

"Is my aunt so very ill?"

"Yes. She warn't so dangerous when I come away as she had been, but next to it; almost as ill as she could be, the doctors said."

"Then I will go. I am sure my mother will not prevent it; let us go to her directly."

We did so; and far from objecting, she rather hurried me away; facilitating my departure by every means in her power, so much so, that I could scarcely repress the exclamation of surprise, which now and then rose to my lips, at the celerity of her movements and impatience of her orders. I managed to keep silent, however, and got into the carriage of which John had superintended the preparation, and drove off as rapidly as the four horses—which my aunt had desired her messenger to order at every stage—could carry me.

Absorbed in thought, I noticed nothing upon the road; and finding that, unsubdued by fatigue, John was as anxious to reach The Wold as myself, and declared he could obtain quite sufficient rest in the rumble, I decided upon travelling all night.

It was mid-day, however, before—with our utmost speed—we came to the last place for changing horses; and then, eagerly springing from his seat, John rushed towards a servant who wore the Aylmer livery, and was evidently awaiting our arrival; whilst almost directly after, I heard another carriage drive into the inn-yard behind us. I made no observation, for my attention was so entirely occupied in hoping and fearing the results of the inquiries which I knew John was making, that I heeded little else. But, before I could well learn it, I was informed, to my extreme mortification, that it was necessary I should alight for a few minutes, while something was done to one of the wheels, which had been injured; and going into an upper room in order to be safe from intrusion, I sat down to wait as patiently as I could.

Five minutes had scarcely elapsed, when a low rap sounded on the door, and bidding the applicant—whom I supposed to be John—come in, my astonishment may be conceived when my mother appeared!

"I could not help it, Isa," she said, sobbing, as my arms closed around her trembling figure; "I would not come with you, lest I might involve you in trouble, but my heart does so yearn for home and my father's pardon; I must see him. But do not fear, I will be very cautious. Go now," she cried, hurriedly, as a waiter announced the carriage to be ready, "go now, darling; and pray for me—for us all."

"Worse, worse! miss," said John, in answer to my eager glance, as I met him in the hall, "and cravin' for you. There's been five messengers down a ready, to-day. But we sha'n't be long now; they've sent down the four best cattle from The Wold, and the grass won't grow under our feet."

"How is she?"

"Thank GOD you've come!" were the brief salutations exchanged between John and the woman at the lodge as the carriage swept through the ready-opened gates, and dashed along the broad park road towards the house, on the steps of which, when we came in sight, stood a crowd of people watching for us.

On! on! with redoubled speed went the horses; before the wheels had well stopped, the steps were let down, and, hurried forward by some one in authority, I entered the grand old hall of my ancestors.

There, as if the very air was changed, the bustle ceased. All was calm and still as the armoured figures which stood around; and, suddenly chilled to the heart, I walked after my conductor into a room, in which I was left alone.

A minute more, and rapid feet were heard approaching; another door opened, and Mary, her eyes red with tears, ran in.

"Oh, Miss Bell, she is so ill, so ill, but pinin' for you. Come, come at once—here—this way."

And following her through the same door, and a neighbouring corridor, I reached the ante-room, into which the sick chamber opened, and in an instant was in my aunt's presence.

I scarcely know what I expected to see—a sick room and all its accessories, I suppose; but, whatever I did expect, I was disappointed—the reality had never entered into my head.

Upon a splendid couch, propped high with gorgeous pillows, and robed in the most elegant attire—her beautiful face emaciated almost as a skeleton, her large eyes glistening with fever and excitement—reclined Miss Aylmer.

Beside her, meek and silent, but tender and expectant, stood her mother, and about the chamber, in various places, were upper servants of both sexes.

The moment I entered the apartment, my aunt's eager eyes fell upon me, a sudden light and glow came into them, and uttering a strange plaintive cry, she half rose from her couch, and opened her arms.

"My child! my child! Isa! Isa!" she cried, as, throwing myself impetuously on my knees at her feet, she strained me to her heart. "I am so happy—I can die now. Mother, dear mother," and she turned to the pale lady beside her, "here is one who will atone for all my wrongs to you; take her—love her."

"I have seen you before; GOD bless you, dear one," said Mrs. Aylmer softly, laying her wan, white hand upon my head. "But you must recover now, dearest; I must not lose you now, just when—"

She stopped. Timid and fearful, she shrank from ending the sentence, which her daughter finished.

"When I begin to be human, conscious of my misdoings to so dear and good a mother. Ah! if I could live to repair—but it cannot be; the fiat has gone forth, and my days are numbered. I must, therefore, finish my task quickly, undo somewhat, if I may, the evil I have done. Bryan, request my father's presence. Now, Isa, my darling, come forward, that I may smooth those curls; I would have you look your best, and you have travelled far and fast. Stand up bravely, whatever happens, and take your own place; I shall not long be here to hold it for you. Now then," she continued, as an opposite door opened, and a tall, wonderfully stately old man entered, "be calm."

"You sent for me, Eleanor. Ah! who is this?" he cried, starting as his eyes fell on me.

"Your heiress and grand-daughter, sir," said my aunt, rising calmly from her couch, and drawing me gently forward; "pardon me for the surprise, but learning yesterday that my hours were counted, I sought to find one who would comfort you when I am gone, would carry our name worthily through the world, and take the place I shall so soon vacate. Father, dear father," and she sank at his feet, "if you have ever loved me, receive and bless this child. Take her to your heart, and then removing her for a while, hold me there until the grave claims me. I have been wild and wilful, proud and pitiless, but you love me; in your arms let me die."

"Eleanor, my darling, what is all this? calm this dangerous excitement. What is the cause of all this?" he asked sternly of the bystanders, while, raising his daughter from the ground, he supported her in his arms.

"Ask nothing, father; no one can tell you; ask nothing, but grant my prayer. Let me die in peace."

"What is it you ask, Eleanor?" he said, in an agitated tone; "who is this lady?"

"Look in her face, those eyes will tell you; or, if they do not, bend down your head, father, and I will whisper it."

"Ha!" cried he, starting, as some trembling words reached his ears. "My poor, poor child! and is this the secret of your life?"

"Yes," she murmured, drooping. "Now will you consent?"

"But—"

"Oh, father, do not hesitate," she cried, with sudden energy; "my life is fleeting fast, let its last moments pass in peace. My child, if GOD had given me one, would have been your own; have taken my place of right; have comforted and dwelt with you; let this child, the beloved of my heart, do the same. Forget everything, but that I love her; and for my sake, when I am gone, be to her what you are to me. Oh, let me not plead in vain; grant my last prayer!"

"I will! I will!"

"Thanks, thanks; GOD, at your last hour, send you the comfort you have given to me! Now"—and she drew up her stately figure to its loftiest height, as, taking her father's arm and my hand, she advanced a step towards the heads of the establishment, who, during this scene, had grouped together at the lower end of the chamber—"I see among you many faces familiar to me from childhood; faces which, from long services rendered and received, I have learned to love, and who in return have, I think, loved me. If this is so, you will regard my last wishes. In this young lady—my sister's daughter, my beloved child and niece—you see my successor here, my father's heiress. If there be any present who owe me duty and affection, let the debt be paid to her. From this moment the 'Old Feud,' which has disgraced our name and Christianity for centuries, is ended. In my niece's person both races are united; and the peace, so long a stranger to the rival Houses, shall visit them again. In my grave, let all be forgotten. And now, fare-

well! take my thanks for the many kindnesses I have received from most of you, and though I am younger than any, take my dying blessing too."

"And me; oh, Eleanor! forgive and bless me too!" shrieked a voice, which paled my grandfather and aunt's cheeks to an ashy hue, as, rushing from her concealment, my mother glided forward, and sinking at her side, embraced her sister's knees, her trembling mother approaching eagerly the while.

"Frances! she whom I vowed never—"

"Forgive me, forgive me! Mother, plead for me!"

"I will—I do," and approaching swiftly, laying her hand lightly upon her husband's arm, Mrs. Aylmer said, in a soft, low voice, which sounded like troubled music, and seemed sweetly in keeping with her slender and graceful, though aged figure—"Fulke, by the memory of the days when you *did* love me—by the memory of these children, when they were happy infants—by the memory of your own parents, show me the mercy you have shown to Eleanor, complete the good deed so well begun, remove the ban from our child's head, and pardon the sin which her whole life has mourned! Speak, Eleanor, if you would prove what you have professed of late; speak, if my voice is powerless!"

"It needs not, mother—see, all is peace now," and pointing with a glorious smile to where Frances, creeping to her father's feet, was being lifted to his heart, she sank back fainting into Mary's arms.

But death-like as she looked, GOD spared her to us yet twelve months longer, and during that time, under the influence of the blessed spirit so newly awakened in the souls of all, such changes happened as a year before would have been treated as fairy tales, even by the most credulous.

My mother, her boys, and myself were all at The Wold, and Fulke, my pride and darling, creeping inch by inch so surely into his aunt and grandfather's hearts, as almost to rival me, who was the pet of both. As I had from the first foreseen would be the case, if ever Providence brought my precious boy under the notice of our mother's family, Fulke's noble nature instantly approved itself, and claimed kindred with all that was noble and generous in their souls. Listening to the voice of his pure and glorious pride—too proud to heed what others thought, so his own heart was satisfied—his fond unselfishness, his gracious, loving courtesy, how could they do aught but love and strive to deserve him? While he, happy as a bird, without a care to vex, a fear to fret him, grew hour by hour stronger, handsomer than ever, more and more wonderfully like the race whose fitting representative he looked.

And by-and-by, little by little, to my intense delight, those whom it most imported to convince, began to think so too, and that it was a pity the old name—so long a trumpet-call in the North—should die away, become extinct for ever in the person of a girl, whose own appellation was so soon to change again; that the Aylmer blood ran as redly in the boy's, as in his sister's veins; and that the scion who bore the impress of his lineage so boldly on his brow, ought with the face, to own the lands and honours too.

Whether (unknown to him who, in his singleness of heart and thought, never suspected what was going on) I encouraged or combated these opinions, I shall not say, but content myself with observing that, although my grandfather has long been at rest beneath the chancel floor of the old church of Loughton, Fulke Aylmer still reigns at The Wold, and the memory of the "Old Feud" is now a fireside legend.

END OF "THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN HEIRESS."

BOOKS FOR THE BLIND.

Books and writing, the materials by which we communicate with others, and by which we acquire ordinary information, are useful only so long as we possess the faculty of sight. The rich stores of learning treasured up in books are closed and sealed when the eye can no longer trace the letters on the page. We may listen as others read to us—as blind Milton listened while his daughters read—but no longer can we read for ourselves the books of earthly lore, or the Volume of inspired wisdom. Neither can the blind write. Some of those who have grown blind in their maturity, may contrive to scrawl a few lines which the eye of affection may decipher; but, as a rule, the hand forgets its cunning, and the poor sightless one is deprived of those common school acquisitions—reading and writing.

Benevolence has exerted its ingenuity to administer to the relief of the blind. It has fought a good fight

for the afflicted and the needy. It has built homes for the homeless, provided employment for those who are able to work, and has given instruction to those who require teaching. And in this last effort it has been compelled to seek out some new method of communicating with the mind. The ordinary printed page would be spread in vain before sightless eyes; oral teaching could not supply the place of books; something must be done to give "eyes to the blind."

The eyes of the blind are at their fingertips. They see by touch. There seems to be a compensating power in nature which sharpens one faculty in proportion as it deadens another. The sense of feeling in the blind is exceedingly acute. Many singular facts illustrating this statement might be mentioned. It is, however, only necessary to remark here that any variation from a plain surface is immediately recognised as the finger of the blind sweeps over it, and that these inequalities of surface are so distinctly felt and so accurately marked, that their recurrence is at once noticed. This fact suggests the idea of teaching the blind to read by the employment of embossed characters; and this system having been introduced, all that remains is to settle what sort of alphabetic character is the best to employ.

The original invention of printing in relief was made in 1784. Since that time it has spread all over Europe and America, and has been carried to great perfection. There are at present several systems in use; it is unnecessary to draw attention to each one; we may notice, however,

LUCAS'S SYSTEM.— This consists of a short-hand character, closely resembling Byron's stenography. The alphabet is made to consist of thirteen primary characters, and thirteen formed from these with a crotchet head to each. There are ten double letters from the same roots, distinguished also by the crotchet head; these also represent the nine figures and the cypher, whether used as numerals or ordinals; in all, thirty-six characters are employed. By the employment of this system the cost of books for the blind is diminished, on account of less labour being required in setting up the type, and less paper used in printing. But the question to be solved is, whether the contractions which are

guess at the meaning of any given character or combination of characters by the context—a stretch of mental exertion which it is unreasonable to look for in a child.

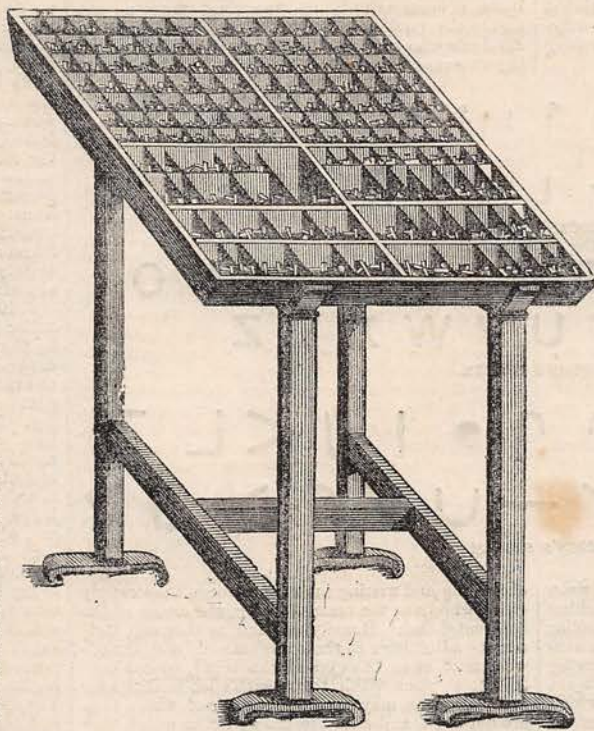
Mr. FRERE'S SYSTEM is still more complicated,

The systems of Lucas and Frere are formed entirely of arbitrary characters, bearing no resemblance whatever to our common alphabet. They include a large number of contractions and words represented by single letters, and abound in abbreviations, which, however useful to the short-hand writer, are likely to burden the memory and impede the progress of an average pupil. Another difficulty is, that, before a blind scholar can be taught to read, his instructor must acquire a thorough knowledge of the system. This is no easy task when an individual has grown familiar with our ordinary Roman character, and would be beyond the attainment of many who could readily teach reading in the common style.

Mr. ALSTON'S SYSTEM consists of the Roman character, merely deprived of the small strokes at the extremities. In 1832 the Society of Arts for Scotland offered a gold medal for the best alphabet for the blind. Fifteen alphabets were submitted for competition. Twelve of these were composed of arbitrary symbols, and three were modifications of the ordinary character. Lithographic sketches of these alphabets were subsequently forwarded to all the institutions for the blind in the country, in order to obtain the general opinion as to what was most likely to be the most serviceable. This led to some experiments in a modification of the Roman alphabet, and to the ultimate adoption of Dr. Fry's by several of the leading institutions in Great Britain.

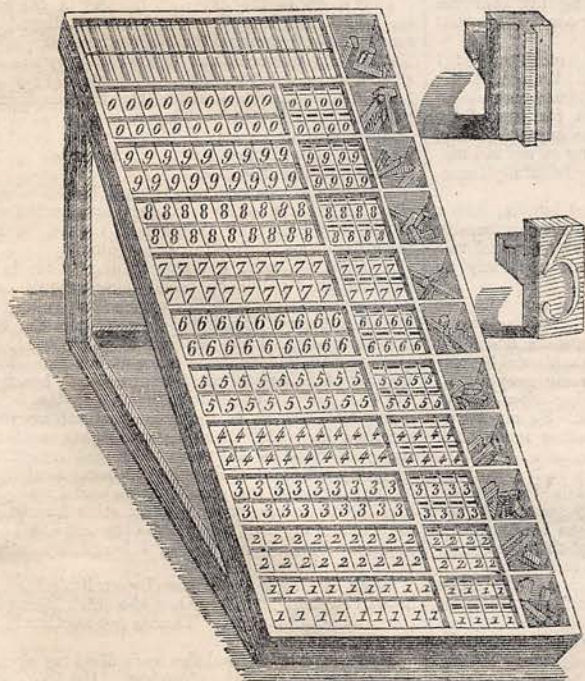
But vast as was this improvement on the systems of Frere and Lucas, it was still questionable whether some better plan might not be adopted. It was urged that, although Alston's system might be taught with facility and read with ease by children, the power of reading it was lost with childhood; that as years advanced, and the blind entered upon the manual labours of their lives, their fingers entirely lost the power of feeling such fine characters as those of the old system.

MOON'S SYSTEM, invented by Mr. Moon, of Brighton, himself a blind man, has obtained considerable popularity. Moon's type is not "arbitrary" in the full sense of that expression. About one-third of the letters are identical with our ordinary printed types, a full third more simply consist of parts of our

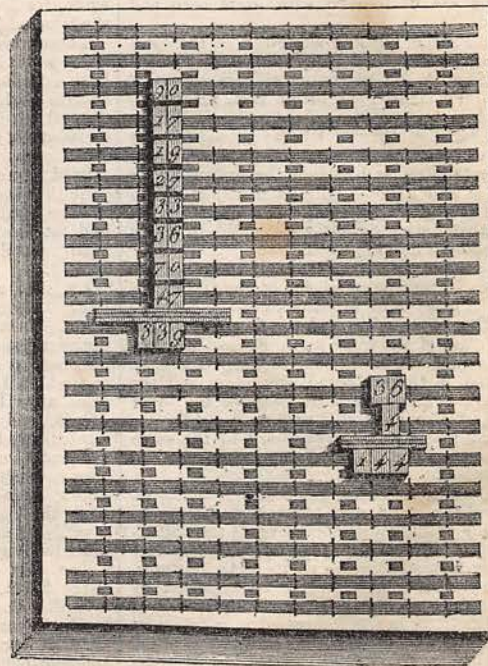


ORDINARY PRINTING FRAME USED IN PREPARING BOOKS FOR THE BLIND, IN THE EMBOSSED CHARACTER.

and still more difficult either to teach or to learn than Lucas's. It is professedly founded on Gurney's short-hand, but is manifestly ill-adapted for the general instruction of the blind. The abbreviations,



CASE OF NUMERALS USED BY THE BLIND.



MODE OF CALCULATING ADOPTED BY THE BLIND.

used do not confuse the pupil, and lead to more disadvantages than can by any possibility be fairly balanced by any saving of cost. The blind reader, by this system, is compelled, in many instances, to

which may be perfectly intelligible to a practised stenographer, are likely to produce confusion and annoyance in a common school, and the simplest and plainest system is invariably found to be the best.

printed letters, and the remaining third, with but two exceptions—p and q—are but repetitions of the letters in the first two-thirds of the alphabet, only placed in different positions. It

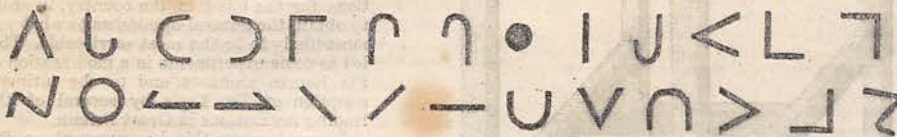
is urged that this system does not require above ten minutes, or, at most, a quarter of an hour's application, to render a seeing man perfectly acquainted with it, and to enable him to enter at once upon the teaching of the blind. Considerable success has attended the new system. Within the last ten years the whole Bible has been printed in it; portions of it have been embossed in twenty-six foreign languages, and in Scotland especially very great progress has been made.



LUCAS'S SYSTEM.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

ALSTON'S SYSTEM.



MOON'S SYSTEM.

It is not our province to institute a comparison between the various systems now in use for teaching the blind to read. Each have their own peculiar advantages, and have deservedly gained public confidence. The difficulties which occur in carrying out these systems are very great, as the results are not only to be judged by the facility with which pupils acquire the art, but also by the permanency of that acquisition. Those types which are most easily recognised by the blind generally, are unquestionably the best. No ingenuity of form, no carefully-elaborated system, no facile abbreviations will make amends for the want of good, clear, intelligible type—type about which the reader can make no mistake as the finger glides over it. To answer this end the faces of the letters should be thin and sharp, so as to present a wedge-shape from the surface of the paper to the surface of the letter. Such forms are deciphered with great ease and satisfaction.

The incalculable blessing conferred on the blind by the invention of embossed printing cannot be too highly estimated. It places an endless source of instruction and amusement within their reach, and relieves to a vast extent the terrible affliction which has befallen them. By the sense of touch the light of information is poured on the eyes of their understanding, and though the outward page of nature is still a blank, the inner man is illuminated with the light of science, and rejoiced by the beams of that better light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

The expense of providing literature is of course very heavy. There is an edition of the Old Testament, but it consists of fifteen volumes super-royal quarto. There is an edition of the New Testament in four volumes of the same size. Several elementary books and works of general literature have been printed in the embossed characters, but the cost is great, as the type must be large, the paper thick, and, of course, printed only on one side.

Maps and music are also prepared in the same way, and an edition of *Æsop's Fables*, with *woodcuts*, is highly prized.

With regard to teaching the blind to write, we may remark that numerous plans have been suggested. One of the most interesting is the following:—A set of wooden types is employed, the face of the letter formed of brass points. As, however, the delicacy of the finger might be impaired by touching the sharp metal points forming the face of the type, the letter is also impressed in relief on its side, and the type required is thus easily ascertained without injury to the fingers. A full set of types being completed, they are arranged in a case, similar to those employed by compositors; and in another case are lines or grooves in which the words are to be arranged with suitable spaces. The letters being set up, the paper is laid over them, and pressed down with a piece of leather, a distinct impression being produced with the utmost simplicity

and accuracy. Block types are also used with considerable success in teaching arithmetic to the blind, who are thus enabled to set up their "sums," and cast them off with great facility.

In concluding our notice of this highly interesting subject—a notice which, on account of our limited space, is necessarily brief—we cannot commend too highly the noble exertions of the philanthropic individuals who have exerted themselves in establishing a means of supplying the blind with a knowledge

of reading and writing; nor can we urge too strongly on all who have the means to help, the claims of the indigent blind. Heavily afflicted as they are, it is ours to administer to their assistance; and though we cannot open the eyes of the blind, we can contribute to place within their reach such facilities for instruction as may supply the sense of which they are deprived, and alleviate the suffering which they endure.

FANNY, THE FRIGHT.

"TAKE her away! take her away this instant," said the feeble voice, with as energetic an expression of horror and disgust as it was capable of making. "Ugh! the little monster! The little squint-eyed, purple horror! There, don't bring her near me again, for I disown her. I never can believe that she is my child."

These words were uttered by my mother, and I was present and the object of them; though having been a dweller upon this mundane sphere a somewhat shorter period than that required for one of its diurnal revolutions, I could not be expected to be conscious of anything that was going on around me. In after years, however, they were faithfully transmitted to me by my nurse.

So they took me away, a little red bundle, with a restless head that the one early instinct of humanity had set moving vainly in search of food, and two small, purple fists, beating the air as vainly as blindly.

I was to all intents and purposes a motherless babe. My mother never willingly looked upon me again. I was left to the care of servants, and drew my nourishment, not from the warm maternal bosom, but from a certain flat bottle of some grey metal, and which I well remember carrying often in my arms after I had learned to walk. So my nurse Jeanie, and my *petit biberon*, together made such a substitute for a mother as I alone knew.

I had five brothers and sisters, all beautiful, happy, healthy, rosy children, while I was ugly, sallow, large-eyed, and prematurely grave and sad. I was the black lamb of the flock—so I often heard myself called by persons who forgot that the silent, quiet-looking child had either ears or feelings.

The only creature I ever envied was my little sister Edith, later born than myself, a miracle of infantine loveliness, who was nourished at my mother's bosom, and was the daily and hourly recipient of her caresses. Yet I truly loved Edith, and was not so much envious of herself as of her beauty and the love it made her dowry.

The disgust I had inspired in my mother's bosom, when she first looked upon me, was not effaced as I grew older. And her neglect and aversion was in some degree imitated by nearly every member of the family. Among my brothers and sisters I met taunts and jeers continually. The boys lampooned

and caricatured me upon their slates, and when the girls played at punishing their dolls, they dressed them in dowdy garments, and sat them in my favourite attitude, and gave them my name—"Fanny, the Fright."

Perhaps my father might have loved and cared for me had he ever been long enough at home to become acquainted with his family. But he was engaged in political life, and held an office under the government, that kept him nearly always away.

My education had not been quite neglected, for the reason that I had a thirst for knowledge that was not to be quenched. My mother had manifested great anxiety in regard to the education of the other girls, especially in accomplishments such as are the current coin of social life. For me, I was permitted to acquire music, for which I had a passionate love; but the consent was embittered by the remark that it was really of no consequence what I learned, since nothing was to be hoped for me in society; social distinction being the sole end and aim of woman's existence in my mother's estimation.

I did not learn music, therefore, with the expectation that any other, save myself, would be charmed by the gift and its exercise. Song was the natural expression of a soul that had few outward avenues of expression, and to learn all pertaining to this art that masters could teach me was my sole pride and joy. Not that I did not, as ever, eagerly imbibe all that was to be learned of science, of history, of mathematics and the languages, in the schools I attended, but these acquirements were miser's hoards, locked and guarded from all human knowledge. These were my silent gifts—music linked me, with its glorious harmonies, to all other souls.

So I grew silent, and—as I was told—sullen, in my father's house, unnoticed amidst the lovely band of my brothers and sisters, until I was fourteen. I remember well my fourteenth birthday. My father was at home, but I had not seen him; he had not asked for me by name, and that sense of my ugliness—the feeling that my very aspect repulsed all human love—had kept me away from his presence. The day had passed sadly enough for me, though it had been a household festival. No one had remembered that it was my birthday; and the gifts and caresses that were wont, on like occasions, to be lavished on my more fortunate brothers and sisters, had likewise been forgotten. All this made me sad, even beyond my ordinary wont, accustomed as I was to neglect; and I think I was not to be blamed if I bitterly contrasted this day with the anniversary of Edith's birth, only the previous week, which had been celebrated by a profusion of gifts.

I sat alone in the deserted nursery in the evening, and listened to the sounds of merriment that rose up from the warmed and lighted parlours below. The nursery was cold, and lighted only by the dim, shaded lamp. But warmth, and light, and joy were not for me—the black lamb, the neglected child, "Fanny, the Fright." That room, so chill and dim—so full of ghastly shadows—was a meet emblem of my gloomy heart, which no sunlight of affection had ever warmed.

I believe I was weeping, though I seldom wept, when Edith came to tell me that "papa wanted some music, and that mamma had sent for me, because the others were engaged in some game."

I went down, with a bitter feeling in my heart, because I had only been remembered when I could be of use, and prevent the others from being disturbed in their enjoyments. I went into the back drawing-room, which was but dimly lighted, and quite empty, and took my place at the piano-forte. I would not speak to my father, and my heart was full of the savage anger that I cannot define.

But the first notes that rose beneath my touch softened me. All discordant thoughts melted in the great flood of harmony. I forgot myself and my petty griefs, and felt my spirit borne aloft on the billowy music of the grand theme that I was playing. I was as unconscious of all other human presences as of my own, till, just as the last notes were lingering beneath my touch, I heard my father's voice just at my side—

"Can this inspired musician be our little Fanny?" he was saying. "Where has the child learned to play and sing like this! There's not another in the flock has such a gift."

My heart swelled, and the tears filled my eyes. I rose and stood silently before him. He took me in his arms, and kissed me fondly. It was the first kiss of affection he had ever bestowed upon me—the first I had ever received, save from nurse Jeanie!

So my birth-day ended in the first joy of my life, connected with the affections. I sat beside my father, after I had played and sang as much as he desired, and he questioned me earnestly in relation