

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse
Poe Aristotle James Hastings Voltaire Cooke
Hale Shakespeare Bunner Chambers Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shaw Benedict Alcott
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The Missing Bride

Emma Dorothy Eliza Nevitte Southworth

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CHAPTER I.

LUCKENOUGH.

Deep in the primeval forest of St. Mary's, lying between the Patuxent and the Wicomico Rivers, stands the ancient manor house of Luckenough.

The traditions of the neighborhood assert the origin of the manor and its quaint, happy and not unmusical name to have been—briefly this:

That the founder of Luckenough was Alexander Kalouga, a Polish soldier of fortune, some time in the service of Cecilius Calvert, Baron of Baltimore, first Lord Proprietary of Maryland. This man had, previous to his final emigration to the New World, passed through a life of the most wonderful vicissitudes—wonderful even for those days of romance and adventure. It was said that he was born in one quarter of the globe, educated in another, initiated into warfare in the third and buried in the fourth. In his boyhood he was the friend and pupil of Guy Fawkes; he engaged in the Gunpowder Plot, and after witnessing the terrible fate of his master, he escaped to Spanish America, where he led for years a sort of buccaneer life. He afterwards returned to Europe, and then followed years of military service wherever his hireling sword was needed. But the soldier of fortune was ill-paid by his mistress. His misfortunes were as proverbial as his bravery, or as his energetic complaints of "ill luck" could make them. He had drawn his sword in almost every quarrel of his time, on every battlefield in Europe, to find himself, at the end of his military career, no richer than he was at its beginning—save in wounds and scars, honor and glory, and a wife and son. It was at

this point of his life that he met with Leonard Calvert, and embarked with him for Maryland, where he afterwards received from the Lord Proprietary the grant of the manor "aforesaid." It is stated that when the old soldier went with some companions to take a look at his new possessions, he was so pleased with the beauty, grandeur, richness and promise of the place that a glad smile broke over his dark, storm-beaten, battle-scarred face, and he remained still "smiling as in delighted visions," until one of his friends spoke and said:

"Well, comrade! Is this luck enough?"

"Yaw, mine frient!" answered the new lord of the manor in his broken English, cordially grasping the hand of his companion, "dish ish loke enough!"

Different constructions have been put upon this simple answer – first, that Lukkinnuf was the original Indian name of the tract; secondly, that Alexander Kalouga christened his manor in honor of Loekenoff, the native village of his wife, the heroic Marie Zelenski, the companion of all his campaigns and voyages, and the first lady of his manor; thirdly, that the grateful and happy soldier had only meant to express his perfect satisfaction with his fortune, and to say:

"Yes, this is luck enough! luck enough to repay me for all the past!"

Be it as it may, from time immemorial the place has been

"Luckenough."

The owner in 1814 was Commodore Nickolas Waugh, who inherited the property in right of his mother, the only child and heiress of Peter Kalouga.

This man had the constitution and character, not of his mother's, but of his father's family – a hardy, rigorous, energetic Montgomery race, full of fire, spirit and enterprise. At the age of twelve Nickolas lost his father.

At fifteen he began to weary of the tedium of Luckenough, varied only by the restraint of the academy during term. And at sixteen he rebelled against the rule of his indolent lymphatic mamma, broke through the reins of domestic government, escaped to Baltimore and shipped as cabin boy in a merchantman.

Nickolas Waugh went through many adventures, served on board merchantmen, privateers and haply pirates, too, sailed to every part of the known world, and led a wild, reckless and sinful life, until the breaking out of the Revolutionary War, when he took service with Paul Jones, the American Sea King, and turned the brighter part of his character up to the light. He performed miracles of valor—achieved for himself a name and a post-captain's rank in the infant navy and finally was permitted to retire with a bullet lodged under his shoulder blade, a piece of silver trepanned in the top of his skull, a deep sword-cut across his face from the right temple over his nose to the left cheek—and with the honorary title of commodore.

He was a perfect beauty about this time, no doubt, but that did not prevent him from receiving the hand of his cousin Henrietta Kalouga, who had waited for him many a weary year.

No children blessed his late marriage, and as year after year passed, until himself and his wife were well stricken in years, people, who never lost interest in the great estate, began to wonder to which among his tribe of impoverished relations Nickolas Waugh would bequeath the manor of Luckenough.

His choice fell at length upon his orphan grandniece, the beautiful Edith Lance, whom he took from the Catholic Orphan Asylum, where she had found refuge since the death of her parents and placed in one of the best convent schools in the South.

At the age of seventeen Edith was brought home from school and established at Luckenough as the adopted daughter and acknowledged heiress of her uncle.

Delicate, dreamy and retiring, and tinged with a certain pensiveness, the effect of too much early sorrow and seclusion upon a very sensitive temperament, Edith better loved the solitude of the grand old forest of St. Mary's or the loneliness of her own shaded rooms at Luckenough than any society the humdrum neighborhood could offer her. And when at the call of social duty she did go into company, she exercised a refining and subduing influence, involuntary as it was potent.

Yet in that lovely, fragile form, in that dreaming, poetical soul, lay undeveloped a latent power of heroism soon to be aroused into action.

"Darling of all hearts and eyes," Edith had been at home a year when the War of 1812 broke out.

Maryland, as usual, contributed her large proportion of volunteers to the defense of the country. All men capable of bearing arms rapidly mustered into companies and hastened to put themselves at the disposal of the government.

The lower counties of Maryland were left comparatively unprotected. Old men, women, children and negroes were all that remained in charge of the farms and plantations. Yet remote from the scenes of conflict and hitherto undisturbed by the convulsions of the great world, they reposed in fancied safety and never thought of such unprecedented misfortunes as the evils of the war penetrating to their quiet homes.

But their rest of security was broken by a tremendous shock. The British fleet under Admiral Sir A. Cockburn suddenly entered the Chesapeake. And the quiet, lonely shores of the bay became the scene of a warfare scarcely paralleled in atrocity in ancient or modern times.

If among the marauding band of licensed pirates and assassins there was one name more dreaded, more loathed and accursed than the rest, it was that of the brutal and ferocious Thorg — the frequent leader of foraging parties, the unsparing destroyer of womanhood, infancy and age, the jackal and purveyor of Admiral Cockburn. If anywhere there was a beautiful woman unprotected, or a rich plantation house ill-defended, this jackal was sure to scent out "the game" for his master, the lion. And many were the comely maidens and youthful wives seized and carried off by this monster.

The Patuxent and the Wicomico, with the coast between them, offered no strong temptation to a rapacious foe, and the inhabitants reposed in the fancied security of their isolation and unimportance. The business of life went on, faintly and sorrowfully, to be sure, but still went on. The village shops at B — — and C — — were kept open,

though tended chiefly by women and boys. The academicians at the little college pursued their studies or played at forming juvenile military companies. The farms and plantations were cultivated chiefly under the direction of ladies whose husbands, sons and brothers were absent with the army. No one thought of danger to St. Mary's.

Most terrible was the awakening from this dream of safety, when, on the morning of the 17th of August, the division under the command of Admiral Cockburn—the most dreaded and abhorred of all—was seen to enter the mouth of the Patuxent in full sail for Benedict. Nearly all the able-bodied men were absent with the army at the time when the combined military and naval forces under Admiral Cockburn and General Ross landed at that place. None remained to guard the homes but aged men, women, infants and negroes. A universal panic seized the neighborhood and nothing occurred to the defenseless people but instant flight. Females and children were hastily put into carriages, the most valuable items of plate or money hastily packed up, negroes mustered and the whole caravan put upon a hurried march for Prince George's, Montgomery or other upper counties of the State. With very few exceptions, the farms and plantations were evacuated and left to the mercy of the invaders.

At sunrise all was noise, bustle and confusion at Luckenough.

The lawn was filled with baggage wagons, horses, mules, cows, oxen, sheep, swine, baskets of poultry, barrels of provisions, boxes of property, and men and maid servants hurrying wildly about among them, carrying trunks and parcels, loading carts, tackling harness, marshaling cattle and making other preparations for a rapid retreat toward Commodore Waugh's patrimonial estate in Montgomery County.

Edith was placed upon her pony and attended by her old maid Jenny and her old groom Oliver.

Commodore and Mrs. Waugh entered the family carriage, which they pretty well filled up. Mrs. Waugh's woman sat upon the box behind and the Commodore's man drove the coach.

And the whole family party set forward on their journey. They went in advance of the caravan so as not to be hindered and incon-

venienced by its slow and cumbrous movements. A ride of three miles through the old forest brought them to the open, hilly country. Here the road forked. And here the family were to separate.

It had been arranged that as Edith was too delicate to bear the forced march of days' and nights' continuance before they could reach Montgomery, she should proceed to Hay Hill, a plantation near the line of Charles County, owned by Colonel Fairlie, whose young daughter Fanny, recently made a bride, had been the schoolmate of Edith.

Here, at the fork, the party halted to take leave.

Commodore Waugh called his niece to ride up to the carriage window and gave her many messages for Colonel Fairlie, for Fanny and for Fanny's young bridegroom, and many charges to be careful and prudent, and not to ride out unattended, etc.

And then he called up the two old negroes and charged them to see their young mistress safely at Hay Hill and then to return to Luckenough and take care of the house and such things as were felt behind in case the British should not visit it, and to shut up the house after them in case they should come and rob it and leave it standing. Two wretched old negroes would be in little personal danger from the soldiers.

So argued Commodore Waugh as he took leave of them and gave orders for the carriage to move on up the main branch of the road leading north toward Prince George's and Montgomery.

But so argued not the poor old negroes, as they followed Edith up the west branch of the road that led to Charles County.

This pleasant road ran along the side of a purling brook under the shadow of the great trees that skirted the forest, and Edith ambled leisurely along, low humming to herself some pretty song or listening to the merry carols of the birds or noticing the speckled fish that gamboled through the dark, glimmering stream or reverting to the subject of her last reading.

But beneath all this childish play of fancy, one grave, sorrowful thought lay heavy upon Edith's tender heart. It was the thought of poor old Luckenough "deserted at its utmost need" to the ravages of

the foe. Then came the question if it were not possible, in case of the house being attacked, to save it—even for her to save it. While these things were brewing in Edith's mind, she rode slowly and more slowly, until at length her pony stopped. Then she noticed for the first time the heavy, downcast looks of her attendants.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"Oh! Miss Edith, don't ask me, honey—don't! Ain't we-dem got to go back to de house and stay dar by our two selves arter we see you safe?" said Jenny, crying.

"No! what? you two alone!" exclaimed Edith, looking from one to the other.

"Yes, Miss Edith, 'deed we has, chile—but you needn't look so 'stonish and 'mazed. You can't help of it, chile. An' if de British do come dar and burn de house and heave we-dem into de fire jes' out of wanton, it'll only be two poor, ole, unvaluable niggers burned up. Ole marse know dat well enough—dat's de reason he resks we."

"But for what purpose have you to return?" asked Edith, wondering.

"Oh! to feed de cattle and de poultry? and take care o' de things dat's lef behine," sobbed Jenny, now completely broken down by her terrors. "I know—I jis does—how dem white niggers o' Co'bu'ns 'ill set de house o' fire, an' heave we-dem two poor old innocen's into de flames out'n pure debblish wanton!"

Edith passed her slender fingers through her curls, stringing them out as was her way when absent in thought. She was turning the whole matter over in her mind. She might possibly save the mansion, though these two old people were not likely to be able to do so—on the contrary, their ludicrous terrors would tend to stimulate the wanton cruelty of the marauders to destroy them with the house. Edith suddenly took her resolution, and turned her horse's head, directing her attendants to follow.

"But where are you going to go, Miss Edith?" asked her groom, Oliver, now speaking for the first time.

"Back to Luckenough."

"What for, Miss Edith, for goodness sake?"

"Back to Luckenough to guard the dear old house, and take care of you two."

"But oh, Miss Edy! Miss Edy! for Marster in heaven's sake what'll come o' you?"

"What the Master in heaven wills!"

"Lord, Lord, Miss Edy! ole marse 'ill kill we-dem. What 'ill old marse say? What 'ill everybody say to a young gal a-doin' of anything like dat dar? Oh, dear! dear! what will everybody say?"

"They will say," said Edith, "if I meet the enemy and save the house—they will say that Edith Lance is a heroine, and her name will be probably preserved in the memory of the neighborhood. But if I fail and lose my life, they will say that Edith was a cracked-brained girl who deserved her fate, and that they had always predicted she would come to a bad end."

"Better go on to Hay Hill, Miss Edy! 'Deed, 'fore marster, better go to Hay Hill."

"No," said the young girl, "my resolution is taken—we will return to Luckenough."

The arguments of the old negroes waxed fainter and fewer. They felt a vague but potent confidence in Edith and her abilities, and a sense of protection in her presence, from which they were loth to part.

The sun was high when they entered the forest shades again.

"See," said Edith to her companions, "everything is so fresh and beautiful and joyous here! I cannot even imagine danger."

Edith on reaching Luckenough retired to bed, and addressed herself to sleep. It was in vain—her nerves were fearfully excited. In vain she tried to combat her terrors—they completely overmastered her. She was violently shocked out of a fitful doze.

Old Jenny stood over her, lifting her up, shaking her, and shouting in her ears:

"Miss Edith! Miss Edith! They are here! They are here! We shall be murdered in our beds!"

In the room stood old Oliver, gray with terror, while all the dogs on the premises were barking madly, and a noisy party at the front was trying to force an entrance.

Violent knocking and shaking at the outer door and the sound of voices.

"Open! open! let us in! for God's sake, let us in!"

"Those are fugitives—not foes—listen—they plead—they do not threaten—go and unbar the door, Oliver," said Edith.

Reluctantly and cautiously the old man obeyed.

"Light another candle, Jenny—that is dying in its socket—it will be out in a minute."

Trembling all over, Jenny essayed to do as she was bid, but only succeeded in putting out the expiring light. The sound of the unbar-ring of the door had deprived her of the last remnant of self-control. Edith struck a light, while the sound of footsteps and voices in the hall warned her that several persons had entered.

"It's Nell, and Liddy, and Sol, from Hay Hill! Oh, Miss Edy! Thorg and his men are up dar a 'stroyin' everything! Oh, Miss Edy! an' us thought it was so safe an' out'n de way up dar! Oh, what a 'scape! what a 'scape we-dem has had!"

CHAPTER II.

THE ATTACK.

That summer day was so holy in its beauty, so bright, so clear, so cool; that rural scene was so soothing in its influences, so calm, so fresh, so harmonious; it was almost impossible to associate with that lovely day and scene thoughts of wrong and violence and cruelty. So felt Edith as she sometimes lifted her eyes from her work to the beauty and glory of nature around her. And if now her heart ached it was more with grief for Fanny's fate than dread of her own. There comes, borne upon the breeze that lifts her dark tresses, and fans her pearly cheeks, the music of many rural voices—of rippling streams and rustling leaves and twittering birds and humming bees.

But mingled with these, at length, there comes to her attentive ear a sound, or the suspicion of a sound, of distant horse hoofs falling upon the forest leaves—it draws nearer—it becomes distinct—she knows it now—it is—it is a troop of British soldiers approaching the house!

They rode in a totally undisciplined and disorderly manner; reeling in their saddles, drunken with debauchery, red-hot, reeking from some scene of fire and blood!

And in no condition to be operated upon by Edith's beautiful and holy influences.

They galloped into the yard—they galloped up to the house—their leader threw himself heavily from his horse and advanced to the door.

It was the terrible and remorseless Thorg! No one could doubt the identity for a single instant. The low, square-built, thick-set body, the huge head, the bull neck, heavy jowl, coarse, sensual lips, blood-shot eyes, and fiery visage surrounded with coarse red hair—the whole brutalized, demonized aspect could belong to no monster in

the universe but that cross between the fiend and the beast called Thorg! And now he came, intoxicated, inflamed, burning with fierce passions from some fell scene of recent violence!

Pale as death, and nearly as calm, Edith awaited his coming. She could not hope to influence this man or his associates. She knew her fate now — it was death! — death by her own hand, before that man's foot should profane her threshold! She knew her fate, and knowing it, grew calm and strong. There were no more hopes or fears or doubts or trepidations. Over the weakness of the flesh the spirit ruled victorious, and Edith stood revealed to herself richly endowed with that heroism she had so worshiped in others — in that supreme moment mistress of herself and of her fate. To die by her own hand! but not rashly — not till a trial should be made — not till the last moment. And how beautiful in this last fateful moment she looked! The death pallor had passed from her countenance — the summer breeze was lifting the light black curls — soft shadows were playing upon the pearly brow — a strange elevation irradiated her face, and it "shone as it had been the face of an angel."

"By George! boys, what a pretty wench! Keep back, you d — d rascals!" (for the men had dismounted and were pressing behind him) "keep back, I say, you drunken — —! Let rank have precedence in love as in other things! Your turn may come afterward! Ho! pretty mistress, has your larder the material to supply my men with a meal?"

Edith glanced around for her attendants. Jenny lay upon the hall floor, fallen forward upon her face, in a deep swoon. Oliver stood out upon the lawn, his teeth chattering, and his knees knocking together with terror, yet faintly meditating a desperate onslaught to the rescue with his wooden rake.

"No matter! for first of all we must have a taste of those dainty lips; stand back, bl — t you," he vociferated with a volley of appalling oaths, that sent the disorderly men, who were again crowding behind him, back into the rear; "we would be alone, d — — you; do you hear?"

The drunken soldiers fell back, and he advanced toward Edith, who stood calm in desperate resolution. She raised her hand to supplicate or wave him off, he did not care which — her other hand,

hanging down by her side, grasped the pistol, which she concealed in the folds of her dress.

"Hear me," she said, "one moment, I beseech you!"

The miscreant paused.

"Proceed, my beauty! Only don't let the grace before meat be too long."

"I am a soldier's child," said Edith; her sweet, clear voice slightly quavering like the strings of a lute over which the wind has passed; "I am a soldier's child—my father died gallantly on the field of battle. You are soldiers, and will not hurt a soldier's orphan daughter."

"Not for the universe, my angel; bl—t 'em! let any of 'em hurt a hair of your head! I only want to love you a little, my beauty! that's all!—only want to pet you to your heart's content;" and the brute made a step toward her.

"Hear me!" exclaimed Edith, raising her hand.

"Well, well, go on, my dear, only don't be too long!—for my men want something to eat and drink, and I have sworn not to break my fast until I know the flavor of those ripe lips."

Edith's fingers closed convulsively upon the pistol still held bidden.

"I am alone and defenseless," she said; "I remained here, voluntarily, to protect our home, because I had faith in the better feelings of men when they should be appealed to. I had heard dreadful tales of the ravages of the enemy through neighboring sections of the country. I did not fully believe them. I thought them the exaggerations of terror, and knew how such stories grow in the telling. I could not credit the worst, believing, as I did, the British nation to be an upright and honorable enemy—British soldiers to be men—and British officers gentlemen. Sir, have I trusted in vain? Will you not let me and my servants retire in peace? All that the cellars and storehouses of Luckenough contain is at your disposal. You will leave myself and attendants unmolested. I have not trusted in the honor of British soldiers to my own destruction!"

"A pretty speech, my dear, and prettily spoken—but not half so persuasive as the sweet wench that uttered it," said Thorg, springing toward her.

Edith suddenly raised the pistol—an expression of deadly determination upon her face.

Thorg as suddenly fell back. He was an abominable coward in addition to his other qualities.

"Seize that girl! Seize and disarm her! What mean you, rascals? Are you to be foiled by a girl? Seize and disarm her, I say! Are you men?"

Yes, they were men, and therefore, drunken and brutal as they were, they hesitated to close upon one helpless girl.

"H—I fire and furies! surround! disarm her, I say!" vociferated Thorg.

Edith stood, her hand still grasping the pistol—her other one raised in desperate entreaty.

"Oh! one moment! for heaven's sake, one moment! Still hear me! I would not have fired upon your captain! Nor would I fire upon one of you, who close upon me only at your captain's order. There is something within me that shrinks from taking life! even the life of an enemy—any life but my own, and that only in such a desperate strait as this. Oh! by the mercy that is in my own heart, show mercy to me! You are men! You have mothers, or sisters, or wives at home, whom you hope to meet again, when war and its insanities are over. Oh! for their sakes, show mercy to the defenseless girl who stands here in your power! Do not compel her to shed her own blood! for, sure as you advance one step toward me, I pull this trigger, and fall dead at your feet." And Edith raised the pistol and placed the muzzle to her own temple—her finger against the trigger.

The men stood still—the captain swore.

"H—I fire and flames! Do you intend to stand there all day, to hear the wench declaim? Seize her, curse you! Wrench that weapon from her hand."

"Not so quick as I can pull the trigger!" said Edith—her eyes blazing with the sense of having fate—the worst of fate in her own

hands; it was but a pressure of the finger, to be made quick as lightning, and she was beyond their power! Her finger was on the trigger—the muzzle of the pistol, a cold ring of steel, pressed her burning temple! She felt it kindly—protective as a friend's kiss!

"Seize her! Seize her, curse you!" cried the brutal Thorg, "what care I whether she pull the trigger or not? Before the blood cools in her body, I will have had my satisfaction! Seize her, you infernal—"

"Captain, countermand your order! I beg, I entreat you, countermand your order! You yourself will greatly regret having given it, when you are calmer," said a young officer, riding hastily forward, and now, for the first time, taking a part in the scene.

An honorable youth in a band of licensed military marauders.

"Sdeath, sir! Don't interfere with me! Seize her, rascals!"

"One step more, and I pull the trigger!" said Edith.

"Captain Thorg! This must not be!" persisted the young officer.

"D—n, sir! Do you oppose me? Do you dare? Fall back, sir, I command you! Scoundrels! close upon that wench and bind her!"

"Captain Thorg! This shall not be! Do you hear? Do you understand? I say this violence shall not be perpetrated!" said the young officer, firmly.

"D—n, sir! Are you drunk, or mad? You are under arrest, sir! Corporal Truman, take Ensign Shields' sword!"

The young man was quickly disarmed, and once more the captain vociferated:

"Knock down and disarm that vixen! Obey your orders, villains! Or by h—l, and all its fiends, I'll have you all court-martialed, and shot before to-morrow noon!"

The soldiers closed around the unprotected girl.

"Lord, all merciful! forgive my sins," she prayed, and with a firm hand pulled the trigger!

It did not respond to her touch—it failed! it failed!

Casting the traitorous weapon from her, she sunk upon her knees, murmuring:

"Lost—lost—all is lost!" remained crushed, overwhelmed, awaiting her fate!

"Ha! ha! ha! as pretty a little make-believe as ever I saw!" laughed the brutal Thorg, now perfectly at his ease, and gloating over her beauty, and helplessness, and, deadly terror. "As pretty a little sham as ever I saw!"

"It was no sham! She couldn't sham! I drew out the shot unbeknownst to her! I wish, I does, my fingers had shriveled and dropped off afore they ever did it!" exclaimed Oliver, in a passion of remorse, as he ran forward, rake in hand.

He was quickly thrown down and disarmed—no one had any hesitation in dealing with him.

"Now then, my fair!" said Thorg, moving toward his victim.

Edith was now wild with desperation—her eyes flew wildly around in search of help, where help there seemed none. Then she turned with the frenzied impulse of flying.

But the men surrounded to cut off her retreat.

"Nay, nay, let her run! Let her run! Give her a fair start, and do you give chase! It will be the rarest sport! Fox-hunting is a good thing, but girl-chasing must be the very h—l of sport, when I tell you—mind, I tell you, men—she shall be the exclusive prize of him who catches her!" swore the remorseless Thorg.

Edith had gained the back door.

They started in pursuit.

"Now, by the living Lord that made me, the first man that lays hands on her shall die!" suddenly exclaimed the young ensign, wresting his sword from the hand of the corporal, springing between Edith and her pursuers, flashing out the blade, and brandishing it in the faces of the foremost.

He was but a stripling, scarcely older than Edith's self—the arm that wielded that slender blade scarcely stronger than Edith's