

THE OLD NURSE'S STORY.

You know, my dears, that your mother was an orphan, and an only child; and I dare say you have heard that your grandfather was a clergyman up in Westmoreland, where I come from. I was just a girl in the village school, when, one day, your grandmother came in to ask the mistress if there was any scholar there who would do for a nurse-maid; and mighty proud I was, I can tell ye, when the mistress called me up, and spoke to my being a good girl at my needle, and a steady honest girl, and one whose parents were very respectable, though they might be poor. I thought I should like nothing better than to serve the pretty young lady, who was blushing as deep as I was, as she spoke of the coming baby, and what I should have to do with it. However, I see you don't care so much for this part of my story, as for what you think is to come, so I'll tell you at once I was engaged, and settled at the parsonage before Miss Rosamond (that was the baby, who is now your mother) was born. To be sure, I had little enough to do with her when she came, for she was never out of her mother's arms, and slept by her all night long; and proud enough was I sometimes when missis trusted her to me. There never was such a baby before or since, though you've all of you been fine enough in your turns; but for sweet winning ways, you've none of you come up to your mother. She took after her mother, who was a real lady born; a Miss Furnivall, a granddaughter of Lord Furnivall's in Northumberland. I believe she had neither brother nor sister, and had been brought up in my lord's family till she had married your grandfather, who was just a curate, son to a shopkeeper in Carlisle— but a clever fine gentleman as ever was and one who was a right-down hard worker in his parish, which was very wide, and scattered all abroad over the Westmoreland Fells. When your mother, little Miss Rosamond, was about four or five years old, both her parents died in a fortnight— one after the other. Ah!

that was a sad time. My pretty young mistress and me was looking for another baby, when my master came home from one of his long rides, wet and tired, and took the fever he died of; and then she never held up her head again, but just lived to see her dead baby, and have it laid on her breast before she sighed away her life. My mistress had asked me, on her death-bed, never to leave Miss Rosamond; but if she had never spoken a word, I would have gone with the little child to the end of the world.

The next thing, and before we had well stilled our sobs, the executors and guardians

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came to settle the affairs. They were my poor young mistress's own cousin, Lord Furnivall, and Mr. Esthwaite, my master's brother, a shopkeeper in Manchester; not so well to do then, as he was afterwards, and with a large family rising about him. Well! I don't know if it were their settling, or because of a letter my mistress wrote on her death-bed to her cousin, my lord; but somehow it was settled that Miss Rosamond and me were to go to Furnivall Manor House, in Northumberland, and my lord spoke as if it had been her mother's wish that she should live with his family, and as if he had no objections, or that one or two more or less could make no difference in so grand a household. So, though that was not the way in which I should have wished the coming of my bright and pretty pet to have been looked at— who was like a sunbeam in any family, be it never so grand— I was well pleased that all the folks in the Dale should stare and admire, when they heard I was going to be young lady's maid at my Lord Furnivall's at Furnivall Manor.

But I made a mistake in thinking we were to go and live where my lord did. It turned out that the family had left Furnivall Manor House fifty years or more. I could not hear that my poor young mistress had ever been there, though she had been brought up in the family;



and I was sorry for that, for I should have liked Miss Rosamond's youth to have passed where her mother's had been.

My lord's gentleman, from whom I asked as many questions as I durst, said that the Manor House was at the foot of the Cumberland Fells, and a very grand place; that an old Miss Furnivall, a great-aunt of my lord's, lived there, with only a few servants; but that it was a very healthy place, and my lord had thought that it would suit Miss Rosamond very well for a few years, and that her being there might perhaps amuse his old aunt.

I was bidden by my lord to have Miss Rosamond's things ready by a certain day. He was a stern, proud man, as they say all the Lord Furnivalls were; and he never spoke a word more than was necessary. Folk did say he had loved my young mistress; but that, because she knew that his father would object, she would never listen to him, and married Mr. Esthwaite; but I don't know. He never married at any rate. But he never took much notice of Miss Rosamond; which I thought he might have done if he had cared for her dead mother. He sent his gentleman with us to the Manor House, telling him to join him at Newcastle that same evening; so there was no great length of time for him to make us known to all the strangers before he, too, shook us off; and we were left, two lonely young things (I was not eighteen), in the great old Manor House. It seems like yesterday that we drove there. We had left our own dear parsonage very early, and we had both cried as if our hearts would break, though we were travelling in my lord's carriage, which I had thought so much of once. And now it was long past noon on a September day, and we stopped to change horses for the last time at a little smoky town, all full of colliers and miners. Miss Rosamond had fallen asleep, but Mr. Henry told me to waken her, that she might see the park and the Manor House as we drove up. I thought it rather a pity; but I did what he bade me, for

fear he should complain of me to my lord. We had left all signs of a town or even a village, and were then inside the gates of a large wild park— not like the parks here in the south, but with rocks, and the noise of running water, and gnarled thorn-trees, and old oaks, all white and peeled with age.

The road went up about two miles, and then we saw a great and stately house, with many trees close around it, so close that in some places their branches dragged against the walls when the wind blew; and some hung broken down; for no one seemed to take much charge of the place;— to lop the wood, or to keep the moss-covered carriageway in order. Only in front of the house all was clear. The great oval drive was without a weed; and neither tree nor creeper was allowed to grow over the long, many-windowed front; at both sides of which a wing projected, which were each the ends of other side fronts; for the house, although it was so desolate, was even grander than I expected. Behind it rose the Fells, which seemed unenclosed and bare enough; and on the left hand of the house as you stood facing it, was a little old-fashioned flower-garden, as I found out afterwards. A door opened out upon it from the west front; it had been scooped out of the thick dark wood for some old Lady Furnivall; but the branches of the great forest trees had grown and overshadowed it again, and there were very few flowers that would live there at that time.

When we drove up to the great front entrance, and went into the hall I thought we should be lost— it was so large, and vast, and grand. There was a chandelier all of bronze, hung down from the middle of the ceiling; and I had never seen one before, and looked at it all in amaze. Then, at one end of the hall, was a great fireplace, as large as the sides of the houses in my country, with massy andirons and dogs to hold the wood; and by it were heavy old-fashioned sofas. At the opposite end of the hall, to the left as you went in— on the western side— was

an organ built into the wall, and so large that it filled up the best part of that end. Beyond it, on the same side, was a door; and opposite, on each side of the fire-place, were also doors leading to the east front; but those I never went through as long as I stayed in the house, so I can't tell you what lay beyond.

The afternoon was closing in, and the hall, which had no fire lighted in it, looked dark and

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gloomy; but we did not stay there a moment. The old servant who had opened the door for us bowed to Mr. Henry, and took us in through the door at the further side of the great organ, and led us through several smaller halls and passages into the west drawing-room, where he said that Miss Furnivall was sitting. Poor little Miss Rosamond held very tight to me, as if she were scared and lost in that great place, and, as for myself, I was not much better. The west drawing-room was very cheerful-looking, with a warm fire in it, and plenty of good comfortable furniture about. Miss Furnivall was an old lady not far from eighty, I should think, but I do not know. She was thin and tall, and had a face as full of fine wrinkles as if they had been drawn all over it with a needle's point. Her eyes were very watchful, to make up, I suppose, for her being so deaf as to be obliged to use a trumpet. Sitting with her, working at the same great piece of tapestry, was Mrs. Stark, her maid and companion, and almost as old as she was. She had lived with Miss Furnivall ever since they both were young, and now she seemed more like a friend than a servant; she looked so cold and grey, and stony, as if she had never loved or cared for any one; and I don't suppose she did care for any one, except her mistress; and, owing to the great deafness of the latter, Mrs. Stark treated her very much as if she were a child. Mr. Henry gave some message from my lord, and then he bowed good-bye to us all,— taking no notice of my sweet little Miss Rosamond's out-

stretched hand— and left us standing there, being looked at by the two old ladies through their spectacles.

I was right glad when they rung for the old footman who had shown us in at first, and told him to take us to our rooms. So we went out of that great drawing-room, and into another sitting-room, and out of that, and then up a great flight of stairs, and along a broad gallery— which was something like a library, having books all down one side, and windows and writing-tables all down the other — till we came to our rooms, which I was not sorry to hear were just over the kitchens; for I began to think I should be lost in that wilderness of a house. There was an old nursery, that had been used for all the little lords and ladies long ago, with a pleasant fire burning in the grate, and the kettle boiling on the hob, and tea things spread out on the table; and out of that room was the night-nursery, with a little crib for Miss Rosamond close to my bed. And old James called up Dorothy, his wife, to bid us welcome; and both he and she were so hospitable and kind, that by-and-by Miss Rosamond and me felt quite at home; and by the time tea was over, she was sitting on Dorothy's knee, and chattering away as fast as her little tongue could go. I soon found out that Dorothy was from Westmoreland, and that bound her and me together, as it were; and I would never wish to meet with kinder people than were old James and his wife. James had lived pretty nearly all his life in my lord's family, and thought there was no one so grand as they. He even looked down a little on his wife; because, till he had married her, she had never lived in any but a farmer's household. But he was very fond of her, as well he might be. They had one servant under them, to do all the rough work. Agnes they called her; and she and me, and James and Dorothy, with Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark, made up the family; always remembering my sweet little Miss Rosamond! I used to wonder what they had done



before she came, they thought so much of her now. Kitchen and drawing-room, it was all the same. The hard, sad Miss Furnivall, and the cold Mrs. Stark, looked pleased when she came fluttering in like a bird, playing and pranking hither and thither, with a continual murmur, and pretty prattle of gladness. I am sure, they were sorry many a time when she flitted away into the kitchen, though they were too proud to ask her to stay with them, and were a little surprised at her taste; though, to be sure, as Mrs. Stark said, it was not to be wondered at, remembering what stock her father had come of. The great, old rambling house, was a famous place for little Miss Rosamond. She made expeditions all over it, with me at her heels; all, except the east wing, which was never opened, and whither we never thought of going. But in the western and northern part was many a pleasant room; full of things that were curiosities to us, though they might not have been to people who had seen more. The windows were darkened by the sweeping boughs of the trees, and the ivy which had overgrown them: but, in the green gloom, we could manage to see old China jars and carved ivory boxes, and great heavy books, and, above all, the old pictures!

Once, I remember, my darling would have Dorothy go with us to tell us who they all were; for they were all portraits of some of my lord's family, though Dorothy could not tell us the names of every one. We had gone through most of the rooms, when we came to the old state drawing-room, over the hall, and there was a picture of Miss Furnivall; or, as she was called in those days, Miss Grace, for she was the younger sister. Such a beauty she must have been! but with such a set, proud look, and such scorn looking out of her handsome eyes, with her eyebrows just a little raised, as if she wondered how any one could have the impertinence to look at her; and her lip curled at us, as we stood there gazing. She had a dress on, the like of which I had never seen before, but it was all the fash-

ion when she was young; a hat of some soft white stuff like beaver, pulled a little over her brows, and a beautiful plume of feathers sweeping round it on one side; and her gown of blue satin was open in front to a quilted white stomacher.

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"Well, to be sure!" said I, when I had gazed my fill. "Flesh is grass, they do say; but who would have thought that Miss Furnivall had been such an out-and-out beauty, to see her now?"

"Yes," said Dorothy. "Folks change sadly. But if what my master's father used to say was true, Miss Furnivall, the elder sister, was handsomer than Miss Grace. Her picture is here somewhere; but, if I show it you, you must never let on, even to James, that you have seen it. Can the little lady hold her tongue, think you?" asked she.

I was not so sure, for she was such a little sweet, bold, open-spoken child, so I set her to hide herself; and then I helped Dorothy to turn a great picture, that leaned with its face towards the wall, and was not hung up as the others were. To be sure, it beat Miss Grace for beauty; and, I think, for scornful pride, too, though in that matter it might be hard to choose. I could have looked at it an hour, but Dorothy seemed half frightened of having shown it to me, and hurried it back again, and bade me run and find Miss Rosamond, for that there were some ugly places about the house, where she should like ill for the child to go. I was a brave, high-spirited girl, and thought little of what the old woman said, for I liked hide-and-peek as well as any child in the parish; so off I ran to find my little one.

As winter drew on, and the days grew shorter, I was sometimes almost certain that I heard a noise as if some one was playing on the great organ in the hall. I did not hear it every evening; but, certainly, I did very often; usually when I was sitting with Miss Rosamond, after I had put

her to bed, and keeping quite still and silent in the bedroom. Then I used to hear it booming and swelling away in the distance. The first night, when I went down to my supper, I asked Dorothy who had been playing music, and James said very shortly that I was a gowk to take the wind souging among the trees for music; but I saw Dorothy look at him very fearfully, and Bessy, the kitchen- maid, said something beneath her breath, and went quite white. I saw they did not like my question, so I held my peace till I was with Dorothy alone, when I knew I could get a good deal out of her. So, the next day, I watched my time, and I coaxed and asked her who it was that played the organ; for I knew that it was the organ and not the wind well enough, for all I had kept silence before James. But Dorothy had had her lesson, I'll warrant, and never a word could I get from her. So then I tried Bessy, though I had always held my head rather above her, as I was evened to James and Dorothy, and she was little better than their servant. So she said I must never, never tell; and, if I ever told, I was never to say *she* had told me; but it was a very strange noise, and she had heard it many a time, but most of all on winter nights, and before storms; and folks did say, it was the old lord playing on the great organ in the hall, just as he used to do when he was alive; but who the old lord was, or why he played, and why he played on stormy winter evenings in particular, she either could not or would not tell me. Well! I told you I had a brave heart; and I thought it was rather pleasant to have that grand music rolling about the house, let who would be the player; for now it rose above the great gusts of wind, and wailed and triumphed just like a living creature, and then it fell to a softness most complete; only it was always music and tunes, so it was nonsense to call it the wind. I thought, at first, it might be Miss Furnivall who played, unknown to Bessy; but, one day when I was in the hall by myself, I opened the organ and peeped

all about it, and around it, as I had done to the organ in Crosthwaite Church once before, and I saw it was all broken and destroyed inside, though it looked so brave and fine; and then, though it was noon-day, my flesh began to creep a little, and I shut it up, and ran away pretty quickly to my own bright nursery; and I did not like hearing the music for some time after that, any more than James and Dorothy did. All this time Miss Rosamond was making herself more and more beloved. The old ladies liked her to dine with them at their early dinner; James stood behind Miss Furnivall's chair, and I behind Miss Rosamond's, all in state; and, after dinner, she would play about in a corner of the great drawing-room, as still as any mouse, while Miss Furnivall slept, and I had my dinner in the kitchen. But she was glad enough to come to me in the nursery afterwards; for, as she said, Miss Furnivall was so sad, and Mrs. Stark so dull; but she and I were merry enough; and, by-and-by, I got not to care for that weird rolling music, which did one no harm, if we did not know where it came from.

That winter was very cold. In the middle of October the frosts began, and lasted many, many weeks. I remember, one day at dinner, Miss Furnivall lifted up her sad, heavy eyes, and said to Mrs. Stark, "I am afraid we shall have a terrible winter," in a strange kind of meaning way. But Mrs. Stark pretended not to hear, and talked very loud of something else. My little lady and I did not care for the frost;— not we! As long as it was dry we climbed up the steep brows, behind the house, and went up on the Fells, which were bleak and bare enough, and there we ran races in the fresh, sharp air; and once we came down by a new path that took us past the two old gnarled holly-trees, which grew about half-way down by the east side of the house. But the days grew shorter and shorter; and the old lord, if it was he, played away more and more stormily and sadly on the great organ. One Sunday afternoon,— it must

have been towards the end of November

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— I asked Dorothy to take charge of little Missey when, she came out of the drawing-room, after Miss Furnivall had had her nap; for it was too cold to take her with me to church, and yet I wanted to go. And Dorothy was glad enough to promise, and was so fond of the child that all seemed well; and Bessy and I set off very briskly, though the sky hung heavy and black over the white earth, as if the night had never fully gone away; and the air, though still, was very biting and keen.

"We shall have a fall of snow," said Bessy to me. And sure enough, even while we were in church, it came down thick, in great large flakes, so thick it almost darkened the windows. It had stopped snowing before we came out, but it lay soft, thick and deep beneath our feet, as we tramped home. Before we got to the hall the moon rose, and I think it was lighter then,— what with the moon, and what with the white dazzling snow — than it had been when we went to church, between two and three o'clock. I have not told you that Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark never went to church: they used to read the prayers together, in their quiet gloomy way; they seemed to feel the Sunday very long without their tapestry-work to be busy at. So when I went to Dorothy in the kitchen, to fetch Miss Rosamond and take her up-stairs with me, I did not much wonder when the old woman told me that the ladies had kept the child with them, and that she had never come to the kitchen, as I had bidden her, when she was tired of behaving pretty in the drawing-room. So I took off my things and went to find her, and bring her to her supper in the nursery. But when I went into the best drawing-room, there sat the two old ladies, very still and quiet, dropping out a word now and then, but looking as if nothing so bright and merry as Miss Rosamond had ever been near them. Still I thought she might be

hiding from me; it was one of her pretty ways; and that she had persuaded them to look as if they knew nothing about her; so I went softly peeping under this sofa, and behind that chair, making believe I was sadly frightened at not finding her.

"What's the matter, Hester?" said Mrs. Stark sharply. I don't know if Miss Furnivall had seen me, for, as I told you, she was very deaf, and she sat quite still, idly staring into the fire, with her hopeless face. "I'm only looking for my little Rosy-Posy," replied I, still thinking that the child was there, and near me, though I could not see her.

"Miss Rosamond is not here," said Mrs. Stark. "She went away more than an hour ago to find Dorothy." And she too turned and went on looking into the fire.

My heart sank at this, and I began to wish I had never left my darling. I went back to Dorothy and told her. James was gone out for the day, but she and me and Bessy took lights, and went up into the nursery first and then we roamed over the great large house, calling and entreating Miss Rosamond to come out of her hiding place, and not frighten us to death in that way. But there was no answer; no sound.

"Oh!" said I at last, "Can she have got into the east wing and hidden there?"

But Dorothy said it was not possible, for that she herself had never been in there; that the doors were always locked, and my lord's steward had the keys, she believed; at any rate, neither she nor James had ever seen them: so, I said I would go back and see if, after all, she was not hidden in the drawing-room, unknown to the old ladies; and if I found her there, I said, I would whip her well for the fright she had given me; but I never meant to do it. Well, I went back to the west drawing-room, and I told Mrs. Stark we could not find her anywhere, and asked for leave to look all about the furniture there, for I thought now, that she might have fallen asleep in some warm hidden

corner; but no! we looked, Miss Furnivall got up and looked, trembling all over, and she was no where there; then we set off again, every one in the house, and looked in all the places we had searched before, but we could not find her. Miss Furnivall shivered and shook so much, that Mrs. Stark took her back into the warm drawing-room; but not before they had made me promise to bring her to them when she was found. Well- a-day! I began to think she never would be found, when I bethought me to look out into the great front court, all covered with snow. I was up-stairs when I looked out; but, it was such clear moonlight, I could see quite plain two little footprints, which might be traced from the hall door, and round the corner of the east wing. I don't know how I got down, but I tugged open the great, stiff hall door; and, throwing the skirt of my gown over my head for a cloak, I ran out. I turned the east corner, and there a black shadow fell on the snow; but when I came again into the moonlight, there were the little footmarks going up— up to the Fells. It was bitter cold; so cold that the air almost took the skin off my face as I ran, but I ran on, crying to think how my poor little darling must be perished and frightened. I was within sight of the holly-trees, when I saw a shepherd coming down the hill, bearing something in his arms wrapped in his maud. He shouted to me, and asked me if I had lost a bairn; and, when I could not speak for crying, he bore towards me, and I saw my wee bairnie lying still, and white, and stiff, in his arms, as if she had been dead. He told me he had been up the Fells to gather in his sheep, before the deep cold of night came on, and that under the holly-trees (black marks on the hill-side, where no other bush was for miles around) he had found my little lady— my lamb— my queen— my darling— stiff and

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cold, in the terrible sleep which is frost- be- gotten. Oh! the joy, and the tears of having her

in my arms once again! for I would not let him carry her; but took her, maud and all, into my own arms, and held her near my own warm neck and heart, and felt the life stealing slowly back again into her little gentle limbs. But she was still insensible when we reached the hall, and I had no breath for speech. We went in by the kitchen door.

"Bring the warming-pan," said I; and I carried her up-stairs and began undressing her by the nursery fire, which Bessy had kept up. I called my little lammie all the sweet and playful names I could think of,— even while my eyes were blinded by my tears; and at last, oh! at length she opened her large blue eyes. Then I put her into her warm bed, and sent Dorothy down to tell Miss Furnivall that all was well; and I made up my mind to sit by my darling's bedside the live-long night. She fell away into a soft sleep as soon as her pretty head had touched the pillow, and I watched by her till morning light; when she wakened up bright and clear— or so I thought at first— and, my dears, so I think now.

She said, that she had fancied that she should like to go to Dorothy, for that both the old ladies were asleep, and it was very dull in the drawing-room; and that, as she was going through the west lobby, she saw the snow through the high window falling— falling— soft and steady; but she wanted to see it lying pretty and white on the ground; so she made her way into the great hall; and then, going to the window, she saw it bright and soft upon the drive; but while she stood there, she saw a little girl, not so old as she was, "but so pretty," said my darling, "and this little girl beckoned to me to come out; and oh, she was so pretty and so sweet, I could not choose but go." And then this other little girl had taken her by the hand, and side by side the two had gone round the east corner.

"Now you are a naughty little girl, and telling stories," said I. "What would your good mamma, that is in heaven, and never told a



story in her life, say to her little Rosamond, if she heard her—and I dare say she does—telling stories!"

"Indeed, Hester," sobbed out my child; "I'm telling you true. Indeed I am."

"Don't tell me!" said I, very stern. "I tracked you by your foot-marks through the snow; there were only yours to be seen: and if you had had a little girl to go hand-in-hand with you up the hill, don't you think the foot-prints would have gone along with yours?"

"I can't help it, dear, dear Hester," said she, crying, "if they did not; I never looked at her feet, but she held my hand fast and tight in her little one, and it was very, very cold. She took me up the Fell-path, up to the holly trees; and there I saw a lady weeping and crying; but when she saw me, she hushed her weeping, and smiled very proud and grand, and took me on her knee, and began to lull me to sleep; and that's all, Hester—but that is true; and my dear mamma knows it is," said she, crying. So I thought the child was in a fever, and pretended to believe her, as she went over her story—over and over again, and always the same. At last Dorothy knocked at the door with Miss Rosamond's breakfast; and she told me the old ladies were down in the eating-parlour, and that they wanted to speak to me. They had both been into the night-nursery the evening before, but it was after Miss Rosamond was asleep; so they had only looked at her—not asked me any questions.

"I shall catch it," thought I to myself, as I went along the north gallery. "And yet," I thought, taking courage, "it was in their charge I left her; and it's they that's to blame for letting her steal away unknown and unwatched." So I went in boldly, and told my story. I told it all to Miss Furnivall, shouting it close to her ear; but when I came to the mention of the other little girl out in the snow, coaxing and tempting her out, and wiling her up to the grand and beautiful lady by the Holly-tree, she threw

her arms up—her old and withered arms—and cried aloud, "Oh! Heaven, forgive! Have mercy!"

Mrs. Stark took hold of her; roughly enough, I thought; but she was past Mrs. Stark's management, and spoke to me, in a kind of wild warning and authority.

"Hester! keep her from that child! It will lure her to her death! That evil child! Tell her it is a wicked, naughty child." Then, Mrs. Stark hurried me out of the room; where, indeed, I was glad enough to go; but Miss Furnivall kept shrieking out, "Oh! have mercy! Wilt Thou never forgive! It is many a long year ago——"

I was very uneasy in my mind after that. I durst never leave Miss Rosamond, night or day, for fear lest she might slip off again, after some fancy or other; and all the more, because I thought I could make out that Miss Furnivall was crazy, from their odd ways about her; and I was afraid lest something of the same kind (which might be in the family, you know) hung over my darling. And the great frost never ceased all this time; and, whenever it was a more stormy night than usual, between the gusts, and through the wind, we heard the old lord playing on the great organ. But, old lord, or not, wherever Miss Rosamond went, there I followed; for my love for her, pretty helpless orphan, was stronger than my fear for the grand and terrible sound. Besides, it rested with me to keep her cheerful and merry, as beseemed her age. So we played together, and wandered together, here and there, and everywhere; for I never dared

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to lose sight of her again in that large and rambling house. And so it happened, that one afternoon, not long before Christmas day, we were playing together on the billiard-table in the great hall (not that we knew the right way of playing, but she liked to roll the smooth ivory balls with her pretty hands, and I liked to do

whatever she did); and, by-and-bye, without our noticing it, it grew dusk indoors, though it was still light in the open air, and I was thinking of taking her back into the nursery, when, all of a sudden, she cried out:

"Look, Hester! look! there is my poor little girl out in the snow!"

I turned towards the long narrow windows, and there, sure enough, I saw a little girl, less than my Miss Rosamond—dressed all unfit to be out-of-doors such a bitter night—crying, and beating against the window-panes, as if she wanted to be let in. She seemed to sob and wail, till Miss Rosamond could bear it no longer, and was flying to the door to open it, when, all of a sudden, and close upon us, the great organ pealed out so loud and thundering, it fairly made me tremble; and all the more, when I remembered me that, even in the stillness of that dead-cold weather, I had heard no sound of little battering hands upon the window-glass, although the Phantom Child had seemed to put forth all its force; and, although I had seen it wail and cry, no faintest touch of sound had fallen upon my ears. Whether I remembered all this at the very moment, I do not know; the great organ sound had so stunned me into terror; but this I know, I caught up Miss Rosamond before she got the hall-door opened, and clutched her, and carried her away, kicking and screaming, into the large bright kitchen, where Dorothy and Agnes were busy with their mince-pies.

"What is the matter with my sweet one?" cried Dorothy, as I bore in Miss Rosamond, who was sobbing as if her heart would break.

"She won't let me open the door for my little girl to come in; and she'll die if she is out on the Fells all night. Cruel, naughty Hester," she said, slapping me; but she might have struck harder, for I had seen a look of ghastly terror on Dorothy's face, which made my very blood run cold.

"Shut the back kitchen door fast, and bolt it

well," said she to Agnes. She said no more; she gave me raisins and almonds to quiet Miss Rosamond: but she sobbed about the little girl in the snow, and would not touch any of the good things. I was thankful when she cried herself to sleep in bed. Then I stole down to the kitchen, and told Dorothy I had made up my mind. I would carry my darling back to my father's house in Applethwaite; where, if we lived humbly, we lived at peace. I said I had been frightened enough with the old lord's organ-playing; but now, that I had seen for myself this little moaning child, all decked out as no child in the neighbourhood could be, beating and battering to get in, yet always without any sound or noise—with the dark wound on its right shoulder; and that Miss Rosamond had known it again for the phantom that had nearly lured her to her death (which Dorothy knew was true); I would stand it no longer.

I saw Dorothy change colour once or twice. When I had done, she told me she did not think I could take Miss Rosamond with me, for that she was my lord's ward, and I had no right over her; and she asked me, would I leave the child that I was so fond of, just for sounds and sights that could do me no harm; and that they had all had to get used to in their turns? I was all in a hot, trembling passion; and I said it was very well for her to talk, that knew what these sights and noises betokened, and that had, perhaps, had something to do with the Spectre-child while it was alive. And I taunted her so, that she told me all she knew, at last; and then I wished I had never been told, for it only made me more afraid than ever.

She said she had heard the tale from old neighbours, that were alive when she was first married; when folks used to come to the hall sometimes before it had got such a bad name on the country side: it might not be true, or it might, what she had been told.

The old lord was Miss Furnivall's father—Miss Grace, as Dorothy called her, for Miss



Maude was the elder, and Miss Furnivall by rights. The old lord was eaten up with pride. Such a proud man was never seen or heard of; and his daughters were like him. No one was good enough to wed them, although they had choice enough; for they were the great beauties of their day, as I had seen by their portraits, where they hung in the state drawing-room. But, as the old saying is, "Pride will have a fall;" and these two haughty beauties fell in love with the same man, and he no better than a foreign musician, whom their father had down from London to play music with him at the Manor House. For, above all things, next to his pride, the old lord loved music. He could play on nearly every instrument that ever was heard of; and it was a strange thing it did not soften him; but he was a fierce dour old man, and had broken his poor wife's heart with his cruelty, they said. He was mad after music, and would pay any money for it. So he got this foreigner to come; who made such beautiful music, that they said the very birds on the trees stopped their singing to listen. And, by degrees, this foreign gentleman got such a hold over the old lord, that nothing would serve him but that he must come every year; and it was he that had the great organ brought from Holland and built up in the hall, where it stood now. He taught the old lord to play on it; but many and many a time, when Lord

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Furnivall was thinking of nothing but his fine organ, and his finer music, the dark foreigner was walking abroad in the woods with one of the young ladies; now Miss Maude, and then Miss Grace.

Miss Maude won the day and carried off the prize, such as it was; and he and she were married, all unknown to any one; and before he made his next yearly visit, she had been confined of a little girl at a farm-house on the Moors, while her father and Miss Grace thought

she was away at Doncaster Races. But though she was a wife and a mother, she was not a bit softened, but as haughty and as passionate as ever; and perhaps more so, for she was jealous of Miss Grace, to whom her foreign husband paid a deal of court— by way of blinding her— as he told his wife. But Miss Grace triumphed over Miss Maude, and Miss Maude grew fiercer and fiercer, both with her husband and with her sister; and the former— who could easily shake off what was disagreeable, and hide himself in foreign countries— went away a month before his usual time that summer, and half threatened that he would never come back again. Meanwhile, the little girl was left at the farm-house, and her mother used to have her horse saddled and gallop wildly over the hills to see her once every week, at the very least— for where she loved, she loved; and where she hated, she hated. And the old lord went on playing — playing on his organ; and the servants thought the sweet music he made had soothed down his awful temper, of which (Dorothy said) some terrible tales could be told. He grew infirm too, and had to walk with a crutch; and his son— that was the present Lord Furnivall's father— was with the army in America, and the other son at sea; so Miss Maude had it pretty much her own way, and she and Miss Grace grew colder and bitterer to each other every day; till at last they hardly ever spoke, except when the old lord was by. The foreign musician came again the next summer, but it was for the last time; for they led him such a life with their jealousy and their passions, that he grew weary, and went away, and never was heard of again. And Miss Maude, who had always meant to have her marriage acknowledged when her father should be dead, was left now a deserted wife— whom nobody knew to have been married— with a child that she dared not own, although she loved it to distraction; living with a father whom she feared, and a sister whom she hated. When the next summer passed over and the dark for-

eigner never came, both Miss Maude and Miss Grace grew gloomy and sad; they had a haggard look about them, though they looked handsome as ever. But by and by Miss Maude brightened; for her father grew more and more infirm, and more than ever carried away by his music; and she and Miss Grace lived almost entirely apart, having separate rooms, the one on the west side— Miss Maude on the east— those very rooms which were now shut up. So she thought she might have her little girl with her, and no one need ever know except those who dared not speak about it, and were bound to believe that it was, as she said, a cottager's child she had taken a fancy to. All this, Dorothy said, was pretty well known; but what came afterwards no one knew, except Miss Grace, and Mrs. Stark, who was even then her maid, and much more of a friend to her than ever her sister had been. But the servants supposed, from words that were dropped, that Miss Maude had triumphed over Miss Grace, and told her that all the time the dark foreigner had been mocking her with pretended love— he was her own husband; the colour left Miss Grace's cheek and lips that very day for ever, and she was heard to say many a time that sooner or later she would have her revenge; and Mrs. Stark was for ever spying about the east rooms.

One fearful night, just after the New Year had come in, when the snow was lying thick and deep, and the flakes were still falling— fast enough to blind any one who might be out and abroad— there was a great and violent noise heard, and the old lord's voice above all, cursing and swearing awfully,— and the cries of a little child,— and the proud defiance of a fierce woman,— and the sound of a blow, — and a dead stillness,— and moans and wailings dying away on the hill-side! Then the old lord summoned all his servants, and told them, with terrible oaths, and words more terrible, that his daughter had disgraced herself, and that he had turned her out of doors,— her, and her child,—

and that if ever they gave her help,— or food— or shelter,— he prayed that they might never enter Heaven. And, all the while, Miss Grace stood by him, white and still as any stone; and when he had ended she heaved a great sigh, as much as to say her work was done, and her end was accomplished. But the old lord never touched his organ again, and died within the year; and no wonder! for, on the morrow of that wild and fearful night, the shepherds, coming down the Fell side, found Miss Maude sitting, all crazy and smiling, under the holly-trees, nursing a dead child,— with a terrible mark on its right shoulder. "But that was not what killed it," said Dorothy; "it was the frost and the cold,— every wild creature was in its hole, and every beast in its fold,— while the child and its mother were turned out to wander on the Fells! And now you know all! and I wonder if you are less frightened now?"

I was more frightened than ever; but I said I was not. I wished Miss Rosamond and myself well out of that dreadful house for ever; but I would not leave her, and I dared not take her away. But oh! how I watched her, and guarded her! We bolted the doors,

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and shut the window-shutters fast, an hour or more before dark, rather than leave them open five minutes too late. But my little lady still heard the weird child crying and mourning; and not all we could do or say, could keep her from wanting to go to her, and let her in from the cruel wind and the snow. All this time, I kept away from Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark, as much as ever I could; for I feared them— I knew no good could be about them, with their grey hard faces, and their dreamy eyes, looking back into the ghastly years that were gone. But, even in my fear, I had a kind of pity— for Miss Furnivall, at least. Those gone down to the pit can hardly have a more hopeless look than that which was ever on her face. At last I even got so

sorry for her— who never said a word but what was quite forced from her— that I prayed for her; and I taught Miss Rosamond to pray for one who had done a deadly sin; but often when she came to those words, she would listen, and start up from her knees, and say, "I hear my little girl plaining and crying very sad— Oh! let her in, or she will die!"

One night— just after New Year's Day had come at last, and the long winter had taken a turn as I hoped— I heard the west drawing-room bell ring three times, which was the signal for me. I would not leave Miss Rosamond alone, for all she was asleep— for the old lord had been playing wilder than ever— and I feared lest my darling should waken to hear the spectre child; see her I knew she could not. I had fastened the windows too well for that. So, I took her out of her bed and wrapped her up in such outer clothes as were most handy, and carried her down to the drawing-room, where the old ladies sat at their tapestry work as usual. They looked up when I came in, and Mrs. Stark asked, quite astounded, "Why did I bring Miss Rosamond there, out of her warm bed?" I had begun to whisper, "Because I was afraid of her being tempted out while I was away, by the wild child in the snow," when she stopped me short (with a glance at Miss Furnivall) and said Miss Furnivall wanted me to undo some work she had done wrong, and which neither of them could see to unpick. So, I laid my pretty dear on the sofa, and sat down on a stool by them, and hardened my heart against them as I heard the wind rising and howling.

Miss Rosamond slept on sound, for all the wind blew so; and Miss Furnivall said never a word, nor looked round when the gusts shook the windows. All at once she started up to her fall height, and put up one hand as if to bid us listen.

"I hear voices!" said she. "I hear terrible screams— I hear my father's voice!"

Just at that moment, my darling wakened

with a sudden start: "My little girl is crying, oh, how she is crying!" and she tried to get up and go to her, but she got her feet entangled in the blanket, and I caught her up; for my flesh had begun to creep at these noises, which they heard while we could catch no sound. In a minute or two the noises came, and gathered fast, and filled our ears; we, too, heard voices and screams, and no longer heard the winter's wind that raged abroad. Mrs. Stark looked at me, and I at her, but we dared not speak. Suddenly Miss Furnivall went towards the door, out into the ante-room, through the west lobby, and opened the door into the great hall. Mrs. Stark followed, and I durst not be left, though my heart almost stopped beating for fear. I wrapped my darling tight in my arms, and went out with them. In the hall the screams were louder than ever; they sounded to come from the east wing— nearer and nearer— close on the other side of the locked-up doors— close behind them. Then I noticed that the great bronze chandelier seemed all alight, though the hall was dim, and that a fire was blazing in the vast hearth-place, though it gave no heat; and I shuddered up with terror, and folded my darling closer to me. But as I did so, the east door shook, and she, suddenly struggling to get free from me, cried, "Hester! I must go! My little girl is there; I hear her; she is coming! Hester, I must go!"

I held her tight with all my strength; with a set will, I held her. If I had died, my hands would have grasped her still; I was so resolved in my mind. Miss Furnivall stood listening, and paid no regard to my darling, who had got down to the ground, and whom I, upon my knees now, was holding with both my arms clasped round her neck; she still striving and crying to get free.

All at once, the east door gave way with a thundering crash, as if torn open in a violent passion, and there came into that broad and mysterious light, the figure of a tall old man, with grey hair and gleaming eyes. He drove

before him, with many a relentless gesture of abhorrence, a stern and beautiful woman, with a little child clinging to her dress.

"Oh Hester! Hester!" cried Miss Rosamond. "It's the lady! the lady below the holly-trees; and my little girl is with her. Hester! Hester! let me go to her; they are drawing me to them. I feel them— I feel them. I must go!"

Again she was almost convulsed by her efforts to get away; but I held her tighter and tighter, till I feared I should do her a hurt; but rather than let her go towards those terrible phantoms. They passed along towards the great hall-door, where the winds howled and ravened for their prey; but before they reached that, the lady turned; and I could see that she defied the old man with a fierce and proud defiance; but then she quailed— and then she threw up her arms wildly and piteously to save her child— her little child— from a blow from his uplifted crutch.

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And Miss Rosamond was torn as by a power stronger than mine, and writhed in my arms, and sobbed (for by this time the poor darling was growing faint).

"They want me to go with them on to the Fells— they are drawing me to them. Oh, my little girl! I would come, but cruel, wicked Hester holds me very tight." But when she saw the uplifted crutch she swooned away, and I

thanked God for it. Just at this moment— when the tall old man, his hair streaming as in the blast of a furnace, was going to strike the little shrinking child— Miss Furnivall, the old woman by my side, cried out, "Oh. father! father! spare the little innocent child!" But just then I saw— we all saw— another phantom shape itself, and grow clear out of the blue and misty light that filled the hall; we had not seen her till now, for it was another lady who stood by the old man, with a look of relentless hate and triumphant scorn. That figure was very beautiful to look upon, with a soft white hat drawn down over the proud brows, and a red and curling lip. It was dressed in an open robe of blue satin. I had seen that figure before. It was the likeness of Miss Furnivall in her youth; and the terrible phantoms moved on, regardless of old Miss Furnivall's wild entreaty,— and the uplifted crutch fell on the right shoulder of the little child, and the younger sister looked on, stony and deadly serene. But at that moment, the dim lights, and the fire that gave no heat, went out of themselves, and Miss Furnivall lay at our feet stricken down by the palsy — death-stricken.

Yes! she was carried to her bed that night never to rise again. She lay with her face to the wall, muttering low but muttering away: "Alas! alas! what is done in youth can never be undone in age! What is done in youth can never be undone in age!"

Article: ‘The Old Nurse's Story’ by Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell

Journal: *Household Words*, Volume VI, Magazine 1852 Christmas, 25 December 1852, Pages: 583-592

Author(s):

- Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell

Gaskell, Elizabeth Cleghorn (Stevenson) I *Mrs Gaskell* I 1810-1865, novelist. Attended the Misses Byerley's school in Stratford-on-Avon. In 1832 married William Gaskell. Her first published writing, verse written in collaboration with her husband, appeared in *Blackwood's*, 1837. Thereafter contributed to *Howitt's Journal*, *Sunday School Penny Magazine*, both of Dickens's periodicals, *Cornhill*; occasionally to other periodicals. Published in book form *Mary Barton*, 1848; *Ruth*, 1853; and *Sylvia's Lovers*, 1863; published her other novels first as serials in periodicals; *Wives and Daughters* was appearing in *Cornhill* at time of her death. Author also of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 1857.

Mrs. Gaskell sent Dickens a copy of *Mary Barton* soon after the book was published; she seems to have first met him in 1849. In that year she was among the guests at the *David Copperfield* celebration dinner. Later, Dickens at times visited the Gaskells when he was in Manchester. On occasion, in the early years of their acquaintance, Mrs. Gaskell asked him for information or assistance in helping people in whom she was interested - an unfortunate girl to be helped to emigrate to Australia, the Manchester prison philanthropist Thomas Wright to be championed in *H.W.* as worthy recipient of a Government pension. Otherwise, their association was entirely that of contributor and editor, and, in that relationship - until their dissension concerning the serialization of *North and South* [X, 61-68. Sept. 2, 1854, and the 21 following nos., ending X, 561-70. Jan. 27, 1855] - she held him in friendly regard. In a letter of 1852 (addressee unknown), she stated that she was not in the habit of writing for periodicals and wrote occasionally for *H.W.* only "as a personal mark of respect & regard to Mr Dickens" (*Letters*, No. 519, misdated 1862). Mrs. Gaskell, naturally, shared "the well-grounded feeling of dislike to the publicity" that Dickens gave to his domestic affairs in 1858. It had, she wrote, made him "extremely unpopular," and she did not wish to be announced as a contributor to his new periodical that was to appear in April of the following year (*Letters*, No. 418). Mrs. Gaskell was among the first writers whom Dickens asked to contribute to *H.W.* "... I do honestly know," he wrote to her, Jan. 31, 1850, "that there is no living English writer whose aid I would desire to enlist in preference to the authoress of *Mary Barton* (a book that most profoundly affected and impressed me). ..." If Mrs. Gaskell preferred to speak with him about the matter of contribution, he would be glad to call on her in Manchester to explain whatever she might wish to know. In response to the request, Mrs. Gaskell sent Dickens "Lizzie Leigh," [I, 2-6. March 30, 1850, and the 2 following nos.] the first chapter of which appeared in the opening number immediately following Dickens's "Preliminary Word." Thereafter, at Dickens's repeated urging, she sent him from time to time additional stories, as also articles, for some of which he had exceedingly high praise, and for their author pretty compliments. The



"Cranford" stories ["Our Society at Cranford [lead]", IV, 265-74. Dec. 13, 1851; "A Love Affair at Cranford", IV, 349-57. Jan. 3, 1852; "Memory at Cranford", IV, 588-97. March 13, 1852; "Visiting at Cranford", V, 55-64. April 3, 1852; "The Great Cranford Panic", VI, 390-96. Jan. 8, 1853, and the following no.; "Stopped Payment, at Cranford", VII, 108-15. April 2, 1853; "Friends in Need, at Cranford", VII, 220-27. May 7, 1853; "A Happy Return to Cranford", VII, 277-85. May 21, 1853] were delightful; "The Old Nurse's Story" [Christmas 1852, pp. 11-20] was "Nobly told, and wonderfully managed." Mrs. Gaskell was his "Scheherazade"; she could not write too much for *H.W.* and had "never yet written half enough"; anything that she might write would please Dickens; "it only needs be done by you to be well done" (Dec. 5 [4], Dec. 21, 1851; Nov. 6, 1852; Nov. 25, 1851; April 13, Sept. 19, 1853). When he felt it advisable to make more than slight changes in her stories he did so in consultation with her and did not insist on changes that she did not approve. (The letter in which Mrs. Gaskell objected to Dickens's alteration in "Our Society at Cranford" - his substituting mention of Hood and Hood's writings for her mention of Boz and Boz's writings - reached Dickens only after the number in which the story was to appear was already in print. He hoped that she would not blame him for what he had done "in perfect good faith." "I would do anything rather than cause you a minute's vexation arising out of what has given me so much pleasure ..." Dec. 5 [4], 1851). On Aug. 19, 1854, *H.W.* announced the forthcoming publication in its pages of "NORTH AND SOUTH. By the AUTHOR OF MARY BARTON." The same authorship ascription appeared with the title of the novel in each instalment - this being the only instance, except for *Hard Times*, in which statement of authorship accompanied a title. *North and South* was unsuited to Dickens's serialization formula, and its publication disrupted the amicable relationship that had existed between author and editor. Points of dispute centred on the condensing of material, the quantity to be included in each *H.W.* number, and the fitting of chapters into weekly instalments. Divided as Mrs. Gaskell insisted, wrote Dickens, the novel was "wearisome in the last degree," and the resultant decrease in *H.W.* sales was not to be wondered at. The whole matter was "a dreary business" (to Wills, Oct. 14, 1854). His version of the vexatious author-editor relationship during the months of the novel's serialization Dickens gave in a letter to Wilkie Collins, March 24, 1855: "You have guessed right! The best of it was that she [Mrs. Gaskell] wrote to Wills, saying she must particularly stipulate not to have her proofs touched, 'even by Mr. Dickens.' That immortal creature had gone over the proofs with great pains - had of course taken out the stiflings - hard-plungings, lungeings, and other convulsions - and had also taken out her weakenings and damagings of her own effects. 'Very well,' said the gifted Man, 'she shall have her own way. But after it's published show her this Proof, and ask her to consider whether her story would have been the better or the worse for it.'" Mrs. Gaskell admitted, to Anna Jameson, that toward the end of the novel she had infringed "all the bounds & limits they set me as to quantity," but that every page had been "grudged" her (*Letters*, No. 225). She was acutely distressed by the unsatisfactory state in which the novel had appeared. In bringing it out in book form, she explained that the serial publication had made impossible the development of the story as she had originally planned and that she had, toward the close, been compelled "to hurry on events with an improbable rapidity." To remedy these matters in some degree, she made various alterations and additions in the book publication. Despite the altercation, Mrs. Gaskell continued to contribute to *H.W.* (the instalment division of one of her stories - "Half a Life-Time Ago" [XII, 229-37. Oct. 6, 1855,

and the 2 following nos.] - again caused contention). To *A.Y.R.* Mrs. Gaskell did not wish to become a contributor. Concerning a story for which she hoped to find an American publisher, she wrote to C. E. Norton, March 9, 1859; "I *know* it is fated to go to this new Dickensy periodical, & I did so hope to escape it" (*Letters*, No. 418). Mrs. Gaskell did not comply with Dickens's request that she write a novel for *A.Y.R.*, though she did contribute shorter items. After she became a contributor to *Cornhill*, she reserved for that periodical what she considered her best writing; Dickens got the second best. She made the distinction clear in a letter to George Smith: a story "not good enough" for *Cornhill* "might be good enough" for Dickens's periodical (*Letters*, No. 451a). Some of the material that Mrs. Gaskell contributed to *H.W.* she had used before in an essay and a story published in *Sartain's Union Magazine*. The social background of the country town described in "The Last Generation in England," and some of the incidents related in that essay, appeared in the "Cranford" stories; "Martha Preston," in revised and expanded form, became 'Half a Life-Time Ago' (see Hopkins, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, and Sharps, *Mrs. Gaskell's Observation and Invention*). Mrs. Gaskell obviously contributed the material to *H.W.* as previously unpublished, and Dickens so accepted it. Mrs. Gaskell was generously paid for most of her *H.W.* contributions, though for some she was paid at the standard rate. In a letter written after she had been almost three years a contributor, she stated that she did not know the rate at which she was paid (*Letters*, No. 519, misdated 1862). The overgenerous twenty pounds that she received for her first contribution, however, so startled her that she wondered whether she were "swindling" the proprietors (*Letters*, No. 70). Mrs. Gaskell was "extremely annoyed & hurt" by the way in which an incident related in her "Disappearances" [III, 246-50. June 7, 1851] was handled in Morley's "Character-Murder," Jan. 8, 1859. In her article Mrs. Gaskell had told of the disappearance of an apprentice, with unmistakable implication that "the poor lad" had been murdered - a suspicion that had been disproved more than fifteen years before. Morley, quoting part of her account, cited it as an instance of the public's unwillingness to let rumours and scandals die even "after all the truth had been most publicly and perfectly explained." He did not, of course, mention the author of "Disappearances"; but since Mrs. Gaskell had reprinted the article in *Lizzie Leigh; and Other Tales*, her authorship was not a secret. Mrs. Gaskell wrote to Wills, protesting that Morley's article made her "say by implication" more than she had actually said; Wills's reply gave her no satisfaction (Gaskell, *Letters*, No. 418). Before the appearance of "Character-Murder," two short *H.W.* items ("A Disappearance" and "A Disappearance Cleared Up") had printed letters from readers stating facts that disproved the murder-rumour (see author details for John and William Gaunt). The first of the items was appended to "Disappearances" in the Tauchnitz Edition of the *Lizzie Leigh* collection. In addition to contributing to *H.W.*, Mrs. Gaskell at times sent to the editorial office writings of her friends and acquaintances. Not all were accepted for publication. Those that did appear in *H.W.* were the poem "The Outcast Lady," a story by Mme. De Merey, and two papers by Mrs. Jenkin. A commendatory reference to Mrs. Gaskell's novels appeared in the *H.W.* article "Doctor Dulcamara, M.P.," written by Wilkie Collins and to some extent revised by Dickens: to recover from the effect produced by reading *The Heir of Redclyffe*, stated the article, the writer had had recourse to the "restoratives" provided by better women novelists than Charlotte Yonge, among them Mrs. Gaskell. *H.W.* readers probably liked Gaskell's "Cranford" stories best of her contributions to the periodical; among the many admirers of the stories were Forster, Ruskin, Charlotte Brontë, Monckton Milnes, and

Charles Eliot Norton. Landor stated that a story related in Gaskell's "Modern Greek Songs" had provided him with "the rudiments of a story" on which he based his poem "A Modern Greek Idyl." Of the items listed below as not reprinted by Gaskell, "Cumberland Sheep-Shearers" [VI, 445-51. Jan. 22, 1853] is established as her writing by Forster's letter to her, Jan. 20, 1853 (typescript in Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds Library); "Modern Greek Songs" [IX, 25-32. Feb. 25, 1854] is so established by a letter from Dickens to her, Feb. 18, 1854. Mrs. Gaskell's being a guest, in the spring of 1852, at Lord Hatherton's seat, Teddesley Park, where John Burton was head gardener from 1851 to 1853 (Sharps, *Mrs. Gaskell's Observation and Invention*, p. 145n), authenticates her authorship of "The Schah's English Gardener" [V, 317-21. June 19, 1852]. Bibliographers and biographers have attributed to Gaskell three verse items published in *H.W.*: "Bran," "The Scholar's Story," and "A Christmas Carol." The first two are by William Gaskell, with the brief prose introduction to "The Scholar's Story" being written, according to J. A. Green, by Mrs. Gaskell. The authorship of the third has not been ascertained. Its attribution to Mrs. Gaskell rests on a misunderstanding of the Office Book system of recording. *Harper's* reprinted seven of Gaskell's *H.W.* contributions (one, only in part), two of them acknowledged to *H.W.*; of the two, one was "Lizzie Leigh," listed in the table of contents as "By Charles Dickens." The New York publishers De Witt & Davenport brought out a pirated edition, 1850, of "Lizzie Leigh" as "By Charles Dickens." They included "Lizzie Leigh" in a collection (n.d.) of three stories "By Charles Dickens" (the first item in the collection was one of Georgiana Craik's *H.W.* stories; the third, one of Howitt's). "Lizzie Leigh" "By Charles Dickens" appeared as the first of the "spirit-stirring sketches of imagined or of real life" that constituted the *Irving Offering*, 1851, the picture that served as frontispiece bearing the legend "Lizzie Leigh." "Lizzie Leigh" was included in *Choice Stories from Dickens' Household Words*, pub. Auburn, N.Y., 1854. "Disappearances" was included in the Putnam volume of selections from *H.W.*: *Home and Social Philosophy*, 2nd ser. *D.N.B.*

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

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Genre(s):

- Prose: Occasional (Christmas Story; article in Christmas or New Year Number, &c)
Short fiction or non-fiction article published as part of, or within, the framework of a Christmas Number.

Subject(s):

- Children; Childhood; Pregnancy; Childbirth; Child Rearing; Adoption; Child Labor
- Health; Diseases; Personal Injuries; Hygiene; Cleanliness—Fiction
- Medical care; Nursing; Hospitals; Hospital Care; Surgery; Medicine; Physicians
- Social classes; Class distinctions; Aristocracy (Social Class); Aristocracy (Social Class)—Fiction; Middle Class; Working Class; Servants;



- Supernatural; Superstition; Spiritualism; Clairvoyance; Mesmerism; Ghosts; Fairies; Witches; Magic; Occultism

- Work; Work and Family; Occupations; Professions; Wages

Citation (MHRA): Gaskell, Elizabeth Cleghorn, ‘The Old Nurse's Story’, *Household Words*, VI, 25 December 1852, 583-592

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