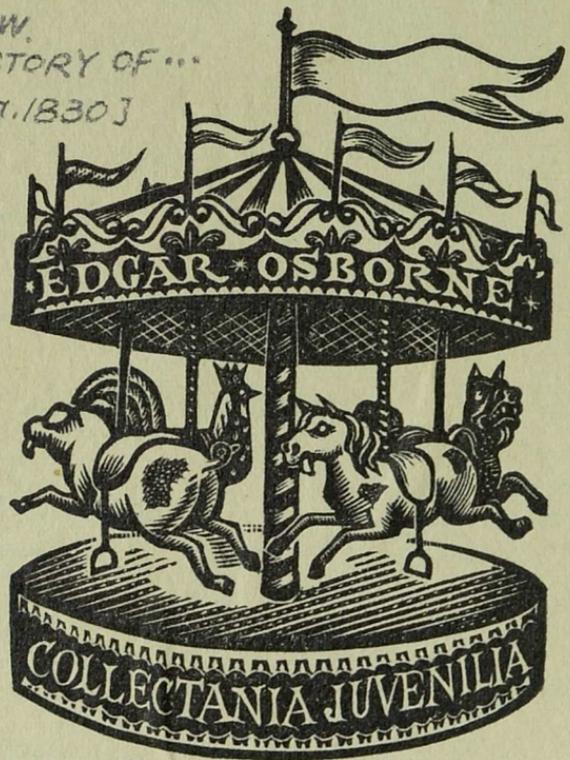


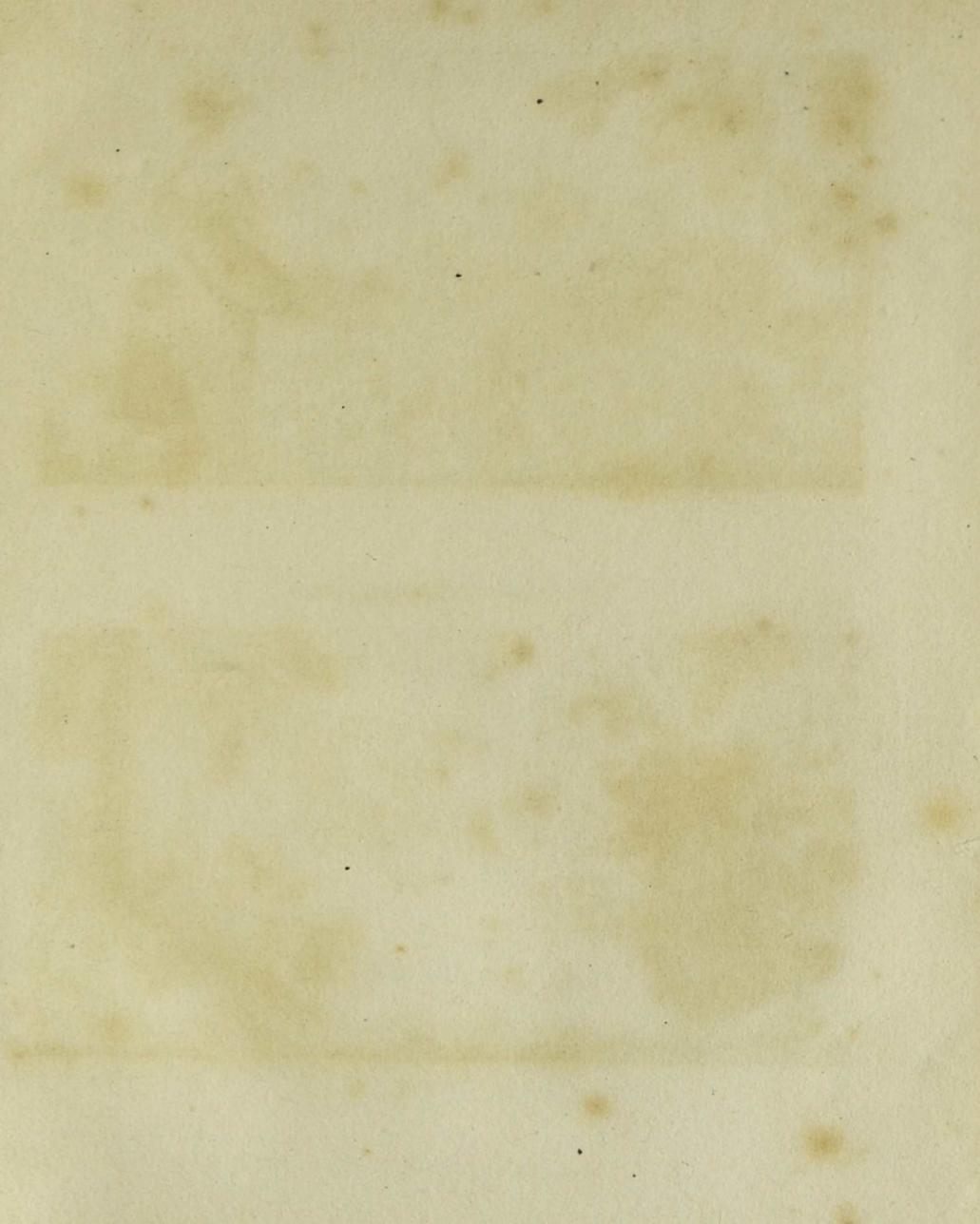
NS
E. W.
HISTORY OF ...
[Ca. 1830]



37131009567116

I, 215

This book forms part of
The Osborne Collection of Children's Books
presented to the Toronto Public Libraries by
Edgar Osborne
in memory of his wife
MABEL OSBORNE





I beheld my favourite fall .



A HISTORY
OF
MY PET ANIMALS,
DURING A YEAR'S
RESIDENCE IN THE COUNTRY;
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS,
ADDRESSED TO
MY NIECE SELINA.
WITH COPPER PLATES.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

LONDON:
WILLIAM DARTON, 58, HOLBORN HILL.

PRICE 2s. 6d. HALF-BOUND.

A HISTORY
OF
MY PET ANIMALS.



LETTER I.

MY DEAR SELINA,

As I promised you, when health and leisure would permit, to write the history of my various occupations during twelve months' residence in the retired and pleasant village of R——h, I have now taken up my pen with the intention of fulfilling that promise. I would endeavour to guard your

young and tender heart from cherishing a too great partiality for dumb creatures. I have proved, from my own experience, their incapacity to return your regard with kindness or gratitude; they are so entirely devoted to the love of self, as to be quite indifferent to the hand that feeds them, when their wants are satisfied. I shall, however, make an exception in favour of the dog, as his attachment, I believe, is very sincere, and his fidelity has been the the theme of many a historian, from time immemorial. I have chosen the form of letters for addressing you, conceiving it to be one of the easiest modes of conveying knowledge of any kind to the youthful mind. It will also prove an advantage to myself, as I may meet with many interruptions in the progress of my narrative.

Our removal from N——— was attended with the customary accompaniments, hurry, bustle, inconvenience, and fatigue; and I anticipated, with no small degree of eagerness, that calm when I should begin to feel myself in the country, and to taste the sweets attendant upon silence and repose.

Your Cousins were delighted with the change, and experienced few of the inconveniences that more sensibly affected myself. Every place was visited by them with eagerness and delight, and the natural versatility of the youthful mind made all equally charming. They soon found a variety of amusements to pass away their time; a new scene in life was open to their view, and it was pleasing to observe the impressions that were made and the observations that were called forth by a

ready conception of things. I often thought of you, and wished you had been with me, to have partaken of the amusements which afforded them so much enjoyment. I shall now bid you adieu. I hope in my next to be able to tell you that the calm I was so desirous to enjoy had arrived; and that occupations of a more agreeable nature than putting furniture, crockery, &c., in their proper places, were about to be entered upon by,

Dear Selina's very affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR SELINA,

A few days restored order and tranquillity. The house, of which I was become an inhabitant, I shall briefly describe in its proper place; but I must first tell you the train of thinking into which I fell when I experienced leisure. My family within doors, said I mentally, is much too small to occupy all my time and attention, I must have some active pursuit, to keep *ennui* and idleness aloof. These thoughts led me back to the days of my youth, from the earliest period of which, that I can remember, I fondly

cherished a love for the feathered race, as well as for other dumb animals, and had beguiled many an hour with bestowing endearments on a favourite dog and cat, listening at the same time to the shrill song of an almost tame Canary bird; nor can I, even at this more advanced period of my life, reflect, without sensations of the liveliest emotion, upon the pure pleasures they afforded me. When fatigued with other sports, the company of one, or all of my favourites, restored elasticity and energy; in their society, all personal inconvenience was forgotten. The threat of being deprived of one of my loved companions, always operated as an incentive to industry, and inspired more active obedience to the wishes of those who studied my future happiness. Well can I remember the

first who came to welcome me from school, my fond, my faithful Flora; my cat, I thought, looked pleased to see me, though, I am now satisfied that idea was only one of those delusions with which the youthful mind is so prone to deceive itself, but which proves one of its greatest sources of happiness; my bird, I also fancied, chirped louder and sang more sweetly upon seeing me. My hours of recreation were most commonly occupied in cleaning his house, and giving him fresh seed and water, nor did I forget to decorate the wires of his cage with groundsel, of which he was remarkably fond. Flora came in for her share of combing and cleaning, and was very docile under the operations; not so my cat, which was almost always refractory, and testified her disapprobation by frequent

scratching, and getting off my lap at every opportunity, which provoked my displeasure.

It is my intention, at some, perhaps not far distant, period, to give you a brief, but faithful history of my life. I shall, therefore, desist from speaking any more of my early habits.—To commit to paper such an eventful life as mine has been, will be to recal many painful recollections; but, as pleasing ones will also arise in quick succession, it may not be found altogether uninteresting; and I feel the more induced to do it immediately, as I can perceive much of the volatility of disposition in you, that so strongly marked your Aunt in early life, added to that natural *gaieté de cœur*, which were striking features in her character; and these qualities, unless restrained by prudence and right

guidance, must ever mislead and misdirect the thoughts and actions of the possessor. May the experience of your Aunt, which will be tendered with diffidence and affection, serve as a beacon to direct you in your journey through the vale of life ; and that you may have the ability to avoid the troubles she so often incurred from her heedlessness, and tread in her footsteps where they led to happiness, is the sincere prayer of

Dear Selina's most affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER III.

MY DEAR SELINA,

IMPRESSED with strong recollections of some of the favourite pursuits of my childhood, mentioned in my last, I was resolved, as soon as I conveniently could, to collect around me most of the various fowls which are always to be found in the large farm yards, and for which my present situation was admirably adapted. The house was a very ancient one, and had been built without any regard to external beauty or regularity, and I might almost add to shape; small latticed windows were thinly scattered about,

and gave no very pleasing idea of the airiness of the rooms within. I was puzzled to find what is called a front entrance, concluding, from what I saw, that I had chosen the back-way, but there was no other. The clumsy door which was opened for our reception led directly into the kitchen, a large good-sized room, at the further end of which, was a long casement overlooking the farm yard, which presented a prospect by no means unpleasant. Through a small hall or passage, that had been added by a modern tenant, you came to the parlour, an old-fashioned wainscotted room, dreary and sombre in the extreme, and perhaps rendered more so by the tendrils of the vine without almost wholly overshadowing the window. I hastened to it, and no longer felt any dislike to

the darkened apartment. The prospect it afforded me was beautiful. A large and rich garden was to be seen, still abounding with a choice variety of nature's latest beauties; her fragrant breath perfumed the air, and hushed to rest every latent disposition to discontent.

The other apartments in this oddly-fashioned house were similar to the two I have described; there was nothing in them to give you the idea of a dwelling for the heroine of a romance; all that could be said of it was, that it was well suited for a farmer of the last century, and quite accorded with my ideas of an old-fashioned farm house, as it abounded with every convenience that a humble and contented mind could desire. The barn, the cowhouses, the piggery, and

stables, surrounded the farm yard, and gave it an appearance of warmth and security. The little apartment I designed for my fowls, and which I shall call the roost-house, was at one end of the house, adjoining the wash-house, and was to be entered by my feathered family through the farm yard. I shall now finish my letter, and in my next endeavour to give you some faint idea of the beautiful scenery by which we were surrounded. For the present, my dear Selina, adieu.

Your affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR SELINA,

I will now give you, agreeably to my promise, some little idea of the country in our immediate vicinity, before I enter into a detail of my various occupations. Our house stood quite in a valley, on the front of which was a small orchard, fenced on three sides with a quickset hedge; a small but convenient pond formed another security to it against depredators. To the right of the house there were cultivated fields; and on the opposite side, at no great distance, the park and plantations of Sir E. S——, the proprietor of the soil. The walks, in all

directions, were for the most part retired and romantic; perhaps, a more beautiful diversity of hill and valley, wood and lawn, could scarcely be found. The season of the year was not the most inviting for a residence in it, and many would have exclaimed, in the beautiful lines of Shenstone—

“ Oh pensive Autumn! how I grieve
Thy sorrowing face to see,
When languid suns are taking leave
Of ev'ry drooping tree.

Ah! let me not with heavy eye,
This dying scene survey;
Haste Winter, haste, usurp the sky,
Complete my bowers' decay.

Ill can I bear the motley cast
Yon sickening leaves retain;
That speak at once of pleasure past,
And bode approaching pain.”

But to me, nature in her most fantastic garb, is always charming; the autumnal tints gave a richness to the scenery, and at the same time added a brilliancy to the hues of many coloured woods, "shade deepening shade," till all was lost in sooty black. The approaching winter was anticipated without any feeling of dread, conscious, to a real lover of the country, that even that season was not without its charms. I was determined to make the most of the present time, and wandered in every direction, both at early morn and dewy eve. The thrush, the linnet, and the lark were still to be heard, but in faint warblings, and imagination might have led one to believe they were singing the words I have just quoted from the Poet.

One of my most admired walks was at the

back of the house, through a long winding lane, which branching off to the right led into the rich plantations of the wealthy owner; thence you descended into a deep vale, and, on ascending a steep and mazy hill, you entered all at once into the spacious park before mentioned, where an extensive prospect, bounded by a circuitous plantation of trees, whose lofty tops seemed to meet the horizon, alike amazed and delighted you. If the sun's rays were too powerful, or the wind not genial, you could enjoy the beautiful scenery from a rural retreat, raised near this entrance to the park, for retirement and rest, and serving at the same time as a picturesque object to the spacious mansion within view, which formed a striking contrast with the humble cottages interspersed here and there,

and added greatly to the beauty of the scene. I always returned home from a morning or evening stroll much gratified, and satisfied no pleasures were so pure and lasting as those enjoyed by the lovers of rural retirement; still, my dear Selina, the seclusion of our abode did not form a barrier against the intrusion of cares, for some would occasionally creep in to alloy happiness; such as absence from relations, and the earliest friends of my youth, or anxiety when sickness befel a beloved object. Even the apparently trivial event of a tame rabbit, falling a victim to the merciless disposition of a cat, has discomposed the harmony both of scene and feeling for many days. I must not, however, anticipate my journal, but narrate incidents as they befel. Your susceptible heart will, I

have no doubt, heave many a sigh at the fate of some of my favourites, and you will probably exclaim, well, I will profit by my Aunt's experience, and never have so many. You will act wisely in adhering to such a resolution; your own feelings will escape being wounded by neglect or ingratitude, for be assured that too much indulgence invariably tends to render the party indulged—whether boy or girl, lamb or cat—fretful, impatient, impertinent, rebellious, and ungrateful, as will be seen in the history of my favourites. I have written a longer letter than I intended, so shall conclude, with assuring you how sincerely I remain,

Your affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR SELINA,

I shall now enter upon the subject most interesting to you, by informing you that in a short time I found myself surrounded with a numerous variety of fowls, for whose accommodation I had been at considerable trouble and expense. My first care was to teach them the way to their new abode, but I found them invariably inclined to act contrary to my wishes. Some were for roosting in the out-houses, others for sitting in the trees in the orchard, and the webfooted tribe evinced a very strong desire to remain on the

grass all night; but I was too anxious for their welfare and security, to allow them to please themselves; at length, after much resistance on their part, and of perseverance on mine, I conquered, and I was repaid for my trouble by their future obedience. My hens soon rewarded my kindness by furnishing me with eggs. My geese were next upon the list; as soon as my gray goose had completed her number, which was eleven, she commenced sitting upon her eggs, for the purpose of introducing a race of goslings. I was very willing she should be gratified, and was pleased to observe with what care and industry she lined her straw nest, with the down she plucked from her breast; occasionally she would roll the eggs round, and remove the inside ones outside, and *vice versa*,

that all might alike partake of her warmth, and be nourished by it. When disposed to quit her care, she covers the eggs with the soft light substance, but remains from them no longer than nature requires for the refreshment of food; she generally sought the nearest pond first, where she renovated and strengthened her limbs by repeated divings, and throwing the water all over her—no sooner had she completed her task of feeding and cleaning, than she returned to her nest, and re-settled herself upon her eggs, with the greatest care. A good goose will seldom quit her nest more than once in the twenty-four hours.

I shall now speak of my turkeys, and the untimely death of my first favourite. One of the hens was particularly beautiful; I

selected her from the rest, and often gave her a handful of oats to render her more familiar with me. I did not stop to ask the question, is she more deserving of kindness than the others? what other recommendation has she besides her beauty? No, all that pleased me was her external appearance, which too often conceals in children, as well as in birds, very unamiable dispositions, as the sequel will prove: for my beautiful bird was quarrelsome, ill-tempered, and tyrannical; and wished to be mistress over every fowl in the yard.

I hoped that time, and the good example of her sister hens, would make her more peaceably disposed, and teach her that subjection and obedience to her superiors in age and strength, were absolutely necessary;

that the same law existed amongst fowls as amongst the rulers of the earth, *viz.* that the strongest and the most powerful were always the greatest tyrants. I had frequently to chastise her, and shut her up alone, lest she should be killed, when she looked so gentle, and appeared so unhappy, (for she rejected her food), that I at last resolved she should fight her battles out without interruption, and take the consequences of her own folly. One afternoon, as I stood watching her repeated provocations to her old enemy, one of the barn-door cocks, she roused his anger to the utmost, and a fierce battle ensued; I trembled for the result, and determined upon separating them before any bad consequences could happen, but, alas! I was too late; in an instant I beheld my favourite fall, whilst

her antagonist immediately clapped his wings and proclaimed the victory he had gained, by loud and repeated crowing. It was, indeed, a complete victory, the price of which was a cause of regret to me, for my hen had fallen to rise no more ; neither will I write any more at present upon this serious subject, but conclude my letter with the assurance, that I am, as ever,

Your very affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER VI.

MY DEAR SELINA,

I am persuaded that all the cocks and hens were very glad to find their quarrelsome neighbour gone, for whenever they had assembled together, either for the purpose of chatting, or of basking in the warm sun, she was sure to go and interrupt them, leaving her peaceable brother and sisters, who had often, perhaps, though fruitlessly, admonished her to act differently.

I was certainly vexed at her untimely death, for the loss I had sustained, as I had given a high price for her, but, upon reflection, I considered, that as a partial evil

often proves a universal good, it might be so in this instance, and I very soon forgot my loss, in the pleasing prospect of the tranquillity, harmony, and apparent good-will that now existed amongst my feathered family.

For some time no interruptions of an unpleasant kind occurred, and my two white geese were in due time the first to present me with a family of goslings. I observed that my gray goose, which had but a day or two longer to remain upon her eggs, became very restless, and was continually leaving them to wander forth with the young family of her neighbours, and appeared quite as fond of them as though they had been her own; nay, she often enticed them away from their mothers, which caused great uneasiness and dissensions amongst them. I

was obliged to fasten her in her house, and to insist upon her remaining on her eggs, that she might have the pleasure of going forth with a family of her own; but I found it in vain to remonstrate with one who was obstinately determined to act as she pleased, so I gave up the contest, and permitted her to go at large. I could not, however, be persuaded that jealousy, or the desire of gadding about with the offspring of another, were the sole causes of her forsaking her eggs, for with very few exceptions, a goose or any other bird, will sit closely and patiently during the time that nature and instinct tell them is necessary to effect the desired end. I conjectured that something uncommon had disturbed her, and the event proved that I was not mistaken. I always

made it a rule to have my young family of goslings counted every evening, when they went in to bed, and again when they were let out in the morning. To my astonishment, the servant came one morning and told me, that two goslings were missing, and that something must have got into the roost-house, as the gander was scarcely quiet all night. I feared a weasel, as the plantations by which we were almost surrounded, were a certain and safe harbour for vermin of every species destructive to fowls. I had search made for the hole or crevice by which an entrance had been effected, but in vain. Alas! another, and another gosling nightly vanished, and the faithful guardian of his wives and children, made the place echo with his nightly cries. Vexed with my re-

peated losses, and angry that the midnight robber should continue his depredations without detection, I resolved, though at the risk of the lives of my helpless family, to have a rat-trap set in the house, when they should have retired to rest. About midnight, the watchful sentinel gave the alarm, but his cries were of short duration.

The servant man, who could hear what was passing, hastened down to learn why the uproar had so suddenly ceased, and found in the trap a huge old rat, which I have no doubt had been the original cause of the gray goose forsaking her eggs, for when they were removed, part of a gosling was found under them, whither he had doubtless resorted to regale himself, and by so doing had completely unsettled her.

The rat's entrance I could never find, but I conjecture that it must have been from a hole in the roof, imperceptible to the eye, as I had ordered every apparent aperture to be mortared up.

The tranquillity of my roost-house being restored, I began to feel no trifling degree of pride, when viewing my progeny daily increasing, and was reposing in careless security, when another unexpected and most formidable enemy appeared in the shape of an old sow. I shall begin my next letter with an account of her ravages, as the length of this warns me not to tire you with any more at present. Accept, therefore, my love, and believe me to remain

Your very affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER VII.

MY DEAR SELINA,

I had at this time a dozen hens, each with not less than twelve chickens, parading about in all directions, when one luckless day no fewer than sixteen of these delicate little creatures fell victims to the sow's voracious appetite; I was an eye witness of this slaughter, but was unequal to attack such a ferocious monster, and had it not been for the timely arrival of one of the farming men, many more would have been sacrificed, as she appeared too well pleased with the repast to leave one untasted. I was

not sorry that she paid for the crime she had committed with the loss of her liberty, and ultimately of her life, as she was put up to fatten, and was sold soon after. My turkeys met with no disasters owing to my extreme vigilance, as I considered them by far the most helpless and inoffensive of the feathered tribe. They will follow with unwearied perseverance the person accustomed to feed them, and their invariably mild and gentle manners attracted my peculiar attention; I should exclude the male bird from these amiable dispositions, as he is ever prone to anger, and threatens and reddens; at the approach of his best friend, he instantly erects his tail into the form of a half crescent, and the naturally white fleshy substance which adorns his head and throat, becomes of the

brightest scarlet. The properties of this bird are very singular; he has power to enlarge or contract at will, the warty substance mentioned, and can change its colour from white to scarlet, blue, and bluish white, alternately; according as he is pleased or displeased. He evinces, by his constant attendance, a great attachment to his wives and offspring, and keeps strutting and parading around them, with a mixture of pride and conscious superiority. It would, my dear Selina, be an almost endless task, were I to attempt enumerating the many qualities peculiar to fowls in general. From the result of my observations, I discovered that they were incapable of attachment to our race; the love of self was their predominant characteristic, and as long as their wants were supplied, they were

perfectly indifferent to the hand that fed and protected them.

I am also persuaded that they are governed solely by instinct in the care and preservation of their offspring, for no sooner are they enabled to find food for themselves, than the maternal wing is withdrawn; a deaf ear is turned to the sorrowful chirpings of the young, and a peck with the beak is the punishment, if they attempt too near an approach. Indeed, I have had some hens who would desert their charge even before nature had sufficiently endowed them with the power of protecting themselves, and much care and anxiety have devolved upon me. I had, generally, the satisfaction to find myself rewarded by preserving the lives of the little orphans.

You will easily perceive by my letters, that I have passed over in silence the most gloomy months of the winter, during which, few incidents occurred that would interest or amuse you; my occupations were various, but chiefly confined within doors.

The spring was now advancing rapidly, and I anticipated with no small degree of pleasure, the time when the shepherd would arrive to take the immediate charge of his flock; when I might realize the possession of what I had so long and so much wished for, namely, a cot lamb. I had often pictured to my lively imagination the delight I should experience in its innocent acknowledgments of my kindness, and the caresses it would lavish upon me for supplying the place of its mother. But, my dear Selina, remember,

I never meditated robbing the mother of its young ; my hopes and expectations were derived from the knowledge that it often happened in flocks of ewes, that either the mother died in giving birth, or that she had more lambkins than nature permitted her to rear ; in either case, I was resolved to endeavour to preserve its life by my care and attention.

As my compassion and love for dumb animals have always been excessive, and have often made me miserable, I would again impress upon your mind, my folly in encouraging, to such an excess, feelings that always made me ultimately uncomfortable. Our sympathy and assistance are certainly due, in the first instance to our fellow creatures of the human race, as they stand in a

nearer relation to us, and hold a superior rank in the works of creation ; but, I own the incapability of a poor brute creature to utter his distress, and his want of reason to find out the means of relieving it, will still plead more powerfully with me, than all the rhetoric of a beggar, practised in the art of moving compassion. Undisguised nature, though void of speech, expresses herself in the most impassioned manner ; and when you shall have perused my little history, you will, I think, coincide in the sentiments of, dear Selina,

Your very affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER VIII.

MY DEAR SELINA,

MY desire is to point out to you the errors into which a mistaken tenderness, or a too lively sensibility for dumb creatures, was constantly betraying me. Far be it from my intention to suppress such amiable propensities; it is against their excessive indulgence only that I would guard you. That nature has dealt her most amiable and endearing qualities to you, with an unsparing hand, is visible in every action, where feeling, generosity, affection, and tenderness are called for; and I have no doubt, but the loss of

your favourite kitten, Selima, would affect you most sensibly. In your affliction you would not suffer the influence of reason to point out the folly of grieving for one, who cared only for herself; and, though what I write is from experience, still, I fear that I shall not be able to convince you that a cat is by nature treacherous and intractable, and at one time or another will show her tiger-like propensities. Their utility in pursuing and destroying vermin, makes them commonly necessary in our dwellings, and often favourites; nay, I remember to have read, that in Egypt these animals were formerly objects of such sacred veneration, that wilfully to destroy a cat was considered a capital offence. Herodotus states, that whenever a cat died a natural death, the inhabitants of the house were ac-

customed to shave their eye-brows, in tokens of sorrow, and the animal so dying, was embalmed and nobly interred. I dare say, you would have no objection to similar honours being paid to your Selima, at her death. I am not certain, that I should not have commemorated the loss of my favourite cat Spot, in some way or other, had she not first deceived, and then forsaken me. As I may not have a more convenient opportunity than this, to give you a brief history of her life, I will embrace the present time, and lay it before you.

Mrs. Spot was born in the spring of one thousand eight hundred and fourteen, under the roof of a man of worth, whose chief study consisted in imparting good to all who had the happiness to be known to him ; but

particularly to those who needed his assistance, for his hand was ever as ready to bestow, as his heart was to sympathise in the distresses of his fellow-creatures. One of the amiable sisters of this gentleman, whom I have the happiness to call my friend, selected her from a family of five, as the most worthy my acceptance. Being too young to be signalized for any particularly good qualities, her beauty was the principal object of attraction, and certainly she was one of the handsomest of that description of beauty I ever saw; her skin was of the purest white, finely speckled with brown and black, in regular spots, the size of a half-crown. She had a white nose, with very beautiful green gooseberry coloured eyes, and fine long white whiskers. At a suitable time, she was safely

conveyed to her new mistress, and experienced all the kindness her tender age required; she afterwards became the play-fellow of your little cousin, who allowed her to take, without reluctance or complaint, whatever he might have in his hand, if it pleased her palate. Death removed him from me, when I became imperceptibly attached to his companion, and forgave many an act of disobedience, and overlooked numberless offences, because he had done the same, and loved her so much.

I always allowed her to rear her family in peace and plenty, and deluded myself with the belief that she was attached to me. The removal to R——, caused me much anxiety, as I feared, from the natural propensity cats have for rambling, or poaching, she would

wander into the neighbouring plantations, and be caught in one of the traps, which was always to be found in readines, to decoy and catch them, lest they should destroy the game. Frequently have I heard the poor cottagers lamenting the loss of their cats, and how their bread and cheese suffered from the nightly depredations of the rats and mice. Fortunately, my Spot escaped the snares, in which so many were caught, and betrayed no desire to ramble beyond the precincts of the garden and barn. I was simple enough to believe she had received too good an education ever to practice any of the bad propensities of her race, beyond that of catching mice, of which she was very fond. Often had she been left alone with my turtle doves, without attempting to do them an injury,

which confirmed me in the opinion that she cared for nothing so much as mice and milk. Eight years had so strengthened her in good habits, that I frequently said, my cat seldom commits a fault; shortly, however, I was to be convinced of the fallacy of such opinions, for she proved herself a very cat at heart. Your cousin John had saved the life of a wild rabbit, which, by kind and generous treatment, was become so tame and playful, that it was a general favourite; it would sport and frolic about, sit upon its hind legs to nibble the tender herbs culled by the hands of affection for it, come when called, and in short, it formed one of John's great sources of happiness and amusement. I thought the lines of Gay upon the hare, very applicable to our pet rabbit:—

“ Her care was never to offend,
And every creature was her friend.”

Having occasion to visit N——, for a few days, I begged that the necessary precautions, which I never omitted, for the nightly preservation of the rabbit, might be strictly observed; the charge was particularly entrusted to a female servant, who was as much pleased with it as my children, and I am sure would not willingly have exposed it to the probability of danger. Adjoining the room in which it was allowed to frolic during the night, was a light closet, which faced the west, and to which my cat used always to resort, to bask, as I then thought, and sleep in the rays of the setting sun; when at home, I had never omitted to put her out, or shut the door at night, lest the rabbit's too great

familiarity with its companion should provoke contempt and cruelty, when no one was near to protect it. Not so thoughtful were my stewards; one luckless night, puss was left sleeping, the door was left open, and the pretty innocent fell a sacrifice to the wanton disposition and natural instinct of the cat. Immediately on my return home, the sorrowful countenance and overflowing eyes of John, announced to my mind that some disaster had befallen his favourite; I inquired why the cat had not been put out of the closet, the servant to whom I had entrusted the charge, replied, "Spot was sleeping so soundly, it would have been a pity to have disturbed her, and as she and the rabbit had always been good friends, we feared no ill." Her compassionate feelings I approved, but

I thought her regard for the slumbers of the cat was ill-timed, and reminded me of the humanity of a sultan, who chose rather to have the sleeve of his robe cut off than awake his favourite cat, which was sleeping on it.

Upon our quitting R——, Puss was again a travelling companion, and appeared for some time satisfied, if not pleased with the change, when one day she took her leave and never returned, nor could I ever learn what became of her. Time, and the conviction of her ingratitude, reconciled me to her loss, for in me she had ever found a kind mistress, and a sincere friend; nor could I have believed she would ever have deserted me; but so it was, and with her vanished my regard for that ungrateful race. How unlike the generous and faithful attachment

of my dog, of whose amiable and watchful attention to the interests of its owner, I may be tempted some time hence to give you an account, should I be flattered with the assurance that my efforts to amuse are not altogether fruitless. Adieu, with love and regard, I am, as heretofore,

Your affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER IX.

MY DEAR SELINA,

THE early buds of spring had already put forth many of their tender blossoms, and the garden was gay with snow-drops, crocuses, daisies, primroses, violets

darkly blue, and polyanthuses with unnumbered dyes, which, with the yellow wallflower and sweetly scented mezerion, conspired to delight the senses with their beauty and fragrance; I was enjoying these sweets and indulging in a pleasing reverie when a summons from the shepherd recalled my wandering thoughts, and gave a new turn to my ideas. He presented a very sorrowful countenance, and putting forth his hand in which he held something, covered over with a piece of old rag, "Madam," he said, "I have a little stranger that must die, unless somebody will take compassion on it, and I have no inclination to nurse it, or take the trouble of it; the mother had three, she can suckle but two, so I left the two best, and took away the weakest." Upon saying this,



Pet scampered off.



he withdrew the covering, and presented me with a living thing certainly, but by what name to call it I knew not; the shepherd seeing my amazement exclaimed, "Madam, it is a young lamb, and will make a beautiful cot, you must if you please to take it, keep it warm, and give it some new milk now and then." "Well, give it me then, I replied, and I will do all I can for it;" so saying, I took the helpless shivering lamb, sat down before the fire, and with a tea-spoon put a little warm milk down its throat, which seemed to strengthen it, for it raised its tiny head. My curiosity now led me to examine it, having never before seen so unshapely a creature; its head was small to minuteness, the body was also *petit*, but the legs were long, thick and very disproportioned; this I

afterwards found to be a peculiarity of sheep, when first born: it was not half an hour old when I received it, consequently, I saw it under every disadvantage, but I was not discouraged by the unfavourableness of its appearance, from becoming its nurse. I had no doubt, if it lived, that I should be amply repaid for my trouble, by its innocent caresses, and frolicsome gambols; and your Uncle, who though not particularly partial to such animals, had no objection to my rearing a cot lamb, satisfied I should never make the attempt a second time. His predictions respecting their troublesomeness, unmanagableness, and mischievousness, and the fatigue I should experience, had no effect in altering my resolution; I assured him I should bring Pet up so well that he would always obey

me. "Then you must not indulge him," was his truly wise reply. "But," I replied, "unless he be indulged he will never love me, and single me out from every other person, which is what I am looking forward to with so much pleasure." "Well," observed your good Uncle, "do as you please, only remember my advice, which is, if you wish to make him obedient and tractable, do not spoil him by excessive indulgence."

My first care was to make Pet, for so I had named him, a comfortable and warm bed, on which to repose his tender limbs. For this purpose I prepared an old basket, and lined it with flannel many times doubled, to render it soft. My next care was to invent something to feed him with, as it would be at least two months before he would be

able to eat the food nature would provide for his support. It occurred to me that he must be treated like the infant who is reared with the aid of warm or new milk, put into a bottle, and a piece of sponge tied into the neck of it, through which the infant draws the milk, the sponge being of a porous nature. In like manner I proposed feeding my lambkin, and I was pleased to find my success beyond my most sanguine expectations. Master Pet, before the hour for retiring, had emptied a teacupful of new milk, and seemed not only to be much refreshed, but to have gained strength. I regarded the nights as the most formidable, for the preservation of my charge, as they were still long and cold, and he would require nourishment during that period.

To leave him below stairs I deemed certain death; therefore, after a little consultation, it was agreed he should be placed by my bedside, and a stone bottle of milk made quite hot, put under my pillow, which would keep warm for some hours in case of need. It was certainly a very wise provision, for about midnight, Master Pet, awoke me with his first essay at speech; a faint "ba ba-a," was several times repeated. I instantly attended to his cries, and having satisfied his wants, he again sunk into calm repose, to the satisfaction of your affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER X.

MY DEAR SELINA,

I found it necessary to administer food about three times during the night: in two days he was able to stand and testify his knowledge of me by “ba-ing” whenever he saw me; he was yet too weak to walk without tottering, though he attempted very often to follow me. I did not encourage him, as I feared he would meet with many disasters from his being so very small; I often thought how pleased he would be with a companion of his own species. However, I had no intention to solicit one, as I began

to be weary of night-nursing, for now that he could stand, instead of asking for his milk as heretofore, he used to get upon his hinder legs, and with his fore feet keep pawing the bed clothes and shaking the curtain to hasten my attendance upon him. My wishes for a companion to my favourite were too soon realized; in about two weeks a lamb had the misfortune to lose its mother, a few minutes after it was born. The shepherd instantly brought the helpless orphan to me; he was aware of my inability to turn a deaf ear to the cries of the unfortunate, and as it had been perhaps hinted to him, that I had expressed a wish for a companion to Pet, he was the more ready to bring it home, as he was certain that he would be remunerated in a more ample manner than by selling the skin of the

lamb, had he suffered the animal to die. The skins of the lambs which die are the perquisites of the shepherd, and though separately they are of small value, yet, in large flocks, where the deaths are numerous, the money arising from the sale of them produces no inconsiderable sum. I once more stretched out my hand to receive this object of compassion, which I nourished in the same way in which I had done Pet, and gently placed her by his side. Phillis was to be her name, she had the advantage of Pet in size, though the difference in age was better than a fortnight, and I think, in two days she was quite as strong as he was; another fortnight rolled over their heads, and gave them sufficient strength to amuse all who saw them with their gambols. I was pleased with their

distinguishing me from the other members of the family, and secretly congratulated myself upon the predictions of your Uncle not being wholly verified. But I certainly began to feel partially fatigued, and resolved to wean them by night, for no sooner had they taken a short nap than up they both jumped, and began to importune me for the bottle, so that my rest was very much disturbed, and my short slumbers by no means refreshing. The task, I must confess, appeared a very formidable one, circumstances, however, rendered it imperious, and I resolved not to delay the accomplishment of it; I therefore began, by giving them all they desired before I retired, which was about eleven, and again as early in the morning as possible, which was as soon as the dairy-maid had milked her cows.

My next care was to put them into a room, where their cries and lamentations would not reach my ears. I imagined they must be very loud and frequent, and had I not been prevented by your Uncle, I dare say I should have been weak enough to have gone and listened, thereby making myself more uncomfortable, without the power of contributing in the least to their wants. I will not attempt to describe the extravagant capers they cut when I made my appearance in the morning; Pet was on my lap the instant I sat down, whilst the mild, the timid Phillis stood beside me, apparently conscious that she was not to be served first. I had no sooner satisfied boisterous Pet, than down he scampered, and looking up in my face, I almost fancied he would say “now you may

take Phillis," which I did, but whether he was jealous, or impatient to get out, I cannot determine; certain it is, poor Phillis had very little comfort in her breakfast; he was continually trying to displace her, running his head first under one of my arms, then under the other, to our great discomfiture and annoyance; I insisted upon better behaviour, but to no purpose, and your Uncle's prophecy crossed my mind, viz. "that excessive indulgence would beget disobedience." I thought a slight punishment would not be amiss, so I told him that for his rude behaviour, I should leave him up stairs, and carry Phillis down, though I did not expect he would pay any regard to my words, but would follow me as quickly as he could: I was, however, mistaken, for he took his station at the top of

the stairs, where he began to bleat as loud as he could, and reminded me of some naughty little girls and boys that I have known, who, if they cannot have every thing they wish for immediately, will begin to cry and fret till they make themselves quite ill, and every one about them uncomfortable. It was the same with this naughty lamb; he stood kicking and crying till his noise was intolerable; in short, I was compelled to say that he might come down stairs. Your cousin John had been pleading for him some time; he could not bear that poor Pet should be in disgrace, or that any one should be angry with him. They were the best friends imaginable, although the lamb was continually doing something to annoy him, such as running away with his play-things, pulling him

about by the corner of his pinafore, when he would rather have remained quiet; with a thousand other tricks, amusing to the looker on, but tiresome to the wearied playfellow. That you may not vote me as tiresome as Master Pet, I shall end this long letter with renewed assurances of the love of your most affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER XI.

MY DEAR SELINA,

The month of June arrived, and as the returning season had brought with it a fresh supply of grass, I thought of wholly weaning my lambs. I will confess my folly,

and candidly acknowledge to you, that I made many unsuccessful attempts at putting my intention into execution; their supplicating looks not to be left, joined to their melancholy bleating, always conquered my resolution. I yielded to their expressive language, and suffered them to remain about me. Master Pet was unquestionably the more troublesome of the two; scarcely an hour passed in which I had not cause to repent my want of firmness; he was as mischievous as a monkey, and really appeared to derive much pleasure and amusement from tormenting me. I am quite sure that little Phillis would have been a much better behaved cot, had she not had such a bad example constantly set before her, and I think many of her worst pranks might be attributed

to the instruction of her frolicsome playfellow. One day, the garden door having been carelessly left open, Pet, unobserved, stole in, and, without doubt, enticed Phillis to accompany him. I was very earnestly at work, and not a little startled when I heard them bleat; and the next instant I saw them both looking in at the parlour window. I went into the garden, where Pet no sooner saw me than he scampered off as fast as he could, evidently conscious that he had done wrong, though I was not then aware of the way in which he had been amusing himself. I walked after him, and down a path where stood the flowers and plants which I had nursed with so much care through the winter. Ah! luckless sight, he had nibbled off every one, and little more than the naked

stems remained; I was, as you may suppose, very sorry, and very angry with Pet, but I expressed my displeasure by words alone. I was more in fault than the lamb; I had not pursued the proper method of education, I had neglected to teach him what was right and wrong, what he might do, and that what he was to avoid; I had also refrained from manual chastisement, so that he was ignorant of what it meant, had I then applied it. Justly might the following lines of Gay be applied to him. He had—

“ Ne'er felt correction's rigid hand,
Indulg'd to disobey command,
In pamper'd ease his hours were spent,
He never knew what learning meant.
Each little mischief gain'd him praise,
So pretty were his fawning ways.”

I am inclined to believe that Phillis was innocent of having taken any part in this act of wantonness, at least I judged so from her conduct; she did not flee from me as Pet did, but stood silently nibbling my fingers, as I contemplated the devastation that had been made. Yet you must not suppose that Miss Phillis was never guilty of doing what she ought not, on the contrary, though her frolics were less frequent than her playmates, still, I often found her amusing herself very indiscreetly; she had a very great dislike to neatness, nay, I might add cleanliness, for whenever she could get at my workbox, she would pull all the things out, and scatter them all around; and more than once, I detected her in the act of running round the room with my work in her mouth, dragging

it on the floor; these repeated frolics were not confined to myself, otherwise, I might have been weak enough to have borne with them longer, but the cots had become general plagues. The dog and cat could no longer repose in quiet. Both moved off at the approach of the favourites, for they had been taught to yield in all things to them; and I believe to their tyranny may be attributed, in the first instance, the untimely death of the pretty tame rabbit, for had not Puss been driven to extremities, she would never have sought repose in the light closet. I found, likewise, that the lambs served as an excuse for the carelessness of the servants; I was certainly aware of their extreme proneness to mischief, yet, I do not believe they merited all the censures that were heaped

upon them. If any thing was broken, Master Pet or Miss Phillis was the cause. If any thing was mislaid, or missing, the cots alone were to blame; so that to prevent their characters from being wholly ruined, I determined, after many a struggle, to put them away. I felt the propriety, if not the necessity, of such a measure, and though combated by feelings in opposition to the plan, I finally suffered reason to govern me. I began to wean them gradually, and from giving them milk four and five times during the day, I reduced it to twice, once in the morning, and once in the evening; I also proposed turning them into the orchard for a few days, that I might be near them, and observe their actions. Accordingly, early one lovely morning, I conducted them into

their park, and had I remained with them they would, I dare say, have been very happy to have stayed there quietly enough; for during the time I was with them, they seemed very much pleased with the green carpet nature had spread for them; first they galloped round and round, next they began to taste the sweet grass, and at last lay down to rest their tender limbs. I stole out as I thought unobserved, and closed the little wicket gate after me; but no sooner had I done so, than up jumped Pet, and, with all the force he was master of, ran with his head to open it, but I had too well secured it, knowing that was the expedient he always made use of, when he wished a door to be opened for him, or wanted to make himself heard. Little Phillis stood beside him, not

doubting, I dare say, that her companion would get it open. She was quite satisfied to see him work, nor could I perceive that she aided him, either by words or looks, in his rebellious undertaking. Indeed she often walked a few paces from him, and every now and then refreshed herself with some mouthfuls of the sweet food she had been tasting, and I think would have betrayed very little uneasiness at her separation from me, had Pet behaved better; but he kept hammering the gate with his head, till I suppose he found the task a fruitless one, when he began to cry in so piteous a manner, that Phillis could not refrain from joining in his plaintive bleating. It was truly melancholy to hear them, but I was not to be softened into a compliance with their desires. I cer-

tainly did not eat my breakfast with my usual appetite, nor will you, I fear, should this reach you at the time you are preparing to take yours, if I continue my history; I will therefore bid you adieu for the present, for to amuse, not to distress you, is the constant wish of dear Selina's very affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER XII.

MY DEAR SELINA,

I think there are few, if any, who have not, at some time or other, experienced the pains occasioned by a separation from some object, endeared to them by affection

or habit, whether of the rational or irrational part of creation it matters not, so that we had attached ourselves to it. I am aware it will be termed, by many, a great weakness of intellect, to suffer the absence of a brute to give us one moment's uneasiness; on the other hand, there will be found many who can enter into my feelings, and who, from the tenderness, or weakness, if you please, of their own hearts, will plead an apology for the extreme susceptibility of mine upon this occasion. I certainly did not, as I observed in my last letter, eat my breakfast with my wonted appetite. I missed my constant companions; I had been so long accustomed to see one on each side of me, as I sat at the breakfast table, waiting for a morsel of bread, and when satisfied, go and play with my

children, or repose at my feet, that the tears involuntarily stole into my eyes, and the food refused to go down. My unpleasant feelings were perhaps increased, by the constant remarks of your Cousins, who heard the lambs bleat from the room in which we sat, "Mamma," said John, "listen to your Pet, how he is crying; I will go and play with him, the instant I have done my milk: and now Phillis has begun, how unhappy they are." "I," said William, "am very sorry for poor little Phillis, and I will carry her some of my milk, because she never throws me down, nor upsets my bowl, as Master Pet does, whenever he sees me." I endeavoured to excuse Pet, but I could not make William think well of him. John had preserved a portion of his meal for his favourite, observing,

how much more he should cry if he saw Phillis have some milk, while he had none. They soon left us to join their innocent play-fellows, to whom they gave the milk, and then culled for them handfuls of the young grass, and used every means to reconcile them to the change in their situation. Night was a time of fresh trouble to me; I had allotted them a new resting place, which I was very sure would not meet with their approbation; instead of a basket lined with flannel, they were now to sleep in a larger bed, viz. a bin, well lined with clean sweet straw; this was placed in an out-house, close to the dwelling-house, and very secure from invaders, or bad weather. They behaved much better than I had anticipated, and were rewarded with an extra quantity of milk, after which, they laid

themselves down, without one word of complaint. Thus we continued to jog on without much interruption ; whenever an opportunity presented itself for escape from the orchard, they never neglected it, nor to remind me that they were as prone to playfulness as ever. Whenever I took a walk I allowed them to accompany me, at which, their joy seemed very great, and I was simple enough to deceive myself with the belief, that it sprang from gratitude ; a feeling of which I now believe them incapable—instinct alone governs them. The mild, the gentle Phillis, never betrayed any of the boisterous spirit of her companion ; she trotted quietly by my side, and seemed pleased every now and then to stop to nibble a young shoot, or tender blade of grass, which she found by the road

side: whilst her foster-brother was sometimes behind, sometimes before, now on this side, now on that, and tossing up the dust, to the great annoyance and inconvenience of his more quiet companions.

I made it a practice to take them daily into the field, where the flock was feeding, hoping that they would in time become acquainted with the probable companions of their future lives. But they behaved themselves so ill at first, and so like spoiled children, who will do every thing that they like, and nothing which they ought to do, without crying, and contending for their own will, that I was really ashamed of them. I again thought of your good Uncle's advice, and was convinced how much wiser he was than I had been. I had, indeed, by excessive indulgence, made them

every thing that he predicted; rebellious, disobedient, and almost unmanageable. Master Pet first stared at the ewes, then ran at them, instead of treating them with the respect their age and knowledge of the world had a right to exact from him, and not content with interrupting the mothers, he ran at their children, who would, I dare say, have been very willing to admit him and Phillis to a share in their sports, had they behaved themselves properly; but to be molested in their amusements was what they had no idea of, and the mothers of the lambs would not suffer it with impunity; I repeatedly called my cots away, but to no purpose; they were so intent upon their own pleasures, that my voice of admonition was disregarded, and they were very near paying dear for their frolic: an old ewe,



Their innocent gambols .



who had for some time been pawing the ground with her fore feet, in token of anger, on a sudden, ran violently at Pet, and tossed him completely over, at first I hardly knew whether he was hurt or not. I ran to his assistance, suspecting from his motionless appearance that he was dead, but my fears had magnified the danger, for the instant he saw me by his side, he was on his legs, nor could I perceive that he was in the least hurt; frightened enough he had been, for I found he carefully avoided walking on the side next the flock. Miss Phillis, expecting a similar chastisement, and without doubt, conscious she deserved it, ran to conceal herself in a ditch, which was fortunately a dry one, though deeper than she was aware of, as she began when I called her, (for I

could not see her,) to bleat, otherwise, I should have been at a loss to find her: with some difficulty, your Cousins and myself got her out. If they could have listened to the voice of reason, I dare say I should, by way of punishment, have put Pet down with her into the ditch, and kept them there all day.

These frequent excursions to visit the flock were productive of great pleasure to me, as well as to my lambs, for in a short time they began to associate more amicably with their species, and would often stay behind, until recollection, or some other intuitive property occurring, they came ambling home, having contrived to get through some aperture in the gate, or gap in the hedge. It has often excited my surprise and astonishment that they found their way home alone, when left

in some far distant field; and very often I have seen them, when I returned by a contrary road to the one I went, arrived before me, crying at the door for admittance. They were now wholly weaned, and would occasionally remain abroad all night, though they would never suffer themselves to be driven to the fold with the flock. As you may not know what I mean by a Fold, I will tell you in my next what a fold is, and conclude this long letter with begging you, dear Selina, to accept the love of your affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER XIII.

MY DEAR SELINA,

A fold or pen is composed of a great many hurdles, some of wood, some of a thin sort of iron, but the former are in most general use, being less expensive. These are placed in a square form in a field, secured to each other by a stake which is driven into the ground, to which a hurdle on either side is tied; this is called a fold, into which temporary retreat the sheep are driven at sunset, and remain until the shepherd releases them in the morning. By this precaution the sheep are prevented from straying, a practice to which these animals are peculiarly prone, and

the land becomes mucked, which is necessary, that corn may be raised. The fold is removed to a fresh place every day, so that in a short time the whole field becomes well manured and ready for the plough. As I before observed, my cots seemed quite contented, and pleased to remain abroad all night, though never in the fields, as they always came home first to the door to crave admittance, which favour was occasionally granted; after having received some small token of regard, they went with a very reluctant step into the orchard, in which, unless the weather forbade, they passed the night; if very wet, they retired into their straw bed.

I think they must have been the happiest cot lambs in the world; they were never interrupted in any innocent pursuit, nor in their

walks to and from the fields in which they chose to feed, in short, theirs was a life of apparent ease and enjoyment. I congratulated myself upon my anxiety concerning their welfare being at an end, and that they would occasion me no more trouble; how premature were such congratulations; but I must go on gradually. The blindness to the future is wisely given, to enable us to persevere in the path of duty; though the path be a rugged one, yet, encouraged by the grand sweetener of life, *Hope*, we are at every step anticipating a change, where brighter prospects and more pleasing scenes await us, which could not be the case were we permitted to draw aside the curtain that veils futurity from our view. I have unintentionally wandered from my narrative; back-glancing memory was busy

to act her part by recalling to my thoughts past events, which, imperceptibly, led me into this moralising strain, for which I beg your pardon, and will return immediately to my story; I should have told you, that upon my lambs' first egress into the world, I had decorated them with a collar. Pet's was of sky blue riband, with his mistress' name wrought in scarlet, to make it more conspicuous. The gentle inoffensive Phillis wore one of scarlet, wrought with blue, they were tied on with little roses of the same, and attracted the admiration of all who saw them. Three times I had to furnish Miss Phillis with a new one, without knowing by what means she had lost her former one. I inquired of those most in the habit of seeing the cots, but could obtain no intelligence; when one

evening Pet came scampering home by himself, leaving Phillis a long way behind, the doors being open, in he bounced, and in his mouth was the fourth collar I had made for Phillis. I gave him several pats upon his back by way of reproving him, which he returned with as many butts with his head, and put himself into a posture of defiance, by pawing with his fore feet upon the ground. Having found the thief, I had only to use the precaution of fastening on her next collar more securely, but I never found him displace it afterwards: whether from a consciousness of my disapprobation of such conduct, or because he found the task more difficult than before, I cannot pretend to determine; the latter was most probably the true reason, though I cannot but think that these animals

have more power to remember injuries than disposition to recollect kindnesses.

They certainly appeared to know me better, and testified more pleasure at beholding me, than any other person, for if I chanced to go into the field where they were feeding, and called them, they were ready to leap over every thing that obstructed their progress to get to me. Their ready obedience to my call, I am persuaded, arose from the expectation of receiving something, and not from any feeling of gratitude as I then thought. I often fancied that they looked and felt grateful for my unwearied attention to their comforts, so easy is it to deceive ourselves with false hopes and expectations, especially if our feelings are gratified by the deception. My attachment to these dumb animals was

not yet to be shaken, though I had often wished that I had taken your Uncle's advice, and had never reared a cot lamb. Hour after hour have I sat netting, or at work, under the spreading branches of a venerable oak, to watch them feeding, and delighted myself with observing the innocent gambols that they played in concert with your Cousins, till I could, with the assistance of a little imagination, almost fancy myself transported into those Arcadian scenes of which we read in fables. Perhaps, had I been so happy as to have had a female companion or two, as much attached to rural scenes and harmless innocence as myself, I might have been tempted to revive and practice the pastoral amusements, to which the late Lady Selina Countess Dowager of Huntingdon, was so

warmly attached in her youth. As you may not be acquainted with the circumstances to which I allude, and which are rendered interesting by the celebrity of that lady, as the great patroness of the religious sect called Methodists, I cannot forbear relating them. For the present I shall bid you adieu, at the same time, I assure you that I remain your very affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER XIV.

MY DEAR SELINA,

I shall now proceed to give you a history of the early years of the celebrated lady mentioned in my last, which I hope will

serve to amuse you as much as the relation of it did your Aunt when she heard it.

Selina, Countess Dowager of Huntingdon, was of an ancient and noble family, and wife to a peer of the realm. She was a woman of fine understanding, though her judgment was sometimes almost eclipsed by the brilliancy of her imagination. In her youth she was tolerably handsome, and made a splendid appearance in the great world. But her lord, either from some disgust, or from a fondness for retirement, having in early life withdrawn from the court, lady Selina had entirely conformed to his humour; and to amuse herself in her solitary situation, she had indulged the suggestions of her fancy, and turned my lord's park into a poetical Arcadia, where her ladyship, and a few female companions,

lived almost the whole summer a mere pastoral life ; they ranged about with crooks in their hands, like so many Grecian shepherdesses ; garlands of flowers, or baskets of fruit, were seen suspended on every beautiful oak, with rustic pipes, pitchforks, and other rural implements, dispersed in a picturesque manner in various parts of the park ; nay, the poor chaplain was forced to leave his bottle and back-gammon table with my lord, and even to neglect the pastoral functions assigned him by the bishop, to attend her ladyship and her bleating lambkins, and to sit whole afternoons under a spreading tree, to entertain them with his flute, for the steward had actually bought her ladyship “ a score of sheep at Banbury fair,” (according to Justice Shallow’s expression) for this romantic purpose.

The inclemency of the weather, however, in this northern clime, was by no means favourable to these lovely Bœotians, neither did many of the pastoral functions suit with the delicacy of a modern woman of quality, for her ladyship frequently caught the tooth-ache, and was forced to apply to a neighbouring apothecary, (a character seldom introduced in ancient Bucolics); and one of her companions met with a terrible accident in the discharge of her office, for having seized the leg of a large bell wether with her crook, which was fastened to her wrist by a blue riband, the rude unclassical brute struggled with such force to disengage himself, that he pulled down the poor Pastora, dragged her some yards, and disfigured her face to such a degree, that she could not appear again for six

weeks, which put an end to this extravagant scene in pastoral life, and to the end of my story about her ladyship.

Hitherto I had sustained no personal injury from my attachment to these animals, partly perhaps owing to their limited number, and to the domesticated way in which they had been reared. As I have before observed, they were now so accustomed to the flock, that they would occasionally remain with the sheep all the day, and as I found they were well acquainted with every lane and road leading to and from the house, their absence created no surprise; nor did I, as was my custom, accompany them in the morning, unless I had occasion to walk in the direction they took. One afternoon, the weather being very sultry and hot, Pet came home, and

ba-a-d at the door for admittance. I did not see Phillis, and inquired why he had left her; he took no notice of my question, but turning round, laid himself down very composedly in the shade: not doubting that she would soon make her appearance, I went on with the work I was engaged in, and the circumstance of Pet's returning alone quite escaped me. Soon after, your Uncle came in to tea, and told me he had left Phillis in a field not far from the house, apparently unwell, as he had called her, and she would not listen to him; he had offered to carry her, but she avoided him. I was considerably alarmed, and resolved to go in quest of her as soon as our repast was over. Your Cousins, with Pet, accompanied me, and we soon reached the field described. I called Phillis, Phillis,

several times ; as we could not see her, we wandered through fields and lanes in various directions, calling her at intervals. After listening attentively for some time, I thought I heard her feeble voice at no great distance from the place where we were ; it occurred to me she had taken a different road home to the way we had come, as the sound came in an opposite direction, accordingly, I hastened to the spot, and beheld my Phillis laying down, and heard her faintly bleating : she had doubtless heard the voices of her mistress and playfellows, and was replying to us as loud as she was able ; the instant she saw me, she rose and came to meet me, but short as the distance was, it seemed an effort. I took her in my arms, and sat down on the stump of a tree by the road side, to inquire

into the cause of the great weakness under which she laboured, but I could not immediately ascertain the cause. However, when I reached home, I learned from one of the labouring men, that poor Phillis was attacked with a disorder common among sheep, and which in wet seasons destroys vast numbers.

Having inquired as to the most suitable remedies, I boiled some new milk, prepared with isinglass, a little cinnamon, and sweetened it with loaf sugar. I gave her also a few drops of laudanum, but I had inconceivable difficulty in administering the draught, as she had lost all recollection of sucking, and I was compelled to pour it down her throat with a teapot, whilst she kicked, struggled, butted with her head, and at last bit one of my fingers nearly through; the pain was great,

and I could not help exclaiming, “Phillis, Phillis, see what you have done! is it thus you repay my affection, my anxiety, my desire to do you good? have I not nursed you by day and by night for four long months,—borne with your offences, and made good the mischief done to others by your frolicsomeness, and, I might add, without complaining; and now, how do you reward me? with ingratitude and with cruelty: but, alas! fool that I am, to expect more from an animal incapable of reason, than I have experienced from some on whom nature has bestowed that blessing.”

The lamb had only acted in self-defence, it was unconscious of any feeling but of undue restraint, and of being treated in a way to which it had been wholly unaccustomed.

True, it had been fostered by me with a sort of maternal tenderness, and reared with unwearied care and fatigue; but were the fact analysed, it would probably appear, that my own feelings were more consulted in the preservation of its life, than the comfort and happiness of the lamb; by having separated it from its own species, I had made it almost a solitary creature, and had preserved its existence only to prolong its sufferings—“happier would its fate have been had I suffered it to have died with its mother.” Such were my reflections, by no means, you will say, of an agreeable nature, and which, added to the anxiety I endured for the fate of my poor Phillis, kept me awake, during the greater part of the night.

Dear Selina's very affectionate Aunt,

E.— W—.

LETTER XV.

MY DEAR SELINA,

ERE I retired to rest, I administered a second draught to my patient, and met with as much opposition as before, for she exerted all her energies to repel my proffered services. In the morning I was delighted to observe the change in her appearance, she was frolicsome and gay, and eager to join Pet in his morning ramble. I accompanied them into a field of their own choice, and remained until I saw them busily engaged with their breakfast.

The field was near the house, so that I walked frequently during the early part of the day, and was gratified to see Phillis

apparently quite recovered. At sun-set, finding the lambs were not home, I walked for them, and met Pet on the road. I continued my walk, expecting to see Phillis, but in vain. I searched and called in vain, no sound was to be heard, save the distant tinkling of the sheep-bell, and the echo of my own voice dying away upon the gale. I returned home by a circuitous route, hoping that I might be fortunate enough either to see or hear her, but, alas! it was otherwise; I had no doubt but the disorder had returned, and that she had crept into some retired spot to die. I dispatched messengers in various directions, and sallied forth by myself to where the flock was folded, trusting that I should find her there. But Phillis was not amongst them, nor had the shepherd, he said, seen her since

the morning, when she appeared as well as usual. I was very weary when I got home, both in mind and body, and secretly wished I had never reared a cot lamb. Your Uncle had been searching a contrary way, with no better success; he really liked Phillis, she was so gentle; he also pitied and felt for the distress of your Aunt, which he had, with a prophetic voice, foretold, when he heard my intention of rearing a cot lamb. They had, indeed, caused anxiety and weariness, and were sources of sorrow, not comfort. I acknowledged, with tears, that he was indeed right; and with a sigh, that certainly did me good, exclaimed, "Oh! that I had taken your advice, and never reared a cot lamb." I arose in the morning, prepared to encounter fresh toil, for I thought, if I could find Phil-

lis, even though she were dead, it would be a very great consolation; I should at least have the satisfaction of knowing what had become of her, I could bury her, and time would assist me to accomplish the task of forgetting her. I could now think only upon the pleasure she testified at sight of me, and on her mild and affectionate disposition; nay, the very boisterous behaviour which she had shewn only the night before, when she nearly bit my finger through, was softened down into an accidental circumstance. Thus, my dear Selina, was your Aunt weak enough to lament the loss of an animal which was incapable of attachment, and governed solely by instinct, or it would have treated its benefactor and friend differently. To reconcile me to her loss, I should have glanced my

eye backwards, and surveyed the various depredations, she had committed upon my dresses, my gloves, whenever she met with them, my children's things, and in short upon every tangible article within her reach: but the time for retrospection had not arrived. Knowing that at this season of the year the plantations were without traps, I thought of searching them; the task was an almost Herculean one, as the brushwood and furze were high as the knee, and thickly interwoven with each other; but to the industrious and persevering, almost all objects are attainable. I resolved to commence my underking; accordingly, I equipped myself in a garb suitable for the occasion, and with an oaken staff (not a shepherdess's crook) went forth, though with slender expectations of success.

The toil was laborious, and the heat most oppressive; I was more than once tempted by fatigue to give up the search, as the intense heat of the place rendered it almost insupportable; and what made the task more difficult, the soil being sand, yielded to the pressure of the foot and filled the shoes at every step. I had adopted the precaution of taking with me a female servant, who was also very anxious to find poor Phillis, perhaps from a different motive to that which governed me; she was weary of being asked by the men who came to work, Whether little Phil was found? and Which way are you going to day? These questions annoyed her, and she thought, if the cot were found, all inquiries would cease. I heard her express a wish that it had been Master Pet which

was lost, "for he was worse than half a dozen children, and had caused her more trouble than ever Phillis did, for the greatest piece of mischief Phil had ever done, was to pull a cap in pieces, whereas Pet had nibbled almost every thing." A week of strict search had nearly elapsed, and I began to think that any future attempt to find her remains would be unavailing; there only remained one smaller plantation than those we had examined, and, if not there, I would desist from my labours. Accordingly, one afternoon, (it was in the dog-days, so you may conceive the heat I encountered), I had been wading through bush and brake for more than an hour, when, on a sudden, a most offensive odour saluted our olfactory nerves. Mary (for that was the servant's name who accom-

panied me) hastily called out, "Pray Ma'am come here, for I have found poor dear little Phillis!" It was indeed my little lost favourite, that had become so offensive; she had only a few days before gamboled and frolicked in all the elasticity of youth and beauty, and now she lay a putrid corpse, a lifeless mass of corruption; indeed, had not the well-known collar been still round her partly decayed throat, I am doubtful whether I should have believed it to be my Phillis.

To remove her was impossible, I therefore assisted in scratching a hole in the earth in which to put her, that she might no longer offend the eye or the nose of the traveller. This last task was soon accomplished, and the remains of the once beautiful Phillis were consigned to their last retreat. I could not

suppress the too ready tear, though I will confess I was ashamed to have a witness of my weakness.

The performance of this last sad office had relieved my mind of a great weight. The reflection that she had happily escaped the various ills to which her race was heir, operated to reconcile me to her loss; though her life had been short, it had been free from vexations and strife; neither cares nor troubles had ever disturbed her tranquillity; had she lived, circumstances might so have intervened as to make a change of mistress or master unavoidable, when the probability was, that a less easy journey through life had awaited her, and that she would at last have fallen a victim to the butcher's knife. I shall now, my dear Selina, take my leave

of this melancholy subject, and of you also for the present. Adieu, may you be happy is the constant prayer of your ever affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER XVI.

MY DEAR SELINA,

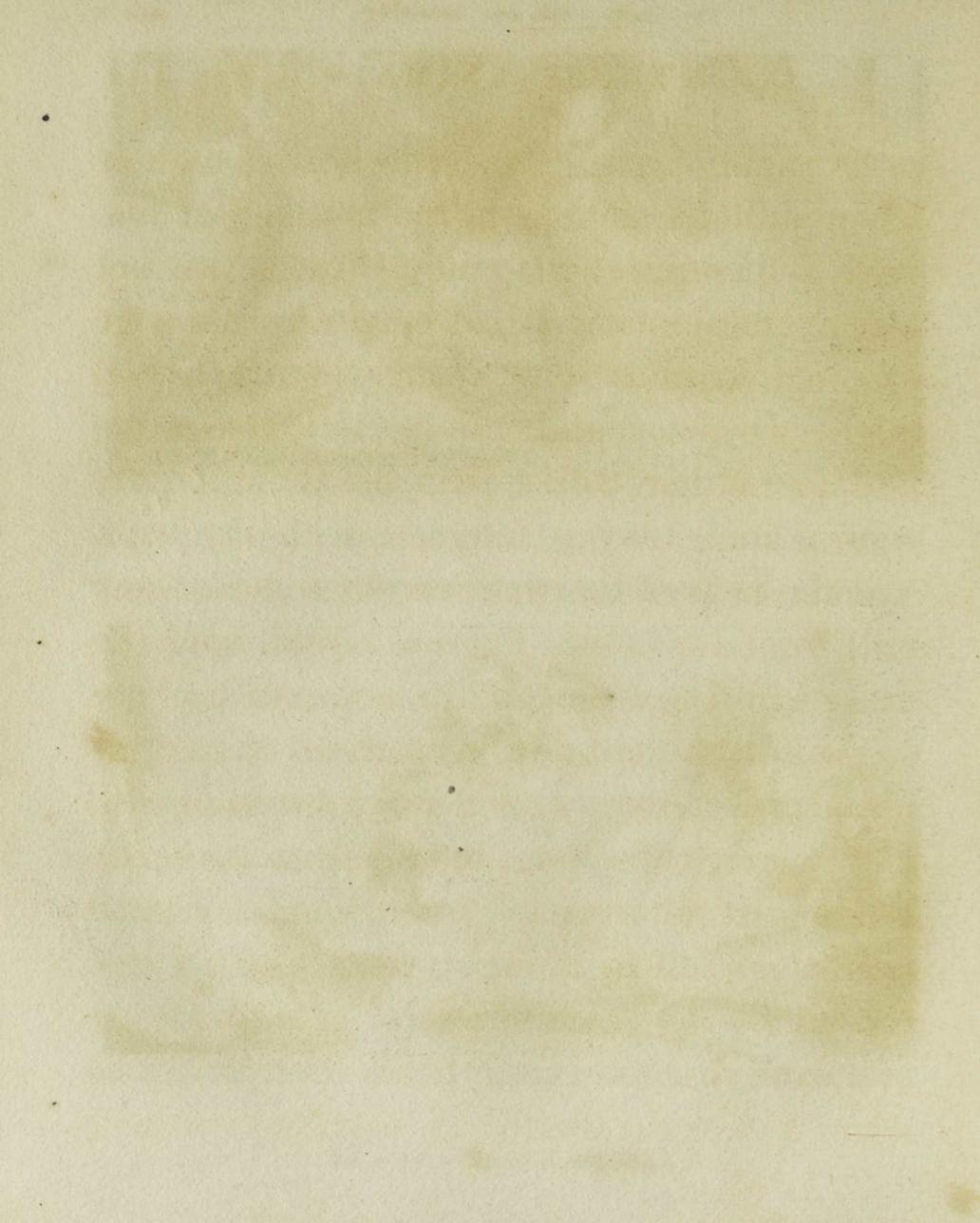
PET was now without a rival, and he was unquestionably one of the worst behaved of his species that I ever knew. Having no travelling companion, he seldom stirred from home, and claimed free admission into the house, where children, chairs, tables, and servants, alternately came under his displeasure; one of the latter had chastised him

rather more than he liked, and driven him into the orchard, whither she had soon to go to look at a duck which was hatching, and whose nest was in a furze bush by the side of a small but rather deep dell; she was stooping to see how many ducklings there were, when Pet, who had been watching her motions, walked backwards some paces, and then running with all his force, knocked her completely heels over head, over the furze bush into the dell. The suddenness of the upset precluded all possibility of her saving herself; nor could she for an instant conjecture who could have served her such a trick, but upon getting up, and seeing no one but Pet, she began to accuse him. As I found she had sustained no injury, except a little fright, I kept Pet's secret, thereby saving him

farther chastisement; she began, however, to threaten him, declaring, it would not be possible to live much longer with such an impudent creature: I could not forbear saying, “Had you taken as much pains to conciliate his good-will, as you have done to tease him, you would never have been so roughly treated.” I narrated the scene to your Uncle, who laughed heartily at Pet’s method of revenging an injury.

I could not perceive that he, in the least, regretted the loss of his companion, which strengthened me in the opinion I entertained of their incapacity to feel attachment, even for one of their own species, for he was never less frolicsome, nor less disposed to eat and be merry. He was the constant companion of my morning and evening walk to the house





of a neighbouring cottager, whose daughter was gradually sinking in the morning of life, with a lingering and painful disease, to her last resting-place. I had been as usual, one evening, to take some trifle which I hoped might prove acceptable to her sickly appetite, and found her worse than usual: upon my return home, being fatigued with my walk and the heat of the weather, for it was a long mile from our house, I threw myself upon the first chair I saw in the kitchen, and laid my straw hat on the table, regardless of any external object, for my mind was impressed with melancholy reflections, arising from the scene I had just witnessed. I remained for some time absorbed in thought, from which I was roused by the voice of your Uncle, inquiring of one of your Cousins, "If his Mamma knew what Pet was after?" I merely answered

“No,” concluding he was in the orchard, where he could do no mischief. William came running in, crying “Mamma, Mamma, do come and see Pet play with your hat and veil.” My hat was certainly gone from where I had laid it; during my reverie he had stolen it, and had been amusing himself with running and scampering about the orchard. Very little of the shape of a hat remained; the green veil hung in tatters,—the more he was pursued, the faster he ran, holding one of the fragments of the veil in his mouth, to the no small amusement of the spectators: remonstrances were in vain, and it was too late to apply the rod of correction. I alone was to blame, and I acknowledged, though the loss of my straw hat vexed me, that I had deserved punishment for having educated my lambs so ill. Pet quite tired himself with this

frolic, and came and laid himself down at the door, looking as innocent as though he had been guilty of no offence. I now began seriously to think of parting with him; I had him driven in a morning, when he did not chuse to go voluntarily, to the flock, and sometimes to the fold at night, to prevent his returning home, where he was always sure to do some mischief. Thus, by degrees, his love of home greatly abated, and he was content to remain absent by the two days together.

An event now occurred, very unexpectedly, which determined the fate of Pet. A lady who was in the habit of riding past our house, and who had frequently been an eye-witness of the pranks and gambols of my children with Pet, sent a servant to inquire whether I would part with him, as she was very desirous

of having a cot lamb. I could scarcely repress a smile at the wish expressed for such a plague. I at first hesitated, still reluctant to part with what I had become attached to, and requested the servant to call the next day for a final answer. I hastened to consult with your Uncle, who pointed out to me the many advantages he would derive from going under the protection of so kind a mistress, (for the lady was well known to us by report), where he would have the range of a small paddock, and a companion or two to enliven him; he would not only be sheltered from the rude blasts of winter, and the chilling hand of penury, but would bask in the sunshine of ease and plenty for the rest of his life.

He was undoubtedly very much estranged from me, and I had entertained a less fa-

vourable opinion of him since he betrayed so much apathy and indifference on the death of Phillis. The opportunity to settle him so advantageously, was too tempting to be rejected, and I consented to his going, with the condition annexed, that I might have the privilege of calling to see him now and then, which was most cheerfully complied with, and the promise, "that the pretty tame creature should be taken care of as long as he lived." A little snug carriage was sent for him, with plenty of clean straw, and he was safely conveyed to his admiring mistress. I went in about a week to see him, and found him the happiest of the happy. I called him, he seemed to remember his name, but his mistress was forgotten, as he ran from me when I attempted to approach him, as did

his two companions. I felt satisfied with having done my duty towards him, and returned home without regretting his loss.

Thus, my dear Selina, ends my history of the Pet Lambs. May it serve as a lesson, or rather as a warning, to those who may wish to rear one; for could I have anticipated one tenth part of the trouble and anxiety they gave me, I should never have attempted it. To the experience of those who are older and wiser than ourselves, we should act wisely to yield; nor should we trust to our own judgment in affairs with which we are but little acquainted. I have one more incident to narrate relative to a lamb, when I shall take my leave of you, until a fresh subject for amusement presents itself. Adieu!

Your affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

LETTER XVII.

MY DEAR SELINA,

AFTER having seen Pet so happily settled for life, I began to hope all my troubles about dumb creatures were at an end. Certain it is I never once anticipated a renewal of them in any shape whatever, but a fresh source of anxiety was already opened for me, though I was at the time ignorant of it. My care and attention were to be directed into a fresh channel. I was called upon to bind up the broken limb, and to pour (if I may be allowed the expression) oil and wine into the wounds of one that had not fallen amongst thieves, but into a deep gravel

pit. Your Uncle was in one of his rambles attracted to the pit by the cries of a lamb in distress; he succeeded, with great difficulty, in getting it out, but found it unable to stand, having broken one of its fore legs. He brought it home, and made me acquainted with the accident. "What is to be done," said he, "shall I order it to be killed, or will you give it the chance of living by being its doctor and nurse?" I stood a few minutes, hesitating how to decide,—'tis true I had officiated in various capacities, as necessity or occasion had required, but I had never before been called upon to set a broken bone; however, I decided it was worth the trial, and I would prepare what I deemed the necessary requisites for the operation. Accordingly, I got some bandages of fine linen, two pieces

of flat wood, narrow, and smooth, and ordered a poultice of white bread and milk, to be in readiness. My next care was to examine the limb of my suffering patient; what a sight presented itself to my view! the bone was broken very high up the front leg, part of which protruded through the skin, the aperture through which it came was filled with maggots. I turned aside to conceal my sensations from my children, and felt half inclined to abandon my undertaking, but recollecting the probability that, at some period of their lives, they might be called upon to exert their energies and exercise their humanity in the cause of affliction or distress, I thought that it would not be acting well to set them an example of pusillanimity, or to let them see me overcome by a regard to my

own feelings. I had another motive which operated powerfully within me to perseverance in the path of duty,—the lamb was the property of your Uncle's friend.

I knelt by the side of my patient, which was stretched on the grass, its head resting on the lap of William, while John acted as my assistant. I sent for some milk and water to cleanse the wound, which was slowly effected. I then proceeded to set the bone, and applying my pieces of wood on either side, to keep the limb straight, I wrapped the bandages about it. A slight moan was all that escaped from my charge—it went to my heart, for I feared my ignorance of anatomy had occasioned it much unnecessary pain in the performance of the operation. I then fixed a poultice over the whole. For

what? perhaps you inquire. Why, I hoped it would check the inflammation, remove the swelling, and soothe the irritation I had caused by handling. No sooner was my task completed, or rather the operation over, than a faint sickness came over me; nature was exhausted with the effort she had made, and demanded some compensation for the injury she had sustained. She was satisfied with the temporary suspension of the faculties, and then gave me leave to resume my occupation.

The lamb appeared easy, she lay in the orchard, where food was within her reach, though she did not seem disposed to take any. I continued, at intervals, to administer fresh poultices for some days, till I found both swelling and inflammation considerably

abated. I gently removed the bandages, and found the bone had united; as she moved the leg, I threw away the pieces of stick, by so doing I could press the limb closer with the binding. My first attempt at surgery was crowned with the most complete and gratifying success. In three weeks my patient was able to walk, and instead of lying down when I entered the orchard, as she was wont to do, she was now all elasticity, and appeared desirous to escape me. One would have thought that the intimacy which had subsisted between us, would have rendered her in some degree familiar with me, though she no longer needed my assistance; but all my kindness and her obligations were forgotten; the instant she could do without me, she avoided me, and shunned her who had been

the means of preserving her life. But why should such conduct excite surprise in my breast, when I consider the object of compassion was an irrational creature? Have I never met with such an instance of ingratitude before? Yes, even in human nature, how many instances could be adduced in justification of my assertion. How many are now living, who, after they have been noticed, cherished, protected, and I will add loved, because they were almost friendless and forsaken, have, when a turn in their affairs and situation has taken place, not only slighted and neglected the heart that fostered them, but repaid their benefactors with insult, cruelty and INGRATITUDE. Such has been my experience, but upon that subject I shall be silent for the present: satisfied

that when you have perused the details of my checkered life, you will acquiesce in the justness and truth of my remarks, and at the same time, agree with me in acknowledging, that the only true source whence happiness is to be derived, must flow from a self-approving conscience, void of intentional offence to God and to our fellow-creatures.

Very little now remains, my dear child, to be said of my residence at R——h. My fowls I left in the possession of the person who succeeded to the farm. The poor young woman whom I mentioned in one of my letters, lingered till the following summer, when she sank into the grave which had long yawned to receive her. She requested a pincushion of her own work might be tendered for my acceptance, as a small but

sincere token of a heart that recollected, even in her dying moments, the little offices of kindness I had shewn her, and for which her gratitude was unabated.

If, my dear Selina, the plain unvarnished narrative of facts that I have penned for your amusement, shall have afforded you any, I shall feel amply rewarded. I will only add a line or two more ere I take my leave.

Remember, my Selina, that you have a great many new lessons to learn in the school of experience; be assured it will always prove your best instructor. Other teachers may load your memory with words, but experience alone can put you in the possession of truths. It can only be in the contemplation of objects in their mutual actions and relations, either by actual observation, or through the re-

port of others, that those general conclusions which constitute knowledge can be drawn; and that you may acquire useful knowledge, without paying too dearly for it in the school of experience, will ever continue one of the sincerest wishes of your very faithful friend, and most affectionate Aunt,

E——. W——.

