

"God is our friend, dear Ernest, and often sends unasked the very blessing we needed most."

"Perhaps so," he said bitterly, "I wish I had your faith Bertha, you always look for brightness to spring out of darkness."

"Not always, Ernest, I wish I did," I answered quickly, the praise making me feel so keenly how often I wickedly forgot to trust everything to God.

Through the course of the day Ernest moved their furniture, which is much nicer than any of ours, and this evening Mrs. Wilbur is comfortably settled in one of the largest apartments our citadel (as Cora calls it,) contains. The other is my own. She has so many pretty things, and is such a grand old lady, that Marion declares:

"Our rooms look quite brilliant to-night."

At Milly's suggestion, I took a survey of Ernest's quarters; poor fellow, he has owned that he has slept all the while either upon the floor with his valise for a pillow, or upon a chair his head upon the table, the table and chair being all his room contained, and the room is about the size of a table-cloth, Milly says:

"No wonder he kept his door shet. I'll clean it to-morrow I guess, and we'll spare him some carpet and put his mother's lounge down there, we'll fix him."

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## CHAPTER XIV.

MAY 20.

OUR days are busy and contented—Ernest has no practice yet, but makes something by his pen. The children get along nicely with their studies—Stuart works very hard, too closely I sometimes fear, but he thinks not.

Ernest is a so much better teacher than myself, that we are all his pupils; our evenings are very pleasant. Now for the first hour Ernest gives the four young students a Latin lesson, because it is of more importance to Stuart than all the other languages put together, he thinks. This is a great advantage to him in school, and he makes great progress.

"He and Cora keep us alive, they say such comical things," says Adele. "First I think Arty is funniest, and the next minute I am sure Cora is," declares Howard admiringly.

"Oh I beg your pardon How!" says Cora, "it is not 'Arty' or I who are funny, but a certain person whom I heard ask yesterday, if the Rocky Mountains were like a cradle or a large chair, and if you had to push them to make them go."

"It was not me said that," declared Howard in a towering passion, "it was Gracie asked me that and I laughed at her."

"Oh!" said Cora quite crest-fallen, for she likes to plague Lela and Howard mightily, but the little girls, she is very tender about.

"Ha! my lady fair," said Stuart in a mocking tone, pulling her curls over her eyes. "I fear you burned your fingers that time."

"Burned my fingers!" looking very innocent of his meaning, "Oh no, I did not, the *sparks* in this room will never set fire to any thing worth burning."

And Stuart subsides, acknowledging a defeat.

Margery has met with such entire success in her neat little store, that we are kept constantly employed, and now even with Mrs. Wilbur's help and sometimes Cora's (who although so young is learning to sew nicely,) we can hardly supply all her orders.

And then the girls' Polkas, Nubies, etc., meet a ready sale, and they enjoy knitting them of evenings.

Mr. Raymond has spent several evenings with us, and I hope great things for Ernest from his influence, they are mutually pleased with each other. Already Ernest has consented to take a class in the Sabbath School, providing Mr. Raymond will go over the lesson with him through the week.

"For I fear," he says, "my theology is not very sound."

"I will trust you, yet it will be pleasant for us to go over it together."

The motive by which we induced Ernest to become a teacher was an unworthy one, but this time I feel, the end of getting him to attend regularly upon religious duties sanctified the means. For Mr. Raymond held out the hope:

"That as there is no practicing physician in the church, at present, you may establish a good business among the members."

This was an inducement and Ernest consented at once.

"Why do you not teach Bertha? your eyes cannot endure that interminable sewing much longer, they are paining this moment, I know from the look in them;" Ernest said as I sat busily engaged finishing a piece of work for Margery. I have resolved over and over again not to do this trying work at night, but sometimes I have to, if it is wanted immediately, as nearly everything is.

"Yes they do ache very much, but I shall soon be done this collar and then I mean to close them up entirely."

"But why do you not teach instead of sewing yourself blind?"

"Teach what, Ernest?" I asked, "what shall I teach?"

"Why music, or French, or almost anything, for you know everything."

"Thank you for your good opinion, whom shall I teach?"

"The members of the church," he replied laughing, "can she not, Mr. Raymond?"

"I think she might find a good many to be taught, if she would try."

"Do you really think I could procure any scholars?" I asked earnestly.

"Indeed I do, I know of several I think I could procure for you, if you are really willing to take charge of them, in music I mean."

"I am much out of practice now, but I think I could teach, for I do not forget easily. Oh I would be so grateful if I could get them."

"If we could only manage to get a piano," said Ernest, "I dread Lela's losing all her knowledge, and indeed the other girls too, they are so young."

"I can obviate that difficulty if you will permit me, by sending you mine."

"Oh no, Mr. Raymond, thank you a thousand times, but we could never accept such a sacrifice, no never," I repeated as he began to remonstrate.

"But hear me dear Madam, it would be no sacrifice—the obligation would be all upon my side, for then I should have the pleasure of sometimes hearing it played upon, now

it is scarcely opened from one year's end to another, and serves me in place of a book case," he answered.

"But why? do you not play?" said Ernest.

"I love to hear music so dearly, that I even am willing to listen to my own, but, playing and preaching do not go well together, I do not quite like the reputation of a musical minister, so it has been one of my crosses, to give up my playing," he replied.

"I can not help thinking your reason a poor one, dear sir, for music is surely a heavenly gift," I said.

"When music, heavenly maid was young," he said smiling. "Well perhaps you are right, but the family with whom I board would be scandalized, should I indulge in such a light unprofitable amusement."

"They must be strange people then."

"They are very strange people indeed, dear Madam."

"Is not your home a pleasant one?" I asked.

"Very far from it, I am sorry to confess," he replied with a shrug.

"What's the reason, can you not get rid of the unpleasant part?" said Ernest.

"I fear not, at least without a good deal of generalship. The chief cause is," and he laughed striving to hide a blush, "there are unfortunately too many unmarried daughters in the house."

"Oh," laughed Ernest, "besieged by the fair sex! I appreciate your suffering, I have gone through the whole ordeal of anxious daughters and manœuvring mammas, have I not Bertha?"

"Indeed you have, poor fellow," I replied, "never was man so put upon as you, when you played 'beau par excellence' to half the belles of Paris."

"'Othello's occupation gone,' now, at all events, no fear of any more nets being spread; the fish is not gilded—not worth catching!"

"Better worth now than ever, the gold has been in the fire and the dross has been burned off, and it is purer now than ever before," I said.

"Thank you, I am inclined to believe you would find yourself solus," then turning to Mr. Raymond, "Why in the name of common sense don't you change your quarters—if they do not suit you?"

"Because I know of none better which I could get, for you know a poor minister must not be too particular."

"Get Bertha to let you have her vacant room," said Ernest.

"I do not dare to, although it would be the greatest blessing."

"What vacant room?" I said in dismay.

"The one on the opposite side of the hall from mine," said Ernest.

"Oh," said I relieved, "that would be rather small for Mr. Raymond."

"I will tell you how we can manage it, if you are willing," said Ernest, who would not see I was not at all willing.

"I only want my room to sleep in, suppose we go into partnership, and turn one room, mine because it is the larger, into a sleeping apartment, and the other into our office, what do you say? it would be small quarters, but we might manage on a pinch, especially as our evenings we can spend up here, and my *immense* practice will take me out all day."

"It would be just the thing. I should like it beyond measure, if Mrs. Percy is willing to have me about," said Mr. Raymond.

"I am entirely willing to have you as one of us," I said, "but I fear our small quarters and frugal fare, would hardly please you."

"I shall be satisfied with anything if you will only let me come; it will be a happy change for me in every way."

And so after some more talk it was arranged he should come, on Monday. I do not know whether I half like this, but I could not help myself.

"And then his board, even if it is not much, and his piano will be a great thing, beside the good he will do Uncle Ernest," says Marion.

So perhaps it is best, but we are getting to be a rather extensive family. If I am able to get some pupils we shall be quite made up.

When Mr. Raymond and Ernest were gone, I went into the room where Lela and Birdie sleep, to tell them, Lela heard nothing but that a piano was coming.

"Can it be true!" she said, clasping her arms around me. "Oh I think I shall never want anything more. Birdie, are you not almost wild with joy?"

"Oh the duetts we will sing, and the waltzes we will have!" cried Cora.

And long after I had retired, I heard the laughing voices of the happy pair. Poor children, it is worth a great deal to see them so cheerful.

JUNE 1.

Mr. Raymond is a most delightful addition to our family, and we are now only too happy to have him with us. Then his piano, which is a most excellent one, is a treasure beyond my pen to tell of. And there are so many of us to use it that hardly an hour from five in the morning until evening is unemployed. While some work or study, another practices an hour, then Lela gives the younger ones a faithful lesson every day.

Through Mr. Raymond's kind efforts, I have already five pupils at a moderate price. This adds considerably to our income; and by a very systematic using of not only my own, but the time of the rest, we still continue to do almost as much as usual for Margery.

Milly gets along famously in her household duties, and the care of the offices. Dear Mrs. Wilbur, or as the children call her "grandmamma" is just the grandest and best of old ladies. I often smile to think what her *soi disant* friends in Paris would say, could they see what a happy contented life she leads in our humble home. The truth is whatever she does, is done with her whole heart. She takes the entire charge of my poor little neglected baby; besides doing the whole of our mending and divers other things.

Yesterday was the birth-day of our twins, and they enjoyed it mightily, for in the evening they sat up until nine o'clock—sang "Chick-a-dedee" and ever so many little songs, to the great amusement of Uncle Ernest and Mr. Raymond, and ate cakes made expressly for them by Milly, to their own satisfaction.

Stuart and the other two gentlemen have taken to gardening most zealously, and declare very wisely:

"Next year with a few dollars outlay, we will raise every thing in the vegetable way you need."

"And this year we have fruit in abundance, no thanks to you," says Cora.

We are very happily circumstanced indeed, in the midst of this hot dusty city, we have fresh air, and pleasant cool shade. God has taken good care of us, and we have need to thank him, and praise his name continually.

We have our perfect health, and strength; our hands are always so busy, that our hearts have seldom time to mourn over the never forgotten past. Save that a pain must always have its dwelling place in our hearts for one forever gone, we are strangely cared for.

JUNE 10.

If it was not that I am sure sewing very steadily does my eyes harm, how much more willingly would I endure the pain it causes, than go out among strangers to gain my bread.

I have little to complain of, all treat me at least civilly; but it is the dread of day after day meeting strangers, it distresses me beyond measure, but I must not complain, it might be much worse.

It is a blessed change after I have been shuddering for hours under the discords made by my pupils, to come home and have Lela sing me some glorious Cavatina, or a gem from one of my pet operas. I am sure if I begin to count the good things I have, they would put to shame the evil.

Marion has begun to give Stuart lessons, he has a very fine voice,

"And is so attentive and determined, he makes astonishing progress, I am very proud of my pupil," she declares.

The garden does the workers therein a world of credit—not one of the old weeds to be seen, and considerable planting done, late as it is.

Stuart has introduced Ernest to the gentleman who has always been so kind to him, and at his request he has given him a set of books to keep, now Stuart can do it no longer. This evening a letter came from this gentleman addressed to Dr. Wilbur, asking, "if his time would allow, if he would undertake the translating and revising of some German chemical works." This was because Stuart had mentioned Ernest's capacities, not to this gentleman only, but two or three beside, who are directors of his school and men of high literary ability.

They, it seems, were very glad to meet with a responsible person to whom they might entrust the work they have in a state of preparation, and immediately closed in with the propositions Stuart made for Ernest.

This is a great piece of good fortune, as it not only will pay him well, but will introduce him to those who may be of service to him; we are all very grateful for it. We will assist him every evening in translating, instead of learning our usual German lesson. This will be of great benefit to Stuart, who will thus get an insight into a new field of study, that of chemistry.

We are surely a very prosperous, contented, busy community, and I humbly trust from our inmost hearts we thank our kind Father.

JUNE 10.

To-day I have finished embroidering a very elaborate bridal dress "for the daughter of a gentleman named Major Watson," Margery tells me.

I remember so well seeing this girl in Washington, a beauty and an heiress, but so cold, so inanimate, so heartless. I cannot imagine how it is possible for her ever to have taken the trouble of preparing to be married, but I suppose there are others taking it for her.

I like to remember the time I saw her first, it was in the "House," and Walter had just finished his first speech. It was an half hour after he was through, at the very least, before he could reach my place in the gallery; so many crowded round him to congratulate him upon his success, and I sat wishing they would cease shaking his hand and making him talk, when he looked so pale and exhausted.

And when he did come, it was a long while before we could get home—and then only with the promise of attending the ball at Major Watson's house, which was to be given in honour of his daughter's debüt, "Le Lis," they called her, because of her pale, haughty beauty.

Walter told me, she had been promised in marriage since her childhood, to her cousin, the son of her mother's brother, and that he had been educated abroad, so that they had never met. He was to return when he arrived at his major-

ity, and by the consummation of this marriage, fulfil the desire of his family, that two old and valuable estates should be united.

And this marriage was to take place on their twenty-first birth-day, so I suppose the time has come. This was six long years ago. Oh! there have been weary, weary days since then.

How very strange it is, that to-day, I should here, in this small back room, surrounded by grey shadowy walls, and with this tulle upon my knee, be listening to the winds sighing sadly and sobbingly through these dark old trees, which could they speak would tell perchance of other wooings and other weddings within reach of their shading branches. Of some who have whispered their sweet, low, love tales, 'neath the dimness of this old garden, and of others who beneath this roof-tree stood up cold and proud, pronouncing the solemn words which were to make their pathways henceforth lie very nearly to each other, but which need no soft tones and tender glances, because alas there was no love to give.

Even so, old trees—dear old trees, even so is it with these of whom I now mind me, oh! I fear for them it will be a very weary life if there is no love. And yet Isadore Watson, cold and heartless as you are, you cannot have known that glad free heart against which it will soon be your right to lean, and not feel some womanly tenderness go forth to him. You cannot have looked upon his noble handsome face—into his dark passionate eye, and had no thrill of love enkindled in your nature; even you must love him, I will hope good things for you.

We met him abroad a gay wild youth, with a noble but undisciplined nature, but he was very rich, his own master, and because he was so frank a favorite with all, pray God he has withstood so many snares.—

This dress is very beautiful and I have chosen to take great pains with it,—great pains, and pleasure too, in expending upon it my utmost skill. Although they will never know it, these old friends of my better days, who will assemble at this wedding feast, never guess that the hand of their once courted friend Bertha Percy, wrought the wreaths entwined around this robe and veil, yet for their sakes I have woven them.

Lilies I have laid there because she who wears them is

queen of the lilies, thus I do her honour. Mignonettes and rose-buds, types of my wishes for her. Upon her bridal eve I wind about her brow and form, emblems of constancy, and true and faithful love, proud girl who would spurn me did I approach her, cold bride who would wither me with a glance from her dark eyes did I seek her presence.

These recollections and musings have been a strange pleasure the while I worked and now that I have woven the last shining bud into its silvery ground-work I will fold away these dreamy thoughts within this mazy robe, and turn me back to life, and present things once more.

Oh Walter! a few years back I was a bride, a merry loving bride, and I thought naught could harm me because I was thy wife, but I forgot the death angel in his terrors, oh I forgot him, and his icy breath. But I am thy wife still, as sure and as truly now, as when we were walking over the gardens and bright places of the earth. Only now thou walkest in a cloud of glory, I in darkness yet—but let not go thy hold of me.

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## CHAPTER XV.

JULY 7.

WE have been getting along so calmly and contentedly of late. The skies seemed bright above us—the air pure and health-giving, I seemed almost to have forgotten the clouds which might be gathering,—I never heard the moaning and heaving of the breakers which might be even then ready to sweep over me.

But now they have come—the clouds and storms—the breakers and waves—and it will be a time hard to endure without murmurings.

One day it seems a long while ago now—Howard complained of a severe head-ache, but we tried to soothe it, and he went to bed, but all night, Stuart says,

“He moaned in his sleep and seemed in pain, so that I could only quiet him by bathing his head with cold water.”

But in the morning he was better, and when I went to give