

Shine Bright LLCE Cycle Terminal

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In the garden

The young Englishman William Crimsworth has been hired as a teacher at a girls' school in Brussels. There he encounters Zoraide Reuter, the headmistress of the school.

Certainly that May day was a lovely one, and it closed in moonlight night of summer warmth and serenity. I remember this well; for, having sat up late that evening, correcting devoirs, and feeling weary and a little oppressed with the closeness of my small room, I opened the oftenmentioned boarded window, whose boards, however, I had persuaded old Madame Pelet to have removed since I had filled the post of professor in the pensionnat de demoiselles, as, from that time, it was no longer "inconvenient" for me to overlook my own pupils at their sports. I sat down in the window-seat, rested my arm on the sill, and leaned out: above me was the clear-obscure of a cloudless night sky—splendid moonlight subdued the tremulous sparkle of the stars—below lay the garden, varied with silvery lustre and deep shade, and all fresh with dew—a grateful perfume exhaled from the closed blossoms of the fruit-trees—not a leaf stirred, the night was breezeless. My window looked directly down upon a certain walk of Mdlle. Reuter's garden, called l'allée défendue, so named because the pupils were forbidden to enter it on account of its proximity to the boys' school. It was here that the lilacs and laburnums grew especially thick; this was the most sheltered nook in the enclosure, its shrubs screened the garden-chair where that afternoon I had sat with the young directress. I need not say that my thoughts were chiefly with her as I leaned from the lattice, and let my eye roam, now over the walks and borders of the garden, now along the many-windowed front of the house which rose white beyond the masses of foliage. I wondered in what part of the

building was situated her apartment; and a single light, shining through the persiennes of one croisée, seemed to direct me to it.

“She watches¹ late,” thought I, “for it must be now near midnight. She is a fascinating little woman,” I continued in voiceless soliloquy; “her image forms a pleasant picture in memory; I know she is not what the world calls pretty—no matter, there is harmony in her aspect, and I like it; her brown hair, her blue eye, the freshness of her cheek, the whiteness of her neck, all suit my taste. [...] “Now, Zoraide Reuter,” thought I, “has tact, caractère, judgment, discretion; has she heart? What a good, simple little smile played about her lips when she gave me the branch of lilacs!” [...] Here a strain of music stole in upon my monologue, and suspended it; it was a bugle, very skilfully played, in the neighbourhood of the park, I thought, or on the Place Royale. So sweet were the tones, so subduing their effect at that hour, in the midst of silence and under the quiet reign of moonlight, I ceased to think, that I might listen more intently. The strain retreated, its sound waxed fainter and was soon gone; my ear prepared to repose on the absolute hush of midnight once more. No. What murmur was that which, low, and yet near and approaching nearer, frustrated the expectation of total silence? It was some one conversing—yes, evidently, an audible, though subdued voice spoke in the garden immediately below me. Another answered; the first voice was that of a man, the second that of a woman; and a man and a woman I saw coming slowly down the alley. Their forms were at first in shade, I could but discern a dusk outline of each, but a ray of moonlight met them at the termination of the walk, when they were under my very nose, and revealed very plainly, very unequivocally, Mdlle. Zoraide Reuter, arm-in-arm, or hand-in-hand (I forget which) with my principal, confidant, and counsellor, M. François Pelet. And M. Pelet was saying—

“À quand donc le jour des noces, ma bien-aimée?”

Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor*, 1857

1. be awake

I wandered lonely as a cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils¹;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

William Wordsworth, *Collected Poems*, 1815

1. *jonquilles*

Romantic gardens

The Romantic Movement, its seeds planted in the seventeenth century, became the ascendant philosophical and aesthetic ethos of the nineteenth century. The opposite of Classicism, with its regard for order, rationality, rules, and balance, Romanticism gave primacy to the imagination, to the senses, to intuition and inspiration, putting a premium on the spectacular, the mysterious, the dramatic. Above all, its emphasis was faith in the self, in the individual. As a movement, Romanticism has been minutely examined in the genres of music, literature, and art. But in this comprehensive survey, we see its development in that most transient manifestation of human effort: the garden.

Romantic gardens were a source of sensory delight, moral instruction, spiritual insight, and artistic inspiration. Here nature stimulated reverie and sentiment. Rustic structures, inscribed monuments, sweeping vistas, and naturalistic lakes and cascades were elements in an ever-changing panorama. Nature, and by extension, gardens were expected to stir the imagination, to clear the mind, to relieve the soul of its burdens, to provide both solace and salvation.

Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, *Romantic Gardens: Nature, Art and Landscape Design*,

2010