

GROUPED STUDIES

Mildred.

Four various impulses do battle in the heart of Mildred—wage in that breast of hers their long, uncertain fight. A girl of her intelligence must crave, at times, for steady intellectual progress. It is natural that she should feel the fascination of present pleasure. All the best of her womanhood finds itself at peace in the consciousness of tender deeds. Blind instinct drives her to be fashionable. Charged with ideals so unstable, so many, and so much at variance, how can she quite succeed? May not life, so weighted, tend to be little else than an unwilling compromise—a concession, graceless after all, and finally barren?

The Basis of Friendship.

Heyburn's remark to me that 'a community of intellectual interests is the real basis for friendship,' has, of course, its truth; yet it shows too, to some extent, the limitations of the person who makes it—shows most of all the absence in him of imperious instinct or profound emotion. Friendly acquaintance, not real friendship, is that which is based, oftenest, on 'community of interests,' whether 'intellectual,'—the condition Heyburn, to do him justice, bargains for—or whether, on a lower level, merely material. On common intellectual interests, no doubt, some friendships are established; but with how many have they nothing to do! Instinctive liking, the discovery, either slow or immediate, that your temperaments understand one another, that your natures can fuse—this, more than anything you can define or intellectually justify, is the basis of associations in which affection must have a large, unstinted part.

A Living Sacrifice.

They sit, row after row—those common women penitents—in their own corner of the church, never looking to this side or that. There stay they, rarely lifting an eye—some of them pasty, some of them fresh coloured; all of them in their dull brown shawls and plain unribboned bonnets; their clothes, their ways, and most of their dull lives a continuous unsuccessful apology for the things of which (by some mistake of Providence) Humanity too much consists.

Patriot.

Patriot.

The man has been so desperately busy in merely getting his place, it would be unreasonable to expect that he should have had any time in which to make ready to fill it.

Lover.

I see—he likes resistance; and, though it would vex him in the end if the woman of his ideal should prove impregnable, it would disappoint him in the process did he discover that she was not strongly fortified.

Critic and Painter.

Yet, after all, is there a straw to choose between the two? For, though you know the painter to be indeed a blithe, degraded compound of ingratitude and vanity, the worst has not been said of his critic when you have called him—and have called him accurately—unsatisfactory and diffuse. He is much more than that. It is his destiny to quit the commonplace, only to arrive at the untrue.

Provence: Morning.

'La terrible lumière du Midi'—Barbey d'Aurevilly's phrase—gleams to-day at its fiercest, though it is early yet. From the eucalyptus that rises by the window, and all along the plain to the great sapphire water and the two islands, whitened gold, upon the far horizon, everything is positive, no detail unrevealed. The wind from the north-west—invisible but potent visitor—has swept and scoured the world, and, in white glare and throbbing heat, the shining land—a rapture of pure colour—burns itself away.

Provence: Evening.

The chain of mountains—the whole jagged Esterel, stretched to the sea—looks, from the place whence I behold it, a great peaked promontory; and, now the sun is down, the whole chain, flushed before with dusty gold, turns in an instant one chill, ghastly grey—like a sad woman's face on which there falls, quite suddenly, the shock of irretrievable, unlooked-for loss.

Sufferers.

Commonplace folk air their kindness of heart by pitying profusely the incompetence of fools. Had Heaven granted them a wider vision, they would have some pity to spare for the capable, on whom fools wreak their mischief.

A Death.

She lay so quiet: stately almost, for it was not only still. On features wont to be changeful—responding quickly to the action of her mental life—the soul had thrown its last mould: the last of all its impulses had settled and stayed. An aspect of suffering, was it?—of sorrow, regret at the leaving? Scarcely. Yet much was abandoned. And she lay quiet—content, one must think, with the change.

FREDERICK WEDMORE.