

**NAXOS**  
AudioBooks

**CLASSIC  
FICTION**

Elizabeth Gaskell  
**Wives and Daughters**

Read by **Patience Tomlinson**



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|    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 1  | THE DAWN OF A GALA DAY                                      | 5:25 |
| 2  | After the proper amount of exhibition...                    | 3:38 |
| 3  | 'Ah, yes! as soon as we have got over the school...'        | 3:20 |
| 4  | A NOVICE AMONG THE GREAT FOLK                               | 4:55 |
| 5  | At length she saw the pretty lady coming back...            | 5:07 |
| 6  | Molly – only child as she was...                            | 4:53 |
| 7  | Mrs Kirkpatrick came gliding up...                          | 5:02 |
| 8  | MOLLY GIBSON'S CHILDHOOD                                    | 3:16 |
| 9  | Mr Gibson's domestic affections...                          | 2:48 |
| 10 | MR GIBSON'S NEIGHBOURS                                      | 3:29 |
| 11 | Perhaps the man of all others...                            | 3:14 |
| 12 | If Roger did not do well at Cambridge it was his own fault. | 2:54 |
| 13 | CALF-LOVE   | 5:34 |
| 14 | Mr Coxe hung his head a little, and meditated.              | 2:13 |
| 15 | A VISIT TO THE HAMLEYS                                      | 4:12 |
| 16 | 'Ah! But it was not a lesson. I remember the painter...'    | 4:44 |
| 17 | Molly was so deep in one of Sir Walter Scott's novels...    | 2:32 |
| 18 | FORESHADOWS OF LOVE PERILS                                  | 2:22 |
| 19 | So Mr Gibson rode round to the stables...                   | 4:00 |
| 20 | DRIFTING INTO DANGER  | 4:04 |

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| 21 | During this absence of Molly's...                               | 5:28 |
| 22 | THE WIDOWER AND THE WIDOW                                       | 5:22 |
| 23 | But the first day on which Mr Gibson paid his visit...          | 2:07 |
| 24 | A CRISIS  | 4:04 |
| 25 | It was the next morning before Mr Gibson arrived...             | 4:56 |
| 26 | For a minute or two he thought it would be kinder...            | 4:46 |
| 27 | To their surprise, Molly came in, trying hard to look as usual. | 3:40 |
| 28 | MAKING FRIENDSHIP   | 3:30 |
| 29 | It is a question whether Mrs Kirkpatrick or Molly wished...     | 4:30 |
| 30 | Mrs Kirkpatrick led her into Lady Cumnor's presence...          | 3:03 |
| 31 | Molly had held up all the day bravely...                        | 3:45 |
| 32 | PREPARING FOR THE WEDDING                                       | 3:12 |
| 33 | MOLLY GIBSON'S NEW FRIENDS                                      | 4:50 |
| 34 | Mr Preston must have heard her step...                          | 3:51 |
| 35 | MOLLY FINDS HERSELF PATRONISED                                  | 3:57 |
| 36 | 'I used to think I managed her...'                              | 3:56 |
| 37 | Then the carriage came round...                                 | 2:31 |
| 38 | All the gentlemen were gone...                                  | 2:45 |
| 39 | THE NEW MAMMA   | 4:14 |
| 40 | For some time the murmurs and grumblings...                     | 4:26 |

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| 41 | THE BRIDE AT HOME   | 4:21 |
| 42 | Squire Hamley came in.  | 3:48 |
| 42 | TROUBLE AT HAMLEY HALL  | 4:53 |
| 44 | The squire asked Molly every day...                             | 4:01 |
| 45 | MR OSBORNE'S SECRET   | 3:08 |
| 46 | The last afternoon of her stay at the Hall came.                | 3:06 |
| 47 | CYNTHIA'S ARRIVAL   | 5:22 |
| 48 | A woman will have this charm...                                 | 4:34 |
| 49 | 'Well, then mamma had to go out as a governess...'              | 5:28 |
| 50 | MRS GIBSON'S VISITORS   | 5:20 |
| 51 | Molly went back to her seat by Cynthia.                         | 4:31 |
| 52 | THE HALF-SISTERS  | 4:26 |
| 53 | 'We've had our unexpected visitor, too,' said Mr Gibson.        | 3:38 |
| 54 | OSBORNE HAMLEY REVIEWS HIS POSITION                             | 3:37 |
| 55 | MRS GIBSON'S LITTLE DINNER                                      | 2:49 |
| 56 | 'Ah, Mr Gibson, I have found out...'                            | 3:51 |
| 57 | HOLLINGFORD IN A BUSTLE   | 2:47 |
| 58 | The afternoon of the day on which the ball was to take place... | 3:24 |
| 59 | A CHARITY BALL  | 4:41 |
| 60 | Meanwhile Miss Piper and Miss Phoebe...                         | 4:42 |

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| 61 | Mr Preston was looking intently and angrily...        | 4:59 |
| 62 | Lady Harriet, spied the Gibson party...               | 5:14 |
| 63 | Molly felt innocent enough, and made no reply.        | 3:05 |
| 64 | She put her arm in her brother's as she spoke...      | 2:58 |
| 65 | RIVALRY   | 4:12 |
| 66 | 'Oh, but you must be with us! We must wait...'        | 4:42 |
| 67 | For some reason or other, unknown to the Gibsons...   | 4:58 |
| 68 | 'I believe I have been very thoughtless...'           | 4:07 |
| 69 | BUSH-FIGHTING   | 5:07 |
| 70 | Presently, Osborne came upstairs...                   | 5:47 |
| 71 | Again Cynthia was lost in thought...                  | 4:43 |
| 72 | OLD WAYS AND NEW WAYS                                 | 4:50 |
| 73 | COMING EVENTS   | 4:23 |
| 74 | Lady Harriet was sorry to miss Molly...               | 4:42 |
| 75 | Cynthia now joined the party, pretty and elegant...   | 3:25 |
| 76 | BRIGHTENING PROSPECTS                                 | 2:00 |
| 77 | 'What's this I hear about Roger?' said Mr Gibson...   | 2:59 |
| 78 | 'I wish I could tell his mother,' said the squire...  | 4:27 |
| 79 | A LOVER'S MISTAKE                                     | 4:05 |
| 80 | Cynthia did not seem inclined to repeat her saying... | 3:18 |

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| 81  | THE MOTHER'S MANOEUVRE  | 4:59 |
| 82  | 'I knew,' said she through sobs and tears...                      | 4:52 |
| 83  | 'Has mamma told you?' said she...                                 | 5:15 |
| 84  | 'He's not the eldest son,' continued the squire...                | 3:12 |
| 85  | 'Your Molly is one in a thousand...'                              | 3:49 |
| 86  | MR KIRKPATRICK, Q.C.  | 3:17 |
| 87  | MOLLY GIBSON BREATHES FREELY                                      | 3:04 |
| 88  | 'You see a great deal of Mr Preston, don't you, Molly!'           | 4:04 |
| 89  | GATHERING CLOUDS  | 3:50 |
| 90  | 'I'm afraid I'm not as much struck by the wonder of the thing...' | 3:01 |
| 91  | THE STORM BURSTS  | 3:44 |
| 92  | Molly left the path and went straight...                          | 4:12 |
| 93  | 'I am quite puzzled by you both,' said Molly.                     | 4:07 |
| 94  | CYNTHIA'S CONFESSION  | 5:39 |
| 95  | He sate down on the table...                                      | 5:35 |
| 96  | 'So now you understand it all, Molly.'                            | 5:50 |
| 97  | MOLLY GIBSON TO THE RESCUE  | 3:46 |
| 98  | It was a cloudy blustering day...                                 | 4:43 |
| 99  | 'Does she say that to you in cold blood?'                         | 3:23 |
| 100 | Cynthia was on the watch for her return...                        | 3:41 |

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| 101 | CONFIDENCES   | 3:29 |
| 102 | 'No one here! What a blessing!'                                   | 4:56 |
| 103 | Molly thought for a minute or two...                              | 3:55 |
| 104 | Molly enjoyed her house to herself to the full...                 | 4:00 |
| 105 | HOLLINGFORD GOSSIPS   | 4:59 |
| 106 | SCANDAL AND ITS VICTIMS   | 5:16 |
| 107 | 'Molly Gibson has lost her character, sister. That's it.'         | 5:45 |
| 108 | AN INNOCENT CULPRIT   | 4:45 |
| 109 | 'You say you were not acting for yourself...'                     | 4:36 |
| 110 | 'I hate to have you mixed up in mysteries.'                       | 4:19 |
| 111 | MOLLY GIBSON FINDS A CHAMPION                                     | 2:59 |
| 112 | At length he burst in.  | 4:16 |
| 113 | Lady Harriet, was riding homewards...                             | 4:28 |
| 114 | And he rode home, and told his wife...                            | 1:55 |
| 115 | CYNTHIA AT BAY  | 4:53 |
| 116 | When she looked back upon her visit...                            | 3:44 |
| 117 | At last she said, 'Molly knows it all.'                           | 4:00 |
| 118 | 'TROUBLES NEVER COME ALONE'                                       | 3:54 |
| 119 | 'But here you are, just in such a position before me, Cynthia!'   | 3:50 |
| 120 | She laid her hand on the hot damp skin of the horse's shoulder... | 3:34 |

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| 121 | SQUIRE HAMLEY'S SORROW   | 4:04 |
| 122 | 'Here's Molly,' said Mr Gibson, choking a little himself...    | 3:11 |
| 123 | 'Some months ago Osborne called.'                              | 3:27 |
| 124 | 'Someone must write to Mrs Osborne Hamley.'                    | 4:29 |
| 125 | UNLOOKED-FOR ARRIVALS  | 4:18 |
| 126 | The writing this letter was rather difficult work for Molly... | 4:27 |
| 127 | Her arms relaxed, her figure swayed...                         | 4:49 |
| 128 | MOLLY GIBSON'S WORTH IS DISCOVERED                             | 4:43 |
| 129 | After this, long days passed over...                           | 4:17 |
| 130 | When they came within two miles of Hollingford...              | 4:26 |
| 131 | Molly's delight at seeing her showed itself...                 | 3:08 |
| 132 | AN ABSENT LOVER RETURNS  | 5:17 |
| 133 | Molly went on with her questions on other subjects.            | 3:49 |
| 134 | 'I was so sorry to hear how ill you had been!'                 | 3:18 |
| 135 | 'OFF WITH THE OLD LOVE, AND ON WITH THE NEW.'                  | 5:11 |
| 136 | Now Roger spoke to Molly – spoke hurriedly, spoke hoarsely.    | 4:18 |
| 137 | BRIDAL VISITS AND ADIEUX                                       | 4:03 |
| 138 | 'The squire?' asked Mrs Gibson in some surprise.               | 3:36 |
| 139 | Molly was sitting in the drawing-room pale and trembling...    | 5:14 |
| 140 | When Molly arrived at the Towers...                            | 4:33 |

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| 140 | REVIVING HOPES AND BRIGHTENING PROSPECTS        | 4:47 |
| 141 | Molly stood up.                                 | 4:29 |
| 142 | MOLLY GIBSON AT HAMLEY HALL                     | 4:00 |
| 143 | It so happened that on Molly's last morning...  | 4:36 |
| 144 | ROGER HAMLEY'S CONFESSION                       | 4:51 |
| 145 | One evening after dinner...                     | 4:17 |
| 146 | 'My dear boy!' said Mr Gibson...                | 4:41 |
| 147 | Mr Gibson gave Roger's message to his wife...   | 3:33 |
| 148 | Having married Cynthia, as her mother put it... | 4:41 |

**Total time: 10:17:16**

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Elizabeth Gaskell  
(1810–1865)

# Wives and Daughters

Elizabeth Gaskell was an optimist. She believed that applying Christian morality would lead to a general betterment of society; she believed in the co-operative value of communities; also that progress was not only inevitable, it was necessary. The daughter of a Unitarian minister, she married one, too, but managed to turn her bright-sided religious conviction into novels and stories of depth and character, resisting the urge to moralise just as much as she resisted sentimentality or melodrama (though there were very occasional lapses). Instead, she was inquisitive, energetic, independent, strong and vivacious – addressing the urgent social matters of industrialisation and its impact with imagination and bravery. Almost inevitably, her calls for greater equality meant that she was called a communist, and some of her books were seen as immoral on account of her examination of the problems facing

‘fallen’ women. In a telling example of the tension between the conventions she upheld as a wife and mother and the taboos she addressed as a writer, Elizabeth Gaskell prohibited her own daughters from reading her novel *Ruth* precisely because it tackled such a fraught issue.

Two things set Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell apart from the notional clergyman’s wife who takes to writing. One is that her observation and humility are on a par with Jane Austen’s, allowing her a remarkable insight into character and motive. The other is her direct experience of the matters she describes. Just as Dickens was able to imbue his London with a genuine sense of lived experience, so Mrs Gaskell (she preferred the married title once she had failed to remain anonymous) could speak with profound honesty about quiet rural villages and seething city centres – she knew them both.

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She was born in London, but her mother died when she was just over a year old, and she was sent to her Aunt Lumb in Knutsford, outside Manchester. From here sprang much of her inspiration, in more than one sense. Thanks to her devoted and generous aunt, Elizabeth was educated, in topics ranging from Latin to dancing, and this itself was slightly unusual (in other than socially forward-thinking dissenting sects such as the Unitarians). Furthermore, Knutsford was the small, rural community Elizabeth was to chronicle with such warmth and perception in *Cranford*. Being only a few miles from Manchester, then becoming a massive urban and industrial centre, she was also very aware of the profound changes being wrought in England; she was soon to get to know them a good deal better, and to reflect them in her later novels.

Her brother was lost at sea in 1828, and this affected her deeply, since her father had remarried, and she is likely to have felt somewhat isolated and alone. This must have increased when it became obvious that she and her new stepmother did not get on at all well; indeed the stepmother

may have been the model – in part at least – for the second Mrs Gibson in *Wives and Daughters*. Here again, Elizabeth Gaskell took what she knew at a personal level and used her transformative intelligence to create profound and engrossing fiction. Before that, however, she underwent a transformation of sorts herself: from Elizabeth Stevenson to Mrs William Gaskell; from dissenter's daughter to Minister's helpmeet; and from woman to mother. These duties and obligations filled her life as much as they changed it. She moved from Knutsford to Manchester and saw at close quarters the appalling conditions of the workers, the utter despoliation of individuals under the crushing application of a particular kind of morality, and the physical damage done to people and the landscape by heavy industry. She and William were active campaigners for social improvement, and supported each other's various endeavours.

It was not until some 15 years after her marriage that she started writing. Their son had died at the age of nine months, and William suggested that Elizabeth write to help in coping with her grief. The result

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was *Mary Barton*, which was an immediate and controversial success. Elizabeth quickly became part of the literary world, and was chosen by Dickens to contribute to his magazine *Household Words*; over the following 18 years she produced novels, novellas, travel pieces, a landmark biography of her friend Charlotte Brontë, and occasional articles ranging in style from the Gothic to the delicately intimate.

Her earlier works have been broadly classified as novels of social problems, and that has a deal of truth to it – her fearless, intelligent knowledge and understanding of those issues was what gave her the legitimacy to write them, and was what caused such a rumpus when she did. But *Cranford* (immediately and still hugely popular) illustrated the depth of her humanity, her integrity and the breadth of range she possessed as an author; and all her works were alive to the domestic and personal trials of womanhood as well as to the broader matters of society.

The two often came together, of course. In Molly, the heroine of *Wives and Daughters*, the Victorian ideal of the angelic female – self-negating, always

concerned for others – is placed in conflict with the significantly less than ‘ideal’ alternatives (Cynthia and her mother). While this provides plenty of genuine insight into different characters, and plenty of comedy too, it also addresses, and very critically, the social role of women in a male-dominated society. Molly does try to control her temper, to overlook slights and think of others’ needs – but she also learns to recognise when one must take a stand, and that having an independent voice is not a sin.

In *Wives and Daughters*, all Mrs Gaskell’s experiences and developed skills are brought together in her most mature work. She is able to bring a small community to vivid life; she develops characters that are complex and fulfilling; she tells a story of changing passions with intelligence; and she develops themes that counter each other and are reflected in the characters and the intertwining events of the wider story. And, as always, much of what she placed in the novel was taken from her own experience and transformed into something of broader and more imaginative import. She had

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the synopsis ready before the serialisation began (in the *Cornhill Magazine* between 1864 and 1866), but she died suddenly while viewing a house she had bought for her husband's retirement. The story was unfinished, with one episode remaining; however, she had intimated to the editor (Frederick Greenwood) what she intended, so he completed it.

Mrs Gaskell's books showed the kind of virtuous outcome she believed could be achieved with people and society, demonstrating as they did the value of effort allied to a natural capacity. Once her own gift for writing was discovered she developed and nurtured it using the natural resources of her talent and the lessons of her experience. Had she had the kind of vanity to consider such a thing, it might have pleased her that her career justified her general philosophical optimism.

**Notes by Roy McMillan**



**Patience Tomlinson** has appeared extensively in theatre and radio in the UK. She has worked for the Royal National Theatre and the Young Vic, and was twice a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company. She has made over 1,500 broadcasts, including stories, books, radio plays and poetry. For Naxos AudioBooks, she has played the part of Emilia in *Othello*.

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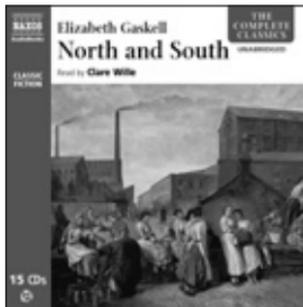
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# Elizabeth Gaskell

# Wives and Daughters

Read by **Patience Tomlinson**

When her father remarries, the honest, innocent Molly Gibson suddenly finds herself with a new stepsister, Cynthia, who is beautiful, worldly and impetuous. This would be more than enough to deal with, but the new wife is the deeply snobbish (and darkly secretive) Hyacinth.

Thwarted love, scheming ambition and small-town gossip underlie the warmth, irony and brilliant social observation which link the relationships and the inevitable conflicts as profound change comes to rural England.

The most mature and rewarding of her novels, *Wives and Daughters* places Elizabeth Gaskell in the first rank of English authors.

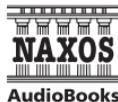


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