

VI -The memoir of Fleeming Jenkin

The provided text seems to be an excerpt from a memoir detailing a significant and poignant period in the life of Fleeming Jenkin, covering the years 1875-1885. This excerpt focuses on a series of personal losses and trials that Jenkin and his family faced, alongside the development of his invention, telpherage, and its impacts on his imaginations and aspirations.



The narrative begins with Fleeming reading the biographies of engineers, finding them depressing due to their focus on struggles rather than happiness. He dreams of literature that would depict a steady growth to triumphant happiness instead of tragedy. This sets the tone for the chapter, which, despite its recounting of multiple deaths and illnesses within Jenkin's family, also captures moments of profound affection, resilience, and love that pierce through the sorrow.

The memoir details the decline and eventual death of Fleeming's parents, starting with his mother's premonitory stroke and descent into illness that left her deaf, aphasic, and gradually diminishing. His father, referred to as the Captain, assumes the dual roles of caregiver and communicator for his wife, embodying unwavering love and respect towards her. This period showcases not only the Captain's deep affection for his wife but also his ability to maintain his courtesy and spirit, even as his own physical strength wanes.

The golden wedding anniversary of Fleeming's parents is described as a bittersweet celebration, marked by pride and the poignancy of enduring love in the face of mental decline. It's a rare moment of joy and nostalgia before the narrative delves back into the somber tone of impending loss.

Subsequently, the memoir narrates the deaths of Uncle John Jenkin and Mr. and Mrs. Austin, presenting them as dignified closures to life well-lived, albeit tinged with

sorrow for those left behind. Fleeming's reflections during these times reveal a man grappling with the inevitability of loss, seeking solace in the hope and trust beyond mere grief.

As Captain Jenkin's health takes a turn for the worse, his character and spirit in facing his final days are detailed with admiration. His light-heartedness, even in the face of death, and his enduring love for his wife, who had become nearly a child in her dependence, highlight a gracious acceptance of life's cycle. The Captain's death quickly followed by Mrs. Jenkin's underscores the depth of their bond and the narrative of enduring partnership that Fleeming holds dear.

In the wake of these family tragedies, Fleeming finds himself deeply changed, with a heightened sense of life's fragility and the closeness of death. Despite this, he immerses himself in the development of his telpherage invention, viewing it with a mix of hope for the future and the acknowledgment of its challenges. His dedication to this project and the anticipation of potential success underscore his relentless pursuit of innovation and improvement, reflective of the very essence of life he so cherished.

The chapter concludes by reintroducing the idea of Italy as a place of renewal and escape for Fleeming and his wife, a dream left hanging as Fleeming faces the realities of his responsibilities and the lingering effects of his recent losses. This notion of seeking solace and a fresh start, amidst the backdrop of professional aspirations and personal sorrows, encapsulates the chapter's themes of resilience, love, and the eternal human struggle for happiness and fulfillment.