

**TWILIGHT THOUGHTS:  
STORIES FOR CHILDREN  
AND CHILD-LOVERS**

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Twilight Thoughts: Stories for Children and Child-Lovers by Mary S. Claude

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**MARY S. CLAUDE**

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# TWILIGHT THOUGHTS

Stories for Children and Child-Lovers

BY

MARY S. CLAUDE

*EDITED BY MARY L. AVERY, WITH A PREFACE BY*

MATTHEW ARNOLD

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## PREFACE.

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HOW can I refuse a word of preface to these stories? They carry me back to the fells and rills of Westmoreland, to long-past days when Westmoreland was the Westmoreland of Wordsworth and Hartley Coleridge, and when the authoress of these stories moved in her youth and spirit and grace through that beautiful region, herself a vision worthy of it.

She was connected with Germany; and the soul of Northern Europe, of the Germany of Jean Paul Richter, of the Denmark of Hans Christian Andersen, is in her stories, lending to them its familiar treatment of nature, its facile attribution to animals and plants and pebbles and clouds, of the life and feelings of man. Many a stroke of playful humour, many a moral and deeply humane suggestion, she owes to this genius—inextricably allied in her, however, with the English sadness.

But it is the neighbour and hearer of Wordsworth who appears in such stories as the "Notice to Trespassers," "The Meadow," "The Stream"; of Wordsworth pleading against the invasion of the beautiful romance of nature by improvements, and of the liberty of the peasant and the child by encroachments. "I have no respect whatever for the Whigs," he said most truthfully to Crabb

Robinson, "but I have a great deal of the Chartist in me." And just this Wordsworthian Chartism inspires the "Notice to Trespassers."

For me, however, the main charm of the stories is in the breath of Westmoreland which blows through them, in the touch which reminds one that there indeed they were born. The cold little new-born rill "creeping softly through the long, drooping moss among the pale and tiny flowers," then "sleeping in quiet pools while the wag-tail and the stone-chat flit restlessly from stone to stone, or a mountain lamb bleats piteously, afraid to ford the shallow wave," then reaching "the small grey cottages in the shadow of the sycamore, the hanging alders, the broad grey stepping-stones" — this is Westmoreland, rendered with what truth, with what beauty!

And so there is nature and fable and humour and pathos and morality and Chartism in these stories — something for every taste; and it is well that America, too, should possess them and read them. May they give pleasure there as they have given pleasure here; and may they not be suffered, as they have here, to become rare or to go out of print!

MATTHEW ARNOLD.



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## TWILIGHT THOUGHTS.



### THE THISTLE-SEED.



"LOOK, how the thistle-seeds fly!" cried the children. "Like little birds," said one. "With a hundred wings," cried another. "Do tell us about them," said a third. "But begin at the beginning," cried all.

So I began at the beginning.

The old Thistle grew in a large field not very far from the hedge, and a stiff, stately dame she was. She stood bolt upright, and held out her sharp prickles as a warning to all that came by not to approach too near. In truth she was very fearless and stout-hearted, and the only living thing she dreaded was an Ass. She would say, "Though he looks so stupid and harmless, he is more dangerous and mischievous than any other creature; he neither respects one's station nor one's prickles—I cannot endure those long grass ears."

The old Thistle was fond and proud of her children, but she was very particular about them. She did not approve of the rambling ways of the blue Vetches