

CHAPTER XVI - THE SUBSTITUTION

On a particularly gloomy April Sunday, with the Murrays disinclined to attend afternoon church except Rosalie, the narrator, Agnes Grey, accompanies Rosalie to service. Agnes views church as a refuge where she can admire Mr. Weston without judgement, wrestling with her conscience over her affections. She rationalizes her feelings by equating her love for Weston not as personal desire, but appreciation for his virtue, aligning it with Biblical encouragement to ponder on things pure and lovely.

Post-service, they encounter Mr. Weston, whom Rosalie quickly engages with a request to visit an ill girl. Surprisingly considerate, she inquires about an appropriate time for his visit, displaying an unusual level of concern for the impressions made on humble cottages by "decent people." Despite the rain, Agnes declines Weston's offer of sharing his umbrella, a refusal she second-guesses but ultimately accepts, interpreting his manners as a sign of potential mutual affection.

Rosalie critiques Agnes for using Weston's umbrella, revealing her irritation in a manner that betrays her jealousy and competitiveness. She declares her intention to shift her flirtatious efforts from Mr. Hatfield to Mr. Weston, aiming to add him to her list of admirers without serious intention. Agnes, deeply hurt but silent, wishes Weston could overhear Rosalie's manipulative plotting.

The following morning, Rosalie expresses a wish to take her sister for a walk, likely as part of her schemes involving Weston. Through this chapter, the complexities of Agnes's feelings for Weston deepen against the backdrop of Rosalie's superficial and strategic social maneuvers, setting a stark contrast between genuine affection and calculated attraction.