

**RECORDS OF LATER
LIFE. IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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Records of Later Life. In Three Volumes, Vol. I by Frances Anne Kemble

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FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE

**RECORDS OF LATER
LIFE. IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

George H. Fox.
1900 -

RECORDS OF LATER LIFE.

BY

FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE,

AUTHOR OF "RECORD OF A GIRLHOOD."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

SECOND EDITION.



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RECORDS OF LATER LIFE.

Philadelphia, October 26th, 1834.

DEAR MRS. JAMESON,

However stoutly your incredulity may have held out hitherto against the various "authentic" reports of my marriage, I beg you will, upon receipt of this, immediately believe that I was married on the 7th of June last, and have now been a wife nearly five mortal months. You know that in leaving the stage I left nothing that I regretted; but the utter separation from my family consequent upon settling in this country, is a serious source of pain to me. . . .

With regard to what you say, about the first year of one's marriage not being as happy as the second, I know not how that may be. I had pictured to myself no fairyland of enchantments within the mysterious precincts of matrimony; I expected from it rest, quiet, leisure to study, to think, and to work, and legitimate channels for the affections of my nature. . . .

In the closest and dearest friendship, shades of

character, and the precise depth and power of the various qualities of mind and heart, never approximate to such a degree, as to preclude all possibility of occasional misunderstandings.

“Not e'en the nearest heart, and most our own,
Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh.”

It is impossible that it should be otherwise: for no two human beings were ever fashioned absolutely alike, even in their gross outward bodily form and lineaments, and how should the fine and infinite spirit admit of such similarity with another? But the broad and firm principles upon which all honourable and enduring sympathy is founded, the love of truth, the reverence for right, the abhorrence of all that is base and unworthy, admit of no difference or misunderstanding; and where these exist in the relations of two people united for life, it seems to me that love and happiness, as perfect as this imperfect existence affords, may be realized. . . .

Of course, kindred, if not absolutely similar minds, do exist; but they do not often meet, I think, and hardly ever unite. Indeed, though the enjoyment of intercourse with those who resemble us may be very great, I suppose the influence of those who differ from us is more wholesome: for in mere *unison* of thought and feeling there could be no exercise for forbearance, toleration, self-examination by comparison with another nature, or the sifting of one's own opinions and feelings, and testing their accuracy and value, by contact and contrast with opposite feelings and opinions. A fellowship of mere accord, approaching to identity in the

nature of its members, would lose much of the uses of human intercourse and its worth in the discipline of life, and, moreover, render the separation of death intolerable. But I am writing you a disquisition, and no one needs it less. . . .

I did read your praise of me, and thank you for it; it is such praise as I wish I deserved, and the sense of the affection which dictated it, in some measure, diminished my painful consciousness of demerit. But I thank you for so pleasantly making me feel the excellence of moral worth; and though the picture you held up to me as mine made me blush for the poor original, yet I may strive to become more like your likeness of me, and so turn your praise to profit. Those who love me will read it perhaps with more satisfaction than my conscience allows me to find in it, and for the pleasure which they must derive from such commendation of me I thank you with all my heart.

What can I tell you of myself? My life, and all its occupations, are of a sober neutral tint. I am busy preparing my Journal for the press. I read but little, and that of old-fashioned kinds. I have never read much, and am disgracefully ignorant: I am looking forward with delight to hours of quiet study, and the mental hoards in store for me. I am busy preparing to leave town; I am at present, and have been ever since my marriage, staying in the house of my brother-in-law, and feel not a little anxious to be in a home of my own. But painters, and carpenters, and upholsterers are dirty divinities of a lower order, not to be moved, or hastened, by human invocations (or even imprecations), and we must e'en bide their time.

I please myself much in the fancying of furniture, and fitting up of the house; and I look forward to a garden, greenhouse, and dairy, among my future interests, to each of which I intend to addict myself zealously.

My pets are a horse, a bird, and a black squirrel, and I do not see exactly what more a reasonable woman could desire. Human companionship, indeed, at present, I have not much of; but as like will to like, I do not despair of attracting towards me, by-and-by, some of my own kind, with whom I may enjoy pleasant intercourse; but you can form no idea—none—none—of the intellectual dearth and drought in which I am existing at present.

I care nothing for politics here, . . . though I wish this great Republic well. But what are the rulers and guides of the people doing in England? I see the abolition of the Peerage has been suggested, but, I presume, as a bad joke. . . . If I were a man in England, I should like to devote my life to the cause of national progress, carried on through party politics and public legislation; and if I was not a Christian, I think, every now and then, I should like to shoot Brougham. . . . You speak of coming to this country: but I do not think you would like it; though you are much respected, admired, and loved here.

I have not met Miss Martineau yet, but I am afraid she is not likely to like me much. I admire her genius greatly, but have an inveterate tendency to worship at all the crumbling shrines, which she and her employers seem intent upon pulling down; and I think I should be an object of much superior contempt

to that enlightened and clever female Radical and Utilitarian.

I was introduced to Mrs. Austin some years ago, and she impressed me more, in many ways, than any of the remarkable women I have known. Her husband's constant ill-health kept her in a state of comparative seclusion, and deprived London society of a person of uncommon original mental power and acquired knowledge; in most respects I thought her superior to the most brilliant female members of the society of my day, of which her daughter, Lucy Gordon, was a distinguished ornament.

Once too, years ago, I passed an evening with Lady Byron, and fell in love with her for quoting the axiom which she does apply, though she did not invent it—"To treat men as if they were better than they are is the surest way to *make* them better than they are:"—and whenever I think of her I remember that.

I congratulate you on your acquaintance with Madame von Goethe: to know any one who had lived intimately with the greatest genius of this age, and one of the greatest the world has produced, seems to me an immense privilege.

Your letter is dated July—how many things are done that you then meant to do?

I am just now seeing a great deal of Edward Trelawney; he travelled with us last summer when we went to Niagara, and professing a great regard for me, told me, upon reading your "notice" of me, that he felt much inclined to write to you and solicit your acquaintance. . . .