

I do not deny that I am proud of my cottage, and, if you will do me the kindness to listen, I shall be happy to tell you how it came to be mine.

Though you find me settled in Canada, I was born in an English village, in a cottage embowered in roses and honeysuckles, shaded by tall elms in which the blackbird sang, and surrounded by a thick hawthorn hedge where thrushes built their nests. Within the hedge was a nice bit of garden, where marygolds and gillyflowers, pinks and lillies, grew in a round plot before the front window, and straggled off in borders full of thyme and rue, sage and parsley, lettuce and onions, to the back, where father planted potatoes, carrots, peas and parsnips, alongside of the currant and gooseberry bushes that offered such strong temptation to my childish fingers. Often, when something reminds me of home, I think of how I used to sit on the low door-step and watch father at work in the garden, and how I tried to step in the patterns he had made in the front walk, of black and white stones and oyster shells. I remember, too, how sometimes my mother would snatch me up suddenly, rush with me to the bench, and wash my face, straighten my tangled hair, and carry me back again before you could say "Jack Robinson", and how, at such times, the squire or the parson was sure to be at the gate talking kindly to father, and how my mother would curtsy when the gentleman looked at her or said, "Good evening, Susan, and how's the little one?" meaning me.

But times changed with us sadly. I and my brothers and sisters had to go to work while we were very small; my mother, who used to be cheerful and strong, grew pale and seldom laughed; we had to leave the pretty cottage and go to a poorer one; father did no work in the garden, and was seldom at home except for his meals, and then he scolded mother because they were not better. We got scolded too, not without deserving it, I daresay, pretty often, but almost just as often for nothing, so that we got to be afraid to see father come in at the door, and were happiest when he was away. Our clothes got very poor, too, nothing but rags and patches, but clean, very clean, for poor mother worked like a slave to keep us fit to be seen; and as soon as ever my sisters could sit on a stool, they were sent to dear old "Granny", who kept a little school, to learn to knit, first garters and then stockings, so that we might have something on our feet, however coarse. We all went to Sunday-school, too, and though the parson had ceased stopping to look at our garden, he was very kind to us. All the summer long we were at work, of course, stone-picking, sparrow or crow-driving, or something of the kind; but in the winter, when there was not much in hand, Mr. Devine, our curate, used to hunt us up and teach us to read and write and do sums, by ourselves, that is, us and such other children as had to work as often as work could be got, and thus we learned a great deal which, if poor mother had been left to get it for us, we should have been without; and many a time I think of it and bless him for his kindness, for I have found that a

bit of education goes a long way here in helping a man forward, just as it does at home.

Things went on pretty much in this way without my thinking a great deal of it, until I was twelve years old! "a big thumping lad", as Granny said, smiling at me over her spectacles, "and a comfort to his poor mother."

"And what a comfort he'll be to her when he's a man", the old woman would add.

From this time her words haunted me like jack-o'-lantern haunts the fens and marshes—"What a comfort he'll be to her when he's a man"! I knew it was very little comfort she had now, poor thing, though I don't think we children were very tiresome to her—not as tiresome as some of our neighbours' children, I knew; but then she talked to us of our duty, and urged us to be good, and taught us to love God, so that we hardly *could* be as careless as others who were taught nothing by their parents. We knew what was right and what was wrong, and when we found fault with others and with each other, mother always answered, "Look at your own faults before your neighbours'". It would have been strange, therefore, if I had not been some comfort to my dear mother, at least as far as good conduct went, but now I thought of her comfort in another light. I had grown used to seeing her ill-dressed and our house ill-supplied with necessaries, but suddenly the past and the future came before me. I remembered a nice dresser full of crockery, a large cupboard with drawers full of clean towels and table-cloths, a good old clock that used to tick loudest when all things were quiet, pretty things on the mantel along with the brass candle-sticks, mother's neat bed with its check hangings and white coverlid, and herself and father going to church in respectable clothes. Now, all was gone; the last new baby, dear little Emmy, was wrapped in mother's wedding shawl for three days, till a kind lady sent mother some things by the parson's wife. There were eight of us now, and I thought with an aching heart of what poor mother would do if things went on like this until we were all grown up. Of course we should keep at work, but that would only help to feed us, and she looked so white and really was so weak that I wondered father didn't see it, and work better. And there and then the thought sprang up, "I'll work for her. I'll be a real comfort, not a make-believe". Ah! how little did I think then wherein a mother's real comfort lies; not in gifts, and gold, and fine clothes. A picture, too, sprang up in my mind of a quiet cottage home with a pretty garden in which an old man, white and worn perhaps, but good now, should walk about and enjoy his pipe, doing a little here and there, just such little jobs as his stalwart sons, having done the heavier part, left him for employment's sake, and, at the cottage door, near which a thrush in a wicker cage should sing all the day long, should sit, in her comfortable arm-chair, an aged woman, at rest, not even knitting, but smiling at a little child who should call her "Granny",—it might not be my child, but it should be my father and