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Chronology

Forebears and families to 1810

Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell née Stevenson is descended from the Stevensons of Berwick on the male side, and the Hollands of Sandlebridge, near Knutsford, Cheshire, on the female. John Chapple has rightly observed in *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years* (1997), hereafter Chapple, just how important the two family strands are in the life and fiction of Elizabeth Gaskell.

Her father William Stevenson (b. 26 November 1870) was the eldest of five sons of a Berwick naval man, Joseph Stevenson (1719–99), and the only one who did not follow a naval calling. William attended Berwick Grammar School, studied Latin and Greek among other subjects, and at the age of 17 went to Daventry Academy in preparation for becoming a Dissenting Minister. There he would follow in the footsteps of the most eminent Unitarian of the 18th century, the chemist and religious reformer, Joseph Priestley.

William Stevenson moved on to Northampton Academy in 1789, then to Bruges as a tutor in 1792, the year in which he was made a burgher of Berwick. He became a tutor at Manchester New College in 1793, preaching also to the small congregation at Dob Lane Chapel, Failsworth, Manchester. In 1796 however he disengaged from his ministry: he published a pamphlet which criticised the primacy of classical learning, and moved to East Lothian, apparently to study farming, probably under the tutelage of one Robert Hope, whose grandson George Hope visited the Gaskells in Manchester many years later. Stevenson's first stay in Scotland was comparatively brief, for he returned to England some time in 1797, and on 1 December married Elizabeth Holland (b. 19 April 1771) at Over Peover parochial chapel, Cheshire. She was the sixth child of Samuel and Ann Holland (née Swinton), her father being a farmer who had moved to Sandlebridge, near Knutsford, in 1774.

Mr and Mrs Stevenson went to Scotland, where he took up farming again at Saughton Mills, near Edinburgh, in 1798. On 27 November their son John Stevenson was born. There were probably other children apart from Elizabeth, but no evidence survives to date. William renounced farming and settled in Edinburgh, where he became a tutor; he also contributed articles to the *Edinburgh Review* from 1803 onwards. In 1805 (William Gaskell was born on 24 July in this year in a suburb of Warrington), Stevenson was appointed private secretary to the Earl of Lauderdale, expected to be the next Viceroy of India. Lauderdale was not chosen but obtained for Stevenson the post of Keeper of the Papers

at the Treasury (20 May 1806) at an initial salary of £200 per annum. Stevenson came to London, and by 1809 he and his wife were settled in Chelsea at Belle Vue, then part of Lindsey Row (now Cheyne Walk), where ES was born on 29 September 1810. Stevenson contributed to the *Annual Register*, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and periodicals like *Blackwood's* over the years.

An older sister of ES's mother, Hannah Holland (b. 29 July 1867), was to play an important part in ES's life. In 1789 she had married Samuel Lumb, a Wakefield woolstapler in comfortable circumstances, at Over Peover chapel. Their daughter Marianne was born 17 October 1790. Samuel was mentally unstable and spent periods of time in asylums: he also had another family life with his housekeeper and their children. He died in March 1805. The formal separation in 1795 provided Hannah with £120 per annum for life. The Hollands were a close and sympathetic family, and Hannah was certainly living in Over Knutsford between 1799 and 1809, near some of them. Relevant details of Stevenson and Holland families and relations are given below in the next section, which begins with the birth of ES.

Early life (1810–30)**1810****March**

Luddites break machinery in Nottingham, effectively the beginning of wide industrial unrest.

April

13 (Fri.) Publication of *The Borough* by George Crabbe.

July

18 (Wed.) Birth of novelist William Makepeace Thackeray.

September

29 (Sat.) Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson born at 'Belle Vue', Lindsey Row, Chelsea. (After EG's death her daughter Meta said that her mother's second Christian name, Cleghorn, originated from that of a woman who had been kind to ES's mother. Her father's friend, the farmer and writer James Cleghorn, also has a claim.)

1811**October**

29(?) (Tues.) ES's mother Elizabeth Stevenson dies in Chelsea; interred in King's Road burial ground there.

November

1 or 2 (Fri. or Sat.) Marianne Lumb, shocked by the news of her aunt Elizabeth Stevenson's death, writes from The Heath, Knutsford, to her mother Hannah, who was probably visiting her brother Swinton near London: she is greatly concerned about the baby Elizabeth, and suggests that she could live with them. There was space for a '*large Crib*' (quoted Chapple 118) in her own bedroom, for which she would pay. She asks her mother to reassure Mr Stevenson that she, Marianne, would be a mother to Elizabeth 'to the very best of my power' (Chapple 113). Exactly when ES went to Knutsford is not clear – certainly within weeks of her mother's death – but supportive, well-to-do Holland relations

were established there. Most prominent was Peter Holland, surgeon, of Church House, Knutsford, who had remarried in 1809. The children of this marriage would be contemporary with ES: Charles (b. 1809), Susan (b. 1811) and Arthur (b. 1813). Unitarian influence within the family was strong, with regular attendance at Brook Street Chapel (Unitarian since 1740).

November

Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* published.

1812

February

7 (Fri.) Birth of Charles Dickens.

Luddite riots begin near Huddersfield: act passed prescribing death penalty for such actions.

March

Overnight fame for the poet Byron with the publication of Cantos 1 and 2 of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

31 (Tues.) Marianne Lumb, Hannah's only daughter, dies in Halifax. ES was 18 months old at the time, and almost certainly became the major focus of Aunt Lumb's attention. They lived comfortably at Heathside, Knutsford, Hannah Lumb's home for the rest of her life.

April

Maria Edgeworth visits the Hollands, with whom she was friendly, at Knutsford. (Just before her death she would comment on *Mary Barton* (see below) while her novel *Helen* (1834) may have been an influence on EG's fiction).

11 (Sat.) Luddite attack on mill near Hartshead, Yorks, repulsed: Patrick Brontë was the curate there.

June

Napoleon invades Russia, (Sept.) enters Moscow, (Dec.) retreats.

September

George Crabbe's *Tales in Verse* published.

1813

January

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* published.
66 Luddites tried at York; 17 executed.

1814

April

11 (Mon.) William Stevenson (ES's father) marries Catherine Thomson (b. 1775).
11 Abdication of Napoleon, who is exiled to Elba.

May

(end) Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* published.

July

1 (Fri.) Death of ES's Holland grandmother Ann.
7 Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* published.

1815

February

24 (Fri.) Publication of Scott's *Guy Mannering* (thereafter *Waverley* novels continue until 1832, the year of Scott's death).

March

20 (Mon.) Beginning of Napoleon's 'Hundred Days'.

June

12 (Mon.) William, half-brother to ES, born to William Stevenson and his second wife Catherine. Baptised by William Turner charismatic, enlightened Unitarian minister of Newcastle-on-Tyne, with whom ES was to stay in the winters of 1829–30 and 1830–31, and to whom she was to read in his last years in Manchester.
18 Wellington and Blücher defeat Napoleon at Waterloo.

December

(end) Jane Austen's *Emma* published (title page 1816).

1816

April

21 (Sun.) Birth of Charlotte Brontë.

May

20 (Mon.) or 26 (Sun.) Death of ES's grandfather Samuel Holland (b. 1734) of Sandlebridge, which his son Peter inherited. Peter, surgeon in Knutsford from 1787 onwards, attended the distinguished local family, the Stanleys of Alderley. (Lady Jane Stanley, a character in Knutsford, may have supplied EG with some ideas for her fictional aristocratic ladies, for example Lady Ludlow and Lady Cumnor.) Samuel Holland's will (Jan. 1815) effectively cut William Stevenson out of any inheritance (through his deceased Holland wife) in the light of his second marriage, but Hannah Lumb was left even more comfortably off, with some financial provision made through her for the use of Samuel's grandchildren.

25 Coleridge: *Christabel and Other Poems* (includes 'Kubla Khan' and 'The Pains of Sleep') published.

December

2 (Mon.) Spa Fields riot in London demanding political reform.

7 Birth of daughter Catherine to William and Catherine Stevenson, a half-sister for ES, baptised at St Luke's, Chelsea. Her mother was the sister of Anthony Todd Thomson, prosperous and successful doctor (first wife died in 1815). His second wife (see 1820 below) was Katherine Byerley who, with her sisters, had founded the school, Avonbank, which ES later attended. Thomson became a Professor at London University (1828), and indulged his love of verse (and family) by annotating his relative James Thomson's poem *The Seasons* (1730) in 1847.

1817

Publication of George Young's *History of Whitby*, consulted by EG in the period when she is preparing *Sylvia's Lovers* from 1859 onwards.

January

17 (Fri.)–18 March (Tues.) Jane Austen writing *Sanditon*.

March

4 (Tues.) Habeas Corpus Act suspended, first step in repressive legislation aimed at preventing insurrection.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* published.

April

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (Tory) founded (publication October) by William Blackwood: William Stevenson is a regular contributor, though sometimes late in supplying articles, often short of money and requesting advance payments. Financial embarrassment was apparently an irreversible characteristic: ES meanwhile was in Knutsford, perhaps visiting her father in London occasionally, but within the protective ambience of cousins and other relatives, secure with Aunt Lumb.

June

26 (Thurs.) Birth of Patrick Branwell Brontë.

July

Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* published.

18 (Fri.) Death of Jane Austen.

The Misses' Byerleys' school moves from Warwick to Barford. (Lois Barclay, tragic heroine of *Lois the Witch* (1859) was brought up in Barford before her enforced emigration to Salem.)

December

(late) Posthumous publication of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* (title page 1818).

1818**May**

19 (Tues.) Keats's *Endymion* published.

June

Scott's *Heart of Midlothian* published.

July

30 (Thurs.) Birth of Emily Jane Brontë.

Throughout these formative years before she began to attend school in 1821, ES would undoubtedly have access to a number of books at Sandlebridge, farm home of her Holland relations.

1819

Publication of the first two cantos of Byron's *Don Juan*.

March

15 (Mon.) Death of William Gaskell's father.

July

3 (Sat.) Publication of Crabbe's *Tales of the Hall*.

August

16 (Mon.) Peterloo Massacre, St Peter's Fields, Manchester, 11 dead, 400 injured, preceded by widespread radical agitation. Divisions of opinion and reaction to these events in Knutsford, with Peter Holland supporting the severity of the magistrates. Samuel Bamford, author of *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (1843), greatly liked by EG later, imprisoned for 20 months after Peterloo.

November

22 (Mon.) Birth of Marian Evans, the future novelist George Eliot.

December

Passing of the Six Acts to prevent outbreaks of public disorder.

John Stevenson, ES's brother, writes to her about his social activities, for example, dancing, and assumes that she has read Thomas Day's *Sandford and Merton*. His sending good wishes to relations indicates that ES was in Knutsford. He is obviously concerned to remain in touch with his sister.

18 (Sat.) Publication of Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

1820

William Scoresby's *An Account of the Arctic Regions, with a History and Description of the Northern Whale-Fishery* published, later consulted by EG in preparation for *Sylvia's Lovers*.

William Gaskell (hereafter WG), ultimately destined for the Ministry, enters Glasgow University.

January

17 (Mon.) Birth of Anne Brontë.

29 Death of George III. Accession of George IV, Regent since 1811.

February

- 1 (Tues.) Anthony Todd Thomson (42) marries Katherine Byerley (22) – perhaps the clinching emphasis in choice of school for ES in 1821, possibly allowing payment of reduced fees through the family connection. Katherine is the youngest of the Byerley sisters. The school was successively at Warwick, Barford (1817–24), then Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 25 (Fri.) Patrick Brontë appointed perpetual curate at Haworth.

March

- 1 (Wed.) John Stevenson given permission by the East India Company to trade in the East (father provides surety of £500).
- 13 John Stevenson made a Freeman of Berwick.
- John Stevenson gives ES account of his stay in Berwick. Mentions two books to ES which he'll send her, *Elizabeth*, or *The Exiles of Siberia*, and *Paul and Virginia* (soon to be recognised as a classic), the first by S. Cottin, the second by Bernadin de St Pierre: both popular translations from the French this year. Further proposes that ES should visit them in the summer, her father returning her to Knutsford in the autumn.

May

- 7 (Sun.) Letter from John to ES describing his London activities.

June

- 12 (Mon.) John writes again from Portsmouth just prior to his sailing (14 June) for Calcutta, where he arrives in November.

July

- 1 (Sat.) Publication of John Keats's *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes, and Other Poems* (the *Odes* and *Hyperion* among them.)

August

- 13 (Sun.) Birth of Susanna Winkworth, older sister of Catherine (Katie), member of a Manchester family later friendly with EG, Katie becoming close to her: the Winkworths are a major source for knowledge of EG in the late 1840s and 1850s.
- (Summer) Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, and other poems including 'Ode to the West Wind', published.

November

29 (Wed.) Diary-type letter from John Stevenson to ES conveying experiences of India: long, extravagant, wanting news, for instance, of how she is progressing with her music.

1821

Manchester Guardian begins publication.

January

15 (Mon.) John Stevenson writes to ES from Calcutta where he is waiting to sail, rather upset at not hearing from her, wanting news from home.

Scott's *Kenilworth* published.

February

23 (Fri.) John Keats dies in Rome at the age of 25.

April

Greek struggle for Independence against Turkey begins.

May

5 (Sat.) Death of Napoleon Buonaparte at St Helena.

July

13 (Fri.) Shelley's *Adonais*, an elegaic tribute to Keats, published.

19 Coronation of George IV.

August

17 (Fri.) Death of Queen Caroline.

September

15 (Sat.) Death of Patrick Brontë's wife Maria.

(Sept./Oct.) De Quincey publishes *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*.

ES joins the Miss Byerleys' school at Barford, evidenced by two gifts for her 11th birthday (29 Sept.): from her father *The Female Mentor; or, Select Conversations* in the prescriptive conduct mode, and from Aunt Lumb a present of a similar nature inscribed to her niece. The Byerley sisters were connected with the Wedgwoods, their father

having been Josiah Wedgwood's partner. ES would follow the curriculum of English, Geography, History, and additionally French, Music, Drawing, Dancing and Italian: certainly evidence of her musical interests (see below).

1822

John Stevenson goes to Madras.

While ES is in her second year at Barford, her father continues to produce articles, suggesting subjects like the then current one of political economy to Blackwood – and pushing for payment.

July

8 (Mon.) Death of Shelley by drowning off the Italian coast at Viareggio. He was 30.

1823

Unitarians help to found the Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, later the Royal Manchester Institution.

Charles Lamb's the *Collected Essays of Elia* published.

May

17 (Sat.) Scott's *Quentin Durward* published.

September

20 (Sat.) ES's Holland cousins, Mary, Bessy and Lucy spend some time in Wales, keeping journals and writing to Aunt Lumb about their doings, returning to Knutsford on that date. The Holland connections with Wales are important to ES. Samuel Holland, copper mine and quarry owner, later moves there – his mother and sisters resident already – and ES stayed at Plas yn Penrhyn (see below) with important results for her fiction.

ES is given Cowper's poems by her father.

November

6 (Thurs.) WG's mother remarries, her husband being Edward Dimock (later subjected to EG's wit in a letter of 17 July 1838): Dimock becomes minister at Sankey Street Chapel, Warrington.

December

- 4 (Thurs.) Advertisement for Cowan Bridge 'School for Clergymen's Daughters' in the *Leeds Intelligencer*, the original for Lowood Institution in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

1824

Mechanics' Institute, with its educational provisions for working men, founded in Manchester.

April

- 19 (Mon.) Byron, intent on practical involvement in the fight for Greek independence, dies of fever at Missolonghi.

May

William Stevenson publishes his *Historical Sketch*.

In the same month the Byerleys' school moves to Avonbank, Stratford-upon-Avon. Abroad John Stevenson's travels continue – he reaches the Red Sea: the first Burmese War had begun in January, the attack on Rangoon and its capture coming on 11 May (John referred to the fighting in December).

WG is awarded his BA degree at Glasgow: he receives prizes for Greek, Mathematics and Ethics.

June

- 21 (Mon.) Repeal of the Combination Acts of 1799–1800: unions were permitted, but any intimidation of workers was proscribed.

August

- 10 (Tues.) Charlotte Brontë begins to attend Cowan Bridge school, followed (25 Nov.) by her sister Emily.

Radical journal the *Westminster Review* founded by James Mill, father of John Stuart Mill. William Stevenson contributes to it.

1825

John Stevenson writes from India to ES and Aunt Lumb suggesting that if his sister kept a diary she would have material for her letters to him. William Stevenson's articles on political economy concluded.

Fanny Parkes (née Byerley) publishes *Domestic Duties, or Instructions to Young Married Mothers on the Relations and Duties of Married Life*,

reprinted several times over the next few years. Almost certainly ES read this, inwardly absorbing its precepts for ironic fictional use later in *Cranford*.

The Avonbank years also provide descriptive material for *My Lady Ludlow*.

June

15 (Wed.) ES inscribes a music book on this date (though she says 'Thursday'), its pages indicating an interest in contemporary song and dance and also reflecting the Byerley sisters' promotion of 'the collaborative musical culture they encouraged in their pupils' (Chapple 246).

Death of Elizabeth Brontë – her sister Maria had died 6 May – Charlotte Brontë's older sisters. She connected their deaths with conditions at Cowan Bridge School.

WG is awarded his MA degree at Glasgow in Science and Maths, having won prizes in Greek, Maths and Ethics. Begins his studies for the Ministry at Manchester New College, then at York, one of his teachers being William Turner. (WG was to preach William Turner's funeral sermon in 1859.) Fellow student is James Martineau, later powerful Unitarian, brother of the writer Harriet Martineau. WG now has three years further study as preparation for the Ministry.

August

2 (Tues.) William Stevenson gives ES a copy of Gray's poems and continues to write and may even, deduces Chapple, have been the author (October) of an article on Lord Braybrooke's edition of Pepys' *Diary*, published in the summer.

September

27 (Tues.) opening of the Stockton–Darlington railway.

ES nears the end of her schooldays: she obviously had access to many classics over these years through her Holland cousins in Knutsford, from the *Arabian Nights*, through Shakespeare, Spenser, Cervantes, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the 18th century writers, then Scott, Crabbe, Wordsworth, Burns, probably Jane Austen, as well as literary reviews, certainly the *Literary Gazette*, founded 1817. This 'intellectually solid literary fare' was supplemented by children's classics, like 'Sarah Trimmer's *History of the Robins* (1786) which she also read to her own children' (Foster 13, further detail Easson 20–21).

1826

University College, London founded.

Brougham's Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge founded.

February

24 (Fri.) End of the Burmese War.

April

22 (Sat.) Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* published anonymously.

June

ES leaves Avonbank, her formal education over.

14 (Wed.) Jane Byerley writes to ES giving critique of Cheltenham, her letter embodying 'Ideals of womanhood' (Chapple 246) and referring to the disappearance in India of a relation of a certain Sophy, uncanny anticipation of ES's future loss of her brother John.

(Winter) ES probably in London with her father, who perhaps tutored her in Italian, Latin, French: she reads (or has read) and admires Goldsmith, Cowper, Pope and Scott.

December

25 (Mon.) Death of Jane Turner, William Turner's second wife. His daughter Ann takes charge of his household.

1827

John Keble publishes (anonymously) his devotional poems, *The Christian Year*. Their popularity stimulates the Anglican revival.

William Stevenson continues to write articles (now lost).

June

8–10 (Fri.–Sun.) John Stevenson writes to ES, pleased that she has started to keep a Journal; tells her he is going to Bombay, hoping to sail on the 15 June. Wishes he could be with her and affectionately, nostalgically recalls their early days when she was 10. Describes a farewell party on board ship.

12 ES's music book of this date has popular songs copied from friends over a period of time, piano arrangements, dances.

13(?) Writing from Gravesend John Stevenson praises ES's criticism of Byron's poetry in a letter sent to her father, but is also full of his own flirtations.

- 29(?) John Stevenson's sailing delayed by unfavourable weather – remembrances to Aunt Lumb and relatives, and wishes ES had written to him before he sailed.

July

- 2 (Mon.) William Stevenson's only letter to ES which survives (enclosing the previous one from John). Reveals the latter's delay, urges ES to write to him and to maintain her studies (particularly Latin and Italian) since she has been in Knutsford upwards of a month, and encloses the *Literary Gazette* with a review, largely extracts, of Scott's *Life of Napoleon Buonaparte* (published July). Also suggests she keeps her journal if she holidays in Wales.

ES probably in Wales this summer, staying at Plas Brereton – rented by Samuel Holland senior early in the 19th century – also at Aber and visiting Anglesey.

- 6 Treaty of London – England, France, Russia press for Greek autonomy.

August

- 8 (Wed.) Death of the Prime Minister George Canning.

September

- 13 (Thurs.) Catherine Winkworth (Katie) born – later close friend of EG's.

October

- 20 (Sat.) Turkish fleet wiped out at Navarino (Greek autonomy guaranteed by the major powers).

November

- 16 (Fri.) Birth of Charles Eliot Norton, close friend of EG after their meeting in Rome in 1857. He is to become one of EG's most important correspondents after that date.

1828

King's College, London, founded.

Thomas Arnold appointed Headmaster of Rugby School.

(1828–1832) Albertine Necker de Saussure is publishing *l'Education progressive*, an influence on EG's *My Diary* (1835–38).

January

- 9 (Wed.) Duke of Wellington becomes Prime Minister.

May

- 9 (Fri.) Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts removes restrictive measures against Dissenters.

July

- 15 (Tues.) Differential scale of charges introduced for the importation of wheat (Corn Law) keeps the price of bread high and particularly embitters the labouring poor.
- 30 John Stevenson writes to ES praising her tale of the old naval man Capt Barton and mentioning a quicksand incident in it which connects later with 'The Sexton's Hero' (see 4 September 1847). John obsessed with immediate concerns, kicking against exile from England and his sister.

August

- 3 (Sun.) WG is appointed to Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, to join the other serving Minister there, J. G. Robberds: salary initially £200 per annum, congregation predominantly well-off. Robberds is married to Mary Turner, daughter of William Turner. Possibly WG met ES at the Robberds' some time in 1831. WG's brother Sam becomes a doctor, is often consulted later about the health of the children of EG and WG; his sister Anne (m. William Robson) becomes close to EG, while another sister Elizabeth later marries EG's cousin Charles Holland (see below) thus making a mini-familial Unitarian web.
- 15 Letter from John Stevenson (in Chelsea) implying he may stay in India and saying that he has had work rejected for publication – the family writing ambition/tradition which ES was to develop with distinction obviously present in him. The rejection was from Smith, Elder, EG's last and most congenial publisher from *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) onwards. John sent her an annual, *Friendship's Offering*, which Smith, Elder had enclosed.
- 29 ES copies lines from the popular poet Mrs Hemans's 'The Captive Knight' into her music book.
- (in this year) John Stevenson is either lost at sea or disappears in India. The lost character – Poor Peter in *Cranford*, Kinraid in *Sylvia's Lovers* – who returns, or Frederick Hale's clandestine journey to see his dying mother in *North and South*, are perhaps EG's fictional expressions of something unexplained or concealed. This recurrent *motif* also appears in

the anecdotal 'Disappearances' (1851) and 'The Manchester Marriage' (1858).

30 September–4 October (Tues.–Sat.)

ES probably attended a fancy dress ball at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, part of a musical festival marked by the appearance of the opera singer, Angelica Catalani.

1829

Industrial unrest in Rochdale, Macclesfield, Manchester. Police Force established in Manchester, centralised effectively with Borough status 10 years later.

ES's bust by David Dunbar possibly executed in Newcastle late this year.

March

5 (Thurs.) Wellington and Peel steer the Bill for Catholic Emancipation through the Commons (becomes law 13 April): major disabilities were removed, and Catholics could sit in Parliament.

20 William Stevenson suffers a stroke, dies 22 March (ES with him), funeral 27 March. Buried beside his first wife in King's Road cemetery, Chelsea.

(March–June) ES stays in London, probably with Holland relatives.

April

The widowed Elizabeth Stevenson, ES's step-mother-in-law, given £40 from the Royal Literary Fund.

June

15 (Mon.) Elizabeth Stevenson writes to Aunt Lumb about ES's commendable behaviour while she was with them at the time of her father's death, noting how improved she was (an enigmatic emphasis) – 'I could easily see that he felt proud of his daughter ... I shall ever love Elizabeth as my own child' (quoted Chapple 332–3).

September

Mary Holland reports ES and Aunt Lumb as having a good time in Gloucester, while Jane Byerley records later (4 November) she has received long and amusing letters from ES, suggesting she, Aunt Lumb and Bessy Holland have been enjoying themselves: this may have included the Bath Ball at Cheltenham.

29 (Tues.) The London Police Force, 'Peelers', is established.

Probably ES went to Newcastle late in 1829 to stay with William Turner and his daughter Ann for the early winter months of 1830, a visit repeated in the following year, then going on to Edinburgh. ES would hear Turner preach and move in a stimulating, tolerant, cultural circle, Turner undoubtedly a major influence on her. Turner had helped found the Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle and was an active educationist. He perhaps provided some (though certainly not all) traits for Mr Benson in *Ruth*.

John Stevenson not mentioned again: 'On present evidence there must have been a kind of deliberate suppression of painful recollections' (Chapple 339).

Particularized evidence of ES's other movements lacking – Meta Gaskell said later she visited uncle Swinton, but that prosperous banker, a partner in Barings, had died in 1827, though she may of course have stayed with his wife.

1830

Much unrest ('Captain Swing' in the South) against introduction of threshing machines and enclosure of land. William Cobbett, uncompromising Radical, gives four lectures in Manchester, while a meeting at Cross Street Chapel, attended by WG, reflects the general Unitarian concern to ameliorate degrading social conditions. Radical Unitarian W. J. Fox observes in June 'The union and energy of Unitarians will be the reformation of England' (quoted Chapple 423).

June

Publication of Tennyson's *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*.

26 (Sat.) Death of George IV.

July

26–29 Revolution in Paris: Louis Philippe becomes French King.

September

15 (Wed.) Liverpool–Manchester railway opened, marred by the death of the ex-Colonial Secretary, William Huskisson, run down by Stevenson's prototype locomotive, *Rocket*. In the autumn, perhaps into the winter, ES in Edinburgh with Ann Turner.

November

16 (Tues.) Liberal Ministry under Earl Grey formed following the resignation of Wellington.

1831

(ES 21 in this year – her first letters to have survived begin).

Ebenezer Elliott publishes his *Corn Law Rhymes*, simple effective verses condemning the tax on bread.

In this year Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth (as he became) is Secretary to the Manchester Special Board of Health to control cholera, his work reformist and successful. He had been a factory owner. He was later to help, hinder and irritate EG in their dealings with Patrick Brontë and Mr Nicholls as she began researching *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

The British Association for the Advancement of Science founded. First meeting in York, attended by William Turner.

Cholera danger in the North – Ann (Turner) and ES in Edinburgh during early months, perhaps as a safety precaution. Sympathetic Edinburgh ambience perhaps reflected in the ‘frame’ technique of *Round the Sofa* (see 19 March 1859).

January

3 (Mon.) Murder of Thomas Ashton in Manchester, an event which has resonances in the plots of Elizabeth Stone’s *William Langshawe, The Cotton Lord* (1842), where Henry Wolstenholme is murdered, and (allegedly) in EG’s *Mary Barton* with the killing of Harry Carson. EG denied knowledge of the earlier novel, although it seems likely she read it. (See 16 August 1852 below.)

19 Charlotte Brontë attends Roe Head School.

February

3 (Thurs.) ES and Ann Turner have tea with family of prominent Newcastle Unitarian James Losh (afterwards Recorder of Newcastle).

14 ES and Ann Turner spending a few days with the Loshes.

March

23 (Wed.)–8 October – Reform Bills steered through the Commons, only to be defeated in the House of Lords.

(Possible that the bust of ES executed by David Dunbar, variously dated 1829, 1831, may have been done in Newcastle rather than Edinburgh. James Losh sat for Dunbar on 31 March and 1 April.)

c. June

ES writes from Newcastle to friend Anne Burnett: affectionate tone, thanks her for a book, which she will read when she is at Woodside near Birkenhead with her Aunt Lumb for the summer. Warm appreciation of kindness received from friends in Newcastle and the happy memories she has.

18 (Sat.) Letter from Woodside to friend Harriet Carr in London. Trademark humour which distinguishes EG's maturity embryonically evident, sometimes crudely (she compares Harriet's voice to a parrot's). Ironic appraisal of Harriet's (supposed) social activities: questions her about the celebrated violinist Nicolo Paganini, who had a triumphal first London season between June and August. ES provides a potted history of Achille Murat's (Napoleon's nephew) career. Some rather self-conscious name-dropping here when ES mentions her cousins, the children of her uncle Swinton and his wife Anne. Self-mockery when she says she would like to wear a wig for she finds having hair a nuisance. (ES and Aunt Lumb probably stayed with the latter's brother Samuel Holland at Woodside June to September.)

August

31 (Wed.) and 1 Sept. Rambling letter to Harriet from Woodside. Refers to the loss of the *Rothsay Castle*, which foundered on its way to Beaumaris, with more than 120 dead. Pertinent criticism of its being allowed to sail. Big event in Woodside, a Bazaar, takes precedence over the coming coronation of William IV (8 September). Will visit Manchester before the end of the winter, mentions her scrapbook, though can't pretend it's an album. (This is perhaps the commonplace book, now lost, with extracts from Shakespeare, Burns, Wordsworth, sentimental poetry, Southey, Mrs Hemans, Petrarch, ballads, a mass of 17th century poetry – Ben Jonson, Lovelace, Suckling, Vaughan, Herbert –, a chunk of *The Compleat Angler*, romantic lyrics, laments, all individual choices first noted by Jane Whitehill: 'the range of Gaskell's early literary predilections, and in particular the foundation of her life-long love of poetry' (Foster 15.) ES reveals she has been studying phrenology, enjoying pleasant river trips, exclaims how much she likes 'Liverpool and the Mersey and the accent, & the people' (FL 8). Has begun but not

finished (over a period of time) both *Sir Charles Grandison* and *Madame de Sévigné*. Latter reference fascinating since in 1862 she would deepen her own research on the celebrated Frenchwoman of letters with a view to writing a memoir, never completed. Mentions books read many times (not titled) and stray volumes of Shakespeare, Tasso and Hume. Daringly she has re-read *Paul Clifford* (by Bulwer Lytton), whose work she likes despite its being considered immoral. Delightful irony: she and cousin Ann are thinking of writing a book on the '*crimes of innocent people*' (FL 9). Wearing by the ongoing obsession with the Reform Bill. Letter, which ranges way beyond this summary, signals ES's vivacity, humour, observation, literary interests – zest for life.

September

8 (Thurs.) Coronation of William IV.

(this month) ES goes from Liverpool to Knutsford, then on to Sandlebridge, then returns to Knutsford to receive visitors in October with Aunt Lumb.

29 ES's 21st birthday.

Later in the autumn (but before 20 October). ES and Ann Turner go to Manchester, staying with J. G. Robberds and his wife Mary. ES probably meets WG then.

October

20 (Thurs.) To Harriet Carr from, Knutsford. Has copied some songs for her, is going to settle quietly for the winter, has been reading a book about a year in Spain by an American author and completing a third reading of *Destiny* (1831, by Susan Ferrier). Here ES waxes witty: thinks of setting up as a dancing instructress, ranges over visitors and friends, comments racy on the number of marriages in a week. Ponders an epigrammatic sentence which suggests one can make friends but that it is hard to keep them. Mentions cholera spreading, but can't envisage it nearby. Records her stay at Sandlebridge with cousin Susan Holland.

26 Cholera reaches Sunderland

November

27 (Sun.) William Turner speaks at the British Association for the Advancement of Science in York.

December

- 7 (Wed.) Cholera in Newcastle.
21 Public dinner for William Turner in Newcastle to celebrate his 50 years' in the town.
27 Darwin sails in the *Beagle* to gather scientific data off South America, a voyage which took nearly five years.

1832

Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth writes his treatise on the conditions of the cotton operatives in Manchester.

Sam Gaskell practises as a doctor in Manchester (1832–40) – greatly trusted by his brother and EG.

Harriet Martineau publishes her *Illustrations of Political Economy*, which includes 'A Manchester Strike'.

January

Cholera in Edinburgh.

- 16 (Mon.) onwards. References to ES in Herford's Diary, important source for the local Unitarian community. (Edward Herford studied under J. G. Robberds from 1830–32.)

February

Cholera in London.

- 6 (Mon.) WG displays his sometimes overlooked sense of humour – apparently he knocked on people's doors and ran away.
(mid-month) ES organizes a charade. Herford (aged 17) smitten with WG's sister Elizabeth.

March

- 13 (Tues.) J. G. Robberds notices ES's shy behaviour.
14 ES goes for a walk with WG.
(mid-month) Engagement of ES and WG.
26 Death of Mrs Robberds senior.
27 ES and WG in Knutsford together. ES tells Elizabeth Gaskell (her future sister-in-law) that WG has not seen much of Aunt Lumb, who broke a blood vessel on the day he arrived. Reports Aunt Lumb as saying to her 'Why Elizabeth how could this man ever take a fancy to such a little giddy thoughtless thing as you' (*GL* 1). Light tone – ES writing of WG's last evening there.
29 WG's engagement letter to his sister Elizabeth reveals he has seen ES in an even more loveable way than before – her

care, concern, warmth – and it has brought them closer. Aunt Lumb also received him kindly, pleased with the engagement. Mrs Robberds was buried that day: WG most anxious to visit ES in Knutsford the following week.

April

Carlyle's essay on 'Biography' published in *Fraser's Magazine*. EG quotes from it on the title page of *Mary Barton*, reflecting her admiration for him.

May

3 (Thurs.) From Knutsford to Harriet Carr thanking her for her engagement good wishes. Aunt Lumb recovering well. ES interested in the Fancy Dress Balls Harriet attended in Newcastle. Gives her more local news of marriages. She has read Bulwer Lytton's *Eugene Aram*, published this year (schoolmaster embraces crime but repents). Comments on Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (published 19 March) that she has found it amusing and its criticism of American manners convincing. ES defines her own writing as that of a 'very commonplace boarding-school young lady' (*FL* 18).

June

4 (Mon.) Reform Bill passed by the House of Lords.

6 Death of Jeremy Bentham, social reformer who posited 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.

ES spends at least part of the summer in Edinburgh. W. J. Thomson (brother of her stepmother) paints a miniature of her in this month.

July

Precautions taken in Knutsford against the spread of cholera.

August

8 (Wed.) Thanks Harriet for a forget-me-not ring, jokes about her marriage, but absorbed in wedding preparations, observing ironically 'I am to learn obedience the 30th of this month' (*FL* 19). Gives an account of a production of *The Rivals*, though not participating. Obviously pleased Harriet has enquired about WG. Cholera not in Knutsford though in villages nearby. Vivid observation and descriptive liveliness throughout

30 ES married to WG at St John's Parish Church, Knutsford, by special licence. Her uncle Peter Holland probably gave

the bride away, and almost certainly she was married from Heathside.

- 30 EG and WG honeymoon in Wales at Aber. Topography, atmosphere, stored and used later in fiction, conflated with previous stays in area. They travel about and return to Plasyn Penrhyn.

September

- 16 (Sun.) Shared letter with WG to his sister Elizabeth descriptive of their honeymoon touring from their favourite Aber: WG says EG ('Lily', expressive of loving intimacy) is in the best of health, much praise, affection for Mrs Holland, Sam and Ann (EG's relations). Asks Elizabeth to look after the garden, hopes she'll get a Broadwood piano for them.
- c.17 EG jokes to Elizabeth Gaskell about WG and their travels: there is a. delightful freshness, intimacy, humour about family which reflects their happiness.
- 29 EG and WG return to Manchester at 1 (later renumbered 14) Dover Street on EG's 22nd birthday.

October

- 6 (Sat.) Thanks William Turner for good wishes, likes her new home, cheerful, comfortable, and somewhat rural for Manchester. Aunt Lumb much improved. WG will take her on pastoral visits and Mary Robberds (Turner's daughter) will be initiating her. Wants to be remembered to her friends in Newcastle: Aunt Lumb visiting her soon.
- (later in the year) WG involved via the Domestic Mission of Cross Street Chapel in practical aid for the poor – EG active soon in the Lower Mosley Street Schools, administered by the Chapel.

November

- 5 (Mon.) Herford visits WG and EG some days previously and notes their happiness. Their home, on the edge of the city, was away from the poverty and social deprivation which characterized so much of Manchester.

December

Dickens's 'A Dinner at Poplar Walk' is published, the first of what became *Sketches by Boz*.

1833

The Factory Act stipulates that children under nine could not be employed in the cotton mills. Hours for children under 13 were limited to 48 per week. Inspectors had the power to see that these regulations were enforced.

Katherine Thomson (née Byerley) publishes a silver fork (society) novel, *Constance*, which may have had some influence on EG's fiction. EG certainly had the capacity to produce ironic pictures of Welsh or Warwickshire society, but the Manchester experience ensured that 'her own pen was destined to dwell on urban guilt and misery' (Chapple 432). Katherine Thomson's influence possibly seen in *Cranford* and *Wives and Daughters*.

January

1 (Tues.) The ministry to the poor from Cross Street Chapel publishes its first report indicating its practical concern with schools, clothing clubs, mechanics institutes, etc. all ongoing.

July

3(?) (Wed.) or 10(?) or 4(?) EG has a still-born girl. (See 4 July 1836).

14 John Keble's Assize Sermon attacks government's misusage of Church Funds and clears the way for the Oxford Movement, the reinvigoration of the Anglican church through an emphasis on its essentially Catholic principles.

September

9 (Mon.) The first of J. H. Newman's *Tracts for the Times* (1833–37) gives positive impetus to the Oxford Movement.

December

c.16 (Mon.) Generally gossipy and family-newsy letter to her sister-in-law Elizabeth, jokes about married life, mentions nursing Aunt Lumb, concerned about the health of WG's mother, and reveals that her 17-year-old half sister is to be married before Christmas.

1834

March

Chadwick's report on the Poor Law following the Royal Commission (see below).

July

25 (Fri.) Death of Coleridge.

August

1 (Sat.) Slaves freed within the British Empire following legislation the previous year.

14 Poor Law Amendment Act (establishment of the Workhouse System).

September

12 (Fri.) Marianne Gaskell born.

October

16 (Thurs.) Houses of Parliament destroyed by fire.

November

26 (Wed.) Marianne baptised at Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford, by Revd Henry Green, later (1859) historian of Knutsford and close friend of EG and WG.

December

27 (Sat.) Death of Charles Lamb.

29 Aunt Lamb's will of this date makes no mention of John Stevenson (see 1 May 1837).

1835

Saussure's work on education translated into English during this year.

March

9 (Mon.) Newcastle–Carlisle railway opened.

10 EG begins *My Diary*. The emphasis is 'as much subjective as objective' (Sharps 18), but it is 'a foreshadowing of her development as a novelist' (*Private Voices* 11). Marianne, six months old, good-tempered, occasionally passionate, obstinate: EG intent on getting, maintaining her attention, prays for her, stays with her until she sleeps.

July

29 (Wed.) Charlotte Brontë becomes a teacher at Roe Head School: Emily accompanies her but returns home after three months.

August

- 4 (Tues.) Diary entry expressing EG's fears of Marianne dying should she become ill. These fears obviously derive from the birth of her still-born girl in July 1833, later commemorated in a poem (see 4 July 1837). Also records her own doubts about her capacity to be patient with Marianne.

September

- 9 (Wed.) Widespread establishment of Local Government in England through the Municipal Reform Act.

October

- 4 (Sun.) Has concluded that Marianne needs to avoid excitement. Reveals that WG has reassured her (EG) that she is not by nature jealous, though she admits to being upset at times by Marianne's preference for the nurse Betsy. More prayers for Marianne reflect EG's unquestionable faith, the seriousness with which she takes her maternal responsibilities.

December

- (Christmas) Encloses songs to Mary Darbishire (of the Dukinfield Darbishes) and sends seasonal good wishes to her and her husband Sam.
- 28 (Mon.) Records Marianne's fondness for 'Papa': reiterates faith at the end of this year – calls down God's blessing on Marianne and seeks for His help and guidance in her upbringing.

1836

The next two years see the widespread introduction of railway travel. The celebrated engineer and inventor James Nasmyth begins to build the Bridgewater Foundry at Patricroft near Manchester, later visited by EG and Katie Winkworth. (Some of Nasmyth's traits are fictionalised in Paul Manning's father in *Cousin Phillis*.)

February

- 7 (Sun.) Notes Marianne's affection for her when she is not feeling well, her memory seems good, she has some natural abilities.
- 8 *Sketches by Boz*, First series (book publication).

April

Pickwick Papers begins publication in monthly parts, concluding November 1837.

May

12 (Thurs.) Revealing letter to sister-in-law Elizabeth Gaskell from Sandlebridge, Holland family home, which is five miles away from anything close to a town. Has enjoyed her riding (one jaunt of 18 miles to the Davenports at Capesthorpe). Much reading – Spenser, Shakespeare and, specifically, Coleridge and Wordsworth – ‘for one can’t think any thing but poetry & happiness’ (GL 7). Here until Saturday (14th). Revels in her reading, and is appropriately sitting amid nature. She and WG are undertaking imitations of the poets: refers to Dryden, Crabbe, Pope as she works away at them all. They will probably go to Poulton (le-Fylde) in August. Tone is racy, gossipy, skipping from one subject to another, a letter of dashes but warm with immediacy of experience, reaching heights of enthusiasm and sheer exuberance with life.

July

4 (Mon.) Writes sonnet ‘On Visiting the Grave of my Stillborn Little Girl’. (Says Sunday, which was the 3 July.) Moving, poignant if conventionally expressed sense of love and loss, seen in the climactic couplet ‘And thou, my child, from thy bright heaven see/ How well I keep my faithful vow to thee.’ (See first entry for July 1833.) During this year ‘Sketches Among the Poor’ written with WG: evidence of strong influences of Wordsworth, Crabbe, derivations too from Goldsmith, Cowper and others. Story of Mary in the poem is recycled in *Mary Barton*, as EG later acknowledges.

July–5 November (Sun.): diary entry on that date largely retrospective – thus at the beginning of July Marianne’s eye-teeth were through, she was beginning to walk, had become a chatter-box, loved to be told stories and listen to bits of poetry. Has not pushed her mind too much, but encouraging her to observe, pay attention and keep trying. Upset at times by Marianne’s obstinacy (often she is overtired), records her response to punishment – feels she knows right from wrong. EG registers her responses to bathing, being rewarded after

taking something unpleasant, refusal of food sometimes: she is of an affectionate, responsive nature. EG prays fervently for them both.

(late in the year) Stays in Knutsford – she is pregnant – obviously needs to leave Manchester periodically, a recurring pattern.

December

17 (Sat.) *Sketches by Boz*, Second series, published.

1837

January

'Sketches among the Poor' published in *Blackwood's* xli, 48–50 – love of countryside and nature exemplified, poignant focus on the lonely Mary who has the associations of childhood return without a physical return to the places she loved.

15 (Sun.) Marianne goes to stay with Aunt Lumb, thus easing EG's situation as she waits for the birth of next child.

February

Oliver Twist begins serialization in *Bentley's Miscellany* (to March 1839).

5 (Sun.) Birth of Margaret Emily Gaskell, always referred to later as 'Meta'.

28 Working Men's Association (London) urges petitioning of Parliament for reforms (precursor of full-scale Chartist Movement).

March

(early) Robert Southey, poet laureate (1813), responding to Charlotte Brontë's sending him poems, recognises her talent but asserts literature cannot be the main concern of a woman's life and it should not be anyway.

8 (Wed.) Aunt Lumb, whom EG thought of as being more than a mother to her, has a paralytic stroke. EG hastens to Knutsford, stays nearby with her two children, little more than a month after the birth of Meta.

15 Further deterioration in the condition of Aunt Lumb.

16 Aunt Lumb in terrible pain now and completely blind.

18 Gives Elizabeth Gaskell moving account of Aunt Lumb's state, exclaiming 'Oh there never will be one like her' (*GL* 9),

grateful, always considerate of other people. The letter is instinct with compassionate feeling and love.

Takes Marianne to see her but apprehensive about effect. Aunt Lumb, afraid her blindness will upset Marianne, puts on a night-cap: Marianne at ease and plays in the room.

May

- 1 (Mon.) Death of Hannah Lumb. EG is left an annuity of £80.
- 3 EG and daughters return to Manchester.
- 9 Publication of Carlyle's *The French Revolution*.

June

- 20 (Tues.) Death of William IV – accession of Queen Victoria.

July

- Goes to Crosby, Liverpool to recover her health.
- 13 (Thurs.) Opening of London rail terminus at Euston Station.

September

Goes with WG to Wales, staying at Plas yn Penrhyn for three weeks, leaving children behind. Marianne remains in Knutsford: EG has not told her that Aunt Lumb is dead. EG still recovering from her loss.

September

- 28 (Thurs.) William Turner baptises Meta in Manchester.

November

Feargus O'Connor founds militant newspaper *The Northern Star*, read by John Barton in *Mary Barton*.

December

- 9 (Sat.) Long entry in *My Diary* reveals poignant reactions to the death of Aunt Lumb and her absorption in the welfare of Marianne and ten-month old Meta, with further moving prayers reflecting humility, sincerity, abiding concern.

1838

A visit to Clopton Hall may have taken place this year, though EG almost certainly went there when at school.
Formation of the Manchester Anti-Corn Law League.

March

25 (Sun.) Has told Marianne about God in simple terms before she goes to Infant school: she and WG have debated the pros and cons of her attending, so she goes mornings at present. Revealing comment on her marriage – ‘William says he fears I excite her [Marianne’s] sensibilities too much’. Sometimes Marianne has to have ‘a slight whipping’ but she responds, is not resentful (*Private Voices* 68).

30 Marianne had an attack of croup the previous Friday. Eliza (sometimes Lizzie) Gaskell (sister-in-law) is coming to visit them and will have her tiny room with Marianne attending her. Family news, bazaar, tired out with preparations. WG thinks she looks miserable, but she (EG) is looking forward to seeing Lizzie, whom she wished for during Marianne’s illness.

April

8 (Sun.) Evening, reference to Marianne’s attack of croup earlier: she was treated by Sam Gaskell (WG’s doctor–brother) and James Partington. EG’s own anguish and fears are vividly recreated. Graphic account and more perception of the differences between her two children, particularly noting that Meta is already much the more independent.

Serial publication of *Nicholas Nickleby* begins (to October 1839).

May

Writes to William and Mary Howitt – reminiscences about the ‘little, clean, kindly country town’ (*GL* 15) where she lived in her childhood. Specific location of Knutsford is clear from references to Old Tabley and its one-time occupant, Sir Peter Leycester. Love of the countryside – would like to wander about it now but has two children to look after, and a husband who is a busy Unitarian Minister. Lyrical nostalgia and fine talent for descriptive writing evident, though something of a set piece.

8 (Tues.) Publication of the ‘People’s Charter’.

June

28 (Thurs.) Queen Victoria’s coronation.

July

17 (Tues.) Tells sister-in-law Elizabeth (in Beaumaris) she would like to show her her favourite haunts in the area. Refers to

Aber, Cwm Morfyn Lake and other places familiarly which she saw last autumn and indeed in past years, and looks forward to discussing Wales with her. Witnessed the Coronation celebrations at Knutsford happily, then went visiting and on to Rivington, where air did her good, to see the Dukinfield Darbshires. Stayed a week more than she meant to in Knutsford with Henry Green's wife Mary. WG preaching at Buxton. Reveals he is to give series of lectures at the Mechanics Institute at Miles Platting, Manchester, on the poets of humble life. Delicious risqué humour: 'Mrs J. J. Tayler has got an impromptu baby at Blackpool ... Bathing places do so much good. Susan & Mary went to Blackpool last year, but did not derive the same benefit' (*GL* 20). Constructs parodic Johnsonian sentence for retailing to her step-father-in-law (the Rev Dimock) so that he'll think her clever. Vivacious, witty, inconsequential, self-mocking, wonderfully alert to mixed experiences of a busy life.

Summer – Charles Holland, EG's cousin, falls in love with Elizabeth Gaskell, WG's sister (see 3 December below).

August

- 6 (Mon.) WG lectures on Burns.
- 7 EG notes Charles Holland's interest in Elizabeth. EG had called on the Nasmyths at Patricroft the previous Saturday (4 August). The girls continue to improve, Marianne 'obedient', Meta 'lively'. EG's tone lively too, family confidences and gossip retailed. (*GL* 23).
- 13 WG reads lectures aloud.
- 14 Visitors staying overnight.
- 15 Spends day near Pendleton on visit to the wealthy Bradford family (see below) for a christening party.
- 16 Visits woman who had lost a child.
- 17 WG to Burton to repeat lectures (returning Mon. 20 August). EG teases Elizabeth Gaskell about her interest in Charles and the progress of their romance – offers to show her one of WG's letters to her (EG) if she'll respond with one of Charles's to her. Light jokey tone throughout but comforting, supportive. Disparages long engagements.
- (May–August 1838) Reminisces about living in Chelsea in the distant past sometimes with her father and step-mother – was very unhappy but recalls the 'beautiful, grand river' (*GL* 797).

- 18 Directs William Howitt's attention to Clopton Hall (see below), displays her own historical interests, reminisces about being a Londoner born, but her mother died when she (EG) was very young and she was taken to 'my dear *adopted native* town, Knutsford' (GL 28). Gives details of customs, superstitions etc, for example quoting the verses about 'sanding', one of which is repeated in *Sylvia's Lovers* by Kester when Sylvia and Philip are married (ch. xxx), plus 'Riding Stang' and 'Marling'. Slightly misquotes Tennyson's 'Deserted House' ('Life and thought are gone away'). Writes of the deserted old halls she'd like to explore, mentions her own and WG's wish to write about the labouring poor – their only one in *Blackwoods* in 1837 – disarmingly joking about their non-success. Takes great pride in WG's lectures to the impoverished weavers in the most deprived area of Manchester – evidence of his, and her, strong socio-moral-humanitarian-Christian commitment. Quotes Wordsworth's 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' ('That we have all of us one human heart', line 253), a favourite of hers. (Howitt later included extracts from this letter in the second edition of his *Rural Life of England*. See April 1840.) EG probably met the Howitts this year.
- 19 Baby fretful, treated with calomel, advises her sister-in-law what to wear, longs for her to visit – wedding with Charles Holland is approaching, says that WG will provide the wedding dress, accessories. Much affectionate mention of Sam Gaskell (a great comfort over Marianne, someone in whom she can confide – an implied contrast with WG). WG critical of her last letter (he is away at Buxton). Tells Lizzie a week of marriage is more valuable than a year of visits. Full, sometimes fulsome practical advice, delight in giving it, excited anticipation of the wedding. Begs her to visit – two years since she has done so.
- 21 Sam Gaskell and WG to the Lakes.

September

- 23 (Sun.) Anti-Corn Law League formed – same day, a Chartist demonstration on Kersal Moor, Manchester.

October

- 14 (Sun.) *Diary* entry records Marianne began to read and sew following her birthday on 12 September Still excitable though, does not take naturally to occupation: contrast with Meta, always busy.

- 28 Last Diary entry – still absorbed with Marianne and her problems, warmed by her sympathy if she feels EG sad, asks for guidance to improve her, EG's, patience, ends with the simple prayer calling for God's blessing on both her daughters.

November

- 15 (Thurs.) Elizabeth Gaskell marries Charles Holland.

December

- 2 (Sun.) Wedding letter from EG to her sister-in-law Elizabeth Holland on her marriage to Charles, hoping the next day will be as lovely as this one when she enters her new home. Full of good wishes and generally tactful advice, but confident, warm, loving. EG is with Samuel Dexter Bradford (see above 15 August) at Seedley, staying with this American family whom she greatly admires. EG and Marianne arrived on Friday 30 November. WG will join them today – they leave on Tuesday 4 December. WG adds a line, sending his love which 'Lily' had forgotten to pass on. Lily's own wit evident: she observes of Mr Bradford, 'It seems funny to dine with a man who has dined with the Pope' (*GL* 39). (Julia Gaskell, b. 3 September 1846, has second Christian name 'Bradford'.)

[Some time between 1838 and 1841 EG gave birth to a son who died when he was still a baby. See below 15 March 1856]

1839

WG's book of *Temperance Rhymes* published (anonymously) dedicated to the working men of Manchester.

Widespread suffering in England and, particularly in the industrial centres, poverty increasing.

February

- 4 (Mon.) Chartist meeting in London.

June

- 14 (Fri.) The great Chartist Petition of the National Convention, taken by working men's delegates to the House of Commons, presented there, with more than one million signatures, atmospherically charged sequence conveyed in *Mary Barton*.

July

- 12 (Fri.) Commons rejects the Chartist petition.
 15 Chartist demonstration in Birmingham.
 Henry Holland, eldest son of Peter Holland, publishes *Medical Notes and Reflections*.

Autumn

WG has a ten-week holiday with a friend – Switzerland, Florence, Venice.

December

Publication of *Visits to Remarkable Places* by William Howitt, to which EG contributes a description of Clopton Hall or House, Howitt acknowledging it as being by a lady. Recollections of a visit during her schooldays at Avonbank in 1825 perhaps supplemented later. Delight in the creation of atmosphere, speculation about past lives, interest in research, all anticipatory of EG's later fictional practice. The anecdote re Charlotte Clopton was adapted by Katherine Thomson in her novel *Constance*, where 'Margaret of Marchmont ... had caught the plague and, in a trance, was buried alive' (Chapple 256).

- 28 (Sat.) Carlyle's *Chartism* published. Obvious influence on EG: 'that great dumb toiling class' is a phrase almost echoed in EG's preface to *Mary Barton*. Carlyle advocates investigation of the current state of the labouring classes, damns meaningless statistics, the New Poor Law, the failure of Parliamentary Radicalism.

1840

During this year F. W. Newman becomes a Professor (Greek, Latin and English) at Manchester New College (to 1846): he 'moved through strict Calvinism to a spiritual faith in God free of all dogma' (Easson 13).

Frances Trollope publishes *Michael Armstrong, The Factory Boy* (1839–40).

The general recession in Manchester (reflected in *Mary Barton*) worsens: many operatives are unemployed and have to live on their savings – the majority had none.

WG becomes secretary of Manchester New College, which has moved back to Manchester from York.

Ebenezer Elliott's *Poetical Works* published.

January

- 10 (Fri.) Introduction of the Penny Post nationally.

Index

This index is divided into three sections:

- (1) the writings of Elizabeth Gaskell;
- (2) people – references to selected family, friends, contemporaries and others – with brief notes, where possible cross-referenced to
- (3) places – homes, selected visits/stays in British Isles/Europe, cross-referenced where appropriate to (2).

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