

'The Experimental School' opened in 1872 as the Johnson Street School at Stepney, London. It became the prototype for most London Board Schools from the 1880s onwards and its key innovations are described in a contemporary account by Edward Robert Robson (Selection 1). In 1872 the gothic draughtsman and fledgling novelist Thomas Hardy was assisting the architect of the Experimental School, T. R. Smith. Selection 2 comes from a tense moment in Hardy's final novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895), in which a school building becomes the site of a marital dispute between two teachers, Richard and Sue Phillotson (formerly Bridehead).

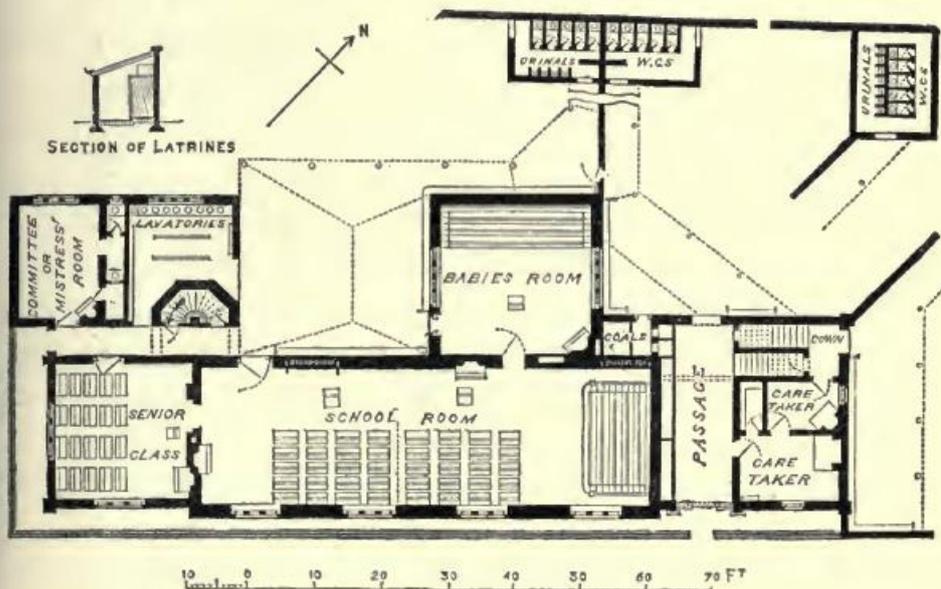
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Selection 1

From Edward Robert Robson, *School Architecture* (1874), copied from <https://ia902700.us.archive.org/14/items/schoolarchitectu00robsuoft/schoolarchitectu00robsuoft.pdf>

In carrying out the building the arrangements have been exactly reversed, and our illustrations may be somewhat perplexing unless it is explained that the plans (Nos. 203, 204, and 205,) give the original disposition on the ground, while the view (woodcut No. 202) is drawn from the actual building.

The area of the site is half an acre. Its purchase-money was



205.—HARWOOD ROAD SCHOOL. GROUND PLAN.

1,600*l.* And the contract for the building, excluding furniture, was taken at 5,716*l.*

The accommodation is as follows: viz.:—

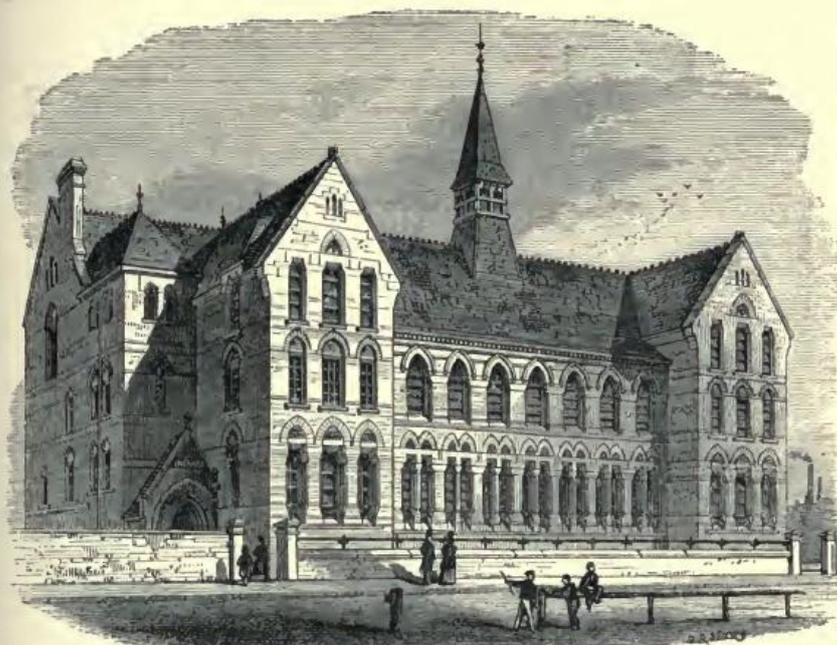
Infants	289
Boys	219
Girls	219
Total	727

Soon after the work of supplying the deficiency in accommodation had fairly begun and several new buildings were already in progress, attention was drawn to the great difference in method of planning between that existing and proposed to be still followed in England, and that pursued on the continent. On all hands it

appeared to be admitted that the English system possessed an advantage in the greater economy of teaching power. The advocates of the German system, however, urged that the best method, not the cheapest, should be adopted for the new schools of London, and claimed the superiority, as tested by results, for the foreign schools. After much consideration it was determined that the arguments were of sufficient importance to justify an experiment in the erection of a complete specimen, and that therefore a schoolhouse should be built consisting of separate rooms, each requiring the employment of a separate and fully qualified teacher. It was further held that the system could never be successful in this country without the addition for the use of the Graded schools of an assembly hall, and that therefore the school to be built should be of a large size, so as to distribute the extra cost of the hall over a large number of class-rooms. The hall, although in some sense corresponding to the Aula of Germany, is larger in proportion to the size of the school, and is really intended for the assembly of all the children of the Graded schools at one time, instead of merely serving for the occasional examination of one or two classes. The number of children,—at first fixed at 1,000—was in view of the above reason and of the great necessities of the neighbourhood increased, and it was finally decided to build for 1,500.

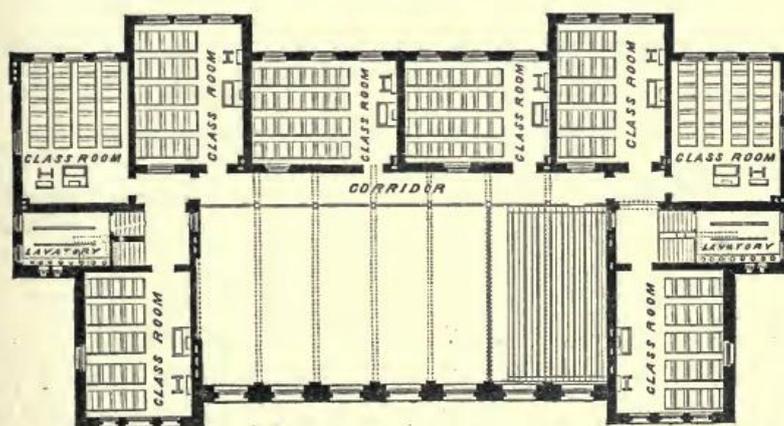
The Jonson Street school at Stepney, therefore, as finally carried out from the designs of Mr. T. R. Smith, is of considerable size. Its external architecture (woodcut No. 206) is of simple Pointed character constructed of grey stock brick, with a sparing intermixture of stone: such simple architectural features as are introduced being almost wholly in brick. It possesses two features different from—indeed never found in—its Prussian model. One is the presence of an Infant school, which here occupies the whole of the ground floor (woodcut No. 210) except a certain portion not required for school work and therefore devoted to an equally useful purpose as covered playground. The other is the utilisation of the hall itself for two of the daily

classes. One of these classes may, from the position of the hall



206.—JONSON STREET SCHOOL, STEPNEY.

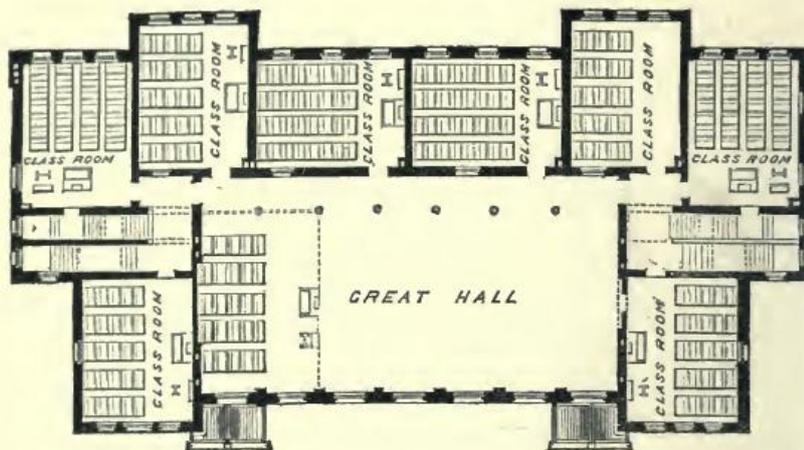
in reference to the class-rooms, be held at one end, and the other in a gallery provided for the purpose. The German principle of



207.—PLAN OF SECOND FLOOR.

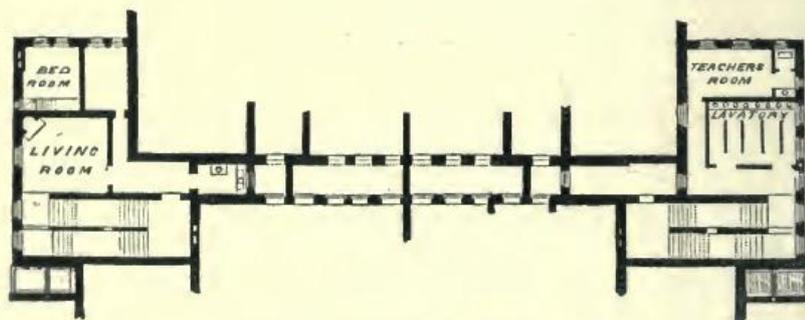
lighting from the left side of the children is strictly carried out,

although other lighting is introduced in the case of some of the rooms. The class-rooms either enter from the hall direct, or from



208.—PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR.

the landings in immediate contiguity thereto. The general shape of the building does not follow the regular parallelogram seen in some of the examples already alluded to in the previous chapter on German schools. The girls and infants enter from one street,

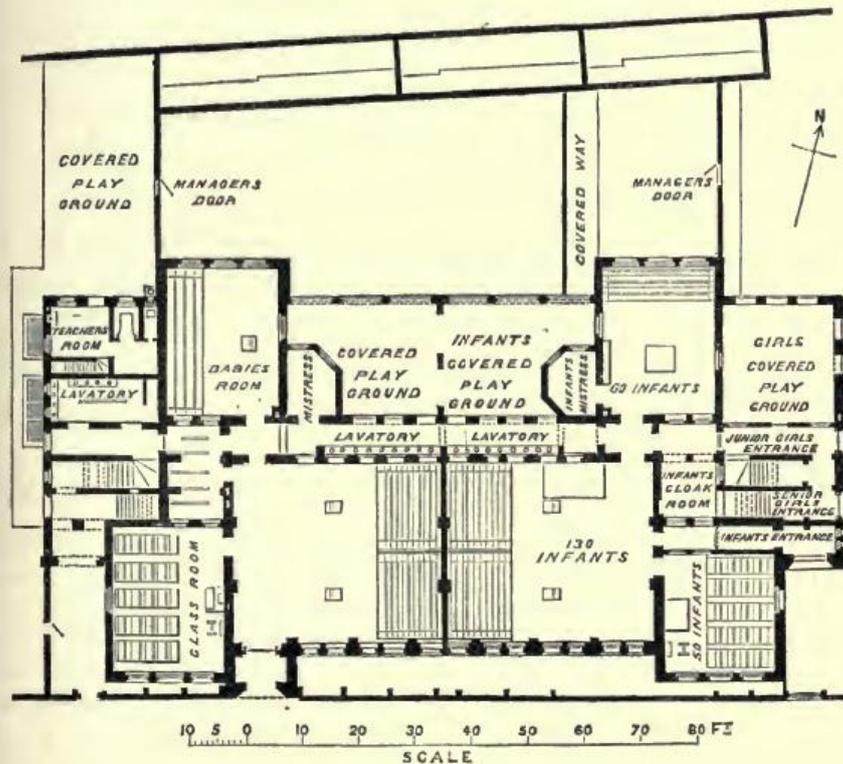


209.—PLAN OF MEZZANINE.

and the boys from another. The infant department is divided into two schools, each with its separate school-room and two class-rooms, its cloak-room and lavatory, but the covered playground is common to both. From its great size the school required two entrances to each of the Graded schools and two

staircases. The arrangements are not those of a senior and junior department to each sex, as commonly understood, but approximates thereto as nearly as the class-room system admits.

The ground story, devoted to infants, is 15 ft. in clear height, and a mezzanine has been introduced into one part, as shown



210.—JONSON STREET SCHOOL. GROUND PLAN.

by woodcut No. 209, by which a caretaker's house, teacher's room, and lavatories have been economically obtained over offices, covered playground, &c., not requiring the full height given to the general story.

Including the two classes obtained, as above described, in the hall, and again calculating the internal area at 8 ft. superficial for infants, and at 9 ft. for other departments, the total accommodation appears as follows: viz. :—

Infants	575
Girls	540
Boys	560
Total	1675

The area of the site is three-quarters of an acre, with two front-ages at opposite sides, each to a separate street, the ends of the building both abutting on land soon to be covered by small dwelling houses. The land was purchased for 3,000*l.*, while the cost of the building amounted to about 12,600*l.* The great size of the latter rendered any other than what we have called an "artificial" system of warming and ventilation out of the question, and it accordingly presents what is believed to be a good specimen of the method—described in a previous chapter—of warming by means of hot water vessels placed in the basement, and heated at a low pressure, and of ventilation by means of numerous outlet flues leading to one common shaft, and supplied with motive power for extraction.

The Jonson Street school cannot, when critically considered, be regarded in the light of a success which invites general imitation. One noticeable defect is the smallness of the accommodation for infants as compared with other departments. Another lies in the enormous aggregation in one building, rendering necessary the covering of too great an area of population, and the bringing of children every day from great distances, a principle condemned in its application to Elementary schools by the experience of all Europe. A third consists in the comparative uselessness of the hall. The last arises from the great annual cost of the teachers involved by the system of class-subdivision. The experiment shows that, for our purpose, the German system, if carried out on a large scale, bears its own condemnation in its size. If attempted with the ordinary numbers it would present at all points an inferiority to the English method, unless its teaching-results can yet be shown to be of a decidedly higher order.

Selection 2

Part Fourth, Chapter Three of *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Copied from Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/153/153-h/153-h.htm>

Sue's distressful confession recurred to Jude's mind all the night as being a sorrow indeed.

The morning after, when it was time for her to go, the neighbours saw her companion and herself disappearing on foot down the hill path which led into the lonely road to Alfredston. An hour passed before he returned along the same route, and in his face there was a look of exaltation not unmixed with recklessness. An incident had occurred.

They had stood parting in the silent highway, and their tense and passionate moods had led to bewildered inquiries of each other on how far their intimacy ought to go; till they had almost quarrelled, and she said tearfully that it was hardly proper of him as a parson in embryo to think of such a thing as kissing her even in farewell as he now wished to do. Then she had conceded that the fact of the kiss would be nothing: all would depend upon the spirit of it. If given in the spirit of a cousin and a friend she saw no objection: if in the spirit of a lover she could not permit it. "Will you swear that it will not be in that spirit?" she had said.

No: he would not. And then they had turned from each other in estrangement, and gone their several ways, till at a distance of twenty or thirty yards both had looked round simultaneously. That look behind was fatal to the reserve hitherto more or less maintained. They had quickly run back, and met, and embracing most unpremeditatedly, kissed close and long. When they parted for good it was with flushed cheeks on her side, and a beating heart on his.

The kiss was a turning-point in Jude's career. Back again in the cottage, and left to reflection, he saw one thing: that though his kiss of that aerial being had seemed the purest moment of his faultful life, as long as he nourished this unlicensed tenderness it was glaringly inconsistent for him to pursue the idea of becoming the soldier and servant of a religion in which sexual love was regarded as at its best a frailty, and at its worst damnation. What Sue had said in warmth was really the cold truth. When to defend his affection tooth and nail, to persist with headlong force in impassioned attentions to her, was all he thought of, he was condemned *ipso facto* as a professor of the accepted school of morals. He was as unfit, obviously, by nature, as he had been by social position, to fill the part of a propounder of accredited dogma.

Strange that his first aspiration—towards academical proficiency—had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration—towards apostleship—had also been checked by a woman. "Is it," he said, "that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springs to noose and hold back those who want to progress?"

It had been his standing desire to become a prophet, however humble, to his struggling fellow-creatures, without any thought of personal gain. Yet with a wife living away from him with another husband, and himself in love erratically, the loved one's revolt against her state being possibly on his account, he had sunk to be barely respectable according to regulation views.

It was not for him to consider further: he had only to confront the obvious, which was that he had made himself quite an impostor as a law-abiding religious teacher.

At dusk that evening he went into the garden and dug a shallow hole, to which he brought out all the theological and ethical works that he possessed, and had stored here. He knew that, in this country of true believers, most of them were not saleable at a much higher price than

waste-paper value, and preferred to get rid of them in his own way, even if he should sacrifice a little money to the sentiment of thus destroying them. Lighting some loose pamphlets to begin with, he cut the volumes into pieces as well as he could, and with a three-pronged fork shook them over the flames. They kindled, and lighted up the back of the house, the pigsty, and his own face, till they were more or less consumed.

Though he was almost a stranger here now, passing cottagers talked to him over the garden hedge.

“Burning up your awld aunt’s rubbish, I suppose? Ay; a lot gets heaped up in nooks and corners when you’ve lived eighty years in one house.”

It was nearly one o’clock in the morning before the leaves, covers, and binding of Jeremy Taylor, Butler, Doddridge, Paley, Pusey, Newman and the rest had gone to ashes, but the night was quiet, and as he turned and turned the paper shreds with the fork, the sense of being no longer a hypocrite to himself afforded his mind a relief which gave him calm. He might go on believing as before, but he professed nothing, and no longer owned and exhibited engines of faith which, as their proprietor, he might naturally be supposed to exercise on himself first of all. In his passion for Sue he could not stand as an ordinary sinner, and not as a whited sepulchre.

Meanwhile Sue, after parting from him earlier in the day, had gone along to the station, with tears in her eyes for having run back and let him kiss her. Jude ought not to have pretended that he was not a lover, and made her give way to an impulse to act unconventionally, if not wrongly. She was inclined to call it the latter; for Sue’s logic was extraordinarily compounded, and seemed to maintain that before a thing was done it might be right to do, but that being done it became wrong; or, in other words, that things which were right in theory were wrong in practice.

“I have been too weak, I think!” she jerked out as she pranced on, shaking down tear-drops now and then. “It was burning, like a lover’s—oh, it was! And I won’t write to him any more, or at least for a long time, to impress him with my dignity! And I hope it will hurt him very much—expecting a letter to-morrow morning, and the next, and the next, and no letter coming. He’ll suffer then with suspense—won’t he, that’s all!—and I am very glad of it!”—Tears of pity for Jude’s approaching sufferings at her hands mingled with those which had surged up in pity for herself.

Then the slim little wife of a husband whose person was disagreeable to her, the ethereal, fine-nerved, sensitive girl, quite unfitted by temperament and instinct to fulfil the conditions of the matrimonial relation with Phillotson, possibly with scarce any man, walked fitfully along, and panted, and brought weariness into her eyes by gazing and worrying hopelessly.

Phillotson met her at the arrival station, and, seeing that she was troubled, thought it must be owing to the depressing effect of her aunt’s death and funeral. He began telling her of his day’s doings, and how his friend Gillingham, a neighbouring schoolmaster whom he had not seen for years, had called upon him. While ascending to the town, seated on the top of the omnibus beside him, she said suddenly and with an air of self-chastisement, regarding the white road and its bordering bushes of hazel:

“Richard—I let Mr. Fawley hold my hand a long while. I don’t know whether you think it wrong?”

He, waking apparently from thoughts of far different mould, said vaguely, “Oh, did you? What did you do that for?”

“I don’t know. He wanted to, and I let him.”

“I hope it pleased him. I should think it was hardly a novelty.”

They lapsed into silence. Had this been a case in the court of an omniscient judge, he might have entered on his notes the curious fact that Sue had placed the minor for the major indiscretion, and had not said a word about the kiss.

After tea that evening Phillotson sat balancing the school registers. She remained in an unusually silent, tense, and restless condition, and at last, saying she was tired, went to bed early. When Phillotson arrived upstairs, weary with the drudgery of the attendance-numbers, it was a quarter to twelve o'clock. Entering their chamber, which by day commanded a view of some thirty or forty miles over the Vale of Blackmoor, and even into Outer Wessex, he went to the window, and, pressing his face against the pane, gazed with hard-breathing fixity into the mysterious darkness which now covered the far-reaching scene. He was musing, "I think," he said at last, without turning his head, "that I must get the committee to change the school-stationer. All the copybooks are sent wrong this time."

There was no reply. Thinking Sue was dozing he went on:

"And there must be a rearrangement of that ventilator in the class-room. The wind blows down upon my head unmercifully and gives me the ear-ache."

As the silence seemed more absolute than ordinarily he turned round. The heavy, gloomy oak wainscot, which extended over the walls upstairs and down in the dilapidated "Old-Grove Place," and the massive chimney-piece reaching to the ceiling, stood in odd contrast to the new and shining brass bedstead, and the new suite of birch furniture that he had bought for her, the two styles seeming to nod to each other across three centuries upon the shaking floor.

"Soo!" he said (this being the way in which he pronounced her name).

She was not in the bed, though she had apparently been there—the clothes on her side being flung back. Thinking she might have forgotten some kitchen detail and gone downstairs for a moment to see to it, he pulled off his coat and idled quietly enough for a few minutes, when, finding she did not come, he went out upon the landing, candle in hand, and said again "Soo!"

"Yes!" came back to him in her voice, from the distant kitchen quarter.

"What are you doing down there at midnight—tiring yourself out for nothing!"

"I am not sleepy; I am reading; and there is a larger fire here."

He went to bed. Some time in the night he awoke. She was not there, even now. Lighting a candle he hastily stepped out upon the landing, and again called her name.

She answered "Yes!" as before, but the tones were small and confined, and whence they came he could not at first understand. Under the staircase was a large clothes-closet, without a window; they seemed to come from it. The door was shut, but there was no lock or other fastening. Phillotson, alarmed, went towards it, wondering if she had suddenly become deranged.

"What are you doing in there?" he asked.

"Not to disturb you I came here, as it was so late."

"But there's no bed, is there? And no ventilation! Why, you'll be suffocated if you stay all night!"

"Oh no, I think not. Don't trouble about me."

"But—" Phillotson seized the knob and pulled at the door. She had fastened it inside with a piece of string, which broke at his pull. There being no bedstead she had flung down some rugs and made a little nest for herself in the very cramped quarters the closet afforded.

When he looked in upon her she sprang out of her lair, great-eyed and trembling.

"You ought not to have pulled open the door!" she cried excitedly. "It is not becoming in you! Oh, will you go away; please will you!"

She looked so pitiful and pleading in her white nightgown against the shadowy lumber-hole that he was quite worried. She continued to beseech him not to disturb her.

He said: "I've been kind to you, and given you every liberty; and it is monstrous that you should feel in this way!"

"Yes," said she, weeping. "I know that! It is wrong and wicked of me, I suppose! I am very sorry. But it is not I altogether that am to blame!"

"Who is then? Am I?"

"No—I don't know! The universe, I suppose—things in general, because they are so horrid and cruel!"

"Well, it is no use talking like that. Making a man's house so unseemly at this time o' night! Eliza will hear if we don't mind." (He meant the servant.) "Just think if either of the parsons in this town was to see us now! I hate such eccentricities, Sue. There's no order or regularity in your sentiments! ... But I won't intrude on you further; only I would advise you not to shut the door too tight, or I shall find you stifled to-morrow."

On rising the next morning he immediately looked into the closet, but Sue had already gone downstairs. There was a little nest where she had lain, and spiders' webs hung overhead. "What must a woman's aversion be when it is stronger than her fear of spiders!" he said bitterly.

He found her sitting at the breakfast-table, and the meal began almost in silence, the burghers walking past upon the pavement—or rather roadway, pavements being scarce here—which was two or three feet above the level of the parlour floor. They nodded down to the happy couple their morning greetings, as they went on.

"Richard," she said all at once; "would you mind my living away from you?"

"Away from me? Why, that's what you were doing when I married you. What then was the meaning of marrying at all?"

"You wouldn't like me any the better for telling you."

"I don't object to know."

"Because I thought I could do nothing else. You had got my promise a long time before that, remember. Then, as time went on, I regretted I had promised you, and was trying to see an honourable way to break it off. But as I couldn't I became rather reckless and careless about the conventions. Then you know what scandals were spread, and how I was turned out of the training school you had taken such time and trouble to prepare me for and get me into; and this frightened me and it seemed then that the one thing I could do would be to let the engagement stand. Of course I, of all people, ought not to have cared what was said, for it was just what I fancied I never did care for. But I was a coward—as so many women are—and my theoretic unconventionality broke down. If that had not entered into the case it would have been better to have hurt your feelings once for all then, than to marry you and hurt them all my life after... And you were so generous in never giving credit for a moment to the rumour."

"I am bound in honesty to tell you that I weighed its probability and inquired of your cousin about it."

"Ah!" she said with pained surprise.

"I didn't doubt you."

"But you inquired!"

"I took his word."

Her eyes had filled. "*He* wouldn't have inquired!" she said. "But you haven't answered me. Will you let me go away? I know how irregular it is of me to ask it—"

"It is irregular."

“But I do ask it! Domestic laws should be made according to temperaments, which should be classified. If people are at all peculiar in character they have to suffer from the very rules that produce comfort in others! ... Will you let me?”

“But we married—”

“What is the use of thinking of laws and ordinances,” she burst out, “if they make you miserable when you know you are committing no sin?”

“But you are committing a sin in not liking me.”

“I *do* like you! But I didn't reflect it would be—that it would be so much more than that... For a man and woman to live on intimate terms when one feels as I do is adultery, in any circumstances, however legal. There—I've said it! ... Will you let me, Richard?”

“You distress me, Susanna, by such importunity!”

“Why can't we agree to free each other? We made the compact, and surely we can cancel it—not legally of course; but we can morally, especially as no new interests, in the shape of children, have arisen to be looked after. Then we might be friends, and meet without pain to either. Oh Richard, be my friend and have pity! We shall both be dead in a few years, and then what will it matter to anybody that you relieved me from constraint for a little while? I daresay you think me eccentric, or super-sensitive, or something absurd. Well—why should I suffer for what I was born to be, if it doesn't hurt other people?”

“But it does—it hurts *me*! And you vowed to love me.”

“Yes—that's it! I am in the wrong. I always am! It is as culpable to bind yourself to love always as to believe a creed always, and as silly as to vow always to like a particular food or drink!”

“And do you mean, by living away from me, living by yourself?”

“Well, if you insisted, yes. But I meant living with Jude.”

“As his wife?”

“As I choose.”

Phillotson writhed.

Sue continued: “She, or he, ‘who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the apeline one of imitation.’ J. S. Mill's words, those are. I have been reading it up. Why can't you act upon them? I wish to, always.”

“What do I care about J. S. Mill!” moaned he. “I only want to lead a quiet life! Do you mind my saying that I have guessed what never once occurred to me before our marriage—that you were in love, and are in love, with Jude Fawley!”

“You may go on guessing that I am, since you have begun. But do you suppose that if I had been I should have asked you to let me go and live with him?”

The ringing of the school bell saved Phillotson from the necessity of replying at present to what apparently did not strike him as being such a convincing *argumentum ad verecundiam* as she, in her loss of courage at the last moment, meant it to appear. She was beginning to be so puzzling and unstateable that he was ready to throw in with her other little peculiarities the extremest request which a wife could make.

They proceeded to the schools that morning as usual, Sue entering the class-room, where he could see the back of her head through the glass partition whenever he turned his eyes that way. As he went on giving and hearing lessons his forehead and eyebrows twitched from concentrated agitation of thought, till at length he tore a scrap from a sheet of scribbling paper and wrote:

Your request prevents my attending to work at all. I don't know what I am doing! Was it seriously made?

He folded the piece of paper very small, and gave it to a little boy to take to Sue. The child toddled off into the class-room. Phillotson saw his wife turn and take the note, and the bend of her pretty head as she read it, her lips slightly crisped, to prevent undue expression under fire of so many young eyes. He could not see her hands, but she changed her position, and soon the child returned, bringing nothing in reply. In a few minutes, however, one of Sue's class appeared, with a little note similar to his own. These words only were pencilled therein:

I am sincerely sorry to say that it was seriously made.

Phillotson looked more disturbed than before, and the meeting-place of his brows twitched again. In ten minutes he called up the child he had just sent to her, and dispatched another missive:

God knows I don't want to thwart you in any reasonable way. My whole thought is to make you comfortable and happy. But I cannot agree to such a preposterous notion as your going to live with your lover. You would lose everybody's respect and regard; and so should I!

After an interval a similar part was enacted in the class-room, and an answer came:

I know you mean my good. But I don't want to be respectable! To produce "Human development in its richest diversity" (to quote your Humboldt) is to my mind far above respectability. No doubt my tastes are low—in your view—hopelessly low! If you won't let me go to him, will you grant me this one request—allow me to live in your house in a separate way?

To this he returned no answer.

She wrote again:

I know what you think. But cannot you have pity on me? I beg you to; I implore you to be merciful! I would not ask if I were not almost compelled by what I can't bear! No poor woman has ever wished more than I that Eve had not fallen, so that (as the primitive Christians believed) some harmless mode of vegetation might have peopled Paradise. But I won't trifle! Be kind to me—even though I have not been kind to you! I will go away, go abroad, anywhere, and never trouble you.

Nearly an hour passed, and then he returned an answer:

I do not wish to pain you. How well you *know* I don't! Give me a little time. I am disposed to agree to your last request.

One line from her:

Thank you from my heart, Richard. I do not deserve your kindness.

All day Phillotson bent a dazed regard upon her through the glazed partition; and he felt as lonely as when he had not known her.

But he was as good as his word, and consented to her living apart in the house. At first, when they met at meals, she had seemed more composed under the new arrangement; but the irksomeness of their position worked on her temperament, and the fibres of her nature seemed strained like harp-strings. She talked vaguely and indiscriminately to prevent his talking pertinently.