

# CHAPTER XXI - THE SCHOOL

Chapter XXI of "Agnes Grey," titled "The School," finds Agnes transitioning from her employment at Horton Lodge to a more hopeful and autonomous phase of her life, as she embarks on a new venture with her mother in A-. Together, they open a small school, starting modestly with three boarders and half a dozen day pupils. Agnes approaches this new challenge with determination and finds a semblance of contentment, starkly contrasted with her previous experiences of disrespect and disillusionment while working as a governess.

The chapter delves into Agnes's internal struggle, as she clings to the hope of reuniting with Mr. Weston, her unspoken affection serving as a secret source of consolation. Despite her attempts to dismiss these hopeful thoughts as fanciful, their persistent presence underscores her deep-seated longing and the profound impact of their connection. This emotional turmoil is further exacerbated by moments of anticipation and disappointment, particularly highlighted through incidents such as an expected visit from Mr. Weston that turns out to be a music master and the excitement over a letter that ends up being from her sister Mary.

Agnes's introspection leads her to chastise herself for harboring hopeful thoughts about Mr. Weston, given her perceived lack of attractiveness and charm. As time passes without any news from him, she gradually relinquishes her hopes but continues to cherish his memory privately. This period of self-reflection and resigned acceptance is interrupted by her mother's concern over Agnes's waning health and spirits, prompting her to reevaluate her priorities and rediscover her resolve to fulfill her duties and find contentment in service to others and in her work at the school.

The chapter closes with an unexpected letter from Lady Ashby (formerly Miss Murray), inviting Agnes to visit her at Ashby Park. Despite the stark differences in their circumstances and the superficiality of Rosalie's life as revealed in the letter, Agnes

sees this as an opportunity to possibly make a positive impact on her former pupil's life and, perhaps, find a new sense of purpose. This invitation marks a potential turning point, offering Agnes a break from her routine and a glimpse into the world she once observed from the periphery, but with a renewed sense of agency and hope for the future.

