results. Various were our speculations as to what might be implied in the sentence 'a suitable return in cash or in books.' 'Books good, but cash better,' we thought. One remark made by my father I remember also—'I do not want my girls to be authors.' In that wish he was not entirely gratified, and I conclude that, before the death of

[1] This was the first of Jane's works to appear in print (1804).

[2] *Associate Minstrels.*

ANN AND JANE TAYLOR

his daughter Jane, he had retracted it. Little at that time, too, could it have crossed his mind that before many years had elapsed, his wife would become the author of numerous works as 'Mrs. Taylor of Ongar.' It was now, in complying with Darton's welcome request, that our evenings became truly valuable to us. And the employment was so much to our taste as well as advantageous to our limited funds, that it was the pleasure of the day to look forward to it, and to provide ourselves with some thoughts suitable for the simple treatment required. We contrived to send up material for the first volume of *Original Poems for Infant Minds*.[1] Exactly when it appeared I do not remember, but it must have been early, as a second was ordered in November, 1804. For this (first) volume the immediate payment was £5, but another £5 was afterwards added. The money was welcome; but more welcome still were expressions of pleasure. Having written to order, we had no control over the getting out of the volumes, and should have been better pleased if contributions from other hands had been omitted. Several of these were signed 'Adelaide,' whom we understood afterwards to have been a Miss O'Keefe. After the publication of these two volumes we were allowed to stand alone. I think I am correct in saying that for the second volume of *Original Poems* we received £15; and for the *Rhymes for the Nursery*, still more simple in style, £20; so that we felt our purses comfortably filling, and

[1] These were the poems, quickly reprinted in America, and afterwards translated into German, Dutch and Russian, of which the first rough copies were written on the margins of engraved plans of fortified towns (see p. 28).

from this time for several years were never without commissions of some sort.[1]

These famous little works were quickly recognized by men of note. Sir Walter Scott wrote to the Taylors' friend Josiah Conder:

"My young people are busy with *Rhymes for the Nursery*, and it is perhaps the highest proof of their being admirably adapted for their benevolent purpose that the little students have most of them by heart already."

And to the "Associate Minstrels,"[2] he wrote:

"Mr. Walter Scott requests permission to intrude upon the 'Associate Minstrels' his grateful thanks for the pleasure he has received in perusing their beautiful poetry, and for the honour they have done him in the MS. verses. They have greatly overrated Mr. Scott's situation in life, which is not beyond a decent independence, and he might with still better grounds disclaim some of the compliments to his poetry, were he not too much flattered by the exaggeration, considering the quarters from which it comes. Should the 'Associate Minstrels' be at any time disposed to drop the incognito, Mr. Scott would be happy to claim the honour of being made personally known to them, and meanwhile begs to assure them of his high respect for their

[1] Elsewhere Mrs. Gilbert writes: "It was not till we began to publish for ourselves that we felt the solid advantage that literature might bring to us. The *Hymns for Infant Minds* were the first venture we thus made. In the first year of their publication we realized £150."

[2] The *Associate Minstrels* was published in 1810 by Josiah Conder. The contributors were the Taylors and a few intimate friends.

poetical talents, and for the amiable qualities which their mode of employing them sufficiently indicates.

"Edinburgh, May 12th" (probably 1810).

Josiah Conder was the recipient of this interesting letter, and post-haste he writes:

"To Two Associate Minstrels, resident near the High Woods, Colchester:

"Sister Minstrels,

"I have taken a small scrap of paper to confine my pen within the narrow limits which lack of time renders necessary, but I could not let Mr. Saville leave town without seizing the opportunity of communicating to you the

Intelligence Extraordinary

of a letter received this morning per twopenny post —dated Edinburgh, May 12th, addressed (under cover to Mr. Thos. Conder, etc.) to the authors of the *Assoc. Minstrels*—from—

Oyez—Oyez—Oyez—Walter Scott!

"But what sort of letter, you cry. Why—in one word, satisfactory and very flattering. But as I intend to transmit the original to you the first convenient opportunity, I will not now forestall. I have received also a note from Professor Smyth, rather dry but polite, and indeed such as ought to content us. This shall be also sent. We are still incog.—Now I hope this will please you; if it does not you do not deserve anything.

"My time is exhausted. Fare you well. Affectionate regards to your whole circle, which I presume will include yourselves.

"JOSIAH CONDER."

James Montgomery wrote thanking the Minstrels 'individually and collectively,' and added: ". . . A. (Ann) is to my mind the queen of the assembly. She is a poet of a high order; the first unquestionably among those who write for children, and not the last by hundreds of those who write for men." Southey, Dr. Arnold of Rugby, Archbishop Whately, and others added their tributes; and Miss Edgeworth, whose "Tales" were reviewed by Ann in the *Eclectic*, wrote of the little poem "The Chatterbox" (*Original Poems*):

> "It is signed Ann T. Perhaps, Madam, it may be written by you; and it will give you pleasure to hear that it is a favourite with four good talkers of nine, six, five and four years old."

Robert Browning, whose poem *Rephan* was 'suggested by a very early recollection of a prose story[1] by the noble woman and imaginative writer Jane Taylor,'[2] said that he considered Jane's poems for children 'the most perfect things of their kind in the English language.'

Soon after the publication of *Associate Minstrels* Ann and Jane set to work on what Isaac described as an undertaking of particular difficulty, the composing of hymns for children. As verse-writers for children the Taylors were almost the first in the field. Others had written in prose, but Dr. Watts had been the only rhymester on the ground, and Ann says modestly,

[1] "How It Strikes a Stranger" (*Contributions of Q.Q.*).

[2] In earlier editions of *Asolando*, Robert Browning alluded to Jane Taylor of Norwich, in which town there was an unconnected literary family of the same name. The mistake was corrected in later editions.

"the road was therefore open to a humble popularity." Jane wrote at this time:

> "I think I have some idea of what a child's hymn ought to be; and when I commenced the task it was with the presumptuous determination that nothing should fall short of the standard I had formed in my mind. In order to do this, my method was to shut my eyes and imagine the presence of some pretty little mortal; and then endeavour to catch, as it were, the very language it would use on the subject before me. If in any instances I have succeeded, to this little imaginary being I should attribute my success. And I have failed so frequently because so frequently I was compelled to say 'Now you may go, my dear. I shall finish the hymn myself.' "

Perhaps she would say that she often had to finish the hymn herself; for the intricate interlineations and revisions of the manuscript suggest that the authors found their task no easy one. But to Jane it was particularly congenial.

The anonymous contributions of the two sisters to the *Minor's Pocket Book* had early attracted attention and enquiry, yet both their parents were strongly averse to their taking up writing as a profession.[1] Yet authorship came upon them with the force of

[1] The late Henry Taylor, F.S.I. (son of Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers), states that "not only were *Original Poems* and *City Scenes* published anonymously, but I think this was the case also with all the 1st Editions of the other books written by Ann and Jane Taylor, *Rhymes for the Nursery*, *Hymns for Infant Minds*, *Rural Scenes*, and *Limed Twigs*. This course was doubtless adopted in deference to their father's strong objection to his daughters becoming authoresses."

destiny: the 'Family Pen' was thrust between their fingers, 'as if the word had been uttered when the pen was given—"use this within the compass of your ability—use it always for the best purposes." '

With the Pen were given the difficulties with which talent is often beset. Isaac says that:

> "Almost everything written by my sisters for some years after their first appearance in print was composed either before the regular occupations of the day had commenced, or after they had been concluded. It was for the most past after a day of assiduous application that the pieces contained in the volumes of *Original Poems* and *Rhymes for the Nursery* were written: nor was it, I think, till a much later period that they ever permitted themselves the indulgence of an entire day given to the labours of the pen."

Continuing the Memorial broken off by his mother's death, Josiah Gilbert thus compares the works of Ann and Jane Taylor:

> "Her (Ann's) share in the early series of poems for children has scarcely been recognized, in consequence of Jane Taylor continuing to write and concentrating public attention upon herself after her sister had resigned the pen. Yet it is remarkable that, almost without exception, the most popular pieces in the joint works were by the elder sister.
>
> "Generally speaking, Ann Taylor dealt with the facts of life, and Jane with those of nature; and the former was consequently more dramatic in style and more given to depict motive and character.

Of many that have become household words, two little poems, 'My Mother' and 'Twinkle, Twinkle, little Star,' are perhaps more frequently quoted than any; the first, a lyric of life, by Ann; the second, of nature, by Jane; and they illustrate this difference between the sisters."

Ann was eminently practical, and always entered with keen relish into the social circle and business of life. Jane's sensitive and shy disposition (though she could sparkle at times) disqualified her for society; and nature with its peace, its pathos and its infinite suggestiveness, was her chosen refuge.

Yet Ann's poetic gift enabled her to express her love of nature in some charming little word pictures. In the nursery rhyme "A Pretty Thing," she wrote of the moon:

"When the sun is gone, I rise,
Into the very silent skies;
And a cloud or two doth skim,
Round about my silver rim,

. . . .

Then the reaper goes along,
Singing forth a merry song,
While I light the shaking leaves,
And the yellow harvest sheaves."

And of the Michaelmas Daisy:

"I am very pale and dim
With my faint and bluish rim;
Standing on my narrow stalk,
By the litter'd gravel walk,
And the wither'd leaves, aloft,
Fall upon me very oft.

But I show my lonely head,
When the other flowers are dead,
And you're even glad to spy
Such a homely thing as I;
For I seem to smile and say—
'Summer is not quite away.' "

It was Ann who wrote the perfect little nursery song:

"Dance, little baby, dance up high,
Never mind, baby, mother is by;
Crow and caper, caper and crow
There, little baby, there you go;

Up to the ceiling, down to the ground,
Backwards and forwards, round and round;
Then dance, little baby, and mother shall sing,
While the gay merry coral goes ding-a-ding! ding."

Ann's drollery and sarcastic fun produced "The Notorious Glutton": her wish to arouse sympathy for animals and appreciation of the culprit's point of view, "The Last Dying Speech of Poor Puss"—

"
. . . .
Now tell me, my friends, was the like ever heard
That a cat should be killed for just catching a bird!
And I am sure not the slightest suspicion I had,
But that catching a mouse was exactly as bad.

Indeed I can say, with my paw on my heart
I would not have acted a mischievous part,
But as dear mother Tabby was often repeating,
I thought birds and mice were on purpose for eating."

Jane, contemplative and serious as she was, had her own keen sense of the fun and drama of everyday life, and expressed it in many of her rhymes. In "The Pond," she tells of the envious chick watching the ducks:

"
. . . .
Now turning tail upward, now diving below;
She though, of all things, she should like to do so.

So the poor silly chick was determined to try;
She thought 'twas as easy to swim as to fly;
Though her mother had told her she must not go near
She foolishly thought there was nothing to fear.

. . . . .

The ducks, I perceived, began loudly to quack,
When they saw the poor fowl floating dead on her back;
And by their grave gestures and looks in discoursing
Obedience to parents were plainly enforcing."

The tragic element in children's stories and poems of those days did not lack critics, and the Taylors have been held offenders in this respect. In 1874 Josiah Gilbert thus answered these objections:

> "Surely most people will think that children get little harm from such dramatic representations, whether in the grotesque of the older legend or in the homely treatment of the newer poem. If a giant cuts somebody's head off, the spectacle is only realized as a striking and funny *dénouement*; and the man without his head is regarded as funny rather than horrible. Childhood is by its nature and unacquaintance with suffering sheltered from horror.

Death itself is more curious than dreadful. The child's mind demands strong lines and colours in the picture presented to it, while its moral sense is not satisfied short of the extremest sentence of the law. For them retribution needs to be absolutely decisive and emphatic; and Ann and Jane Taylor, so far as they depicted such retributions, simply acted from an intuitive perception of child nature."

Writing thirty years after the poems were written to her brother Isaac, Mrs. Gilbert refers to another point of criticism:

"It appears to me that so long as scolding, fighting, pouting, quarrelling and sulking occur in the best nurseries, more or less—(require testimonials from your nursemaid that they never do in yours)—that is, so long as infant human nature exhibits itself in this way and requires correction, it is necessary to advert to these things, and to call them by some name understood by the parties. I would not willingly employ an offensive or inelegant word in preference to one which expressed the same idea in a nicer manner, but in the cases above I scarcely know what to substitute that would not lessen the applicability to the conscience, or appear to soften down the offence. In 'The Notorious Glutton,' and perhaps in 'Meddlesome Matty,' the subject in both cases is inelegant, and the former might have been expunged. I considered it, but as it has obtained a degree of favour as it is, I decided to let it stand."

But the sisters shall speak for themselves.

A TAYLOR MISCELLANY

The four following poems from *Original Poems for Infant Minds*, by Several Young Persons, are from Vol. I, the 15th edition (printed for Darton, Harvey and Darton, No. 55, Gracechurch Street, 1815).

Mrs. Gilbert, in later life, revised many of her early poems. In this little collection they are given in the original and more vigorous form.

THE HAND-POST

The night was dark, the sun was hid
  Beneath the mountain grey;
And not a single star appear'd,
  To shoot a silver ray.

Across the heath the owlet flew,
  And scream'd along the blast,
And onward, with a quicken'd step,
  Benighted Henry pass'd.

At intervals, amid the gloom,
  A flash of lightning play'd,
And show'd the ruts with water fill'd,
  And the black hedge's shade.

Again in thickest darkness plung'd,
  He grop'd his way to find;
And now he thought he spied beyond
  A form of horrid kind.

In deadly white it upward rose,
Of cloak or mantle bare,
And held its naked arms across,
To catch him by the hair.

Poor Henry felt his blood run cold,
At what before him stood;
"But well," thought he, "no harm, I'm sure,
Can happen to the good."

So calling all his courage up,
He to the goblin went;
And eager thro' the dismal gloom,
His piercing eyes he bent.

And when hecame well nigh the ghost
That gave him such affright,
He clapt his hands upon his side
And loudly laugh'd outright.

For 'twas a friendly hand-post stood,
His wandering steps to guide;
And thus he found, that to the good
No evil should betide.

"And well," thought he, "one thing I've learnt,
Nor soon shall I forget,
Whatever frightens me again,
To march straight up to it.

"And when I hear an idle tale
Of goblins and a ghost,
I'll tell of this my lonely walk,
And the tall white Hand-Post."

A. T.

MY MOTHER

Who fed me from her gentle breast,
And hush'd me in her arms to rest,
And on my cheek sweet kisses prest?
My Mother.

When sleep forsook my open eye,
Who was it sung sweet hushaby,
And rock'd me that I should not cry?
My Mother.

Who sat and watch'd my infant head,
When sleeping on my cradle bed,
And tears of sweet affection shed?
My Mother.

When pain and sickness made me cry,
Who gaz'd upon my heavy eye,
And wept, for fear that I should die?
My Mother.

Who drest my doll in clothes so gay,
And taught me *pretty* how to play,
And minded all I had to say?
My Mother.

Who ran to help me when I fell,
And would some pretty story tell,
Or kiss the place to make it well?
My Mother.

Who taught my infant lips to pray,
And love God's holy book and day,
And walk in wisdom's pleasant way?
My Mother.

And can I ever cease to be
Affectionate and kind to thee,
Who wast so very kind to me,
My Mother.

Ah! no, the thought I cannot bear,
And if God please my life to spare,
I hope I shall reward thy care,
My Mother.

When thou art feeble, old, and grey,
My healthy arm shall be thy stay,
And I will soothe thy pains away,
My Mother.

And when I see thee hang thy head,
'Twill be my turn to watch *thy* bed,
And tears of sweet affection shed,
My Mother.

For God, who lives above the skies,
Would look with vengeance in His eyes,
If I should ever dare despise,
My Mother.

ANN.

[Some sixty years after the publication of the poems, a writer in the *Athenæum* (understood to be Professor de Morgan), ignorant that the author still survived, wrote as follows:

"One of the most beautiful lyrics in the English language, or in any other language, is spoiled by the introduction of what was not uncommon in the little songs formerly written for children, a bit of religion, no matter what, thrust in, no matter how, something *good* as a piece of form and propriety. After that description of a mother's care and kindness which,

as written, for a child, is absolutely unequalled, the song ends with the reason why the child is never to despise its mother, and that reason is the fear of *God's vengeance*. . . .

"The last verse would suit admirably if those which precede had described indifferent or harsh treatment, for the Fifth Commandment makes no distinction of mothers, which is all that could be said about the duty of attention to a bad one. But, placed as they are, these lines spoil the whole, and are perhaps the reason why the poem is by no means so common among the children of this day, as it deserves to be. We propose that it should be remitted to the Laureate in the name of all the children of England to supply a closing verse which shall give a motive drawn from the verses which precede, and in accordance with the one immediately preceding. It will not be easy, even for Mr. Tennyson, to satisfy reasonable expectation, but we hope he will try."

The succeeding number of the *Athenæum* contained this reply:

"Allow me to thank your correspondent for both his praise and blame. I am grateful for one, and confess to the other, in his notice of a little poem, 'My Mother,' of which I was the author, it may be something more than sixty years ago. I see now so much as he does, *though not in all its implications*, that should another edition pass through the press I will take care that the offending verse shall be omitted; or, as I may hope (without troubling the Laureate), replaced. I have regarded our good old theologian, Dr. Watts, as nearly our only predecessor in verses for children, and his name, a name I revere, I may perhaps plead in part, though not so far as to accept now what did not strike me as objectionable then. There has been an illustrated edition of our *Original Poems* recently published. I am sorry to see it retained there, but, as the still living author, I have sufficient right to expunge it. Possibly you may have heard the names of Ann and Jane Taylor, of whom I am the *Ann*, and remain yours, &c."

She sent the following alteration of the verse:

"For could our Father in the skies
Look down with pleased or loving eyes,
If ever I could dare despise
My Mother."

A correspondent of *Notes and Queries*, 14th July, 1866, again took up the subject, and, after criticising both the critic and the author, objected to the emendation of the latter.

"There is still the abrupt and unnatural transition from the extreme of fondness to its very opposite, and the fear of our Heavenly Father is still put forward as the only motive to the exclusion of his love. . . ."

Two verses were suggested by this writer, to whom the author, within six months of her death, rejoined

"Again I have to thank, and in part agree with, my critics, confessing that at my age it is a favour to have any critic at all! With some of their views I may not fully agree, but in the concluding verses just received, I concur so nearly, that were they simply *my own* I might be glad to employ them. Yet I would rather be *honestly* myself, than *cleverly* anyone else. Excuse me, therefore, for retaining what I have already sent, should another edition allow it.

"Young as I was when the original was written, I did not see, as I do now, its incongruity in tone with those preceding it. Still, I believe that all moral evil is sin; that all sin incurs the divine displeasure; but *vengeance* is a word I would not now employ."

In December, 1866—the month in which she died—Ann Gilbert wrote explaining a longer silence than usual:

"It is a long time since I wrote to you, yet I have been, I might almost say, *writing* ever since. You cannot think what a green sprig of laurel has lately sprung over my grey hairs, for it has been with no small surprise that I am heard of as still without a monument! . . . You remember that in May last, there was a discussion in the *Athenæum* on my poem 'My Mother,' which surprised everybody as an announcement and advertisement (or producing one from me) of my continued existence, so that the Post Office has gained all but a revenue from letters addressed to me, which, kindly, complimentary as they are, I have, of course, had to answer. Some ask for 'My Mother in your hand'; some, 'your veritable autograph'; some,—but I need not go on. Several want to know whether there is an engraved portrait of me in existence, for they have enquired in vain (certainly)."]

THE GLEANER

Before the bright sun rises over the hill,
In the corn-field poor Mary is seen,
Impatient her little blue apron to fill,
With the few scatter'd ears she can glean.

She never leaves off nor runs out of her place,
To play or to idle and chat;
Except now and then, just to wipe her hot face,
And fan herself with her broad hat.

"Poor girl, hard at work in the heat of the sun,
How tir'd and warm you must be;
Why don't you leave off, as the others have done,
And sit with them under the tree?"

"O no! for my mother lies ill in her bed,
Too feeble to spin or to knit;
And my poor little brothers are crying for bread,
And yet we can't give them a bit;

"Then could I be merry, and idle, and play,
While they are so hungry and ill?
Oh no, I would rather work hard all the day,
My little blue apron to fill."

J. T.

THE LITTLE FISHERMAN

There was a little fellow once,
And Harry was his name;
And many a naughty trick had he—
I tell it to his shame.

He minded not his friend's advice,
But follow'd his own wishes;
And one most cruel trick of his,
Was that of catching fishes.

His father had a little pond,
Where often Harry went;
And in this most inhuman sport,
He many an ev'ning spent.

One day he took his hook and bait,
And hurried to the pond,
And there began the cruel game,
Of which he was so fond.

And many a little fish he caught,
And pleas'd was he to look,
To see them writhe in agony,
And struggle on the hook.

At last, when having caught enough,
And tired too himself,
He hasten'd home, intending there
To put them on a shelf.

But as he jump'd to reach a dish,
To put his fishes in,
A large meat-hook, that hung close by,
Did catch him by the chin.

Poor Harry kick'd and call'd aloud,
  And scream'd, and cried, and roar'd,
While from his wound the crimson blood
  In dreadful torrents pour'd.

The maids came running, frighten'd much
  To see him hanging there,
And soon they took him from the hook,
  And set him in a chair.

The surgeon came and stopp'd the blood,
  And up he bound his head;
And then they carried him up stairs,
  And laid him on his bed.

Conviction darted on his mind,
  As groaning there he lay,
He with remorse and pity thought
  About his cruel play.

"And oh," said he, "poor little fish,
  What tortures they have borne;
While I, well pleas'd, have stood to see
  Their tender bodies torn;

"O! what a wicked boy I've been,
  Such torments to bestow;
Well I deserve the pain I feel,
  Since I could serve them so:

"But now I know how great the smart,
  How terrible the pain!
As long as I can *feel* myself,
  I'll never fish again."

JANE.

The eight following are from *Original Poems for Infant Minds*, Vol. II. Twelfth edition. 1815.

THE PIN

"Dear me! what signifies a pin,
  Wedg'd in a rotten board?
I'm certain that I won't begin,
  At ten years old, to hoard;
I never will be call'd a miser,
That I'm determin'd," said Eliza.

So onward tript the little maid,
  And left the pin behind,
Which very snug and quiet lay;
  To its hard fate resign'd;
Nor did she think (a careless chit)
'Twas worth her while to stoop for it.

Next day a party was to ride,
  To see an air balloon;
And all the company beside,
  Were drest and ready soon:
But she a woful case was in,
For want of just a single pin.

In vain her eager eyes she brings
  To ev'ry darksome crack,
There was not one! and yet her things
  Were dropping off her back.
She cut her pincushion in two,
But no, not one had slidden through.

At last, as hunting on the floor,
  Over a crack she lay,
The carriage rattled to the door,
  Then rattled fast away;
But poor Eliza was not in,
For want of just—a single pin!

There's hardly any thing so small,
  So trifling, or so mean,
That we may never want at all,
  For service unforeseen;
And wilful waste, depend upon't,
Brings, almost always, woful want!

ANN.

MEDDLESOME MATTY

O, how one ugly trick has spoil'd
The sweetest and the best!
Matilda, though a pleasant child,
One ugly trick possess'd,
Which, like a cloud before the skies,
Hid all her better qualities.

Sometimes she'd lift the tea-pot lid,
To peep at what was in it;
Or tilt the kettle, if you did
But turn your back a minute.
In vain you told her not to touch,
Her trick of meddling grew so much.

Her grandmamma went out one day,
And by mistake she laid
Her spectacles and snuff-box gay
Too near the little maid;
"Ah! well," thought she, "I'll try them on,
As soon as grandmamma is gone."

Forthwith she plac'd upon her nose
The glasses large and wide;
And looking round, as I suppose,
The snuff-box too she spied:
"O, what a pretty box is this,
I'll open it," said little Miss.

"I know that grandmamma would say,
'Don't meddle with it, dear;'
But then she's far enough away,
And no one else is near;
Besides, what can there be amiss,
In op'ning such a box as this?"

So thumb and finger went to work
To move the stubborn lid;
And presently a mighty jerk,
The mighty mischief did;
For all at once, ah! woful case,
The snuff came puffing in her face.

Poor eyes, and nose, and mouth, and chin,
A dismal sight presented;
And as the snuff got further in,
Sincerely she repented.
In vain she ran about for ease,
She could do nothing else but sneeze.

She dash'd the spectacles away,
To wipe her tingling eyes,
And as in twenty bits they lay,
Her grandmamma she spies.
"Hey day! and what's the matter now?"
Cried grandmamma, with lifted brow.

Matilda, smarting with the pain,
And tingling still, and sore,
Made many a promise to refrain
From meddling ever more;
And 'tis a fact, as I have heard,
She ever since has kept her word.

ANN.

THE NOTORIOUS GLUTTON

A Duck, who had got such a habit of stuffing,
That all the day long she was panting and puffing;
And by ev'ry creature, who did her great crop see,
Was thought to be galloping fast for a dropsy:

One day, after eating a plentiful dinner,
With full twice as much as there should have been in her,
While up to her eyes in the gutter a roking,
Was greatly alarm'd by the symptoms of choking.

Now there was an old fellow, much fam'd for discerning
(A drake, who had taken a liking for learning),
And high in repute with his feathery friends,
Was call'd Dr. Drake—for this doctor she sends.

In a hole of the dunghill was Dr. Drake's shop,
Where he kept a few simples for curing the crop;
Small pebbles, and two or three different gravels,
With certain fam'd plants he had found on his travels.

So, taking a handful of suitable things,
And brushing his topple, and pluming his wings,
And putting his feathers in apple-pie order,
He went to prescribe for the lady's disorder.

"Dear Sir," said the duck, with a delicate quack,
Just turning a little way round on her back,
And leaning her head on a stone in the yard,
"My case, Dr. Drake, is exceedingly hard.

"I feel so distended with wind, and opprest,
So squeamish and faint—such a load at my chest;
And day after day, I assure you, it *is* hard,
To suffer with patience these pains in my gizzard."

"Give me leave," said the Doctor, with medical look,
As her cold flabby paw in his fingers he took;
"By the feel of your pulse,—your complaint, I've been
thinking,
Must surely be owing to eating and drinking."

"Oh! no, Sir, believe me," the lady replied
(Alarm'd for her stomach, as well as her pride),
"I am sure it arises from nothing I eat,
For I rather suspect I got wet in my feet.

"I've only been raking a bit in the gutter,
Where cook had been pouring some cold melted
butter;
And a slice of green cabbage, and scraps of cold meat;
Just a trifle or two that I thought I could eat."

The doctor was just to his bus'ness proceeding,
By gentle emetics, a blister, and bleeding,
When all on a sudden she roll'd on her side,
Gave a horrible quack, and a struggle, and died!

Her remains were interr'd in a neighbouring swamp,
By her friends, with a great deal of funeral pomp;
But I've heard, this inscription her tombstone was put
on:
"Her lies Mrs. Duck, the notorious glutton:"
And all the young ducklings are brought by their
friends,
To learn the disgrace in which gluttony ends.

ANN.

CONTENTED JOHN

One honest John Tomkins, a hedger and ditcher,
Altho' he was poor, did not want to be richer;
For all such vain wishes to him were prevented,
By a fortunate habit of being contented.

Tho' cold were the weather, or dear were the food,
John never was found in a murmuring mood;
For this he was constantly heard to declare,
What he could not prevent he would cheerfully bear.

For, why should I grumble and murmur? he said,
If I cannot get meat, I can surely get bread;
And tho' fretting may make my calamities deeper,
It never can cause bread and cheese to be cheaper.

If John was afflicted with sickness or pain,
He wish'd himself better, but did not complain;
Nor lie down to fret in despondence and sorrow,
But said, that he hop'd to be better to-morrow.

If any one wrong'd him, or treated him ill,
Why John was good-natur'd and sociable still;
For he said—that revenging the injury done,
Would be making two rogues, when there need be
but one.

And thus honest John, tho' his station was humble,
Pass'd thro' this sad world without even a grumble,
And 'twere well if some folks, who are greater and
richer,
Would copy John Tomkins, the hedger and ditcher.

JANE.

MISCHIEF

Let those who're fond of idle tricks,
Of throwing stones, and breaking bricks,
And all that sort of fun;
Now hear a tale of idle Jim,
That they may warning take by him,
Nor do as he has done.

In harmless sport or healthful play,
He never pass'd his time away,
  He took no pleasure in it;
For mischief was his only joy;
Nor book, nor work, nor even toy,
  Could please him for a minute.

A neighbour's house he'd slily pass,
And throw a stone to break the glass,
  And then enjoy the joke;
Or, if a window open stood,
He'd throw in stones or bits of wood,
  To frighten all the folk.

If trav'llers passing chanc'd to stay,
Of idle Jim to ask the way,
  He never told them right;
And then, quite harden'd in his sin,
Rejoic'd to see them taken in,
  And laugh'd with all his might.

He'd tie a string across the street,
That it might catch the people's feet,
  And make them tumble down;
Indeed, he was dislik'd so much,
That no good boy would play with such
  A nuisance to the town.

At last the neighbours, in despair,
Could all these tricks no longer bear:
  In short (to end the tale)
The lad was cur'd of all his ways,
One time, by spending a few days
  Inside the county jail.

JANE.

THE COW AND THE ASS

Beside a green meadow a stream us'd to flow,
So clear, one might see the white pebbles below;
To this cooling brook the warm cattle would stray,
To stand in the shade on a hot summer's day.

A cow, quite oppress'd with the heat of the sun,
Came here to refresh, as she often had done;
And standing quite still, leaning over the stream,
Was musing, perhaps; or perhaps she might dream.

But soon a brown ass, of respectable look,
Came trotting up also, to taste of the brook,
And to nibble a few of the daisies and grass:
"How d'ye do?" said the cow: "How d'ye do?" said the ass.

"Take a seat," cried the cow, gently waving her hand.
"By no means, dear madam," said he, "while you stand."
Then stooping to drink, with a complaisant bow,
"Ma'am, your health," said the ass: "Thank you, sir," said the cow.

When a few of these compliments more had been pass'd,
They laid themselves down on the herbage at last;
And waiting politely (as gentlemen must),
The ass held his tongue, that the cow might speak first.

Then with a deep sigh she directly began,
"Don't you think, Mr. Ass, we are injur'd by man?
'Tis a subject that lies with a weight on my mind:
We certainly are much oppress'd by mankind.

"Now what is the reason? (I see none at all),
That I always must go when Suke chooses to call;
Whatever I'm doing ('tis certainly hard),
I'm forc'd to leave off to be milk'd in the yard.

"I've no will of my own, but must do as they please,
And give them my milk to make butter and cheese;
I've often a great mind to kick down the pail,
Or give Suke a box on the ears with my tail."

"But, ma'am," said the ass, not presuming to teach—
"O dear, I beg pardon,—pray finish your speech;
I thought you had finish'd indeed" (said the swain),
"Go on, and I'll not interrupt you again."

"Why, Sir, I was only just going to observe,
I'm resolv'd that these tyrants no longer I'll serve;
But leave them for ever to do as they please,
And look somewhere else for their butter and cheese."

Ass waited a moment, to see if she'd done,
And then, "not presuming to teach,"—he begun—
"With submission, dear madam, to your better wit,
I own I am not quite convinc'd by it yet.

"That you're of great service to them, is quite true,
But surely they are of *some* service to you;
'This their pleasant meadow in which you regale,
They feed you in winter, when grass and weeds fail.

"And then a warm covert they always provide,
Dear madam, to shelter your delicate hide.
For my *own* part, I *know* I receive much from man,
And for him, in return, I do all that I can."

The cow, upon this, cast her eyes on the grass,
Not pleas'd at thus being reprov'd by an ass;
Yet, thought she, I'm determin'd I'll benefit by't,
For I really believe that the fellow is right.

JANE.

[The *Spectator* commented as follows:

"To the present writer the gem of Jane Taylor's work, and indeed of all the *Original Poems*, is her playful little apologue, 'The Cow and the Ass.' For charming grace and comic humour it has seldom been surpassed. The picture of the two friendly animals by the stream, among the daisies and grass, is as cool and refreshing as a good water-colour drawing. Their manners are most elegant; the cow's complaint has an air of melancholy reason; the 'brown Ass, of respectable look,' argues with her like a true philosopher—

'With submission, dear madam, to your better wit'—

and she, though convinced by his wisdom, has a feminine unwillingness to acknowledge it:

'The cow, upon this, cast her eyes on the grass,
Not pleased at thus being reproved by an ass.'

La Fontaine himself could not have done it much better, and in the case of no other writer for children, we think, could such a comparison even be suggested."]

IDLENESS

Some people complain they have nothing to do,
And time passes slowly away;
They saunter about with no object in view,
And long for the end of the day.

In vain are their riches, their honours or birth,
They nothing can truly enjoy;
They're weary and wretched, in spite of their mirth,
For want of some pleasing employ.

When people have no need to work for their bread,
And indolent always have been,
It never so much as comes into their head,
That wasting their time is a sin.

But man was created for useful employ,
From the earliest ages till now;
And 'tis good for his health, and his comfort, and joy,
To live by the sweat of his brow.

And those who of riches are fully possess'd,
Are not for that reason exempt;
If they give themselves up to an indolent rest,
They are objects of real contempt.

The pleasure that constant employments create,
By them cannot be understood;
And tho' they may rank with the rich and the great,
They never can rank with the good.

JANE.

THE WAY TO BE HAPPY

How pleasant it is, at the end of the day,
No follies to have to repent;
But reflect on the past, and be able to say,
That my time has been properly spent.

When I've done all my bus'ness with patience and care,
And been good, and obliging, and kind;
I lie on my pillow and sleep away there,
With a happy and peaceable mind.

But, instead of all this, if it must be confest,
That I careless and idle have been;
I lie down as usual, and go to my rest,
But feel discontented within.

Then as I dislike all the trouble I've had,
In future I'll try to prevent it;
For I never am naughty without being sad,
Or good—without being contented.

JANE.

EIGHT RHYMES FOR THE NURSERY

THE COW

Thank you, pretty cow, that made
Pleasant milk to soak my bread,
Every day, and every night,
Warm, and fresh, and sweet, and white.

Do not chew the hemlock rank,
Growing on the weedy bank;
But the yellow cowslips eat,
They will make it very sweet.

Where the purple violet grows,
Where the bubbling water flows,
Where the grass is fresh and fine,
Pretty cow, go there and dine.

Learning to Go Alone

Come, my darling, come away,
Take a pretty walk to-day;
Run along, and never fear,
I'll take care of baby dear:
Up and down with little feet,
That's the way to walk, my sweet.
Now it is so very near,
Soon she'll get to mother dear.

There she comes along at last:
Here's my finger, hold it fast:
Now one pretty little kiss,
After such a walk as this.

The Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

When the blazing sun is gone,
When he nothing shines upon,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.

Then the traveller in the dark,
Thanks you for your tiny spark:
He could not see which way to go,
If you did not twinkle so.

In the dark blue sky you keep,
And often through my curtains peep,
For you never shut your eye,
Till the sun is in the sky.

As your bright and tiny spark
Lights the traveller in the dark,
Though I know not what you are,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star. JANE.

["Dr. M—— writes to me that 'Twinkle, twinkle, little Star' has been translated *well* into both Greek and Latin. How little did such a possibility enter Jane's head in writing it!" wrote Mrs. Gilbert to Isaac Taylor in 1864.]

THE FIELD DAISY

I'm a pretty little thing,
Always coming with the spring;
In the meadows green I'm found,
Peeping just above the ground,
And my stalk is covered flat,
With a white and yellow hat.

Little lady, when you pass
Lightly o'er the tender grass,
Skip about, but do not tread
On my meek and healthy head,
For I always seem to say,
"Surely winter's gone away."

The Sheep

"Lazy sheep, pray tell me why
In the pleasant fields you lie
Eating grass and daisies white,
From the morning till the night?
Everything can something do,
But what kind of use are you?"

"Nay, my little master, nay,
Do not serve me so, I pray:
Don't you see the wool that grows
On my back, to make you clothes?
Cold, and very cold you'd be,
If you had not wool from me.

"True, it seems a pleasant thing,
To nip the daisies in the spring;
But many chilly nights I pass
On the cold and dewy grass.
Or pick a scanty dinner, where
All the common's brown and bare.

Then the farmer comes at last,
When the merry spring is past,
And cuts my woolly coat away,
To warm you in the winter's day.
Little master, this is why
In the pleasant fields I lie."

The Cruel Boy and The Kittens

What! go to see the kittens drowned,
On purpose, in the yard!
I did not think there could be found
A little heart so hard.

Poor kittens! no more pretty play
With pussy's wagging tail:
Oh! I'd go far enough away,
Before I'd see the pail.

Poor things! the little child that can
Be pleased to go and see,
Most likely, when he grows a man,
A cruel man will be.

And many a wicked thing he'll do,
Because his heart is hard;
A great deal worse than killing you,
Poor kittens, in the yard.

The Little Fish that Would Not Do As It Was Bid

"Dear mother," said a little fish,
"Pray is not that a fly?
I'm very hungry, and I wish
You'd let me go and try."

"Sweet innocent," the mother cried,
And started from her nook,
"That horrid fly is out to hide
The sharpness of the hook."

Now, as I've heard, this little trout
Was young and foolish too,
And so he thought he'd venture out,
To see if it were true.

And round about the hook he played,
With many a longing look,
And—"Dear me," to himself he said,
"I'm sure that's not a *hook*.

"I can but give one little pluck:
Let's see, and so I will."
So on he went, and lo! it stuck
Quite through his little gill.

As as he faint and fainter grew,
With hollow voice he cried,
"Dear mother had I minded you,
I need not now have died."

ANN.

[The reader is reminded of Dr. Johnson. Discussing simplicity in fables: "The skill," said Goldsmith to Dr. Johnson, "consists in making little fishes talk like little fishes." Whereupon observing Johnson shaking his sides with laughter, he smartly added, "Why, Dr. Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think, for if you wer to make little fishes talk they would talk like WHALES."—Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1773).]

THE LITTLE LARK

I hear a pretty bird, but hark!
I cannot see it anywhere:
Oh! it is a little lark,
Singing in the morning air.
Little lark, do tell me why,
You are singing in the sky?

Other little birds at rest,
Have not yet begun to sing;
Every one is in its nest,
With its head behind its wing:
Little lark, then, tell me why
You sing so early in the sky.

You look no bigger than a bee,
  In the middle of the blue;
Up above the poplar tree,
  I can hardly look at you:
Come, little lark, and tell me why
You are mounted up so high?

'Tis to watch the silver star,
  Sinking slowly in the skies;
And beyond the mountain far,
  To see the glorious sun arise:
Little lady, this is why
I am mounted up so high.

'Tis to sing a merry song,
  To the pleasant morning light:
Why linger in my nest so long,
  When the sun is shining bright?
Little lady, this is why
I sing so early in the sky.

To the little birds below,
  I do sing a merry tune;
And I let the ploughman know
  He must come to labour soon.
Little lady, this is why
I am singing in the sky.

Two poems from *The Associate Minstrels*. Published in 1810.

"To their friend James Montgomery, this little volume is very respectfully inscribed by the Associate Minstrels."

"Josiah Conder had been our guest. He had relatives at Nayland, six miles from Colchester, who always opened a most hospitable home to us, and many were the excursions in which we availed ourselves of their kindly welcome. It was during one of these walks with him to Nayland on a beautiful summer evening, that the idea and the plan of *The Associate Minstrels* were elicited. Josiah was to be editor and publisher. It was to be inscribed to Montgomery. My brother Isaac was to furnish a design for the title page, and so, including a few pieces from the elder Mr. Conder, from the lady afterwards Mrs. Josiah Conder, from my father, and Jacob Strutt, we contrived a volume, Jane, Josiah and I—which did pass into a second edition!"

—*Mrs. Gilbert's Autobiography.*

Only two poems are here quoted—Ann's "Maniac's Song," in a vein unusual to her, and the Rev. Isaac Taylor's tribute to his wife.

THE MANIAC'S SONG

Bring me a garland, bring me a wreath;
Bring me a flower from the dank stream side;
Bring me a herb smelling sweetly of death,
Wet with the drowsy tide.

Haste to the pool with the green-weed breast,
Where the dark wave crawls through the sedge;
Where the bittern of the wilderness builds her nest,
In the flags of its oozy edge;

Where no sun shines through the live-long day,
  Because of the blue-wreathed mist,
Where the cockatrice creeps her foul egg to lay,
  And the speckled snake has hissed:

And bring me the flag that is moist with the wave,
  And the rush where the heath-winds sigh,
And the hemlock plant, that flourishes so brave,
  And the poppy, with its coal-black eye;

And weave them tightly, and weave them well,
  The fever of my head to allay;—
And soon shall I faint with the death-weed smell,
  And sleep these throbbings away.

And my hot, hot heart, that is fluttering so fast,
  Shall shudder with a strange, cold thrill;
And the damp hand of Death o'er my forehead shall
    be passed,
  And my lips shall be stiff and still.

And crystals of ice on my bosom shall arise,
  Prest out from the shivering pore;
And oft shall it struggle with pent-up sighs,
  But soon it shall struggle no more.

For the poppy on my head shall her cool breath shed,
  And wind through the blue, blue tide;
And the bony wand of Death shall draw my last breath,
  All by the dark stream side.

A.

July, 1808.

Montgomery wrote of this: " 'The Maniac's Song' has not only the melancholy of madness, but the inspiration of poetry."

TO MY OLD WOMAN

Ah! tell me not thy locks are greyed;
Those locks which once so gaily played
Thy brows around, when my sweet maid
In youth and blushing beauty said
She'd be my wife:
There's not a lock but much I prize:
Full many a year it charmed my eyes:
Still owns my heart its silken ties,
And will through life.

What, do thy flagging spirits play
Less frolicsome, less brightly gay;
Do aches and fears drive glee away,
September's chill come after May,
My best-loved wife?
Yet still thou art my better part,
The treasure of my doting heart,
The balm for every bleeding smart,
And will through life.

Cast not a fearful, anxious eye,
When younger, gayer nymphs go by;
Nor heave thy bosom with a sigh;
Nor say, "As they are, once was I,"
My dearest wife:
The form so fair, the face so new,
I see, and praise—to merit true;
But my fond eyes still turn to you,
And shall through life.

Mention no more, that young or gay
Might better all my love repay,
And cheer and bless me day by day,
Didst thou beneath the green sod lay,
My long-loved wife:
We've trudged together, many a year,
Through seasons varying, dull or clear,
With mutual hope and mutual fear,
And will through life.

Nor point out here a female mind
More high, or there more calmly kind,
Or richer, healthier, more refined,
T'have been with me in wedlock joined,
My well-loved wife:
But find, to make the case more just,
These charms in one (hard work, I trust!)
Yet then, I'll cleave to thee, my first,
And will through life.

Let those who have no heart to fire,
Who cannot mutual love inspire,
For dear variety enquire,
And wonder why I still admire
My long-loved wife:
The heart that living worth has known,
And felt that treasure all its own,
May well be fonder, kinder grown,
As grows his life.

True, many a gaping, bleeding wound,
By Sorrow's heavy hand, are found;
And woes, by caustic Memory bound,
Corrode; and thorny griefs surround,
My suffering wife:
But kind and faithful is thy soul;
True as the needle to the pole,
Which still returns to one point sole,
And will through life.

If here a wrinkle, there a pain,
Give sighs, and make thee much complain
Of youth, that will not come again,
And biting woes, that still remain,
My much-loved wife:
My heart contemplates too thy face,
And, as each track of Time I trace,
To cares for me will duly place
This waste of life.

Ah! tell me not thy locks are greyed;
As if thy bosom were afraid
To be with frigid eye surveyed,
Or feel the pang of scorn displayed,
Towards thee, my wife;
Too long I've loved, to leave thee now;
To well, to bear thy sunken brow
Of fear or suffering: I avow
Thee mine for life.

Together, heart and hand, we trod
Life's up-and-down-hill, thorny road,
And in each other found bestowed
The charms that gild our calm abode,
My much-loved wife.
May Heaven still bless our devious way
With love that grows as powers decay,
And longs for everlasting day
In better life.

T.

July, 1808. (Rev. Isaac Taylor of Ongar).

In 1810, Ann and Jane, commissioned to write for Tabart & Co. *Signor Topsy Turvey's Wonderful Magic Lantern, or The World turned Upside Down*, branched out into satire.

As this little book is now very rare, eight of the twenty-four little pieces are here given.

The remarkable illustrations are by Isaac Taylor of Stanford Rivers.

The "Advertisement" reads as follows:

"Those grandmammas and aunts who are versed in the nursery learning of fifty years ago, may perhaps recollect a little volume entitled *The World turned Upside Down*. The biographers of *Signor Topsy Turvey and his Magic Lantern* beg leave to apologize for having stolen a few ideas from that learned original, which they have been recommended to revise for the amusement of modern nurseries; and if they appear to have done little good by the undertaking, they hope it may be allowed that they have not done any harm."

INTRODUCTION

SIGNOR TOPSY TURVEY
AND HIS MAGIC LANTERN

I can't tell the story for truth, but 'tis said,
That the first *Magic Lantern* that ever was made,
Perplex'd the inventor extremely;
For houses, and people, and all that he shew'd,
In spite of his efforts, could only be view'd
Upside down, which was very unseemly!

At length out of patience, and quite in despair,
He thought the best way to pass off the affair,
Was to bring it at once to a sequel;
He therefore gave out he'd invented a show,
So wonderful, magical, comic, and new,
As nothing in nature could equal.

The nobility, gentry, and public at large,
With alacrity paid the philsopher's charge,
And throng'd to his rare exhibition;
And nought could exceed the huzzas and encores,
As houses, and horses, and people, and doors,
With their feet in the air, and their heads on the floor,
Past by,—'twas so droll a position!

They said it was such an original thought,
That people of rank and intelligence ought
To give it their full approbation;
So ladies and lords to the scholar repaired,
And as the procession proceeded, declar'd,
It really surpassed expectation!

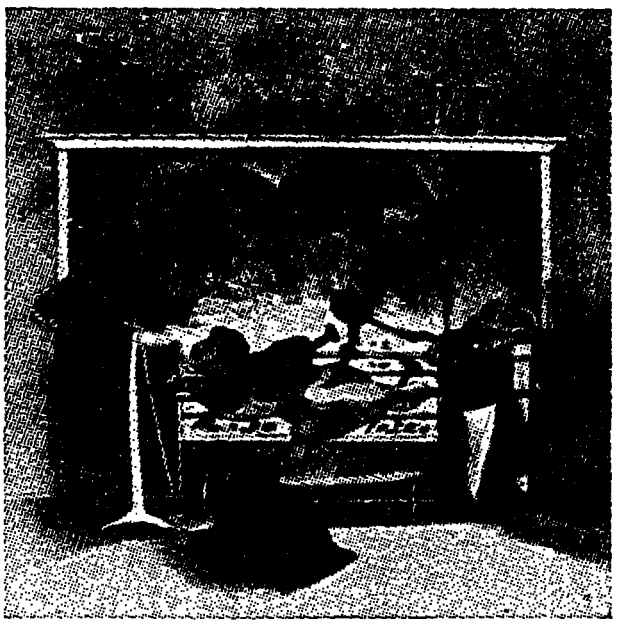
At length a shrewd fellow from college that came,
Who envied, 'twas said, the philosopher's fame
(As cross and conceited as could be),
Stole up to the sliders, and turning them round,
To the company's grief and dismay it was found,
That now, they were seen as they *should be*!

The tumult was dreadful—the gentlemen rose,
And said they *would* see *upside down*, if they chose,
They came with no other intention;
And begg'd that, upon a philosopher's word,
He would not let any one be so absurd
Again, as to spoil his invention.

Now lest there may still be some pedant in town,
To laugh at this turning the world upside down,
With argument witty and weighty,
We've taken the trouble, at wonderful cost,
To copy the sliders (long thought to be lost),
And appeal to the whole literati.

A.

THE COOK COOKED



THE COOK COOKED

A hare, who long had hung for dead,
  But *really* brew'd sedition,
Once set a scheme on foot, and said,
She could not take it in her head,
  That *hares* should be nutrition;

A turkey next began to speak,
  But said her task was harder,
Because the cook had tucked her beak
Behind her wing, for half a week
  That she'd been in the larder.

At length, with some ado she said,
  That as for her opinion,
If any prudent plan were laid,
Her latest drop of blood should aid,
  To rescue the dominion.

A murmur more than usual grave,
  Then issued from an oyster,
Who moaning through a broken stave,
Full many a doleful reason gave,
  Against his wooden cloister.

Eels, sliding on a marble shelf,
  The growing treason aided;
And e'en a turtle 'woke itself,
To reprobate the cruel pelf,
  In callepash that traded.

So hand and foot, and fin and paw,
  In mutual faith were shaken;
And all the patriots made a law,
To murder every cook they saw,
  The moment he was taken.

Ere long a wretched wight was found,
  And carried to the kitchen;
The traitor of a jack went round;
The turkey dredg'd, the cook was brown'd,
And chanticleer the banquet crown'd,
  With songs the most bewitching.

A.

THE MARE TURNED FARRIER

MARE TURNED FARRIER

One day at the farrier's, a spirited mare,
  Declar'd that her nerves were so tender,
The process of *shoeing* she never could bear,
And if he persisted in hammering there,
  She would take certain means to defend her.

The farrier (who happen'd just then to be cross),
  Retorted abruptly upon her,
That "he would not be taken to task by a horse!"
The mare looked indignant, and giving a toss,
  Resolv'd to stand up for her honour.

Accordingly lifting them up from the floor
  (Regardless of danger or trouble),
She shod both his feet, as he did her's before,
And when he complain'd of the torture he bore,
She bid him remember that she had got *four*,
  And therefore her sufferings were double.

J.

THE BEE TURNED DRONE

A bee who had travell'd so far and so wide,
There scarce was a wild flower he had not espied,
  A bean-field, a primrose, or daisy;
Who had ever been active, and first on the wing,
As soon as warm weather gave notice of spring,
  Took it into his head to be lazy.

Said he to himself, as he mused on a tree,
"I don't think I'm handsomely dealt by," says he,
  "And am not over-pleased, I must own;
I have travell'd so often, and labour'd so well,
And laid such a plentiful store in the cell,
  That I've now a great mind to turn drone.

'Tis hard when my youth and my spirits are fled,
And so many bean-fields are wither'd and dead,
  That one scarcely earns salt to one's porridge;
I say it is hard to fag early and late,
Like the rawest young fellow that works for the State,
  To supply the republic with forage!

"Without more ado, I'll let business alone,
And live on my fortune, a gentleman drone,
  From toil and anxiety freed:"
So back to the door of his dwelling he sped,
And swaggering a little, and tossing his head,
  Called out for a bottle of mead.

"You there, little buzz," said he, "mind what I say,
"Get ready my supper by seven to-day,
Before you see after your own!"
"Hey, friend!" said a bee, hard at work in his cell,
"I have not the pleasure of hearing you well;"
"Sir," said he, "I'm a gentleman drone."

"O! a gentleman drone, are you friend?" he replied,
Then drawing a little shrill trump from his side,
Blew forth such a spirited air,
That a volunteer band, two and two from the hive,
Left the poor little fellow more dead than alive,
At leisure some luckier plan to contrive,
Than playing the gentleman there.

THE HORSE TURNED DRIVER

HORSE TURNED DRIVER

A poor looking hack,
Had long borne on her back
A groom, who did nothing but chide her,
Till at length unto her
Came a thought, "My good Sir,"
Quoth she, "I've a mind to turn rider."

So stirrup and bit,
She had alter'd to fit,
Nor of bridle and spur was she sparing;
And the groom she displays
In a saddle or chaise,
Whenever she goes for an airing.

If he dare to complain,
She but tightens the rein,
And whips him for going no faster;
But some people say,
She had trudg'd to this day,
If he'd been a merciful master. A.

SERVANTS TURNED MASTERS

SERVANTS TURNED MASTERS

Altho' in all countries by actions and words,
Man calls himself lord of the flocks and the herds,
Thro' some hocus pocus (the fable knows how)
Here *beasts* are the masters, and *men* in the plough!

And if their rough language will weave into verse,
Perhaps 'twill amuse us to hear them converse;
For after some bowing, and scraping, and that,
They soon were engaged in a sociable chat.

"To ask your opinion I long have intended,
Of this breed of cattle I've heard recommended,"
Says one to the other, "for I understand
They answer extremely for arable land."

"O yes, the fat farmers,—an excellent breed!
I've purchas'd two capital fellows indeed:
But I hear a *prize* farmer is soon to be shown,
That they tell me weighs upwards of seventy stone.

"But then those great overgrown animals, neighbour,
I fancy are just good for nothing at labour;
They only keep eating, and drinking, and that—
I don't like a beast so prodigiously fat."

"Why mine, tho' much leaner, are sad idle creatures,
They are such amazing extravagant eaters!
The pudding and meat they consume in a day,
Would keep my whole household in clover and hay.

"Then 'twould grieve you to see how they trouble me,
Sir,
Of a morning before I can get them to stir;
Indeed all my orders they'd totally scorn,
If I were not to roar, and to shew them my horn.

"For in order to keep them a little in fear,
I'm really obliged to be very severe":
"Well, thank you my friend," said the other, "but now
I must wish you good day,—my respects to the cow."

Thus chatted the cattle, as goes the old fable,
The moral let any one find who is able;
If none should occur, let us see if this suits—
That some *men* behave little better than *brutes*.

J.

FISH OUT OF WATER

Some folks there are, both small and great,
  Who (though it very strange is)
Seem discontented in their state,
  And always long for changes.

The poor are pining to be rich,
  And dunces to be witty;
Thus all are discontented, which
  Is certainly a pity.

That such may alter this defect,
  And learn to grow contented,
With all due reverence and respect,
  This fable is presented.

It happen'd that a little cod,
  Once gazing at the sky,
Began to think it very odd,
That he must in the water plod,
  While birds in air can fly.

A sprat, a herring, and a trout,
  United in replying,
That if they all should venture out,
Their fins would serve beyond a doubt,
  Instead of *wings* for flying.

So out they sprang,—but dreadful slaughter
  Ensued, and sad commotion;
Poor trout,—a flying eagle caught her,
The cod shrieked out, and cried for water!
The sprat and herring died in torture,
  Before they reach'd the ocean!

The finny tribes, both sire and son,
  Had come from every quarter,
Impatient all to see the fun;
But when the fatal stroke was done,
Fear seiz'd upon them every one,
  And all dived under water.

A grave old fish, who cut the tide
  With fifty sons behind her;
Now told how their companions died,
And warn'd them 'gainst such foolish pride,
So all the little fishes cried,
  And promis'd they would mind her.

J.

THE ASS TURNED ELEPHANT

An ass who was vain, and who thought it was hard,
That nobody shew'd her the smallest regard,
Determind' no longer to bear such neglect,
But make people pay her a little respect.

Now the means that occurr'd to her donkeyship's brain,
Was to try a kind elephant's *trunk* to obtain;
For she thought with this badge of distinction at hand,
Tho' not quite as *large*, she should be quite as *grand*,

So she went to a friend of a neighbourly heart,
And boldly requested the loan of that part.
The elephant, looking as grave as a monk,
Reluctantly handed the donkey his trunk.

So bearing her present, delighted she goes,
And fastens it on to the end of her nose;
And tho' to be sure it weigh'd heavy upon her,
She put up with that for the sake of the honour.

Thus trotted her ladyship on the highway,
Fast closing her mouth up for fear she should *bray*;
While, scorning to nod to the donkeys that pass'd her,
She proudly stalk'd up to the door of her master.

"Well done!" exclaim'd he (not alarm'd in the least),
"This *is* a convenient new limb to my beast;
Besides the two pannniers she'd formerly bear,
I can swing my great basket on *this*, I declare."

"Alas!" she exclaim'd, and her countenance sank,
"What then, does he know me in spite of my trunk?
I'm not your old donkey, believe me, my lord,
But a handsome young elephant come from abroad."

"For shame!" cried her master, "such stories to tell,
I know you, my stubborn old donkey, too well;
Did you think, silly brute! upon me to impose,
By wearing that thing at the end of your nose?"

The donkey, alarm'd at this insolence shown her,
Now said, she must carry it back to its owner;
Who, having some business elsewhere, she pretended,
Had got her to take it to town to be mended.

"O no! for the future 'tis yours, never fear,
I like it so well you shall keep it, my dear;
So now hold your tongue, if you please," said the man,
"And bear your new burden as well as you can."

Poor ass, thus oblig'd to submit to her fate,
Repented her pride, but repented too late;
As every one must, who will seek admiration,
In ways that can never belong to his station.

J.

TWO HYMNS FOR INFANT MINDS

(These two poems) "are a better practical description of Christian humility and its opposite than I ever met with in so small a compass. Though very intelligible and touching to a mere child, a man of the most mature understanding, if not quite destitute of the virtue in question, may be the wiser and better for it." Extract from Archbishop Whately's *Essays on Christian Faith*, etc. See "Advertisement" to *Hymns for Infant Minds*.[1]

The Way To Find Out Pride

Pride, ugly Pride, sometimes is seen
By haughty looks and lofty mien:
But oftener, it is found that Pride
Loves deep within the heart to hide;
And while the looks are mild and fair,
It sits and does its mischief there.

Now if you really wish to find
If pride be lurking in your mind,
Inquire if you can bear a slight,
Or patiently give up your right?
Can you submissively consent
To take reproof and punishment;
And feel no angry temper start
In any corner of your heart?
Can you at once confess a crime,
And promise for another time?
Or say you've been in a mistake;

[1] The Third Edition of *Hymns for Infant Minds* in Russian was printed in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1838.

Nor try some poor excuse to make,
But freely own, that it was wrong
To argue for your side so long?
Flat contradiction can you bear,
When you are right, and know you are,
Nor flatly contradict again,
But wait, or modestly explain,
And tell your reasons one by one;
Nor think of triumph when you've done?
Can you, in business or in play,
Give up your wishes or your way?
Or do a thing against your will,
For somebody that's younger still?
And never try to overbear,
Nor say a word that is not fair?
Does laughing at you in a joke,
No anger, nor revenge provoke;
But can you laugh yourself, and be
As merry as the company?—
Or, when you find that you could do
The harm to them they did to you,
Can you keep down the wicked thought,
And do exactly as you ought?
  Put all these questions to your heart,
And make it act an honest part;
And, when they've each been fairly tried,
I think you'll own that you have Pride.
Some one will suit you, as you go,
And force your heart to tell you so:
But if they all should be denied,
Then you're too proud to own your Pride.

ANN.

The Way To Cure Pride

Now I suppose, that, having tried,
And found the secret of your Pride,
You wish to drive it from your heart,
And learn to act a humbler part.
  Well, are you sorry and sincere?
I'll try to help you then, my dear.
  And first, the best, the surest way,
Is to kneel down at once and pray;
The lowly Saviour will attend,
And strengthen you and stand your friend.
Tell him the mischief that you find
For ever working in your mind;
And beg his pardon for the past,
And strength to overcome at last.—
But then you must not go your way
And think it quite enough to pray:
That is but doing half your task;
For you must *watch* as well as *ask*.
You pray for strength, and that is right!
But then it must be strength to fight;
For where's the use of being strong,
Unless you conquer what is wrong?
Then look within:—ask every thought,
If it be humble as it ought;
Put out the smallest spark of Pride
The very moment 'tis descried;
And do not stay to think it o'er,
For, while you wait, it blazes more.
If it should take you by surprise,
And beg you just to let it rise,

And promise not to keep you long,
Say, "*No! the smallest* Pride is wrong."
And when there's something so amiss,
That Pride says, "Take offence at *this;*"
Then if you feel at all inclined
To brood upon it in your mind,
And think revengeful thoughts within,
And wish it were not wrong to sin;
O stop at once!—for if you dare
To wish for sin, that sin is there!
'Twill then be best to go and pray
That God would take your Pride away!
Or if just then you cannot go,
Pray in your thoughts, and God will know.
And beg his mercy to impart
That best of gifts—a humble heart.
Remember, too, that you must pray,
And watch, and labour *every* day:
Nor think it wearisome or hard,
To be *for ever* on your guard.
No; every morning must begin
With resolutions not to sin;
And every evening recollect
How much you've failed in this respect.
Ask whether such a guilty heart
Should act a proud or humble part;
Or, as the Saviour was so mild;
Inquire if Pride becomes a child;
And, when all other means are tried,
Be humble, that you've so much Pride.

INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE HEAVENS

Stars, that on your wondrous way
  Travel through the evening sky,
Is there nothing you can say
  To such a little child as I?
Tell me, for I long to know,
Who has made you sparkle so?

Yes, methinks I hear you say,
  "Child of mortal race, attend;
While we run our wondrous way,
  Listen to the voice we send,
Teaching you that Name Divine,
By whose mighty word we shine.

"Child, as truly as we roll
  Through the dark and distant sky,
You have an immortal soul,
  Born to live when we shall die.
Suns and planets pass away:
Spirits never can decay.

"When some thousand years at most,
  All their little time have spent,
One by one our sparkling host
  Shall forsake the firmament:
We shall from our glory fall;
You must live beyond us all."

. . . .

HYMNS FOR SUNDAY SCHOOLS

Things That Ought to be Remembered

These are the things I ought to mind:
  To come in time, and every day,
And never idly wait behind,
  For no good reason, or to play.

To put my clothes on neat and tight,
  And see my hands and face are clean;
And mind to say my lessons right,
  And to remember what they mean.

My books I must not tear or lose,
  But always keep them smooth and neat;
And wicked words I must not use,
  Such as I hear about the street.

I must remember what I'm told,
  And always do as I am bid;
And not be obstinate or bold,
  Or cross, or sulky, when I'm chid.

And when I am not at the school,
  Even if nobody is near,
I ought to think of every rule,
  And be as good as when I'm there.

These are the things I ought to mind;
  And so I will with all my might;
Because I'm certain I shall find
  There's nothing lost by doing right.

The Folly of Finery

Some poor little ignorant children delight,
In wearing fine ribbons and caps;
But this is a very ridiculous sight,
Though they do not know it perhaps.

Clean hands, and clean faces, and neatly combed hair,
And garments made decent and plain,
Are better than all the fine things they can wear
Which make them look vulgar and vain.

A girl who will keep herself tidy and clean
(As every child easily may),
Needs not be afraid or ashamed to be seen,
Whoever may come in her way.

Then, children, attend to the words you repeat
And always remember this line;
'Tis a *credit* to any good girl to be neat,
But quite a *disgrace* to be fine.

Upon the Pleasures of Industry and Contentment

Some think it a hardship to work for their bread,
Although for our good it was meant;
But those who don't work have no right to be fed,
And the idle are never content.

An honest employment brings pleasure and gain,
And makes us our troubles forget;
For those who work hard have no time to complain,
And 'tis better to labour than fret.

And if we had riches, they could not procure
A happy and peaceable mind:
Rich people have troubles as well as the poor,
Although of a different kind.

It signifies not what our stations have been,
Nor whether we're little or great;
For happiness lies in the temper within,
And not in the outward estate.

We only need labour as hard as we can
For all that our bodies may need,
Still doing our duty to God and to man,
And we shall be happy indeed.

Writing in the *Sunday Times*, 7th March, 1936, of what he mistakenly called 'The Triad of Taylors,' the late Sir Edmund Gosse used these words:

> "Jane Taylor is not 'forgotten,' nor shall be so long as the English language is in use. But when I say 'Jane Taylor,' I understand the expression to include Ann, and even Adelaide O'Keefe, though she was only a Taylor by adoption.[1] The three wonderful girls cannot be separated."

It would be accurate to say—the two wonderful girls cannot be separated. Each had her individual

[1] Adelaide O'Keefe (1776–1855) was associated with the Taylors in one publication only—*The Original Poems for Infant Minds*. She later produced over her own name *Original Poems calculated to Improve the Mind of Youth and Allure it to Virtue*; and several other books for children. She was personally unknown to Ann and Jane Taylor.

gift; but Jane's loneliness gave opportunities for development that brought, even during her short life, the share of laurels that a minister's busy wife, however gifted, must needs forego. In 1817 Ann Gilbert had written to Jane Taylor:

"Almost every letter you send, dear Jane, I cannot help saying what different lives we lead! There are some things I regret, but I feel daily that mine is the lot for me, and yours for you, and we must take them as they are. If your fame and leisure for the improvement of your mind, could be combined with the comfort and pleasures of a larger domestic circle; and if, with a husband and children, I could share a glimmer of your fame and a portion of your reading, we should both perhaps be happier than it is the usual lot of life to be, and at least happier than it seem good for us to be."

But jealousy could not touch these two.

"The seasons vary, but we stand,
Dear girl, as ever, hand in hand"—

'To a Sister,' 23rd Sept., 1806 (*Associate Minstrels*), wrote Ann; and Jane replied:

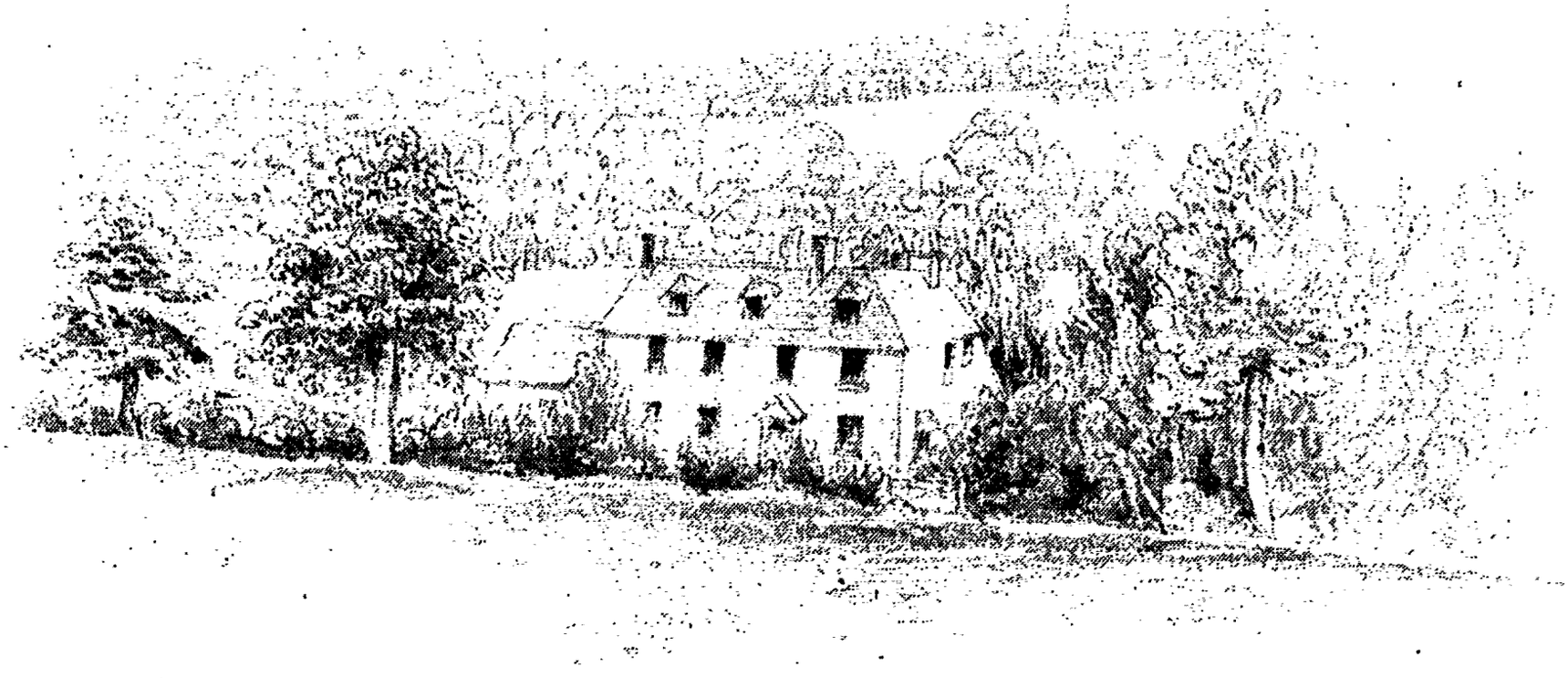
"My Ann, you had taken the lyre;
And I, from the pattern you set,
Attempted the art to acquire,
And often we play a duet;
But those who, in grateful return,
Have said they were pleased with the lay,
The discord could always discern:
And yet I continue to play."

'To a Sister,' 30th Jan., 1809 (*Associate Minstrels*).

Jane was ever eager to surrender praise to others; and thus, looking back down the years, wrote Mrs. Gilbert—

"We were, perhaps, rather sought after as 'clever girls,' and of the two, Jane always conceding a large share of birthright to me, I seemed to be generally accepted as the cleverest. The mistake has been rectified by the public since, and indeed, so as to swing a little beyond the mark, attributing to her many productions that are really mine. Publishers have frequently given a convenient wink and announced 'By Jane Taylor' when 'Ann Taylor' was the guilty person.

Dear Jane never needed to steal, while I could not afford to lose. But what signifies it?"



STANFORD RIVERS HOUSE AND NAVESTOCK CHURCH

"Stanford Rivers, with Navestock Church and woods. The residence of my brother Isaac Taylor; and drawn by him."—Note in Mrs. Gilbert's Album.

"Without, the clustering flowers,
The smoothly shaven green,
The water glistening through the bowers,
The soft surrounding scene
Of fringing woods, and level meads,
And village spire, and river reeds."

"The father and mother, with their daughter Jane, 'the first to die, the first to live,' lie at Ongar, but their graves have been enclosed within the enlarged buildings of the chapel; the vestry door is above them, and close to the honoured dust the children of the Sunday School, so dear to them in life, assemble. It is no desecration. At Stanford Rivers, in a churchyard surrounded by trees, and in the midst of the fields, rest Isaac Taylor and his wife, with two daughters who preceded them, 'waiting for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.'

'My only claim,' said Isaac Taylor in his humility, 'is that I am one of those who love His appearing.'

Across the sweet valley of the Roding, amidst the woods, is the secluded church of Navestock; the bells of Stanford and Navestock answer each other through the mist. There, close to the church porch, lie Martin Taylor and his wife. Jeffreys is buried at St. Peter's, near Broadstairs.

To Ann Gilbert and her husband, the general cemetery at Nottingham affords no such quiet resting-place; but it is on the scene of his twenty-five years of faithful ministry, and in the midst of the old town she loved."

. . . . .

"Life, I repeat, is energy of Love,
Divine or human; exercised in pain,
In strife, and tribulation, and ordained
If so approved and sanctified, to pass
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy."

—*Wordsworth.*

1938

TWO PILGRIMAGES

I
TO LAVENHAM

II
TO ONGAR

TWO PILGRIMAGES

I

To Lavenham

As the car ran through the sweet Suffolk countryside on the late summer afternoon the sun was lighting up the swelling shoulders of cornland and throwing pools of shade into the little switchback town of Lavenham.

'Lafa's Home,' as it was called in Saxon days, is something more than a relic of the long-distant past; it is an almost unspoilt little mediaeval town, its history a miniature history of England. For the Lavenham of to-day dates from the thirteenth century: here is a market place where in 1290 a fair was held; here are cottages in which the Flemish weavers settled in 1340; weaving houses where the master clothier lived and had his 'shop of looms,' and bearing to-day the plaster mitre, fleur-de-lys, and spur-rowel, emblems of his trade. Here too are ancient inns and manor houses side by side with cottages built before the Wars of the Roses: fine old halls of religious and trade guilds: examples of Tudor and Georgian architecture; and also—alas—some unlovely handmarks of our own age.

Crowning a hill is the market place with its beautiful hall of the Gild of Corpus Christi, and lesser buildings dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Here is the market cross—an ecclesiastical wayside

cross—; and (probably) the toll house where dues were paid at fair and weekly market.

Here, to play his sickening part in the festivities, was the bull tied until, maddened, he broke away to race with his attendant curs down one of the steep streets that lead from the market place on every side. Sometimes he turned into Shilling Street, past Mr. Meeking's, where Jane Taylor, perched on the kneading board, entertained the assembled company: past the humble dwellings of spinner and weaver; past 'the first grand house' where the little Taylors sat at their lessons; helter-skelter down the hill to Water Street and the Common.

Hard to picture such a scene on this peaceful golden evening of high summer.

Though fresh from the restorer's hands and bearing the marks of change, the 'Twinkle House' to-day stands quiet and dignified. Here is the beautiful room where Stothard's and Opie's great gallery pictures used to rest against the wall, and the smaller one where Ann and Jane sat at their lessons. If you are fortunate, you may walk to-day down those grassy paths where the garden dips to meet the gentle cornfields: where the grave little Ann first began to string her thoughts into measure and the sisters stood for their portrait.

In her little room in their second home next door, Jane spun her top and lived in a world of her own creation, dwelling in marble halls with Don Floris and writing this nobleman's adventures. Years later she was to return to the darksome house, exchanging the terrors of invasion at Colchester for those of housebreaking at Lavenham. It is good to know that she was reassured and able to give her mind to other

things. "Mr. H. only remembers one instance, years ago; and then, the man being hanged, so much terror was excited that no one has ventured since in that line" —so—"We keep school very regularly, and Jemima comes on both in reading and work."

No sign to-day of the little charge among the walnut trees—that old barn in Water Street where a hundred years before the Taylors' time the small sect called 'Independents,' and later known as Congregationalists, had founded their 'Small Meeting.' Long silent now, the looms after 600 years of weaving, and quiet those streets where once the spinning wheel stood in every cottage door, the women of each family, young and old together, working and chatting in groups. They it was who established the industry that made Lavenham's Blue Cloth famous throughout Europe; and the Flemish weavers' cottages, inhabited to-day, are mellowed by the light that lies on time-touched things.

At the top of Water Street stands the Swan Inn, where Ann and Jane studied the arts of dancing and deportment. Did John Constable, about that time attending the Grammar School, attend also the fat dancing-master's weekly class? We do not know, but perhaps one of his first bows was made under the professional eye to the little Taylors in the fine old timbered hall of the Swan.

To-day the old inn, carefully restored, dispenses comfortable hospitality to the traveller who would put back the clock and rest awhile in a little town where lingers the spirit of an age that is gone. It is fitting that this little bit of old England should be the early home of a family whose qualities and virtues have their roots so deep in our earth; where the early labourer had heard the morning hymn of a man who

walked throughout life in the street that is called Straight, and brought up his children in the knowledge and love of God.

As the car, taking the road to Colchester, mounted the hill past the glorious old church of St. Peter and St. Paul, the chimes rang out:

"Lord, thro' this hour
Be Thou my Guide,
So by Thy power
No foot shall slide."

II

To Ongar

On a summer afternoon in the year 1810 Jane Taylor, on a picnic in Epping Forest, read a sign-post—"To Ongar." It was but a name to her.

In the year 1811 her father, the Reverend Isaac Taylor, walked from Brentwood to Ongar; and resting against a gate as he viewed the pretty little town across the fields thought, "I could be content to live and die in that spot."

He lived and died there, spending more than eighteen years as the 'assiduous and beloved pastor' of its little Meeting House.

To Jane, his second child—"not forgotten, nor shall be," said the late Sir Edmund Gosse "so long as the English language is in use"—it was the perfect setting for the remaining years of her short life.

On a summer afternoon in 1938 two descendants of Isaac Taylor visited Ongar. We went first to the

Meeting House tucked away behind the village street: "Ongar Congregational Church, 1662," reads the notice on a neighbouring small house where, training for the ministry under Mr. Taylor's successor, once dwelt David Livingstone. In the vestry is a little picture gallery: Mr. Taylor as a youngish man; the aged and thoughtful face of his son Isaac; his daughter Jane in silhouette; his grandson Josiah Gilbert, son of his eldest daughter Ann.

The three Taylor graves are now enclosed, and the custodian must raise the floor boards to show the well-preserved stones where lie all that is mortal of Isaac and Ann Taylor, and of Jane 'their gifted child.'

In the nearby fields stands their first Ongar home, the Castle House, tall and dignified with its deep moat 'once navigated by Martin, Jeffreys, and Jane in a brewing tub, when they unluckily lost one of the fire shovels, used as an oar.'

The Peaked Farm, their second home (it has another name to-day), lies just outside the little town; and here another kind owner showed rooms inhabited for us by friendly ghosts. From that oak panelled parlour with its huge fireplace—scene on winter evenings of the reading, 'mid a running fire of comment, of the latest verse or essay—leads the dark oak staircase up which, wind howling in the poplars outside, 'it became impossible to go, except well accompanied, and with a candle left in the room till sleep should come.'

The pleasant bedrooms still look out over fields; and Mrs. Taylor and Jane (Ann had married from the Castle House), each in her little sanctum, might court her peaceful muse to-day as a hundred years ago. Another staircase leads to the attics, private and particular bolt-holes of sons engaged on literary or

mechanical work as yet unacknowledged; and over those rocky floors we, like Agag, walked delicately.

A mile or two from Ongar lies Stanford Rivers and the serene old house where, for forty years, Isaac Taylor, brother of Ann and Jane, worked out his inventions, wrote his books, and thought his long thoughts. Not for him the little town's activity, the coming and going of neighbours. In the chosen company of wife and children and those fellow-thinkers his fame had gathered round him from far and near, he paced his garden paths and lanes the most secluded, and sought peace with his Maker. To-day the house stands empty, but surely peace inhabits there.

And so across the fields in the soft evening light to the little church amidst its whispering trees where, in the quietness so dear to him in life, sleeps the recluse of Stanford Rivers.

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