

CHAPTER VI.

"THE GRANGE," OCTOBER.

We have broken up all our old ties at last, now we have left us but the memory of the dear old life.

Yesterday we came to Mr. Marstone's where we are to stay for a little while until we find what is best to be done.

Our kind friend declares :

"This must henceforth be your home, Bertha, be content to abide beneath my roof henceforth."

But I know this may not be. I know that I must not subsist upon the bounty of any man, even this one who is our kind and tender friend.

Oh I have need to lay fast hold upon the promises and to bless my God they are so sure, "no chastening seemeth for the present joyous, but rather grievous, but it worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Oh weary desolate widow, it was hard to part with all,—to sever the thousand ties which bound you to that spot, To leave the home of your happy married life never to see it more.

To leave all the brightness and beauty behind, to tread a cold gloomy path leading you wist not where.

But it is worse missing the strong sustaining arm, which once you called your own. Poor widow! poor fatherless children!

The promises are sure, are very precious, abounding in graciousness, for what is beyond, if I could accept them as I ought, and wear them ever as a shield over my heart, but I cannot always, sometimes it is hard to remember all I should, to see the "hand" behind the cloud.

I pray God will put it into Mr. Hartley's heart to be a kind landlord and master, to the many whom He has given to his charge.

The night before we came away I went down to the village, and with Marion and Leonore, took a tender farewell of all those over whom we have so long held an almost feudal sway. Their honest, heartfelt expressions of love and sorrow well-nigh broke my heart.

Every thing which I have brought away from—"Percy's

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Cliff,"—which consists of our wardrobe, some plain cottage furniture (I purchased long ago for the use of my governess Fenton, but which she died before she saw) some bedding, table linen and a few other necessities which I have reserved, I have had stowed away in Alison William's attic.

Of these things, there is a good supply, and it is some comfort to know, with care they will last us many years, so that we need spend none of our earnings, in this way at least. Those dreadful earnings! how they haunt me!

People may talk of the pleasure of independence, of the sweetness of bread bought by your own labor, but I confess, I have no desire to experience these delights, dependence was never a galling chain to me, never anything but blessed.

I have also a few books, the pictures I saved with a few other mementoes before the appraisalment. All these I will leave until we are settled in that home, the location of which as yet we know not, and then Ally will send them all to us, so I have arranged with her.

Mr. Marstone gave me one hundred dollars to-night saying :

"It is the proceeds of a claim, which has been overlooked."

Although I know almost, the claim exists only in his own kind heart, I could not grieve him by refusing to take the money. He will not miss it from his abundance, kind friend, and alas! we need it, this and the few dollars I chanced to have about me are all we have to start in life upon—God help us!

OCTOBER 10.

Our sorrows are innumerable, another stroke, one more of the few friends gone. It is a dreary history, death following death. The third day after we came here Mr. Marstone was attacked late in the night, in a most alarming manner, with what the physician upon his arrival to our horror pronounced apoplexy.

We watched him day and night for five days, but after the first night he never spoke, and then only to say,

"Bertha my child do not be alarmed, go back to bed I shall be better soon I trust."

After that although he strove continually to speak he was never able, but only produced a strange guttural sound most

distressing to hear, and then when he became aware we could not understand him his anguish seemed beyond endurance.

I endeavored in every way to assist him, repeating a list of things I thought might have among them the right thing, but in vain, and in despair I desisted from what was alike a torture to us both.

To night he sank to sleep, and in that sleep the angel of death laid his chill finger upon him, and he never spoke again, but went from earth to heaven.

My last earthly friend gone, the only one to whom I could look for guidance. And now he lies shrouded before me, and as I write I keep my last vigil over him, and I weep that he is gone. But only for myself—for on his aged careworn face, round which the thin white hairs lay like a halo, there already rests "that peace which passeth understanding."

I wonder why all I love die? can there be aught in my love to wither their lives? to dry up their hearts' blood? why do they drop away from me one by one, all my early friends, my beloved ones!

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OCTOBER 12.

We have buried our last friend from our sight, a good man gone to rest. God will receive the friend of the fatherless and widow.

By a will which is dated five years back, his whole fortune is left (with the exception of a few legacies to his servants) "to the son of my dear and only sister."

Perhaps it is wrong, but I cannot help wondering if his desire to speak had not something to do with leaving us something, or recommending us to his heir, but such thoughts are worse than useless now.

To-morrow we will start for the city of B——, there to commence far from our old friends and associations our struggle for bread.

This is my first step alone,—pray God it may be right. A bitter thought strikes me; next summer when the city of P—— sends forth its citizens to their pleasant homes in this neighbourhood, how many will mourn for us, who

will shed a tear of regret over the early death of the master of 'Percy's Cliffe' and the scattering of his family from their princely home. Who will sorrow that I am an exile, and that Walter sleeps out yonder in "God's acre."

But what right have I to repine thus? I have ever received kindnesses and pleasant greetings from all mankind, surely I of all women have the least reason to judge the world harshly. I have read often that poverty embitters, and causes us to look with jaundiced eyes upon all who come in contact with us.

I pray this may not be my case, for surely love is better than hate and I will nourish a loving heart.

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CHAPTER VII.

One by one thy duties wait thee,
Let thy whole strength go to each,
Let no future dreams o'ertake thee,
Learn thou first what these can teach.
Poem entitled ONE BY ONE.

OCTOBER 16.

It was hard to leave all that we had known so long, that cold grey morning, but we did it, and after three tedious days of travel are at last in B——.

I am strongly oppressed with the weight of responsibility which rests upon me; it is a new thing for me to have the care of others, and it frightens me. But still there is comfort in thinking how much worse it might have been, for if upon the journey any one of us had been taken ill what would have become of us.

As it is we have need for thanksgiving that we are all so perfectly well. Marion and I divided the care of baby between us, and although her light weight became a sadly heavy one before the journey ended, yet we have no right to murmur, for she was a darling good little one.

Leánore took her two little sisters under her own especial charge, and we had no trouble concerning them.

The other two took care of themselves, or one another, and enjoyed the journey hugely.

We arrived here late in the night, and were brought to this Hotel by a hackman, who fortunately for us, judged from our one trunk, I suppose, we were scant of funds, and chose a cheap one for us.

But a Hotel be it never so reasonable, is not quite the place for a family of eight with only one hundred dollars in the world, so to-morrow I must try and find a lowlier home.

Poor little children, they are completely worn out and wearied with novelties, "Want to go home to dear papa."

Our only room, with its two beds and lounge, scarcely serves to accommodate us, but we are learning to do with less each day.

I have cut out a few advertisements of boarding houses. In the morning I will seek out some of them, for we must not stay here much longer, or we will be penniless.

OCTOBER 17.

At last this weary day is ended—how tired I am—how bruised my heart feels. It is very desolate to be poor and friendless, in this great wilderness of stone, yes stone, that is it stony hearts cold and hard.

This morning with the advertisements I had chosen, I went forth but, very soon my inability to choose for myself was forced upon me. For of all the list of places I had selected not one was within my means. Some of them would have taken all I had in one week, even the very meanest were not to be thought of, for an instant.

Oh where shall I go, what can I do, I have traversed this great city, until I am footsore and weary. I have talked and bargained and even begged for a home with coarse rough strangers, in vain, in vain.

How fearful the future looks—if there was only some one to whom I might go, just once for advice.

If I were only rich there are hundreds in this and other lands from whom I would without a moment's hesitation seek counsel, but now I am poor, it therefore cannot be.

Well it will only be for a little while this pilgrimage of woe, beyond, it is very bright, but it is weary waiting.

Perhaps if I were to ask some of the servants here they would assist me. I must not be proud, they know more than I of the ins and outs of city life. I will wait until morning then try this seemingly last resort.

Oh Mr. Audley where are you in this our grievous time of need, we are "your boy's" treasures, you would guard and direct us, vain hope, vain wish! in some foreign clime, far away, so far, I cannot reach you, you abide, as totally cut off from us, as though it were worlds that severed us instead of seas, I must not wait and hope for your protection—but strive, and endure.

OCTOBER 17.

At last we have found a place of shelter, a place where we may abide until they carry us to the home for paupers or that safer, happier home, the grave.

It would be a fine thing truly, if we Percies who boast so proudly of our lineage, and noble name, who are wont to tell with brightening eyes, and raised head of our descent from a race of kings, a brave thing if we ended our days in an alms-house: it is nearly that now at least!

Early this morning I called the girl who has waited upon us since we came, and with a quickening heart asked,

"Can you tell me of any room, or rooms suitable for a poor seamstress and her family? I am making enquiries for a person who needs them at once, but as I know nothing of this city, I am at loss where to search."

"Is it for a very poor woman, ma'am?"

"Yes," and the truth struck me drearily, "yes a very poor woman."

"Because ma'am if she is willing to live in an out of the way place, with a nice decent woman in a poor sort of way, why maybe I do know of a place, but you will think it too poor."

"At least let me see it, I will be obliged to you whether I take it or not," I replied.

"Well ma'am, Jane one of the other chamber-maids was a-telling me yesterday, how her mother had two rooms to let, and could find no nice body at all to take them, shall I send her to you ma'am?"

"No, no," I said quickly, dreading to talk with another of these strange girls, "you can find out all about them for me, the price and every thing and then come and tell me."

In a little while she came back, saying,

"They are in the upper part of the city ma'am, and rent for five dollars a month."

What a price! they must be poor indeed! was my first thought, but the next, gratitude at this partial ending of my troubles.

"Jane can go show you the way, ma'am, if you can go before breakfast, it is all the time she has."

We started at once, and following my companion, a tidy looking Irish girl, it seemed to me for miles, the houses growing smaller and the streets narrower as we progressed. At length we turned into a court upon either side of which were high frame houses, narrow and dirty looking.

Before the most decent of these Jane stopped and knocked, saying with a smile:

"This is mother's house ma'am, and a douce decent body ye'll find her to be."

The door opened, and the clean old woman within made her words good.

She showed me the rooms upon the third floor, and from their appearance as well as that of the rest of the house, I felt sure this woman had the crowning virtue of cleanliness, and she is a kind motherly old woman as her hearty welcome of her child testified.

I have taken the rooms for one month, a few days ago I would have scorned them, but after yesterday's experience I am only too grateful for them.

I have paid the rent in advance and also given Mrs. MacKay five additional dollars with which she has promised to make the place tenantable by to-morrow.

The front is the smaller room of the two, this we will have for our sitting and dining room, the other with two bedsteads in it will be our sleeping apartment. Truly "necessity is the mother of invention."

When I returned to my little folks I found them sadly hungry and tired of waiting for breakfast, and very indignant with Marion because she made them,

"Wait until Mamma came back."

I had no words for them, but could only pray them in

piteous impatience to leave me alone awhile, the darkness of that hour weighed down all other care.

I rang for Jane with whom my long walk had made me friends, and sent the children under her care to breakfast.

Then I laid me down beside my baby, and I remember the thought came to me:

"Poor little baby, how she sleeps, free from care"—and ere I had thought it, I was wrapped in dreamless slumbers, which lasted for hours.

Too much mental and physical exertion had done their work, and even while I suffered most severely, the dreary fate before me, my exhausted faculties were locked in a quiet restful sleep, the first I have known for weeks.

The good it has done me is past counting. Marion says she found me stretched beside baby, with the sun streaming into my face, when they came up.

Then she sent all the children under Lela's care to the drawing-room to stay until I awoke. She with Jane's assistance procured some food for baby, and when she slept again, laid her beside me.

Then while she kept watch over us, her nimble fingers packed our trunk ready for the start.

When I awoke it was as from a quiet sleep on my own bed. I lay in the dim light which Marion's care had made, and thought it was early morn, and with my eyes closed lay listening for the sound of the chimes which always rang at sunrise from our little hillside church.

When suddenly the loud clashing sound of the gong for dinner, startled me to life and its realities once more.

A kiss was all my darling needed as a reward for her care of me. After a brief toilette we sought poor Leanore and her charge, who we found were cross enough at being kept so long "playing good" in a public parlor.

At dinner the spirit of *finesse*, was upon me, and I insisted upon the children eating heartily of every thing, although Marion and Lela looked surprised and grave.

At last Lela asked.

"What has changed your ideas dear mamma about the children eating every thing they wish to? and so much too, I thought you considered it hurtful."

"Necessity knows no law, child," I said with a laugh, "better let them have it while they can get it, after this they

will perhaps have to live upon the remembrance of the good things of to-day, and serve it up with the additional delicacy of dry bread and water."

I should not have spoken so, for Leanore is strangely sensitive, and I fear will not accept our lot with meekness. The color sprang to her pale face in torrents though she said nothing, but her pale haughty face had a look upon it the rest of the day I did not like to see.

After dinner I paid our bill, and gave Jane something for her trouble. This and the carriage which she engaged for us leaves me sadly out of funds.

From the window where I sat I could see the park. The leaves are just turning and falling off, every thing is beautiful as a dream, the soft mild summer with its birds and flowers, and its soft balmy breezes, seems loath to depart, and lingers, keeping off with winsome smiles, cold winter with his fierce stern frown, almost as stern as poverty's own.

After tea just at dusk with a farewell to Jane we left the hotel and came here, I was thankful the darkness hid the squalor and misery of the place, until my children's eyes have grown more used to poverty. Our rooms looked more cheerful than I had dared to hope. Kind Mrs. Mackay had evidently done her best to make us feel at home beneath her humble roof.

Thus far the little ones enjoy mightily the eating milk porridge off of a deal table, and would hardly go to bed for talking of,

"The fun of having no carpets, and only wooden chairs, and above all of every-body's sleeping in two beds."

Poor children they little knew this same fun is breaking their mother and sister's, heart.

Leanore's quiet unnatural manner distressed me all this afternoon, and I felt she was regretting though in silence our change of fortunes, and with exceeding bitterness.

But to-night all the restraining barriers have been swept away, and she has added to my sorrow ten-fold by the fierceness with which she rebels against our lot.

I was utterly unable to compete with her passionate weeping and wild lamentations, and left her after a few vain attempts to soothe her, to the care of Marion, whose exceeding gentleness always subdues and quiets her.

Leanore is proud and sensitive, morbidly proud I fear, I must guard her most zealously lest her encounter with the world wound her and cause the already too prominent evils in her character to become more developed, I must not have my little daughter grow up with her haughty Percy blood ever ready to start and take umbrage at every slight, for I fear me much the ills we will have to bear, will cause her to learn very early in life the unpalatable lesson of endurance.

"The spurs that patient merit,
Of the unworthy take."

Coralie is so bright and merry, so used to throwing all thought and care away, such a very bird, shaking damps and dust from her wings and soaring sunward, that even were she older I should not have very much fear for her character being injured by the rough rubs which poverty gives. She is a glad merry child, bringing sunshine even into this humble home. The others will give me no trouble save for their bread.

Since I have been writing Lela has come to me humble and repentant, and with down-cast eyes said in a trembling tone:

"Darling mamma please forgive my wickedness, I did not think how wrong it was, or at least I felt so bitter and hateful I did not care, but oh I am very sorry to have troubled you who have so much to bear, with my naughtiness, but I did try indeed I did to be good and quiet all the while until we came here and then—and then it seemed so dreadful I forgot. Oh mamma, I did not think it could be like this. I was not prepared to have everything so changed."

"Nor I darling, I could not realize it for a long while, not till I was obliged to, I was as rebellious at first as my little daughter. I do not blame you pet, for it is only natural you should feel so, Marion is the only saint among us, although she feels the stroke, as keenly as we, she bears it without a murmur, and strengthens us."

"She does, oh she does," said the weeping girl, "she has told me such things to-night, things I never thought of.—Mamma will you promise me one thing?" and her face glowed with earnest feeling.

"Yes dear, anything I can."

"If I ever forget or grow proud and wilful, please put me in mind of to-night, will you dearest?"

I gave the promise with a kiss, and ere long my weary penitent who has thus early taken up her cross, fell into a sweet sleep.

I think this discipline may be a good thing, and prove that to her at least, poverty has come "a blessing in disguise."

Thus even the greatest evils we meet in our pathway may if we use them aright, be turned into stepping-stones, to aid us in our upward journey. It is well to remember God is our all and above all, and that all things come from him. And oftimes what seems most evil, is just the thing we needed to turn our faces up the mountain.

OCTOBER 28.

With a few more dollars from our scanty fund we have after a week's time, succeeded in making our rooms more tenantable.

"It is just as well we have no more furniture," says Cora, "for there is no place to put it, after we are all in our places."

I am so entirely a novice in the actualities of life that I scarcely know how to begin. But it will not do to wait, to-morrow I must go forth and search for employment, I dread exceedingly to commence the battle of life.

I have read often of the sad weary days spent by poor women seeking work. Pray God such may not be my fate, it will be hard enough to have to sew day and night, without having ever before me the dread of not being able to have it to do.

But I will hope better things, I have still some resources left, for I have a great many beautiful articles of clothing, which should the worst come, we may be able to sell. Some linen, elegantly embroidered, some infant's robes, and also some beautiful dresses which belong to Adele and Grace, poor children they can never wear such fine things now, even if we kept them, for French needle-work, and third-story alley rooms are sadly at variance.

These things will provide us I trust with some necessaries.

Last night, and indeed for several nights I have been distressed beyond measure, by the almost unceasing cough of some one evidently far gone in consumption.

Mrs. MacKay tells me it is a poor widow woman, who has been occupying a room in the back building, for some time, and who is killing herself by hard work, even now when she is so ill, she sits up the greater part of the day sewing.

Perhaps I may be of some use to her, I will ask to-morrow, for the very poorest have a kind word to give if nothing else, and that helps us on our way.

There is that fearful cough again, there are worse lots than mine, and yet I murmur so grievously.

OCTOBER 30.

I have been out all day seeking employment, but without success, for though I have sought untiringly in every direction, it has been in vain. Some had nothing to give, others a kind I could not do in a month, and such prices! can men have souls, and thus oppress their fellow-men, grinding the face of the poor. Building up fortunes for themselves upon the foundation of widows' and orphans' tears!

And last night I said we could part with our clothing, our laces and embroideries, it was a foolish idea, like most of my other schemes, we can do no such thing.

Therefore it is, after walking for the greater part of this day without any food, I sit here to-night writing, and wondering with a desperate kind of calmness, how long fifty dollars will keep a family of eight from starvation, or public charity.—

Later in the night.

I must write because I am too restless to sleep, my poor neighbor has become already one whom I, even I can comfort and assist.

While I was writing in the early part of the evening, I was startled by a shriek of alarm, from the room next mine.

To spring up the short flight of stairs and into the room was the work of an instant, what a sight greeted me!

In a room smaller than mine, but rather better furnished, by a dim light of a candle, I could see the death-like face of an old woman, whose attenuated form lay extended upon

the bed. And beside her knelt a boy who with frantic violence strove in vain to staunch the blood which flowed in a dark stream from her lips.

A moment's inspection showed me the state of the case, the poor invalid had been attacked by hemorrhage, and had fainted.

Hastening back I dispatched Marion whom the noise had awakened, and who was dressing when I came in, down for Mrs. MacKay.

With her assistance and such restoratives as I possessed, we succeeded after repeated efforts in stopping the flow of blood, but she still lay for hours in a death-like trance.

But when I saw she was reviving I sent her son from the room fearing his presence would excite her.

Suddenly she unclosed her eyes, saying.

"Poor Stuart do not be"—

But I placed my hand over her lips saying,

"Stuart is very well, a little frightened, but if you will be very quiet for a while I will call him, to speak to you."

I had told Marion to warn him against exciting her, for fear of renewing the hemorrhage.

As soon as with Marion's aid he had removed all signs of the blood stains, he came in, walking gently across the room and stooping over her pressed a tender kiss upon her brow, saying in a low tone.

"I am very glad you are better," and as she moved, "no, no you must not speak or I shall have to go away."

So her eyes had to look the love her lips were forbidden to speak, while he sat beside her, gently stroking her hand. And thus soothed she has fallen into a quiet slumber from which I trust much good may arise. The dawn has just peeped in at the window, and yet the faithful boy sits motionless, with her hand clasped in his own, fearing to move lest it should arouse her.

I stood but now and watched them, she is an old lady, sadly worn, by too much care, her soft grey locks lay above a white face, where the fears of to-day's actualities, and to-morrow's possibilities have carved deep lines, but the hands are fair and delicate, and look as though they were not always used to labor.

The boy is I should judge about sixteen, and although very poorly clad, has that indescribable look of nobility and

refinement, which makes one know he is above the common herd, and will always command respect. It is a very handsome face, indeed one of the handsomest boy faces I ever remember to have seen, only now wearing a look of anxiety and fatigue, which is pitiful to see. Poor boy, I fear his troubles are very near. God be with him and guard his bark securely over the billows of life, when he shall have to breast them alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOVEMBER 20.

It has been several weeks since I have been able to write anything. Since then I have passed through much, working almost unceasingly night and day, for I have work now, thank God. It seems to me a year since that night, when I in such sorrow learned to know my neighbor.

When Mrs. Aldrich awoke we found her, although very weak, much revived, and for a few days we hoped she was better, but this was a vain hope, she was never able to sit up but a few hours at a time. When she grew strong enough for this, I noticed often an anxious perplexed look upon her face. At last she asked:

"Have you provided yourself with work my child?" My tears started at her words and I answered:

"I can get nothing to do, I have tried so hard everywhere but in vain, God only knows what is to become of us," and the fear of what might, brought my head very low in my clasped hands.

"Do not despair my dear child," she replied laying her thin hand upon my head, "God always provides for those who trust him."

"I know, I know, but I cannot see my way clear now"—

"Let me help you. See how our want of faith has kept us anxious. Here have I been worried, because I have some work which I promised should be done long ago, and now you can do it in my place."