

Chapter 51-The tenant of wildfell hall

They loved her as instinctively as kittens love the light and warmth. And now, with a mingled sensation of bashfulness and tenderness,

I saw their mother draw them back and heard her whisper, "Stand off, children; the lady don't like to have you hanging about her so."

But the lady rebuked her with her usual sweet, playful smile. "Let them alone, Mrs. Hargrave," said she, "I like children, and if they

like me, I should be sorry to tell them they must not come near me. How is your cough now?"

And while she spoke, she presented the basket to the invalid, explaining its contents, and stating that she must not now stay to examine them, as Mr. Huntingdon was awaiting her return, but would come another day and see how they had suited her. "You are very kind, ma'am," said the grateful woman, striving to raise herself up to thank her benefactress, but sinking back on her pillow from the attempt, worn and exhausted by the effort. "You are too good to us, and to everybody; God bless you!"

Then Mrs. Huntingdon passed on, and as she crossed the park, she encountered Lawrence. There was an exchange of greetings, a few words on the winter weather, and the prospects of the poor during this inclement season; and then she passed forward, and as she gradually disappeared from view, my gaze followed her in silence till she was lost in the shades of distance, and I could see her no more.

With a heart now divided between newly ignited hope and vehement anguish, I pondered on what I had seen and heard. Was it too late to dream of happiness? Could it be that she still harboured thoughts of me, refusing others for the memory of what we had shared? My resolve was made: I would seek her out, reveal my presence, and implore one moment of her attention—to hear her speak, to behold her once again was now the limit of my highest ambition. The longings of my heart surged against the prudent dictates of my mind, cries of passion drowning the whispers of caution.