

The Step Mother

BY SUSANNA MOODIE

Well I recall my Father's wife,
The day he brought her home.
His children looked for years of strife,
And troubles sure to come—
Ungraciously we welcomed her,
A thing to scorn and blame;
And swore we never would confer
On her, a Mother's name

I see her yet—a girl in years,
With eyes so blue and mild;
She greeted us with smiles and tears,
How sweetly too she smiled—
She bent to kiss my sullen brow,
With woman's gentle grace;
And laid her tiny hand of snow
On my averted face—

"Henry—is this your son? She said—
"Dear boy—he now is mine—
What not one kiss?—" I shook my head,
"I am no son of thine!—"
She sighed—and from her dimpled cheek
The rosy colour fled;
She turned away and did not speak,
My thoughts were with the dead—

There leaped from out my Father's eyes
A jet of swarthy fire;
That flashed on me in fierce surprise—
I fled before his ire
I heard her gentle voice entreat—
"Forgiveness for her sake"—
Which added swiftness to my feet,
A sad and strange mistake—

A year had scarcely rolled away
When by that hated bride;
I loved to linger half the day,
In very joy and pride;
Her voice was music to mine ear,
So soft its accent fell;
"Dear Mother now"—and oh, how dear
No words of mine can tell—

She was so gentle, fair and kind,
So pure in soul and free from art;

That woman with her noble mind,
 Subdued my rebel heart—
I just had learned to know her worth,
 My Father's second choice to bless;
When God removed her from the earth,
 And plunged us all in deep distress—

Hot fever smote with burning blight
 Stretchd on a restless bed of pain;
I moaning lay from morn till night
 With aching limbs and throbbing brain—
Four weary weeks beside my bed,
 She sat within a darkened room;
Untiring held my aching head,
 Nor heeded silence—cold and gloom—

And when my courage quite gave way,
 And fainter grew my struggling breath;
She taught my stricken soul to pray
 And calmly meet approaching death—
"Fear not God's angel, sent by Him,
 The weary spirit to release;
Before the mortal eyes grow dim,
 Floats down the white winged dove of peace"—

There came a change—but fingers small,
 No longer smoothed my matted hair;
She sprang not to my feeble call,
 Nor helped to lift me to my chair—
And I arose as from the dead,
 A life for her dear life was given;
The angel who had watched my bed
 Had vanished into Heaven!—