

of the household, and conducted chance visitors over the ruined castle — a labour her grandparent had reluctantly relinquished after she reached the age of eighty-five; Joshua Hatherley — a man of lowly intelligence — worked as a labourer on the farm of the Gilberts, where it rose in a nest of orchards upon a slope over against Compton; and ancient Thomasin herself, now fallen upon the last waning dusk of a life unusually long, sat and dreamed — by the ingle during winter, among the flowers in summer-time — of the days left far behind her.

She sat there now on a June morning in an old canvas chair made for her by a husband dead these thirty years. Beside the dame stood an open Bible on a little table; and all around was the flow of the sap, the full choir of the birds, and the pulses of a world waking again, quickening again to the last seed in the sun-kissed furrow, to the least spore of fern within some mossy cranny of the castle walls.

Full of thought sat Thomasin, and she ran one bony finger up and down over the knotted veins that laced her other hand.