NORTH AND SOUTH.
BY THE AUTHOR OF MARY BARTON.
CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

IT needed the pretty light papering of the rooms to reconcile them to Milton. It needed more—more that could not be bad. The thick yellow November fogs had come on; and the view of the plain in the valley made by the sweeping bend of the river, was all shut out when Mrs. Hale arrived at her new home.

Margaret and Dixon had been at work for two days, unpacking and arranging, but everything inside the house still looked in disorder; and outside a thick fog crept up to the very windows, and was driven in to every open door in choking white wreaths of unwholesome mist.

"Oh, Margaret! are we to live here?" asked Mrs. Hale in blank dismay.

Margaret's heart echoed the dreariness of the tone in which this question was put. She omld scarcely command herself enough to say, "Oh, the fogs in London are sometimes far worse!"

"But then you knew that London itself, and friends lay behind it. Here! well! we are desolate. Oh Dixon, what a place this is!"

"Indeed, ma'am, I'm sure it will be your death before long, and then I know who—stay! Miss Hale that's far too heavy for you to lift."

"Not at all, thank you, Dixon," replied Margaret, coldly. "The best thing we can do for mamma is to get her room quite ready for her to go to bed, while I go and bring her a cup of coffee."

Mr. Hale was equally out of spirits, and equally came upon Margaret for sympathy.

"Margaret, I do believe this is an unhealthy place. Only suppose that your mother's health or yours should suffer. I wish I had gone into some country place in Wales; this is really terrible," said he, going up to the window.

There was no comfort to be given. They were settled in Milton, and must endure smoke and fogs for a season; indeed, all other life seemed shut out from them by as thick a fog of circum-
stance. Only the day before Mr. Hale had been reckoning up with dismay how much their removal and fortnight at Heston had cost, and he found it had absorbed nearly all his little stock of ready money. No! here they were, and here they must remain.

At night when Margaret realised this, she felt inclined to sit down in a stupor of despair. The heavy smoky air hung about her bedroom, which occupied the long narrow projection at the back of the house. The window placed at the side of the oblong looked to the blank wall of a similar projection, not above ten feet distant. It loomed through the fog like a great barrier to hope. Inside the room everything was in confusion. All their efforts had been directed to make her mother's room comfortable. Margaret sat down on a box, the direction card upon which struck her as having been written at Helstone—beautiful, beloved Helstone! She lost herself in dismal thought, but at last she determined to take her mind away from the present; and suddenly remembered that she had a letter from Edith which she had only half read in the bustle of the morning. It was to tell of their arrival at Corfu; their voyage along the Mediterranean—

Edith wrote fluently and well, if not graphically. She could not only seize the salient and characteristic points of a scene, but she could enumerate enough of indiscriminate particulars for Margaret to make it out for herself. Captain Lennox and another lately married officer shared a villa, high up on the beautiful precipitous rocks overhanging the sea. Their days, late as it was in the year, seemed spent in boating or land pic-nics; all out-of-doors—pleasure-seeking and glad, Edith's life seemed like the deep vault of blue sky above her, free—utterly free from fleck or cloud. Her husband had to attend drill, and she, the most musical officer's wife there,
had to copy the new and popular tunes out of the most recent English music, for the benefit of the bandmaster; those seemed their most severe and arduous duties. She expressed an affectionate hope that if the regiment stopped another year at Corfu, Margaret might come out and pay her a long visit. She asked Margaret if she remembered the day twelve months on which she, Edith, wrote—how it rained all day long in Harley Street; and how she would not put on her new gown to go to a stupid dinner, and get it all wet and splashed in going to the carriage; and how at that very dinner they had first met Captain Lennox.

Yes! Margaret remembered it well. Edith and Mrs. Shaw had gone to dinner. Margaret had joined the party in the evening. The recollection of the plentiful luxury of all the arrangements, the stately handsomeness of the furniture, the size of the house, the peaceful untroubled ease of the visitors—all came vividly before her in strange contrast to the present time. The smooth sea of that old life closed up without a mark left to tell where they had all been. The habitual dinner, the calls, the shopping, the dancing evenings, were

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all going on, going on for ever, though her Aunt Shaw and Edith were no longer there; and she, of course, was even less missed. She doubted if any one of that old set ever thought of her, except Henry Lennox. He too, she knew, would strive to forget her, because of the pain she had caused him. She had heard him often boast of his power of putting any disagreeable thought far away from him. Then she penetrated farther into what might have been. If she had cared for him as a lover, and had accepted him, and this change inner father's opinions and consequent station had taken place, she could not doubt but that it would have been impatiently received by Mr. Lennox. It was a bitter mortification to her in one sense; but she could bear it patiently, because she knew her father's purity of purpose, and that strengthened her to endure his errors, grave and serious though in her estimation they were. But the fact of the world esteeming her father degraded, in its rough wholesale judgment, would have oppressed and irritated Mr. Lennox. As she realised what might have been, she grew to be thankful for what was. They were at the lowest now; they could not be worse. Edith's astonishment and her Aunt Shaw's dismay would have to be met bravely, when their letters came. So Margaret rose up, and began slowly to undress herself, feeling the full luxury of acting leisurely, late as it was, after all the past hurry of the day. She fell asleep, hoping for some brightness, either internal or external. But if she had known how long it would be before the brightness came, her heart would have sunk low down. The time of the year was most unpropitious to health as well as to spirits. Her mother caught a severe cold, and Dixon herself was evidently not well, although Margaret could not insult her more than by trying to save her, or by taking any care of her. They could hear of no girl to assist her; all were at work in the factories; at least those who applied were well scolded by Dixon for thinking that such as they could ever be trusted to work in a gentleman's house. So they had to keep a charwoman in almost constant employ. Margaret longed to send for Charlotte; but besides the objection of her being a better servant than they could now afford to keep, the distance was too great.

Mr. Hale met with several pupils, recommended to him by Mr. Bell, or by the more immediate influence of Mr. Thornton. They were mostly of the age when many boys would be still at school, but, according to the prevalent and apparently well-founded notions of Milton, to make a lad into a good tradesman he must be caught young, and acclimated to the life of the mill, or office, or warehouse. If he were sent to even the Scotch universities he came back un-
settled for commercial pursuits; how much more so if he went to Oxford or Cambridge, where he could not be entered till he was eighteen? So most of the manufacturers placed their sons in sucking situations at fourteen or fifteen years of age, unsparingly cutting away all off-shoots in the direction of literature or high mental cultivation, in hopes of throwing all the strength and vigour of the plant into commerce. Still there were some wiser parents; and some young men, who had sense enough to perceive their own deficiencies, and strive to remedy them. Nay, there were a few no longer youths, but men in the prime of life, who had the stem wisdom to acknowledge their own ignorance, and to learn late what they should have learnt early. Mr. Thornton was perhaps the oldest of Mr. Hale’s pupils. He was certainly the favourite. Mr. Hale got into the habit of quoting his opinions so frequently, and with such regard that it became a little domestic joke to wonder what time during the hour appointed for instruction could be given to absolute learning, so much of it appeared to have been spent in conversation.

Margaret rather encouraged this light merry way of viewing her father’s acquaintance with Mr. Thornton, because she felt that her mother was inclined to look upon this new friendship of her husband’s with jealous eyes. As long as his time had been solely occupied with his books and his parishioners, as a Helstone, she had appeared to care little if she saw much of him or not; but now that he looked eagerly forward to each renewal of his intercourse with Mr. Thornton, she seemed hurt and annoyed, as if he were slighting her companionship for the first time. Mr. Hale’s over-praise had the usual effect of over-praise upon his auditors; they were a little inclined to rebel against Aristides being always called the Just.

After a quiet life in a country parsonage for more than twenty years, there was something dazzling to Mr. Hale in the energy which conquered immense difficulties with ease; the power of the machinery of Milton, the power of the men of Milton, impressed him with a sense of grandeur, which he yielded to without caring to inquire into the details of its exercise. But Margaret went less abroad, among machinery and men; saw less of power in its public effect, and, as it happened, she was thrown with one or two of those who, in all measures affecting masses of people, must be acute sufferers for the good of many. The question always is, Has everything been done to make the suffering of these exceptions as small as possible? Or, in the triumph of the crowded procession, have the helpless been trampled on, instead of being gently lifted aside out of the roadway of the conqueror, whom they have no power to accompany on his march?

It so happened that it fell to Margaret’s share to have to look out for a servant to assist Dixon, who had at first undertaken to find just the person she wanted to do all the rough work of the house. But Dixon’s ideas of helpful girls were founded on the recollection of tidy elder scholars at Helstone school, who were only too proud to be allowed to come to the parsonage on a busy day, and treated Mrs. Dixon with all the respect, and a good deal more of fright, than they paid to Mr. and Mrs. Hale. Dixon was not unconscious of this awed reverence which was given to her; nor did she dislike it; it flattered her much as Louis the Fourteenth was flattered by his courtiers shading their eyes from the dazzling light of his presence. But nothing short of her faithful love for Mrs. Hale could have made her endure the rough independent way in which all the Milton girls who made application for the servant’s place replied to her inquiries respecting their qualifications. They even went the length of questioning her back again having doubts and fears of their own as to the solvency of a family who lived in a house of thirty pounds a-year, and yet gave themselves airs, and kept two servants, one of
them so very high and mighty. Mr. Hale was no longer looked upon as vicar of Helstone, but as a man who only spent at a certain rate. Margaret was weary and impatient of the accounts which Dixon perpetually brought to Mrs. Hale of the behavior of these would-be servants. Not but what Margaret was repelled by the rough uncourteous manners of these people; not but what she shrunk with fastidious pride from their hail-fellow accost, and severely resented their unconcealed curiosity as to the means and position of any family who lived in Milton, and yet were not engaged in trade of some kind. But the more Margaret felt impertinence, the more likely she was to be silent on the subject; and, at any rate, if she took upon herself to make inquiry for a servant, she could spare her mother the recital of all her disappointments and fancied or real insults.

Margaret accordingly went up and down to butchers and grocers, seeking for a nonpareil of a girl; and lowering her hopes and expectations every week, as she found the difficulty of meeting with any one in a manufacturing town who did not prefer the better wages and greater independence of working in a mill. It was something of a trial to Margaret to go out by herself in this busy bustling place. Mrs. Shaw's ideas of propriety and her own helpless dependence on others, had always made her insist that a footman should accompany Edith and Margaret if they went beyond Harley Street or the immediate neighbourhood. The limits by which this rule of her aunt's had circumscribed Margaret's independence had been silently rebelled against at the time: and she had doubly enjoyed the free walks and rambles of her forest life, from the contrast which they presented. She went along there with a bounding fearless step, that occasionally broke out into a run, if she were in a hurry, and occasionally was stilled into perfect repose, as she stood listening to, or watching any of the wild creatures who sang in the leafy courts, or glanced out with their keen bright eyes from the low brushwood or tangled furze.

It was a trial to come down from such motion or such stillness, only guided by her own sweet will, to the even and decorous pace necessary in streets. But she could have laughed at herself for minding this change, if it had not been accompanied by what was a more serious annoyance.

The side of the town on which Crampton lay was especially a thoroughfare for the factory people. In the back streets around them there were many mills, out of which poured streams of men and women two or three times a day. Until Margaret had learnt the times of their ingress and egress she was very unfortunate in constantly falling in with them. They came rushing along, with bold fearless faces, and loud laughs and jests, particularly aimed at all those who appeared to be above them in rank or station. The tones of their unrestrained voices, and their carelessness of all common rules of street politeness, frightened Margaret a little at first. The girls, with their rough but not unfriendly freedom, would comment on her dress, even touch her shawl or gown to ascertain the exact material; nay, once or twice she was asked questions relative to some article which they particularly admired. There was such a simple reliance on her womanly sympathy with their love of dress, and on her kindliness, that she gladly replied to these inquiries as soon as she understood them; and half-smiled back at their remarks. She did not mind meeting any number of girls, loud-spoken and boisterous though they might be. But she alternately dreaded and red up against the workmen, who commented not on her dress, but on her looks, in the same open fearless manner. She, who had hitherto felt that even the most refined remark on her personal appearance was an impertinence, had to endure undisguised admiration from these out-spoken men. But the very out-spokenness marked their innocence of any intention to hurt her delicacy, as she would have perceived if she had been less
frightened by the disorderly tumult. Out of her fright came a flash of indignation which made her face scarlet, and her dark eyes gather flame, as she heard some of their speeches. Yet there were other sayings of theirs, which, when she reached the quiet safety of home, amused her even while they irritated her.

For instance, one day, after she had passed a number of men, several of whom had paid her the not unusual compliment of wishing she was their sweetheart, one of the lingerers added, "Your bonny face, my lass, makes the day look brighter." And another day, as she was unconsciously smiling at some passing thought, she was addressed by a poorly-

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dressed, middle-aged workman, with "You may well smile, my lass; many a one would smile to have such a bonny face." This man looked so care-worn that Margaret could not help giving him an answering smile, glad to think that her looks, such as they were, should have had the power to call up a pleasant thought. He seemed to understand her acknowledging glance, and a silent recognition was established between them whenever the chances of the day brought them across each other's paths. They had never exchanged a word; nothing had been said but that first compliment; yet somehow Margaret looked upon this man with more interest than upon any one else in Milton. Once or twice, on Sundays, she saw him walking with a girl, evidently his daughter, and, if possible, still more unhealthy than he was himself.

One day Margaret and her father had been as far as the fields that lay around the town; it was early spring, and she had gathered some of the hedge and ditch flowers, dog-violets, lesser celandines, and the like, with an unspoken lament in her heart for the sweet profusion of the South. Her father had left her to go into Milton on some business; and on the road home she met her humble friends. The girl looked wistfully at the flowers, and, acting on a sudden impulse, Margaret offered them to her. Her pale blue eyes lightened up as she took them, and her father spoke for her.

"Thank yo, Miss. Betsy 'll think a deal o' them flowers; that hoo will; and I shall think a deal o' yor kindness. Yo're not of this country, I reckon?"

"No! " said Margaret, half sighing. "I come from the South—from Hampshire," she continued, a little afraid of wounding his consciousness of ignorance if she used a name which he did not understand.

"That's beyond London, I reckon? And I come fra' Burnley-ways, and forty mile to th' north. And yet, yo see, North and South has both met and made kind o' friends in this big smoky place."

Margaret had slackened her pace to walk alongside of the man and his daughter, whose steps were regulated by the feebleness of the latter. She now spoke to the girl, and there was a sound of tender pity in the tone of her voice as she did so that went right to the heart of the father.

"I am afraid you are not very strong."

"No," said the girl, "nor never will be."

"Spring is coming," said Margaret, as if to suggest pleasant hopeful thoughts.

"Spring nor summer will do me good," said the girl quietly.

Margaret looked up at the man, almost expecting some contradiction from him, or at least some remark that would modify his daughter's utter hopelessness. But, instead, he added—

"I'm afeared hoo speaks truth. I'm afeared hoo's too far gone in a waste."

"I shall have a spring where I'm borne to, and flowers, and amaranths, and shining robes besides."

"Poor lass, poor lass! " said her father in a low tone. "I'm none so sure o' that; but it's a comfort to thee, poor lass, poor lass. Poor father! it'll be soon."
Margaret was shocked by his words—shocked but not repelled; rather attracted and interested.

"Where do you live? I think we must be neighbours, we meet so often on this road."

"We put up at nine, Frances Street, second turn to th' left at after yo've past th'Goulden Dragon."

"And your name? I must not forget that."

"I'm none ashamed of my name. It's Nicholas Higgins. Hoo's called Bessy Higgins. Whatten yo' asking for?"

Margaret was surprised at this last question, for at Helstone it would have been an understood thing, after the inquiries she had made, that she intended to come and call upon any poor neighbour whose name and habitation she had asked for.

"I thought—I meant to come and see you. She suddenly felt rather shy of offering the visit, without having any reason to give for her wish to make it, beyond a kindly interest in a stranger. It seemed all at once to take the shape of an impertinence on her part; she read this meaning too in the man's eyes.

"I'm none so fond of having strange folk in my house." But then relenting, as he saw her heightened colour, he added, "Yo're a foreigner, as one may say, and maybe don't know many folk here, and yo've given my wench here flowers out of yo'r own hand;—yo may come if yo like."

Margaret was half-amused, half nettled at this answer. She was not sure if she would go where permission was given so like a favour conferred. But when they came to the town into Frances Street, the girl stopped a minute, and said, "Yo'll not forget yo're to come and see us."

"Aye, aye," said the father, impatiently, "hoo'll come. Hoo's a bit set up now, because hoo thinks I might ha' spoken more civilly; but hoo'll think better on it, and come. I can read her proud bonny face like a book. Come along, Bess; there's the mill bell ringing."

Margaret went home, wondering at her new friends, and smiling at the man's insight into what had been passing in her mind. From that day Milton became a brighter place to her. It was not the long, bleak sunny days of spring, nor yet was it that time was reconciling her to the town of her habitation. It was that in it she had found a human interest.

CHAPTER THE NINTH.

THE day after this meeting with Higgins and his daughter, Mr. Hale came upstairs into the little drawing-room at an unusual hour. He went up to different objects in the room, as if examining them, but Margaret saw that it was merely a nervous trick—a way of putting off something he wished, yet feared to say. Out it came at last—

"My dear! I've asked Mr. Thornton to come to tea to-night."

Mrs. Hale was leaning back in her easy chair, with her eyes shut, and an expression of pain on her face which had become habitual to her of late. But she roused up into querulousness at this speech of her husband's.

"Mr. Thornton!—and to-night! "What in the world does the man want to come here for? And Dixon is washing my muslins and laces, and there is no soft water with these horrid east winds, which I suppose we shall have all the year round in Milton."

"The wind is veering round, my dear," said Mr. Hale, looking out at the smoke, which drifted right from the east, only he did not yet understand the points of the compass, and rather arranged them ad libitum, according to circumstances.

"Don't tell me! " said Mrs. Hale, shuddering up, and wrapping her shawl about her still more closely. "But, east or west wind, I suppose this man comes."

"Oh, mamma, that shows you never saw Mr. Thornton. He looks like a person who would en-
joy battling with every adverse thing he could meet with—enemies, winds, or circumstances. The more it rains and blows, the more certain we are to have him. But I will go and help Dixon. I am getting to be a famous clear-starcher. And he won't want any amusement beyond talking to papa. Papa, I am really longing to see the Pythias to your Damon. You know I never saw him but once, and then we were so puzzled to know what to say to each other that we did not get on particularly well."

"I don't know that you would ever like him, or think him agreeable, Margaret. He is not a lady's man."

Margaret wreathed her throat in a scornful curve.

"I don't particularly admire ladies' men, papa. But Mr. Thornton comes here as your friend—as one who has appreciated you—"

"The only person in Milton," said Mrs. Hale.

"So we will give him a welcome, and some cocoa-nut cakes. Dixon will be flattered if we ask her to make some; and I will undertake to iron your caps, mamma."

Many a time that morning did Margaret wish Mr. Thornton far enough away. She had planned other employments for herself: a letter to Edith, a good piece of Dante, a visit to the Higginsees. But, instead, she ironed away, listening to Dixon's complaints, and only hoping that by an excess of sympathy she might prevent her from carrying the recital of her sorrows to Mrs. Hale. Every now and then Margaret had to remind herself of her father's regard for Mr. Thornton to subdue the irritation of weariness that was stealing over her, and bringing on one of the bad headaches to which she had lately become liable. She could hardly speak when she sat down at last, and told her mother that she was no longer Peggy the laundry-maid, but Margaret Hale, the lady. She meant this speech for a little joke, and was vexed enough with her busy tongue when she found her mother taking it seriously.

"Yes! if any one had told me, when I was Miss Beresford, and one of the belles of the county, that a child of mine would have to stand half a day, in a little poky kitchen, working away like any servant, that we might prepare properly for the reception of a tradesman, and that this tradesman should be the only—"

"Oh, mamma! " said Margaret, lifting herself up, "don't punish me so for a careless speech. I don't mind ironing, or any kind of work, for you and papa. I am myself a born and bred lady through it all, even though it comes to scouring a floor, or washing dishes. I am tired now, just for a little while; but in half an hour I shall be ready to do the same over again. And as to Mr. Thornton's being in trade, why he can't help that now, poor fellow. I don't suppose his education would fit him for much else." Margaret lifted herself slowly up, and went to her own room; for just now she could not bear much more.

In Mr. Thornton's house, at this very same time a similar, yet different, scene was going on. A large-boned lady, long past middle age, sat at work in a grim handsomely-furnished dining-room. Her features, like her frame, were strong and massive, rather than heavy. Her face moved slowly from one decided expression to another equally decided. There was no great variety in her countenance; but those who looked at it once, generally looked at it again; even the passers-by in the street, half-turned their heads to gaze an instant longer at the rm, severe, dignied woman, who never gave way in street- courtesy, or paused in her straight-onward course to the clearly defined end which she proposed to herself.

She was handsomely dressed in stout black silk, of which not a thread was worn or discoloured. She was mending a large, long tablecloth of the finest texture, holding it up against the light occasionally to discover thin places, which required her delicate care. There was not a book about in the room, with the exception of
Matthew Henry’s Bible Commentaries, six volumes of which lay in the centre of the massive side-board, flanked by a tea-urn on one side, a lamp on the other. In some remote apartment, there was exercise upon the piano going on. Some one was practising up a morceau de salon, playing it very rapidly, every third note, on an average, being either indistinct, or wholly missed out, and the loud chords at the end being half of them false, but not the less satisfactory to the performer. Mrs. Thornton heard a step, like her own in its decisive character, pass the dining-room door.

"John! Is that you?"

Her son opened the door, and showed himself.

What has brought you home so early? I thought you were going to tea with that friend of Mr. Bell’s; that Mr. Hale."

"So I am, mother. I am come home to dress!"

"Dress! humph! When I was a girl, young men were satisfied with dressing once in a day. Why should you dress to go and take a cup of tea with an old parson?"

"Mr. Hale is a gentleman, and his wife and daughter are ladies."

"Wife and daughter! Do they teach too? What do they do? You have never mentioned them."

"No! mother, because I have never seen Mrs. Hale; I have only seen Miss Hale for half an hour."  

"Take care you don’t get caught by a penniless girl, John."

"I am not easily caught, mother, as I think you know. But I must not have Miss Hale spoken of in that way, which, you know, is offensive to me. I never was aware of any young lady trying to catch me yet, nor do I believe that any one has ever given themselves that useless trouble."

Mrs. Thornton did not choose to yield the point to her son; or else she had, in general, pride enough for her sex.

"Well! I only say, take care. Perhaps our Milton girls have too much spirit and good feeling to go angling after husbands; but this Miss Hale comes out of the aristocratic counties, where, if all tales be true, rich husbands are reckoned prizes."

Mr. Thornton’s brow contracted, and he came a step forward into the room.

"Mother " (with a short scornful laugh), "you will make me confess. The only time I saw Miss Hale, she treated me with a haughty civility which had a strong avour of contempt in it. She held herself aloof from me as if she had been a queen, and I her humble, unwashed vassal. Be easy, mother."

"No! I am not easy, nor content either. What business had she, a renegade clergy-man’s daughter, to turn up her nose at you! I would dress for none of them—a saucy set! if I were you." As he was leaving the room he said:—

"Mr. Hale is good, and gentle, and learned. He is not saucy. As for Mrs. Hale, I will tell you what she is like to-night, if you care to hear." He shut the door, and was gone.

"Despise my son! treat him as her vassal, indeed! Humph! I should like to know where she could find such another! Boy and man, he’s the noblest stoutest heart I ever knew. I don’t care if I am his mother; I can see what’s what, and not be blind. I know what Fanny is; and I know what John is. Despise him! I hate her!"
Article: ‘North and South [v]’ by Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell


Author(s):

- Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell

Gaskell, Elizabeth Cleghorn (Stevenson) I Mrs Gaskell I 1810-1865, novelist. Attended the Misses Byerley’s school in Stratford-on-Avon. In 1832 married William Gaskell. Her first published writing, verse written in collaboration with her husband, appeared in Blackwood’s, 1837. Thereafter contributed to Howitt’s Journal, Sunday School Penny Magazine, both of Dickens’s periodicals, Cornhill; occasionally to other periodicals. Published in book form Mary Barton, 1848; Ruth, 1853; and Sylvia’s Lovers, 1863; published her other novels first as serials in periodicals; Wives and Daughters was appearing in Cornhill at time of her death. Author also of The Life of Charlotte Brontë, 1857.

Mrs. Gaskell sent Dickens a copy of Mary Barton soon after the book was published; she seems to have first met him in 1849. In that year she was among the guests at the David Copperfield celebration dinner. Later, Dickens at times visited the Gaskells when he was in Manchester. On occasion, in the early years of their acquaintance, Mrs. Gaskell asked him for information or assistance in helping people in whom she was interested - an unfortunate girl to be helped to emigrate to Australia, the Manchester prison philanthropist Thomas Wright to be championed in H.W. as worthy recipient of a Government pension. Otherwise, their association was entirely that of contributor and editor, and, in that relationship - until their dissension concerning the serialization of North and South [X, 61-68. Sept. 2, 1854, and the 21 following nos., ending X, 561-70. Jan. 27, 1855] - she held him in friendly regard. In a letter of 1852 (addressee unknown), she stated that she was not in the habit of writing for periodicals and wrote occasionally for H.W. only "as a personal mark of respect & regard to Mr Dickens" (Letters, No. 519, misdated 1862). Mrs. Gaskell, naturally, shared "the well-grounded feeling of dislike to the publicity" that Dickens gave to his domestic affairs in 1858. It had, she wrote, made him "extremely unpopular," and she did not wish to be announced as a contributor to his new periodical that was to appear in April of the following year (Letters, No. 418). Mrs. Gaskell was among the first writers whom Dickens asked to contribute to H.W. "... I do honestly know," he wrote to her, Jan. 31, 1850, "that there is no living English writer whose aid I would desire to enlist in preference to the authoress of Mary Barton (a book that most profoundly affected and impressed me). ..." If Mrs. Gaskell preferred to speak with him about the matter of contribution, he would be glad to call on her in Manchester to explain whatever she might wish to know. In response to the request, Mrs. Gaskell sent Dickens "Lizzie Leigh," [I, 2-6. March 30, 1850, and the 2 following nos.] the first chapter of which appeared in the opening number immediately following Dickens’s "Preliminary Word." Thereafter, at Dickens’s repeated urging, she sent him from time to time additional stories, as also articles, for some of which he had exceedingly high praise, and for their author pretty compliments. The "Cranford" stories ["Our Society at Cranford [lead]", IV, 265-74. Dec. 13, 1851; "A Love Affair...
8, 1853, and the following no.: "Stopped Payment, at Cranford", VII, 108-15. April 2, 1853; 
VII,277-85. May 21, 1853] were delightful; "The Old Nurse's Story" [Christmas 1852, pp. 11-
20] was "Nobly told, and wonderfully managed." Mrs. Gaskell was his "Sheherazade"; she 
could not write too much for H.W. and had "never yet written half enough"; anything that 
she might write would please Dickens; "it only needs be done by you to be well done" (Dec. 
5 [4], Dec. 21, 1851; Nov. 6, 1852; Nov. 25, 1851; April 13, Sept. 19, 1853). When he felt it 
advisable to make more than slight changes in her stories he did so in consultation with her and 
did not insist on changes that she did not approve. (The letter in which Mrs. Gaskell objected 
to Dickens's alteration in "Our Society at Cranford" - his substituting mention of Hood and 
Hood's writings for her mention of Boz and Boz's writings - reached Dickens only after the 
number in which the story was to appear was already in print. He hoped that she would not 
blame him for what he had done "in perfect good faith." "I would do anything rather than cause 
you a minute's vexation arising out of what has given me so much pleasure ..." Dec. 5 [4], 1851). 
On Aug. 19, 1854, H.W. announced the forthcoming publication in its pages of "NORTH AND 
SOUTH. By the AUTHOR OF MARY BARTON." The same authorship ascription appeared 
with the title of the novel in each instalment - this being the only instance, except for Hard 
Times, in which statement of authorship accompanied a title. North and South was unsuited to 
Dickens's serialization formula, and its publication disrupted the amicable relationship that had 
existed between author and editor. Points of dispute centred on the condensing of material, 
the quantity to be included in each H.W. number, and the fitting of chapters into weekly 
instalments. Divided as Mrs. Gaskell insisted, wrote Dickens, the novel was "wearisome in 
the last degree," and the resultant decrease in H.W. sales was not to be wondered at. The 
whole matter was "a dreary business" (to Wills, Oct. 14, 1854). His version of the vexatious 
author-editor relationship during the months of the novel's serialization Dickens gave in a letter 
to Wilkie Collins, March 24, 1855: "You have guessed right! The best of it was that she [Mrs. 
Gaskell] wrote to Wills, saying she must particularly stipulate not to have her proofs touched, 
even by Mr. Dickens. That immortal creature had gone over the proofs with great pains - 
had of course taken out the stifflings - hard-plungings, lungeings, and other convulsions - and 
had also taken out her weakenings and damagings of her own effects. 'Very well,' said the 
gifted Man, 'she shall have her own way. But after it's published show her this Proof, and 
ask her to consider whether her story would have been the better or the worse for it.' Mrs. 
Gaskell admitted, to Anna Jameson, that toward the end of the novel she had infringed "all 
the bounds & limits they set me as to quantity," but that every page had been "grudged" 
her (Letters, No. 225). She was acutely distressed by the unsatisfactory state in which the 
novel had appeared. In bringing it out in book form, she explained that the serial publication 
had made impossible the development of the story as she had originally planned and that 
she had, toward the close, been compelled "to hurry on events with an improbable rapidity." 
To remedy these matters in some degree, she made various alterations and additions in the 
book publication. Despite the alteration, Mrs. Gaskell continued to contribute to H.W. (the 
instalment division of one of her stories - "Half a Life-Time Ago" [XII, 229-37. Oct. 6, 1855, 
and the 2 following nos.] - again caused contention). To A.Y.R. Mrs. Gaskell did not wish to
become a contributor. Concerning a story for which she hoped to find an American publisher, she wrote to C. E. Norton, March 9, 1859: "I know it is fated to go to this new Dickensy periodical, & I did so hope to escape it" (Letters, No. 418). Mrs. Gaskell did not comply with Dickens's request that she write a novel for A.Y.R., though she did contribute shorter items. After she became a contributor to Cornhill, she reserved for that periodical what she considered her best writing; Dickens got the second best. She made the distinction clear in a letter to George Smith: a story "not good enough" for Cornhill "might be good enough" for Dickens's periodical (Letters, No. 451a). Some of the material that Mrs. Gaskell contributed to H.W. she had used before in an essay and a story published in Sartain's Union Magazine. The social background of the country town described in "The Last Generation in England," and some of the incidents related in that essay, appeared in the "Cranford" stories; "Martha Preston," in revised and expanded form, became 'Half a Life-Time Ago' (see Hopkins, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Sharps, Mrs. Gaskell's Observation and Invention). Mrs. Gaskell obviously contributed the material to H.W. as previously unpublished, and Dickens so accepted it. Mrs. Gaskell was generously paid for most of her H.W. contributions, though for some she was paid at the standard rate. In a letter written after she had been almost three years a contributor, she stated that she did not know the rate at which she was paid (Letters, No. 519, misdated 1862). The overgenerous twenty pounds that she received for her first contribution, however, so startled her that she wondered whether she was "swindling" the proprietors (Letters, No. 70). Mrs. Gaskell was "extremely annoyed & hurt" by the way in which an incident related in her "Disappearances" [III, 246-50. June 7, 1851] was handled in Morley's "Character-Murder," Jan. 8, 1859. In her article Mrs. Gaskell had told of the disappearance of an apprentice, with unmistakable implication that "the poor lad" had been murdered - a suspicion that had been disproved more than fifteen years before. Morley, quoting part of her account, cited it as an instance of the public's unwillingness to let rumours and scandals die even "after all the truth had been most publicly and perfectly explained." He did not, of course, mention the author of "Disappearances"; but since Mrs. Gaskell had reprinted the article in Lizzie Leigh; and Other Tales, her authorship was not a secret. Mrs. Gaskell wrote to Wills, protesting that Morley's article made her "say by implication" more than she had actually said; Wills's reply gave her no satisfaction (Gaskell, Letters, No. 418). Before the appearance of "Character-Murder," two short H.W. items ("A Disappearance" and "A Disappearance Cleared Up") had printed letters from readers stating facts that disproved the murder-rumour (see author details for John and William Gaunt). The first of the items was appended to "Disappearances" in the Tauchnitz Edition of the Lizzie Leigh collection. In addition to contributing to H.W., Mrs. Gaskell at times sent to the editorial office writings of her friends and acquaintances. Not all were accepted for publication. Those that did appear in H.W. were the poem "The Outcast Lady," a story by Mme. De Merey, and two papers by Mrs. Jenkin. A commendatory reference to Mrs. Gaskell's novels appeared in the H.W. article "Doctor Dulcamara, M.P.," written by Wilkie Collins and to some extent revised by Dickens; to recover from the effect produced by reading The Heir of Redclyffe, stated the article, the writer had had recourse to the "restoratives" provided by better women novelists than Charlotte Yonge, among them Mrs. Gaskell. H.W. readers probably liked Gaskell's "Cranford" stories best of her contributions to the periodical; among the many admirers of the stories were Forster, Ruskin, Charlotte Brontë, Monckton Milnes, and Charles Eliot Norton. Landor stated that a story related in Gaskell's "Modern Greek Songs"
had provided him with "the rudiments of a story" on which he based his poem "A Modern Greek Idyl." Of the items listed below as not reprinted by Gaskell, "Cumberland Sheep-Shearers" [VI, 445-51. Jan. 22, 1853] is established as her writing by Forster's letter to her, Jan. 20, 1853 (typescript in Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds Library); "Modern Greek Songs" [IX, 25-32. Feb. 25, 1854] is so established by a letter from Dickens to her, Feb. 18, 1854. Mrs. Gaskell's being a guest, in the spring of 1852, at Lord Hatherton's seat, Teddesley Park, where John Burton was head gardener from 1851 to 1853 (Sharps, *Mrs. Gaskell's Observation and Invention*, p. 145n), authenticates her authorship of "The Schah's English Gardener" [V, 317-21. June 19, 1852]. Bibliographers and biographers have attributed to Gaskell three verse items published in *H.W.*: "Bran," "The Scholar's Story," and "A Christmas Carol." The first two are by William Gaskell, with the brief prose introduction to "The Scholar's Story" being written, according to J. A. Green, by Mrs. Gaskell. The authorship of the third has not been ascertained. Its attribution to Mrs. Gaskell rests on a misunderstanding of the Office Book system of recording. Harper's reprinted seven of Gaskell's *H.W.* contributions (one, only in part), two of them acknowledged to *H.W.*; of the two, one was "Lizzie Leigh," listed in the table of contents as "By Charles Dickens." The New York publishers De Witt & Davenport brought out a pirated edition, 1850, of "Lizzie Leigh" as "By Charles Dickens." They included "Lizzie Leigh" in a collection (n.d.) of three stories "By Charles Dickens" (the first item in the collection was one of Georgiana Craik's *H.W.* stories; the third, one of Howitt's). "Lizzie Leigh" "By Charles Dickens" appeared as the first of the "spirit-stirring sketches of imagined or of real life" that constituted the *Irving Offering*, 1851, the picture that served as frontispiece bearing the legend "Lizzie Leigh." "Lizzie Leigh" was included in *Choice Stories from Dickens* Household Words, pub. Auburn, N.Y., 1854. "Disappearances" was included in the Putnam volume of selections from *H.W.*: *Home and Social Philosophy*, 2nd ser. D.N.B.

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
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**Genre(s):**
- Prose: Serial Fiction
  Fictional narrative 'published in successive instalments' (OED) of a periodical, i.e. involving publication in anything more than a single instalment.

**Subject(s):**
- Education—Great Britain; Universities and Colleges; Schools
- Family Life; Families; Domestic Relations; Sibling Relations; Kinship; Home;
- Friendship
- Industries; Industrial Revolution—Great Britain; Industrialization; Industrial Safety; Industrial Laws and Legislation; Industrial Welfare; Industrial Relations;
- Social classes; Class distinctions; Aristocracy (Social Class); Aristocracy (Social Class)—Fiction; Middle Class; Working Class; Servants;
 Urbanization; Urban Life and Landscapes

Citation (MHRA): Gaskell, Elizabeth Cleghorn, 'North and South [v]', *Household Words*, X, 30 September 1854, 157-162

N.B. The layout of prose articles exported to PDF follows the two-column format of the original, but does NOT preserve the original line breaks. The layout of poems exported to PDF follows the original line breaks, but does NOT attempt to replicate the original indentation or stanza structure. For all these features please refer to the facsimile pages on DJO.