

think our needles would be our chief means of subsistence, now however, we aspire to the height of sometime establishing a school, in which we can all find more or less employment. Having this motive ever before them, the girls study with a will, particularly Leanore, whose nature it is to take the lead in every thing. The earnest untiring industry and determination with which she has pursued every advantage this year held out to her, has caused me to have serious fears lest her health would give way, but thus far she has stood hard work as bravely as Stuart himself.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JULY 6.

THE school party has passed off with the greatest *éclat*. It was held upon Thursday last, in a mountain gorge, a few miles out of the city.

They say it is a beautiful place, the rocks covered with thick soft moss, and overhead a canopy of forest leaves, casting a pleasant shade.

Lela was queen, and Cora, Flora, goddess of flowers. Then there were a long train of other dignitaries. The pieces were well learned, and the whole scene had been rehearsed well, so, to use Cora's words:—

"Every thing went on as merry as a marriage bell, and no one was out of time or out of place."

Estelle says, (she, as well as all the rest of the household, save Tiny and myself, being among the guests.)

"Lela acted the regal ladye to perfection. Even I, who know her so well, was astonished at her graceful dignity, so girlish and yet so becoming. I did not wonder at the various notes of admiration which went round among the elder portion of the audience. I saw the two gentlemen of whom the girls have spoken so frequently, and I am not surprised at their admiration. Ernest and I both exclaimed in a breath, when we saw Mr. Marstone, 'How like his uncle!' and oh Bertha! I think nothing else in the world is like

Rolf Livingstone's face. You know how handsome he was, as a boy, but you can never dream of him now he has the gravity of years upon him. I could not help but think Cora's description 'like the most beautiful of the gods,' was extremely *apropos*."

"And did you see his wife, you used to know her, I think?"

"Indeed I did, and she gave me a chill. They look like the warm bright glowing summer, and the cold icy winter united, no not united, for I never saw any couple so little united, or who took such small pains to hide their indifference."

"Did she know you, Estelle?" I asked, amused at her fierce description.

"Know me, no indeed! she did not seem to know any one, it evidently required more exertion than pleased her, to *look* at the people around her, but to know them! impossible! After the coronation was over, Lela appointed in a very regal tone and manner, certain of the gentlemen to attend her maids of honor, and suite, to the festive board, and created a good deal of amusement among the group, by reserving Mr. Marstone's services for herself. I heard Mr. Livingstone say,

"Always in luck's way old fellow, even among the children you have your pick."

"Why there you make a mistake, Rolf, for in this case I was picked," said Mr Marstone laughing.

Just then, Lela gave Cora in charge of a boy about her own age, saying,

"Will this young gentleman escort the goddess of flowers?" When to the dismay of the young gentleman aforesaid, and also to the queen, the goddess of flowers, sprung from her place beside the throne,

"Indeed, he will not do any thing of the kind; if I may not have whom I will; what is the use of being a goddess?" and catching hold of Mr Livingstone's arm, she cried, "I want you, please sir, will you not escort me?" and she looked up with her prettiest smile into his face.

"Birdie, Birdie, my dear!"—I cried, but before I could say a word of reproof, Mr Livingstone was walking off with her.

"To be sure I will, pet. I will escort you to the end of

the world with the greatest imaginable pleasure, if you ask me,"—I heard him say as they passed on.

"I am glad enough he is a married man, and she is a child," declares Ernest, "for I vow such evident admiration, upon both sides, might come to something serious in time."

"So am I then, Ernest," said I, shuddering at the idea. Oh and so indeed I am. I can think of nothing more dreadful, but what a foolish thing to talk about, an impossibility; I will not moan over what could never by any chance occur.

I am glad the children have had so much pleasure, it will serve them for many days, poor dears, they have at least the rarity to make their enjoyment more keen. And they can go on in the freshness and spur this day's pleasure has been to them, for many other days to come. Thank God for bright things

JULY 10.

After the excitement of the green-wood, the girls had one other, before they settled down to the old quietness, and this was a tea party, and their six friends, were the guests. There was of course a grand fixing of things before-hand.

The kitchen end of our dining room made it hardly a presentable tea room, and Aunt Estelle's furniture was carried into another room, and that made to serve for a supper room *pro tem*. Milly did her best, as she always does, such coffee, such cakes, and indeed such everything was scarcely ever known before!

"And Sandy was the very *bijou* of waiters," declares Cora, to his infinite delight.

"It was a great satisfaction, to be able to do the thing so genteely,"—said Mrs. Wilbur, with a sigh of complacency, after all was over, just the same kind of a sigh as she would have given long ago, after a grand *fête* had been given to some dignitary of royal blood, which she felt had passed off well, and given satisfaction.

And so thought the girls, Lela especially, who was somewhat nervous as to the impression her home would make upon her wealthy friends, although she would not own to it.

Every thing looked nicely, the garden was charming, and

the gay girls enjoyed it mightily, judging by the merry songs and laughter, which were wafted up to me along the moonbeams.

"Have, you always lived here, in this dear old place?" I heard one of them ask Marion.

"Not always, dear, we have lived in two or three other places."

"Oh! yes," said Louise, "Birdie I remember said she was born in Florence, so you must have been abroad, where were you born, in Europe, May?"

"No Lou; I am an American, answered Marion," and was born a little south of here."

"And Lela?" was the next query.

"Is a native of 'La belle France.'"

"Why, you must have lived a great while abroad."

"Yes, six or seven years, Ada."

"But how come you to?" asked Louise. "Did not your father and mother like their own country, better than the land of tyrants?"

"Yes, a great deal, and always were pining for home, Lou, but papa was serving his country better abroad, than he could at home, at least it was needful for him to be there, so they gave up their own pleasure; but we came back very gladly as soon as we were sent for."

"But what was he?"—I heard Louise ask as they moved from beneath my window.

What was he?—oh the child's question brought him up before me as he was then, so brave, so true, so earnest, such a firm good man, a leader among men; never false, never mistaken, always the high souled patriot whose word was law.

My husband! my Walter! what art thou now?—a spirit redeemed, glorified, oh I will not mourn for thee, but only for my weary lonely self.

—But I was recounting the events of the evening, putting down a morsel of the haps.

"We have so longed to see you, dear Mrs. Percy," said Ada Lawrence coming out of the moonlight into the dimness of my quiet room, "we have come to think you were hardly mortal, hearing the praises of your daughters, and seeing what you have taught them to be."

"Thank you, dear, if I were worthy such good children

as God has blessed me with, I should indeed be worth seeing."

"But you are, indeed you are," was the reply of the warm hearted girl, who evidently judges by her first impulsive impressions.

During the evening, Dora Gleason came and talked with me a while very sweetly, making me love her.

"I am afraid these pretty eyes study too hard;" I said as she arose to obey the calls from the garden, "they have a weary look in them, which if you were my child, I should be very loath to see."

"Oh that I were!" she ejaculated quickly. "It would be so peaceful," and she hid her sad eyes for a moment upon my shoulder, then rising she said:

"No, it is not study—but tears, and weary heart-aches."

"Poor child," I said, brushing back the dark hair and kissing her tenderly, "so young and yet bearing a cross," then I whispered, "do you know the sure comfort, the Balm, God gives the weary tried hearts of his children? even the Blessed Saviour's love?"

"No, no," she said under her breath, "oh that I could only feel it as I ought!"

"You can if you will, God is our Father, and of such great and tender mercies, he never sends any empty away. Ask Him, my child, and he will send peace to your heart; only seek him, and he will be found of you; do not doubt or fear, only go. I have found him a very present help in every time of need, and you know my troubles have been neither light nor easy to be borne."

"I know, oh I know they have not, poor Mrs. Percy."

"No, not poor, dear, rich in that I have a bright spirit ever waiting for me, just the other side of the death-barred gate." And then we sat quietly a moment or so until the impatient voices in the garden summoned her, and with a sigh she went, saying as I gave her my earnest blessing and a kiss:

"I wish I might stay and have you tell me more of such a blessed hope."

When they were going home, under the protection of our four escorts, she whispered with a grateful kiss:

"Dear Mrs. Percy, I will remember your kind words and will try,—thank you."

"Then you will conquer, only try, that is all; they never seek in vain who seek to find their Lord."

"If Dora has a kiss, may not I?" said Louise, half shyly half saucily.

"Certainly, my dear, as many as you desire," said I, pressing my lips to her fair white brow, "they are a free commodity."

"My dear madam, if I had as many as I liked, you would give me them at least every night and morning while I live, for you look the most kissable person I know."

"That is Louise, all over again," laughed Cora.

"Do any of the rest think me kissable enough to desire one?" I asked.

"I do," said Clarence springing forward before any one could reply, and flinging his arms about my neck, "I want as many as you have to give away."

"Saucy fellow, you get more than your share always, so clear away and let me bid these young ladies adieu."

And so in merry mood they departed, with many a promise of remembrance and letter-writing while absent, for this was to be the farewell meeting, and on the morrow they were all to start for their far away homes, for the summer months. But I gave Dora into Mr. Raymond's charge, thinking her spirit this night better attuned to his grave gentle words, than to the gay rattle-brain talk of the rest.

Clarence expresses himself delighted, with the whole party,

"And I have lost a minute particle of my heart with each one of the fair damsels."

"Which worthless thing they will shake out of their handkerchiefs as soon as they discover it," retorts Cora.

Stuart says as he looks up from his lexicon, over which he is hard at work punishing himself for having had one evening's pleasure—

"If it were not for the home constellation, I should think them stars of the planetary order."

For which speech, Cora boxes his ears most vehemently.

Now that we have grown quiet again, the girls are doing up a world of sewing for Margery, beside making over some pretty organdies and summer silks which Estelle and I have bequeathed them.

Stuart still makes a slave of himself by studying unceas-

ingly, even this warm weather he shuts himself into his room at nine and studies far into the night.

But Clare who keeps at it steadily through the day, "courts a cold," Cora says, by lying out under the trees, in the moonbeams weaving fairy dreams. We have all come to the conclusion that it would be as useless to strive to turn a mountain torrent up, as to win Clare to be aught but a painter, and so although we make him study, it is with no thought of making any thing else out of him.

JULY 15.

"If ye wi' only list me speech mi leddy," says Sandy, stopping me in my inspection of his garden, "I wi' tell ye a bit o' mi mind."

"Certainly Sandy, what is it?"

"Do ye ken the bit o' ground that lies nixt our ain bit, jest across this pair fence, mi leddy?"

"No, good Sandy, I must confess I do not," I answered.

"I thot not, will, if ye dinna, I ken ain that does. I ha' no my eyes gin me for naught."

Then he went into a long explanation of the long range of buildings next us belonging to the same property, and there being used only for a ware-house, and that 'they say' the back windows have not been opened for years, that the garden was a wilderness of weeds, and no one ever went into it or indeed would, until the much talked of suit was settled.

"What I no' ask o' ye is, to hire the bit o' ground and let me till it. Oh! it wi' make a braw garden."

"But, Sandy, surely we have enough to take care of now."

"Ah naugh, naugh, we ha' na', if ye wi' do what I ask, I will put it under, and get it ready, and come nixt spring, an' it please God," raising his hat and looking upward, "in heaven to spare me, I will plant a' me vegetables in there, an I will ha' sich a bonnie bed o' strawberries in here wi' the young lassies' flower beds as wi' make yer een sparkle to see."

And so with many potent arguments he decided me, it would be advisable, for beside the farming or tilling part of the arrangement, Sandy has promised to "gear up" a sort of stable and barn yard.

"For the horse, Mister Ernest is a talking o' getting himself, now his trade works so well, and I will raise sich a mony fowls, me little leddys shall never want for a fresh egg, morn or eve," he declares.

And so with the entire consent of the rest we have gone largely into the *farming* business, to the infinite delight of Sandy.

CHAPTER XXX.

JULY 30.

Oh! I have been made so sad, so grievously sad, and in a way I little dreamed could ever come to me, in a way which made me almost think the world had all gone wrong. It shames me so, that I scarcely can endure to write it, only that I have promised to record here every event of moment in my life.

Last evening through the kindness of our old friend Mr. Ostend, who often visits us, the whole family went to some floral festival, given in the C—— Hall.

I had just laid Tiny to rest, and was sitting full of divers half sad, half pleasant memories, in the window seat, watching the moonbeams court the flowers and pale their brightness, and thinking of other beams and other flowers, when the door opened and Mr. Raymond came in.

"Why, what is the matter? I thought you had been enjoying the flowers and music for an hour and more," I said,

"No, I excused myself, I have had a headache and I did not feel in the mood for flowers and music," he said.

For a while we sat in silence after that, or else talked for a moment in a quiet manner, looking out upon the garden below us.

"There comes the moon, is it not beautiful? what a soft sweet light it shades over you, Bertha, fair pale Bertha."

"Not fair, but pale," I said smiling.

"Oh yes! fair, beautiful beyond all other women to me, Bertha and moonlight, they mean the same to me; whenever I hear your name, a vision of a soft sad moonlight falls across my heart!" for a moment he stood beside me in the shadow of the wall quite silently, then he added in so low a tone I had to bend towards him to hear his words, "Can you see my face?"

"A little," I answered surprised by the question and the tone in which he asked it, "Why do you ask?"

"Because—because shall I tell you something Bertha? then turn your face to the window, and let me tell you what I cannot help, here in the dim moonlight, only promise me this, you will not hate me when I have told you what will break my heart if I keep it longer."

"I promise," I said, a strange dread oppressing me, as swiftly the thought came over me, what has he been doing, oh what can it be, and will it dishonor his holy calling? and I nerved myself to hear a confession of some terrible deed, "only trust all to me, I will promise to love you through all."

"Love me that is it," and he seemed to catch up the word half eagerly, half sorrowfully, "that is it, love me, only love me Bertha, my Bertha, my dream, my fair pale dream love, God above seeing my heart," he went on passionately, "knows how I love you, how I have striven day and night for a year with this passion, which to night is mastering me, I know my gentle Bertha of the shadow of a never forgotten love which lies ever upon your faithful heart, I knew it from the first, I know all other loves must be but the faint echo of that pure holy first love in your heart, that you can sing no other love song, but I have dreamed you might let me bear your burden of sorrow with you, oh I will mourn for your lost love whom I never knew, I will join the solemn requiem you chant over his memory; only be my companion, my angel guide, throughout life's weary pilgrimage, speak to me, only one word Bertha, speak to me!" and with the moonlight streaming over his passionate face pale and quivering with emotion, he stretched his hands towards me and stood waiting.

But I shrunk away, now he was done. From the first to the last of this appeal, I had stood quiet—never striving to stop him by word or motion, only saying as I clasped my

hands tightly over my poor tortured heart, saying in voiceless agony:

"What have I done! what have I done! that my Father should lay this heavy cross upon me?"

Then when his tender passionate voice rang no longer on my ear, I waited one instant to gather strength, and then went to his side.

"Hear me, my friend, listen to me. Years ago—for I must take you away back with me into the shrouded, buried past—years ago, I was a little girl scarcely fifteen years old, far away from my home, being educated in a convent.

"One day, oh that day sends a thrill to my heart even now, one day there came one—so grand so noble, more like our childish imaginings of a God, than a mortal. He came and carried me home to my native isle, amidst the blue waters of the Mediterranean,—home to my fair pale mother who was dying, and had sent this, her far away cousin to bring the daughter of her heart to receive her blessing.

"I had loved him dearly from the first, but as we watched together day after day, beside that bed of suffering, and I saw all his goodness, my heart went out to him with a wild passionate love, for which even he in after years would gently chide me.

"Who ever saw him that did not love him! who ever looked into his face or heard the matchless melody of his voice, who did not call God's blessing down upon him? And this noble man, beloved by all, loved me, loved me! deigned to call me his darling, to encircle me, poor frail weak thing with his inestimable love.

"Oh how I loved him! God pardon me how much, and by my mother's death-bed we were betrothed, and a year afterwards we were married, and ever after I was by his side ever! ever! my right was there. We were very happy for many, many years, we were all in all to each other, for, save our little ones no other love set up a claim for us, or took from our one great happiness.

"I saw the noblest bravest hearts, which the royalty of Europe gather round them,—and none were so brave, none so noble, or so true, as the heart where I had found my resting place.

"How happy I was then, how impiously happy God alone knows. I loved and worshipped him, first, above all other

things, yea, I made my Creator second to my peerless husband.

"He used to tell me so, to reprove me tenderly for my idolatry, but I never heeded him. I who did his bidding in all else could not in this, but made him the shrine, whereon to offer the fervent incense of my undisciplined heart. God from on high, saw my sin, saw that his poor weak child was wandering far away from Him whom she had vowed to love and serve, and—and God took him.

"See how calmly I say it, see how quietly I stand here in this soft moonlight and tell you all this, do you think I have forgotten, do you think I do not remember the bliss, and then the agony?

"Remember how I told you just now—he was noble and brave and true, he was methinks like that one of whom the good 'Book' says, 'There was none like him among the sons of men.' Were others good and true—his goodness and truth out-shone theirs, as does the bright sunlight of a summer's noontide shame the pale rushlight, I tell you this, and then I tell but that other word, 'God took him,' my God, my Father, who ruleth all things, who 'doeth all things well'—took him away from me, he was shutting out my heaven-light. I could not see the beauty of the hereafter, save as it made a halo about him: and so the flaming sword came down swiftly between us, and left me stranded and lonely upon the shores of time, while with a clang the gates of Eden shut him from my sight. And yet, it was done in mercy, I know it now, although at the first I could not see the 'Hand' of a Father, in the avenging one which wielded the sword of death, but now I can say it was best, God knew!

"But oh! my friend, do not take the one only comfort my poor life knows, away from me, the blessed hope, that afterwards, when life's trials are past, and the gateway to the Eternal City is parted for me, the hope that my husband's arms will clasp me, as he bids me welcome home.

"Oh! you know not what you ask when you bid me love you!—I said God took him, but it was only the casket, the noble manly form,—every night since that one night, has his spirit been with me, every day it walks beside me, my guardian, my helper.

"Tell me not with your vain theology, it is not so. It is,

it is! ten thousand times I assert it, I have proven, I know it for a truth.

"Oh Harley! could I so forget myself, did a dread of the weary days which stretch themselves, so long and drearily in the future before my view affright me.

"Could I so loose my sense of the right, as to stand before God's holy altar, to take other vows upon me, than those I made with my arms clasped round my unburied dead, even there my husband would part us, standing in his noble beauty between me, and him who had dared to allure me from my duty.

"I love you very much Harley, more than you can ever know; you have been a kind true friend to me, but I think that night, the angel of Death came into our happy home making it desolate, with his cold breath extinguishing the light, whose brightness was our joy:—

"I think he took my heart within his icy fingers, and held it tight and hard, until it was numb and lifeless; not chilled so that another fire might warm it back to life, but *dead*, dead, cold and feelingless.

"I have but a sister's love to give, will you have it Harley? a sister's tender, watchful love," and I laid my hand upon him.

I could feel him tremble though he spoke not, but sat as he had been sitting since I began to speak, motionless, with his head bowed upon his clasped hands. I unlocked his pale fingers, and laying my cheek upon his dark hair for one moment—

"Shall it be so, my brother Harley, henceforth the arm of a faithful brother stretched out to help me?" and I looked down calmly into his white face.

With a sudden uprising he clasped my hands one instant within his own, then in a hushed tone said,

"God love thee my sister! my sister!" and went quickly out.

Sitting in the moonlight, I have wondered over all this. I have grieved for him and for myself, but then there is a comfort in the thought, I have gained me a friend, whom Walter would have prized.

I remember now a thousand things, at the time unnoticed, which show me how this love has grown up within his heart, and the endeavours he has made to subdue and crush it, un-

til this night, when it could be borne no more, it gained for a short time the victory.

But I rest me upon the thought this is over now, he will put it away forever, and I have gained my brother.

JULY 31.

As I came in this afternoon from my day's work, Harley met me at the door, and as we stood in the quiet light of departing day, he took my hand tenderly in his, and stood for a little while silently looking out upon the long shaded walk of our old garden. Then turning suddenly round, he said in a low tremulous voice, so low I scarce could hear him:

"Has my sister Bertha forgiven me my wilful madness, my wicked presumption of last night?"

"My dear brother!" was all I said.

"Oh Bertha, the agony of last night after I left you; the terrible ordeal I passed through in the dark still night, wrestling with my ill gotten passion, ere I could conquer it, forever! If the struggle and sufferings of a loving heart crucifying its own hope, can atone for the grief I must have caused you in stirring up your old remembrances, touching with my rude, ruthless hand your Shekinah, you may have the assurance that I have fought such a battle, as please God may come to a man but once in a life-time, I have fought and conquered. Henceforth, I can say humbly and gratefully, Bertha Percy is no more to me in the way of earthly passion, than an angel standing in the 'Presence.' But she is my sister, my little sister, whom I will protect, God giving me strength, as long as life lasts."

I leaned my head upon his shoulder and gave way to a burst of tender grateful tears, for all the mercies vouchsafed to me.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Do not linger with regretting
Or for passing hours despond!
Nor thy daily toil forgetting,
Look too eagerly beyond." ONE BY ONE.

AUGUST 1.

I HAVE passed it, another mile-stone is my life-path; the second record is made—alone waiting and watching two whole years.

It seemed so long in the perspective—but is so short in the retrospection. I have done so little in the right way, lived to so little purpose—acted so feebly the drama of life, doing so many things I ought not to have done, leaving undone those that I ought to have done, oh I may well join my hands and bowing head and heart before my Judge, confess, there is no health in me.

It is so hard always to do right, so very easy to do wrong. I wish it were not so, when "I think I will do well, evil is ever present with me."

Alone in my own little room to-day—this day which renews my sorrow and loneliness, I have laid bare before me my inmost thought, thinking long and painfully of my many short comings, and with my whole heart I have wrestled with my God for strength to be faithful, earnest, and true.

Walter, dear Walter, have I done very wrong? have I missed many things you would have done? am I too selfish—too easily wearied—too prone to make others bear my burdens for me?

Pray God for me, darling, that He will grant me more light, and strength to do my duty to Him and to thee.

How short a time it seems since I sat at his feet a gay thoughtless thing, a very child, loving only the bright fair things of life, yet like many another child, worshipping the pure and holy—with my whole soul.

I know I did, else I could not so entirely have appreciated the noble manhood, which was guiding and guarding me ever. I had such faith in that strong right arm—such entire dependence upon the firm clear mind that made its law, oh I loved and honored him so reverently.