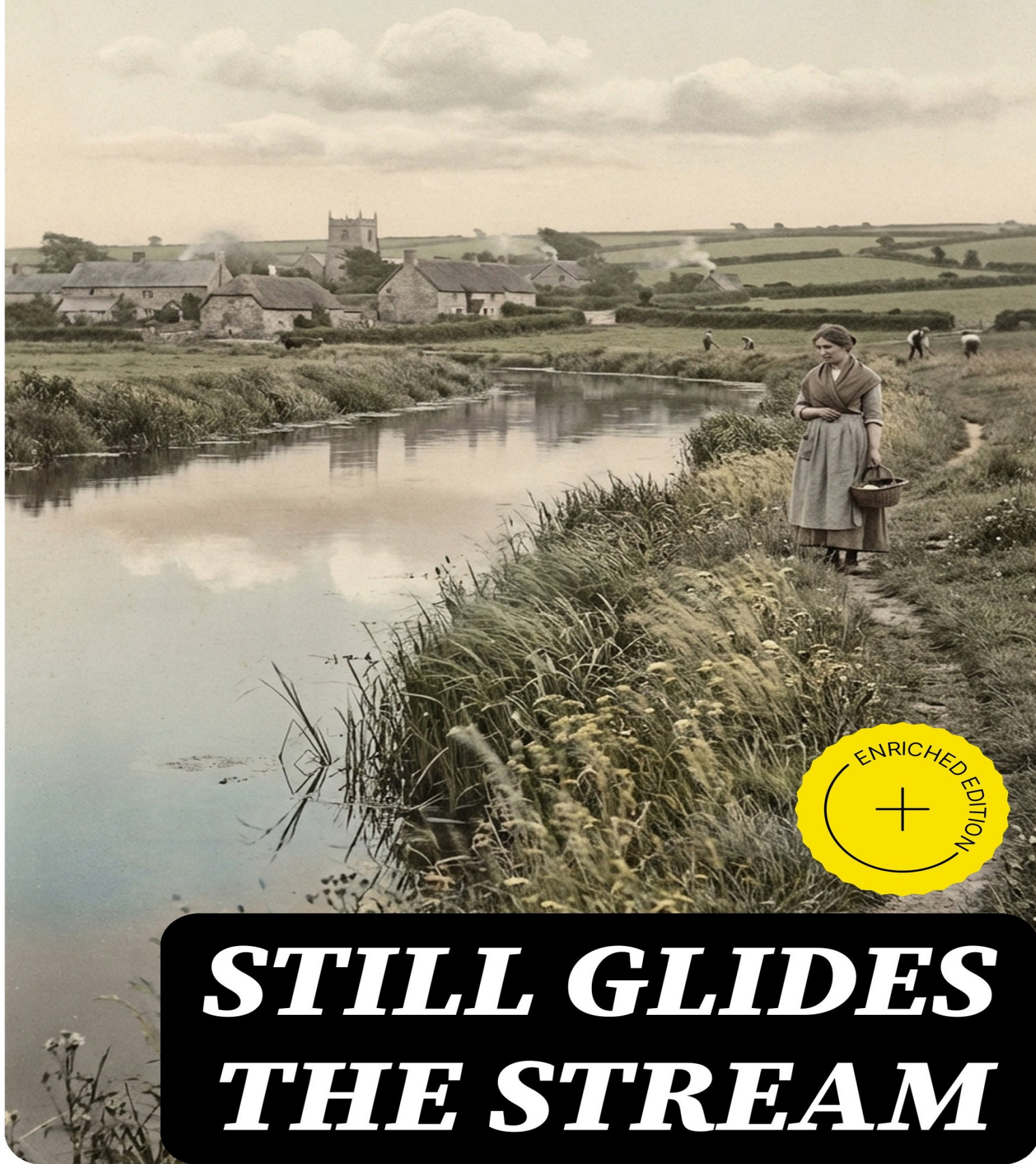


***FLORA JANE
THOMPSON***



***STILL GLIDES
THE STREAM***

Flora Jane Thompson

Still Glides the Stream

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Jackson Price

EAN 8596547187943

Edited and published by DigiCat, 2022



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Introduction

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Poised between the steady motion of the countryside and the restless pull of human longing, *Still Glides the Stream* probes how a small community tries to honor what endures even as individual lives bend toward change, how memory both steadies and unsettles, and how love, duty, and the quiet claims of place can flow together like water that seems always the same yet is never quite identical from one moment to the next, asking—without fuss or finality—what must be kept, what can be altered, and what gently slips away as time passes over familiar ground.

Flora Jane Thompson's *Still Glides the Stream* is a short novel of rural life set in the English countryside, written by the author best known for her evocations of village experience, and published posthumously in the late 1940s. It is not a sequel to her earlier trilogy, yet it shares that work's close attention to ordinary people and the landscape that frames their days. The book belongs to the tradition of the quiet English country novel, where the drama arises not from spectacle but from discernment, and where fields, lanes, hearths, and hedgerows form a living context rather than picturesque backdrop.

Without disclosing its turns, the premise is simple and resonant: a closely connected set of villagers contend with an absence and a possibility that together unsettle their habits and hopes. The story stays near kitchens, gardens, and riverbanks, following practical tasks and small

ceremonies through which characters test what they owe to the past and what they might claim for the future. Instead of plot pyrotechnics, the novel offers the kind of unfolding that feels like walking familiar paths at a new hour of the day, when an altered light makes recognizable things strange enough to prompt fresh decisions.

Readers can expect a reflective, lucid voice that prizes precision without fuss and sympathy without sentimentality. Thompson's style is measured and observant, attentive to workaday gestures, seasonal textures, and the moral weather of a room as much as the literal sky. The tone is calm but alert, capable of gentle humor and of tenderness that refuses to turn indulgent. Descriptions of the natural world are integral to the storytelling, not decorative pauses; they situate choices within a wider, ongoing life. The pace is unhurried, allowing quiet scenes to accrue meaning until the emotional stakes are unmistakable.

Among the novel's central themes are continuity and change, the uses and limits of remembrance, and the way local attachments both constrain and sustain. Thompson explores how affection grows from shared labor and long acquaintance, how communities negotiate tacit rules, and how personal desires can be reframed rather than crushed by those rules. The landscape functions as witness and measure: fields and waters endure, yet they register every season's shift. The book also reflects on education of feeling—how characters learn to see, to wait, to relinquish or to accept—suggesting that maturity is less an arrival than a habit of attention.

For contemporary readers, the novel matters because it models a way of noticing that resists haste and noise without retreating into nostalgia. In an age marked by rapid change, it examines the ethics of inheritance: how to keep faith with what formed us while making room for altered needs and new commitments. Its sensitivity to place resonates with ecological and community concerns, valuing the knowledge embedded in local practice and the dignity found in modest competence. Its treatment of loss is neither melodramatic nor minimizing, offering instead a humane account of how shared routines can become vessels for renewal.

Still Glides the Stream endures as a clear, quiet voice in the English rural tradition, a companion for readers who seek depth in the ordinary and meaning revealed by patient observation. It stands independently within Thompson's body of work while amplifying her lifelong themes: fidelity to the real, generosity toward human frailty, and trust in the illuminating power of landscape. Without spoiling its developments, one can say that it rewards attentiveness with insight rather than shock, leaving behind the feeling of a path well walked, a river well watched, and a future that honors, rather than erases, the ground from which it springs.

Synopsis

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Flora Jane Thompson's *Still Glides the Stream* opens in a quiet English village where a river, fields, and hedgerows frame the rhythms of ordinary life. Thompson establishes an intimate vantage, attentive to the cottages, lanes, and small courtesies that order the community. The narrative draws the reader into a household whose fortunes and friendships illuminate the parish as a whole. Nature's cycles are rendered with particular care, not as decoration but as the book's pulse, setting a measured pace against which personal hopes and anxieties can be felt. From the outset, the stream's steady movement hints at continuity amid coming change.

Before upheaval arrives, Thompson lingers over pre-war customs: the church year, market days, the give-and-take of neighbors, and a code of reserve that conceals deep feeling. Young people look beyond the parish for work and purpose, while elders keep memory alive in anecdote and proverb. The book's central relationships form quietly, through shared tasks, walks, and messages carried between homes. Class and distance exist, but they are bridged by habit and kindness. Thompson's descriptive poise prepares the reader for loss without announcing it, so that ordinary detail gathers weight and the simplest token or visit can shape a life.

Conflict enters not as spectacle but as a widening absence. War draws men away, and the village must learn

to read silence: gaps at the table, letters delayed, news framed in official language that says too much and too little. Thompson sets household chores and harvests beside enlistment and waiting, making the continuity of labor a form of endurance. The stream's constancy becomes an unsentimental counterpoint to disrupted time. A particular absence—felt by family, friends, and a would-be sweetheart—gradually comes to anchor the narrative, not through dramatic scenes but through the way talk slows, plans are deferred, and keepsakes acquire power.

The war's aftermath deepens the book's central questions: what it means to come home, to honor the missing, and to accept a future that does not mirror the past. A returning friend, bearing memories no one else can share, becomes a sensitive witness to the village's attempts at healing. Survivor's burdens and private loyalties complicate any easy gesture of consolation. Thompson avoids melodrama, letting conversations by the lane or in a kitchen disclose unresolved feeling. Here, the novel's pivotal developments are inward: recognitions of what cannot be mended, and of what, nonetheless, might be tended and kept alive.

As years pass, change arrives in subtler forms: altered ownership of land, new machinery, different timetables that tug at custom. Thompson registers these shifts without polemic, showing both the practical gains and the erosion of a social texture that once seemed given. Affection grows cautiously where grief has long held sway, but it must negotiate memory, duty, and a promise that may never be fulfilled. A quiet turning point comes not from revelation

staged to surprise, but from a conversation and a found remembrance that gently reorders expectations, opening the way to decisions the narrative treats with tact and restraint.

The closing movement gathers small resolutions rather than tidy conclusions. Some characters choose rootedness, others drift outward, and the village absorbs both motions without drama. Thompson returns to the stream and the fields not as symbols of escape, but as measures of scale: human plans set beside seasonal return. A sense of acceptance rises—not defeat but composure—shaped by attentiveness to what endures and what must be let go. The novel preserves uncertainty where it belongs, trusting readers to sense how a life can be redirected by a modest change in emphasis, a letter reread, or a gate left open.

Published posthumously in 1948, *Still Glides the Stream* complements Thompson's celebrated rural writing with a more concentrated meditation on time, loss, and continuity. It matters less for plot than for the precision with which it charts emotional weather and the textures of community. By keeping large events at the edge of the frame, the book clarifies their imprint on intimate choices and everyday decency. Its enduring resonance lies in the way it honors both memory and forward movement, suggesting that the work of living after disruption is neither heroic nor trivial, and that, as the stream implies, steadiness can sustain change.

Historical Context

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Flora Jane Thompson (1876–1947) grew up in the hamlet of Juniper Hill, Oxfordshire, and later worked in village post offices before becoming a writer. Best known for the Lark Rise to Candleford trilogy (1939–43), she also completed *Still Glides the Stream*, published posthumously in 1948. Its title echoes Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, with the line *Still glides the stream, and shall for ever glide*, signaling attention to nature’s continuity. Set in rural England, the book draws on the social textures Thompson knew in the south Midlands—parish, school, and sub-post office—amid decades of upheaval. It reflects its era by juxtaposing traditional communal life with accelerating modern change.

Thompson’s setting belongs to the south-Midland counties where small hamlets clustered around a Church of England parish, great estates, and mixed farms, with a nearby market town and branch railway. The 1870 Elementary Education Act and the 1880 act making attendance compulsory created village schools that reshaped childhood and literacy. Parish institutions, friendly societies, and the sub-post office knitted communities through ritual, savings, and news. Such frameworks organized daily life well into the early twentieth century, even as migration and innovation tugged at them. The novel’s quiet scenes depend on those institutions’ rhythms, registering how stable local structures mediated rapid national change.

Late nineteenth-century agriculture faced a prolonged depression (c. 1873-1896) as cheap imported grain undercut English arable farming. Many southern and midland counties shifted toward pasture, dairying, and seasonal work, while rural mechanization advanced unevenly. Estate policies and tenancy systems continued to shape opportunity, but declining wages and insecurity drove out-migration to towns. Joseph Arch's agricultural union briefly organized laborers in the 1870s, signaling rising self-assertion before the downturn weakened bargaining power. Thompson's evocation of hedged fields, haymaking, and hiring customs sits against that background, noting how older agrarian rhythms persisted even as economic forces thinned village populations and strained customary hierarchies.

Expanding communications transformed rural experience. The Post Office Savings Bank (established 1861), money orders, parcel post (1883), and the nationalized telegraph (1870) brought financial and informational services into sub-post offices like those where Thompson worked. Cheap newspapers and circulating libraries widened access to reading; bicycles and railway excursions extended horizons beyond the parish. By the early twentieth century, letters, remittances, and telegrams stitched households to distant employment and empire. Still *Glides the Stream* draws on that infrastructure: scenes of messages carried, news awaited, and official procedures observed reveal how state and market networks penetrated village life while preserving intimate, face-to-face exchange.

Women's work and status were shifting across Thompson's lifetime. In Buckinghamshire and adjacent counties, cottage lace-making declined steeply by the late nineteenth century, while domestic service and seasonal fieldwork remained common. Schooling expanded girls' literacy, and new employment in shops, offices, and the postal service opened gradually. Political rights changed too: the Representation of the People Act 1918 enfranchised many women over thirty, and the Equal Franchise Act 1928 equalized voting at twenty-one; the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 widened professional access. The novel's attentiveness to female perspectives reflects these developments, documenting everyday competence within a society still organized by patriarchal custom.

The First World War (1914–1918) profoundly marked English villages. Volunteers and, after 1916, conscripts departed in county regiments; casualties were commemorated on newly erected war memorials that became focal points of remembrance. The 1918–1919 influenza pandemic compounded loss, while demobilization and the 1919 Land Settlement (Facilities) Act shaped rural return and resettlement. Changes in pay and expectations reduced older deference, even as economic uncertainty persisted. *Still Glides the Stream* engages that climate of absence and recovery, attentive to the ways families and communities absorbed grief, adjusted to altered prospects, and found continuity in seasonal tasks, parish ritual, and the steady presence of landscape.

Interwar modernization reached the countryside unevenly. Motor buses linked hamlets to towns; the British

Broadcasting Company (from 1922) brought wireless sets into parlors; the Electricity (Supply) Act 1926 and the National Grid enabled gradual rural connection. Agricultural policy shifted with the Agricultural Marketing Act 1933 and the Milk Marketing Board, stabilizing some prices amid continuing hardship. Leisure and consumer goods broadened horizons, while migration continued to thin village youth. Thompson's narrative registers these changes through texture rather than reportage, showing how new technologies, media, and regulations entered cottages and fields without wholly displacing customary sociability, neighbourliness, and the calendared round of local observance.

Within English rural writing, Thompson stands alongside contemporaries who treated landscape and labor with documentary care. Her prose blends memory, social observation, and natural history rather than melodrama, a mode that situates *Still Glides the Stream* amid debates about nostalgia and progress in postwar Britain. The book reflects its time by preserving speech, ritual, and work-practice threatened by economic and administrative centralization, while quietly questioning what is lost when mobility and mechanization remake village life. Its enduring emphasis on the stream and fields frames a critique of transience and a defense of continuity grounded in ordinary people's experience of place.

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The Oxfordshire village of Restharrow has changed little in outward appearance during the last fifty years. Three of the old cottages have disappeared and to replace these, about half a dozen new pink-roofed bungalows have been built. The village inn has been brought up to date and its former frontage of oak beams and cream plaster has given place to one decorated with green glazed tiles and red paint; but it is still known as the *Magpie* and the old sign-board depicting that knowing bird with a gold ring in its beak still swings in its old position on the grass margin before the inn door. The old lollipop shop with bull's-eyes and barley sugar behind its dim green bottle-glass window has become the General Stores. On one of its walls a scarlet Post Office letterbox has appeared, with a notice above it stating that stamps may be obtained and parcels posted within.

One of the bungalows is occupied by a retired Metropolitan Police constable, another by the district nurse, and a lady who breeds alsatian dogs has had three of the old cottages thrown into one and installed a bathroom. The new schoolmaster is not expected to occupy the little two-roomed lean-to beside the school building which served a succession of schoolmistresses, but has his own house, remarkable for its well-kept lawn and flower-beds. The sound of his lawn-mower strikes a new note in the village

symphony, but one which blends well with cock-crowing, birdsong, the clinking of buckets, and the shouts and laughter of children at play.

During the two world wars, at Restharrow as elsewhere, hearts must have been torn with anxiety for the absent, and, at the close of both wars, there must have been those there who mourned amidst the general rejoicings. But such scars as were left were personal and invisible; no bomb fell anywhere near Restharrow; no airfield or factory was established in the immediate neighbourhood; on account of the limited accommodation, evacuees were few, and the village retained and has since kept the air of peaceful seclusion now only possible in such places, far from towns, in the heart of the country.

It is a long, straggling place, consisting of what has always been known as 'The Street', though street it is not in the ordinary sense of the term, the cottages standing singly and in groups on both sides of a country byway with fields and hedgerows between. Some of the cottages stand on high banks with flights of stone steps leading up to the doors; others have been built so flush with the road that a passing wagoner, from the top of his load, might if he chose look into the bedroom windows. One here and there of the houses has a honeysuckle-covered porch, a pink or yellow washed front, or a gable end turned to the road, but the greater number are plain, square dwellings of grey limestone, only redeemed from ugliness by the mellowing effect of time and by the profusion of old-fashioned garden flowers which is a feature of the district.

There are many trees. Apple and plum and damson trees in the cottage gardens, laburnums and lilacs at cottage gates, and everywhere in the hedgerows wide-spreading oaks and elms. Around a roadside pond halfway up the village street stand old pollarded willows, the trunks hollowed by time to mere shells in which the village children hide, but every tree with its living topknot of silvery green leaves. A few white Aylesbury ducks[1] still frequent this pond, though not so many as in former years, when, towards nightfall, little girls with light switches in their hands would go to the pond to call in those belonging to their families. '*Dilly, dilly, dilly, dilly!*' they would call, and the ducks would scramble up the bank and, with many a backward glance from their cunning little eyes, they would form two files and waddle off, one file up and the other down the street. It was as the children said, hard to tell which was whosen; but the ducks knew to whom they belonged. In twos and threes they would break from the rank and make for the garden gate which led to the shed where they knew they would find in their troughs a delicious mess of mashed potatoes and brewer's grain[2]. Those were the mass-minded ducks[2a]. One old drake, a strict individualist, had deserted the flock, having become so enamoured of his mistress that he followed her out of doors like a dog and, when she was at home, kept guard on the doorstep. His devotion had so endeared him to the woman that she could not bear to think of him in conjunction with sage and onions, and Mrs. Rouse, going to the well with her buckets suspended by a yoke from her shoulders, closely

followed by her adoring Benny, as she had named him, was for years one of the sights of the village.

Now, as always, the majority of the Restharrow men are farmworkers. During the last half century the proportion of these has increased, for village tradesmen are fewer. The shoemaker who made, as well as mended, footgear and employed a journeyman helper and an apprentice is now represented by an ordinary cobbler; the blacksmith, the carpenter and the stonemason, who was also the sweep, have long ago shut up shop, and the notice board of 'Adam Strong, Tailor' was, years ago, chopped up for firewood. Adam Strong—'Mus' Strong' to most of his customers, 'Adam' to a few, and plain 'Strong' to those of the gentry who employed him to do their repairs—had the reputation of being the best tailor for miles around. 'There's only one fault in your suits, Mus' Strong,' his customers would tell him; and, after a weighty pause, they would add: 'The stuff's so strong and the work so good that you can't wear 'em out nohow.' And Adam's invariable retort was, 'Try taking yours out of the box and going to church in it Sundays.' But only a small minority of the men were regular churchgoers; they left that to the women and children; and, after its first appearance as wedding attire, the best suit was folded away with lavender sprigs in its owner's clothes' chest and only taken out on high days and holidays, including the christenings, and, later, the weddings, of his children. Adam's suits cost three pounds, an enormous sum to men who, in those days, earned ten or twelve shillings a week, but the general opinion was that it paid to save up for one

before marriage, for then, they said, a man had a decent coat to his back for the rest of his days, whatever betided.

Beyond the last group of cottages and the Manor House and the Vicarage, both set well back among trees, stands the church, a small grey building with a shingled belfry and a churchyard where the unmarked graves are as waves in a sea of long grass. The sound most frequently heard there is the moaning of wood pigeons in the surrounding elm trees, for that is the end of the village and few pass beyond the church in that direction.

A long flagged path bordered on both sides by tall, pointed clipped yews, leads from the church gate to the porch, and exactly opposite to the gate on the other side of the road is a stile. One August afternoon an elderly woman stood by this stile and saw that the footpath which crossed the meadow within had become faint from disuse. It was not entirely obliterated, but could still be discerned, winding up and over the gentle rise and dipping to the moist places. A disused footpath, especially one in a district far from towns and not on the itinerary of walking clubs, is to-day no uncommon sight, nor did this particular footpath appear to have any special feature to cause her to gaze upon it so long and intently. Neither was the meadow over which it wound in any way remarkable, being but a few undulating acres of turf, brightened just then by the golds and yellows of the common later summer flowers and closed in by dark hedgerows studded with elms.

Beyond the meadow lay a prospect of other fields, some dark golden with still uncut corn, others with corn in shocks, bluish green with root crops, or grassland; broken here and

there by the dark bushiness of a copse, or by the line of tall herbage which marked a hidden watercourse. Overhead, the high, pale sky was flecked with moon-coloured clouds. Swallows darted and skimmed, white butterflies drifted with thistledown on air currents. Except for the distant dot-like figures of men working in a harvest field, these were the only living things she beheld. Such a landscape may be seen from the window of a railway carriage in almost any part of the country at that season. Yet, though homely, such scenes never tire English eyes, for there is about them a quiet charm which can heal sore hearts and tranquillize tired minds. Demanding nothing from the onlooker, they bless alike the aware and the unaware[19]. The woman at the stile had a special awareness. Her features relaxed and her expression was that of the deep satisfaction of one who in a changed world finds one beloved thing unchanged.

Though getting on in years, she was still pleasant to look upon; of good medium height; plump, but by no means unpleasing of figure, with wavy grey hair, fresh complexion, and clear, penetrating grey eyes. Women of her type are not uncommon in that part of the country; they serve you in shops, nurse you in hospitals, and welcome and make you comfortable at inns. Often, as cleaners or caretakers, they show you round churches or other old buildings. They have good memories and can tell those interested where in the neighbourhood the rarer birds or less common wildflowers are to be found. They can relate, and relate very well, the history of an old mansion or family, or describe, and sometimes interpret, a local custom. In cases of illness or accident, they are the first to be called upon for help by

their neighbours. Chance-met strangers have been known to unfold for them the stories of their lives.

But the woman by the stile had not the appearance of an ordinary countrywoman; her neat grey suit, smart hat and good shoes were not in the country mode; neither had she the brisk, purposeful look of one going about some homely errand in a place where she knew everybody and was herself well known. That afternoon in the church and churchyard she had gazed long and intently upon objects which an inhabitant of the place might have been expected to pass unseeing, or with but a casual glance. And the graves beside which she had stood longest had not been the more recent ones, kept neatly clipped or planted with flowers, but those in the older part of the churchyard where long grasses billowed and even Clerk Tom himself had forgotten who was lying below. But she remembered; for she was a native of the village, a now-retired schoolmistress who, after an absence of many years, was revisiting the scene of her childhood. Her name was Charity Finch.

As she had passed through the village she had noted the few outward changes with a tolerant smile. The wonder, she had thought, was that they were so few when in the outer world all seemed to have changed utterly. What had touched her more nearly was that every face she had seen had been, to her, the face of a stranger. She had known where to look for those she had loved most dearly, or rather the low mounds which covered their mortal remains; but other old friends and neighbours must still be living. Where were they? When she had set out that morning from the farmhouse in the next parish where she had found rooms,

she had imagined men and women of her own age and older ones coming forward to grasp her hand and exclaim: 'Why, bless my soul! if it ain't Charity—Charity Finch? How be 'ee, me dear, how be 'ee?' but no one she had seen had recognized her and she had recognized no one.

Young women, many of whom might well have been born since her last visit to the place, stood in the doorways of cottages once occupied by well-remembered old neighbours. They hung their own artificial silk sets and the many-coloured garments of their children on clothes-lines in gardens where once rows of unbleached sheets and plain calico underwear had billowed, and called to their children from the old gateways. Some of them looked at her curiously, as if thinking, 'Who is this stranger and what is she doing in our street?' but though they were evidently now in possession they struck her as interlopers. That young person with a baby under her arm and a cigarette hanging from her lips at the door of what had been old Mrs. Burdett's cottage, a door always kept shut in those days, for Mrs. Burdett had been one of those who, as they said, kept themselves to themselves. And the girl in the skin-tight jumper bashing down apples with a clothes prop from the tree Jake Harding had planted. The apples would not be fit to eat, for the tree was an annual souring. Jake had favoured that apple because it was a good keeper, and had had several trees of that kind in his garden. Every year about Candlemas[3] time he had gone round the village with a basketful of the fruit and handed out one apple for each member of the family at the doors of those who had shown him small kindnesses. 'Mind you bakes 'em well, missis, and

you'll find they'll come up as white and as light as snow, and when 'em be done, you mash up the inners wi' a knob o' fresh butter and all the brown sugar you've got in the pantry, then you'll know why Eve stole the apple,' he would say. It was the nearest approach to a joke he had ever been known to make, for Jake was himself a bit of an annual souring. Well, Jake had gone, and all his apple trees save one had disappeared. But the girl seemed rather a nice girl really; she had smiled as she caught her eye and wished her good morning.

The children were coming home from school and their mothers were calling to them and they were calling back to their mothers, exactly as other mothers and children had called to each other long ago. But the sound of their speech had not the homely old Oxfordshire tang it was such as might be heard in any part of the country. The children looked better fed and were better shod and clad, and the women appeared more leisured than those she had known there, and she was glad to see that, though she sadly missed the old familiar faces. She had a feeling of unreality, of herself walking like a ghost on a scene where she had once been one of the living company which then held the stage.

But here, at the church stile, she felt at home once more. The little grey church was unaltered, every stone, tile, and weather-worn carving, were exactly as she remembered. The flagstones of the pathway had become mossed at the edges as if fewer feet trod them than formerly, but the yews looked not a day older, and the chestnut by the stile beneath which she was standing was no more widely

spreading. The wood pigeons, descendants many times removed from those she had mocked in her childhood, 'Take two cows, Taffy! Take two cows, Taffy!' kept up the same perpetual moaning. Even the stile upon which she was leaning had not altered. It was still the same substantial structure, with high mounting-stools and a rounded beam for a top rail. 'T'ould take a charge of dynamite to shift this', her father had once said as he crossed it, and he had spoken authoritatively as a craftsman. The rounded top rail had been polished to glassiness by the Sunday trouser-seats of generations of village youths whose favourite perch it had been while waiting for the chimes to stop and the little *ting-tang* bell to tell them that the parson was getting into his surplice, when they would shuffle in a body up the flagstone path and tip-toe into the seat nearest the door, determined not to spend indoors a moment more than was necessary.

She saw again in memory those of her own day, heavy-footed, rosy-cheeked lads with honest eyes, wearing Sunday-best suits of pale plaids, and bright blue or pink neckties, their hair well plastered down and darkened with hair-oil, and in their buttonholes the largest and brightest flowers their parents' gardens could furnish. Some of them would wear a second flower in their hatbands. She had seen some of their names on the 1914-18 war memorial as she had passed through the village. Those of them still living must be grandfathers.

In the days of her childhood the footpath over the meadow had been a hard, well-defined track, much used by men going to their fieldwork, by children going blackberrying, nutting, or in search of violets or mushrooms,

and, on Sunday evenings, by pairs of sweethearts who preferred the seclusion of the fields and copses beyond to the more public pathways. The footpath had led to a farmhouse and a couple of cottages, and, to the dwellers in these, it had been not only the way to church and school and market, but also the first stage in every journey. It had led to London, to Queensland and Canada, to the Army depot and the troopship. Wedding and christening parties had footed it merrily, and at least one walking funeral had passed that way. She herself when a child had trodden it daily, often with her skipping-rope, her white pinafore billowing, her long hair streaming, her feet scarcely touching the ground, or so it seemed to her now. At other times she had carried a basket, on an errand for her mother, to fetch a shillingsworth of eggs, perhaps; eggs twenty a shilling. Not very large eggs, to be sure—they were common barndoor fowls' eggs—but warm from the nest and so full of a delicious milky fluid that it gushed from the shell when the egg was tapped for breakfast next morning. Most often of all she had gone that way on her own errands, for a family of her cousins had lived in the farmhouse, which, to her, had been a second home.

She knew every foot of that meadow by heart. Beneath that further hedgerow violets had grown—white violets and grey blue-veined ones, as well as the more ordinary purple. In spring that dry slope had been yellow with cowslips, short-stemmed cowslips, but honey-sweet of scent. She had once helped to pick a peck of cowslips pips there to make wine, and the flowers and their green rosettes of leaves had felt warm to her hand in the sunshine. The call of the cuckoo

fashionable three-cornered bib-style apron that many women made at home in the late 19th to early 20th century.

16 An 18th-century style of overdress or gown with a bunched-up back and often worn over a plain skirt; in later, cheaper fashion it was imitated in printed cottons for everyday wear.

17 A form of embroidery worked in wool thread (called crewel) using a variety of surface stitches to create decorative motifs such as flowers and ears of wheat.

18 A regional name for a type of treacle (boiled sugar) toffee that is pulled into long threads and ribbons and is notably sticky and chewy.

19 A large temporary tent, often of canvas, erected for public events such as village shows and prize-givings; in British usage it commonly housed exhibits, ceremonies, and entertainments.

20 The national flag of the United Kingdom, combining the historic crosses of England, Scotland and (since 1801) Ireland; commonly flown at public and civic events.

21 A British gold coin worth half a sovereign (ten shillings or half a pound in pre-decimal currency), often used as prize money or a small valuable payment in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

22 A school subject and pedagogical movement, prominent from the late 19th century, that emphasized outdoor observation of plants, animals and local environments as part of elementary education.

23 The feast of St Michael (29 September) that also names an English academic and legal quarter (the

Michaelmas term); in rural speech it commonly signals early autumn and the traditional date for seasonal events.

24 A government official (Her Majesty's Inspector, HMI) responsible for inspecting and reporting on schools in England and Wales from the 19th century onward; such inspections were formal occasions affecting staffing and school status.

25 A historical apprenticeship system in which older pupils (often in their mid-teens) trained as assistant teachers while completing their own education; common in British elementary schooling in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

26 A small, long-coated Scottish dog breed developed on the Isle of Skye, kept historically as a working and companion terrier; popular in Britain in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

27 A light citrus-scented perfume originating in Cologne, Germany (18th century); by the period it had become a common toiletry/refreshing scent.

28 The stamped mark applied at the Mixlow post office showing where a letter was processed; in the chapter it identifies the town through which the anonymous letters were posted (Mixlow may be a nearby village or fictional locality).

29 An extra-legal form of public punishment or humiliation in which alleged offenders were repeatedly immersed in water; historically used by mobs as a deterrent rather than as formal legal sanction.

30 A local, familiar nickname for the village postman who delivered letters and parcels on his regular round; the

phrase emphasizes his steady, weather-defying duty rather than a formal title.

31 A local branch of the Oddfellows, a fraternal 'friendly society' that provided mutual aid such as sickness and funeral benefits to members, common in Britain in the 19th and early 20th centuries; exact local rules and rituals varied by lodge.

32 A small horse-drawn vehicle used to transport a governess or nursery party and children; such light carriages were a common means of short-distance travel in country households before widespread motor car use.

33 Sweetbriar is a fragrant wild rose (*Rosa* species) commonly grown as a hedgerow plant; a 'sweetbriar hedge' refers to such a low, fragrant rose hedge often found in English cottage gardens.

34 A lady's maid was a senior female servant in a household who attended to a lady's personal needs (hair, dress, and daily tasks); the role usually required several years of training or apprenticeship in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

35 Whit-Monday is the Monday after Pentecost (also called Whitsun), a Christian feast day historically observed in Britain as a public or local holiday and often marked by fairs or outings.

36 A 'cocked-hat shape' describes a note folded into a small triangular packet (also called a cocked-hat or triangular fold), a traditional way of sending brief informal messages.

37 'Something blue' is part of the traditional English wedding rhyme ('something old, something new, something

borrowed, something blue') and refers to a blue item worn or carried by the bride as a symbol of fidelity and constancy.

38 A turnip clamp is a traditional farm method of storing harvested turnips in a compact heap covered with earth or straw to preserve them through the winter for livestock feed.

39 'Queen's shillin'' (Queen's shilling) refers to the small coin or bounty historically given to recruits who enlisted in the British Army or navy; in 19th-early 20th-century usage taking the 'Queen's shilling' meant formally joining the service.

40 A 'turn-out' here refers to a hired carriage (and horses) sent from an inn named the Crown; in 19th-early 20th-century Britain inns commonly provided such vehicles to meet or convey travellers.

41 Metheglin is a traditional alcoholic drink — a spiced or herbal variety of mead (fermented honey wine) — historically made and stored in households or small batches in Britain and typically stronger or more aromatic than plain mead.

42 A dog-cart is a light, two-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle common in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, used for carrying people and small loads (the name comes from a lower seat historically used for carrying hunting dogs).

43 A Training College for Teachers was an institution where prospective elementary school teachers received professional instruction; 'Radley' here refers to the village near Abingdon in Oxfordshire, and the phrase likely denotes a local teacher-training establishment operating in the late