

A CENTURY BETWEEN

scene is gay. The sea is quite beautiful and crowded with numberless pleasure and fishing boats among which are steamers plying between Scarborough and Hull that look like giants and are very black and ugly with their huge columns of smoke.

By the time that Charlotte wrote next, she was back at Gunnersbury Park, where she planned to spend part of the autumn.

Your kind letter [she wrote to Hannah] welcomed me on my arrival and should have been acknowledged ere now with a thousand sincere thanks for all the good, affectionate wishes therein contained, but I was in hopes that time, which is said by German poets to bring roses, might increase my budget of news and enable me to send you some agreeable intelligence. Lionel availed himself of a lull in the state of the ministerial atmosphere to leave for Paris. He wished us good-bye this morning. Mrs. James talks of coming to England on a visit to the Duke of Devonshire who had pressed her to stay with him at Chatsworth. She is anxious to see a great many country houses before she finishes Ferrières which, according to my small ideas is too colossal to prove enjoyable. Thank God, the intelligence from India seems rather better. Freddy Helbert is most fortunate in having secured a charming partner for life. The young bride will not hear of letting him go out to India alone but insists upon accompanying him. She and her maid are learning the use of fire-arms. I hope they may not be called upon to shoot Sepoys but that, on their arrival at Calcutta, the horrors of war may have subsided.

The autumnal tints are only just beginning to make their appearance and the garden, though not so bright with roses, is almost as pretty as in July. Is there anything, my dear Hannah Mayer, that Lionel can do for you in Paris? It will give your brother great pleasure to make himself useful.

Always most affectionately and truly yours,

Charlotte.

P.S. Everything is so black that Lionel, on the point of leaving, remained at New Court.

As the Indian mutiny flared up, the FitzRoys rented a country house in Wiltshire called Everleigh. It was a lonely, rambling place nearly two hundred years old with a good-sized garden and

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excellent shooting. On the garden side of the house was a large magnolia tree which grew up against the windows flowering beautifully. It was necessary to cut off some of the white, velvety blooms beneath Blanche's bedroom because of the strong perfume. On the gravel walk below this were two little pomegranate trees in pots which tried each year to put forth a few scarlet waxen flowers.

Everleigh was not a place with a particularly warm climate, however, and close at hand lay Salisbury Plain, with long tracks of green undulating grass where never a soul was to be seen and where Blanche and Arthur made occasional expeditions in search of mushrooms. FitzRoy would often take his daughter for long walks there, but at other times, she would be obliged to go out along the high road with her governess, a dreary lady who said that it made her teeth ache to talk while out of doors. Blanche paced mournfully along, watching the fields where the plough was tracing furrows or where the sheep were being driven from fold to fold. Soon the little girl almost loved these lonely roads marked with milestones, but little else, and where in the cold weather, some old shepherd might be seen, his face and chin muffled up, crook in hand, his dog beside him as he stood silently watching his sheep through the quiet day. Hannah did not see these things thus. She took prosaic constitutionals along the Wiltshire roads, counting her walk by the milestones, and when she had accomplished two miles she would promptly turn her face homewards.

Blanche would generally accompany her father to church on Sunday when he was at Everleigh for week-ends. The congregation of the church was altogether bucolic, and the rector's sermons had to be fitted to his audience. This congregation consisted of old men in elaborately embroidered smock-frocks, old women in traditional red cloaks and black poke bonnets, and the schoolboys who on week-days sat contentedly on gates and plied rattles to keep away the birds. These behaved so noisily in church that the severe schoolmaster bestowed much corporal

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punishment on them during the service. The sound thereof on the clean washed smock-frocks made a mighty noise and the quiet tenor of the sermon was often interrupted by loud whackings proceeding from the school benches.

Blanche rode many times with her father. She had learnt to ride some three years before, chiefly from her father himself, though on a few occasions she had lessons in a riding school, but there she had made little progress, having no interest in riding for its own sake. The truth was that it tired her, and her one aim in sitting on a horse was to have her father's company and, if possible, his conversation. FitzRoy was such a fine horseman that he was by no means easily satisfied with her riding. According to him, few women rode well, but when they did he expressed great admiration for them.

It was here that Blanche first learnt to leap, beginning over quite small obstacles. This rather pleased her, though the spirit in which she undertook her leaps was curious, for when the moment arrived for her pony to clear the fence she would shut her eyes and try to think hard how much she loved her father. Then, as the pony landed safely, she would heave a long sigh of relief.

Hannah was extremely nervous during these rides, remembering Arthur's terrible accident. Blanche was given a pretty, dark chestnut which, though spirited, was quiet. Its name was Violet, and Blanche had taught it to place a hoof affectionately in her palm when she said the magic words: "Shake hands!" One day, when Blanche and her father were riding on Salisbury Plain, they came upon a whole colony of mushrooms. FitzRoy dismounted to investigate, leaving his horse's bridle loosely over its neck. This horse, called Brown Stout, was so trustworthy an animal that FitzRoy had done this many times before. Sambo, the old retriever, who had been following closely behind, lay down, his long red tongue hanging out and his whole appearance indicating that he considered a short rest to be timely and wise, whilst his young mistress sat contentedly on her pony, scarcely holding a loose rein and eagerly pointing out the mushrooms to her father.