

ame Degrade and myself, in order to feel assured the change would be satisfactory, that we will not begin until October. In the meanwhile we can hear from all who are interested in the change, and explain to them.

SEPTEMBER 18.

Of course before we could make any arrangements towards school-keeping, we were compelled to give the occupants of the offices in the front of the house, notice to quit, I dreaded this, but Ernest says:

"It did not seem to annoy or distress any of them, half as much as it did you and Marion."

For Marion, and indeed all the rest but Leanore are at home, and such a world of cleaning, moving in of furniture and arranging it after it was once in, as we have had this last two weeks, would be past relating, but it is all done at last.

The rooms in the front of the house are as square and as large, as the ones in our part are little and crooked.

Of two on one side of the hall, down stairs, we have made school-rooms, of the others, dining room and kitchen, then we have turned our once kitchen up stairs, into a bed-room for Ernest and Harley, and their two little rooms, which stand at the front door, into class-rooms.

The old barricaded windows and doors going out into the garden, have been besieged and overthrown, and this pleasant autumn day, the house looks so clean and cool, that methinks the old owners will walk over it to-night, and find the ancient lordly days renewed.

But still the little sitting-room which has been our home room so long, will be our home room still, our sanctum sanctorum, and only such as have especial favour shall gain admittance, for there is a neat little parlor below for company.

Estelle is to take charge of one dormitory, and poor little gentle Marion the other, I will abide at home still.

In a letter which I had from her, Nora says:

"I had a note from Mr. J—, saying the church in L— St. was undergoing some improvements, and would not be opened until October, so I need not hurry back; if you

think best for me to do so, I will accept Mr. Lea's invitation to travel with Mary, Jennie Chalton, and himself to the White Mountains, and wherever else we will, for the next month."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OCTOBER 2.

DURING the last week in September, came bright-eyed Louise Dutille, then in the afternoon of the same day Ada Lawrence, and Clara Robbins, with whom she had been spending the last week of her vacation. Dear warm hearted girls they could not say enough concerning their delight and gratitude at the change, particularly Ada who grows so enthusiastic and demonstrative that "Marion is obliged to come forward and quiet her down," says Louise.

We had just got this party quietly settled, and somewhat domesticated, when, Dora came with her sad face and dreamy eyes, which now are not nearly so sad and weary looking as they used to be, and this is the reason:—

The evening of the day upon which she arrived, she came into the room where I was standing by a window looking out, and busy pondering over many matters; so engaged indeed I did not notice her, until coming up she laid her cheek upon my shoulder, and said softly and gently:

"I have found the pearl for which you bade me seek, I think, I hope I have."

"I thought so, dear Dora, soon as I saw you, these sweet eyes have more peace, if not comfort and happiness in their look."

"Oh, it is so sweet, so restful, dear Mrs. Percy, the 'Great Rock in a weary land,' oh it is such comfort to rest secure from storms and tempests, beneath its shadow."

"Thank God that you have found it so at last, 'in all troubles a sure help,' I am glad for you."

"But it was all blackness and darkness, until that night I stood here with you; your words somehow seemed to

make it lighter and easier, and I have tried so very hard during my dreary vacation, to find out the right and best way, I think I have at last."

"Was your holiday a dreary one Dora?"

"Oh very, very," and she shuddered, "they always are."

"Then why did you not accept one of the many invitations I know you had, from your school friends and spend a more cheerful time?"

"Because the vacations are the only time I have, to spend with my poor little Agnes."

"Who is she?" I asked.

"My sister, the only near relation I have in the world, and she is a cripple unable to walk, or scarcely to sit up."

"Poor child, and no mother or sister to care for when you are away."

"None, none, oh is it not dreadful? do you wonder that I am always sad when this poor little suffering sister in her lonely room is before me?"

"But has she not kind friends to take care of her in your absence?" I said, greatly touched by her sad tone.

"They are strangers, or at least not friends."

"I will tell you my sad history," she said after a pause, "if you are willing to hear it."

"Indeed I am not only willing, but anxious, if it will not hurt you to tell it," I replied.

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Percy," then with a sad smile she began. "I am a 'ward in chancery,' my father and mother were both of them, being cousins, engaged in the same suit. Indeed almost as far back as we can trace our family, this has been our sad fate, all from generation to generation, for nearly a hundred years have been fighting with the law, for or against each other. Until my father and mother's time the two contending branches of the family who are contesting for the inheritance were bitter enemies, but when they found that not only all the means but the lives of their race were being squandered in the struggle, it was decided by the elders of the families on both sides, that all enmity should be buried, and the whole claim made one by the marriage of the only two remaining children, my father and mother, thus making their offspring the heirs of the whole. This was done, the old people of the family passed away. My parents had several children but all died, save

myself, who was the oldest, until one sad night, nine years ago my mother gave up her life, giving birth to a delicate child whom we named in memory of her, Agnes. I was only about eight years old then, but I remember so well the change that came over the house, how sad and gloomy it grew, how changed papa was, growing stern and cold, never noticing me or indeed any one but the poor little baby, who as soon as it grew old enough he would have in his own bed, and at night when it would cry, I have crept along the cold passage and crouching at the door heard him weep over it, and with deep groans call it,

'Little Agnes, his little darling, his motherless little Agnes!' and hush it to sleep.

"Oh how I used to pine to go to him, and help the baby comfort him, but I dared not, and used to go weeping bitter tears back to my cold little couch.

"All through the day he would sit pouring over law-papers, and I heard him tell a lawyer once, he was trying some way to get 'this fearful law-suit settled, and my children provided for ere I leave them forever.' But it was in vain, and he pined, and grew pale and weak, and at last one of the servants came hurriedly to my room in the middle of the night and wrapping me in a shawl, carried me to his bedside. He was propped up and looked very very white. The baby was laying upon a pillow by his side, its little hand shut over one of his thin white fingers.

"When they had put me upon the bed, cold and frightened, with being roused out of a sound sleep, and brought to this strange scene, he said:

'My poor daughter, my little neglected Dora, I have not been kind to you, poor lonely child, in my own selfish grief I have forgotten you, and now you are afraid of me, my daughter.'

'Oh no papa,' I said quickly, 'not now, when you are so kind, papa, papa, I love you so,' and I clasped his hand and kissed it over and over.

"He drew me to him with all the strength he had, and for a little while said not a word, but kissed me so tenderly. Oh, Mrs. Percy, it is such a blessing to think of now, for I loved him dearly, and it would have been so dreadful had he died without letting me see he had a little love for me.

"Then after he had gained strength and could trust himself, he said:

'My Dora, I am going to leave you to-night, and before I go I want to have you say you will always love and be kind to your little sister.'

'I will, indeed papa I will, dear little sister,' I said with an earnest tone.

'Thank you dear child, always remember this promise made by your father's death bed. Now listen, next week you will be sent to school, this house will be sold by my lawyer, and Wilson will take Agnes to her own home, every vacation you are to go to her.'

'He had not told this without much difficulty making many pauses, at last he found he could say no more; turning to Wilson (who was our housekeeper) he said:

—'Tell her the rest—now—so I can hear—'

'And she began, saying, 'the money for the house—was to be used to pay, for Agnes's board. We would both of us be henceforth 'wards in chancery,' and our maintenance would be provided for.' This and other charges which he had left her, about his funeral, etc., were hardly told me, when I saw a change pass over the face so white and thin upon which I was gazing; a grayness came upon it. His lips moved quickly, his eyes stared wildly and then settled with such a look upon Agnes's face. He made a gurgling noise. I stopped Wilson's words with:

'Hush, papa is going to say something.'

'But just as I spoke the arm which held me, fell away, the eyes closed, I did not know what it was, I thought he slept.

'Hush,' I said, 'he is tired, he will go to sleep.'

'They carried me back to bed;—bye and bye as I lay with wide open eyes, in the dark, Wilson came in, laid Agnes by my side, and went away again. I lay very quietly but sleeplessly thinking over papa's words, until the sun began to peep in through the windows, then Wilson came in again, and coming round to where I lay, said:

'Poor little Dora, poor child, papa is dead,' and burst into a flood of tears.

'I lay for an instant perfectly still, then with a wild shriek fainted away. For a long time after that, I was very ill, so long that it was months before I could be sent to school. Since that time, I have passed my life first at one boarding school then at another, but always spending my vacations

with Agnes. About two years after papa's death, Wilson died: she had been very kind to both of us, especially to Agnes. When she died, she gave my sister, with a solemn charge, to her daughter's care; but she is married, and has children of her own to care for, and perhaps she is as kind as we could expect. When Agnes was about three years old, and a short time after Wilson died, they carelessly left her alone, she fell down a pair of stairs and injured her spine; since then, from neglect and other causes, she has been a constant sufferer, and when I was at home a year ago, the doctors pronounced her case hopeless, and said she will be lame for life. The only gleam of sunshine the poor darling knows, is when I go to her, therefore, of course, I never go anywhere else."

"But why, if they are not kind, do you allow her to remain there? as her board is paid you should remove her immediately."

"But where? there is no other place."

I thought for a moment, and then drawing the poor girl more closely to me said,

"Here, with you, is the proper place for her, bring her here and we will nurse and care for her, and with a mother and sister to watch over her, she will pass a happier life, poor child."

"Oh, Mrs. Percy, you are too good, too kind, you are an angel."

But I laid my hand over her lips with:

"Not so, dear Dora, but an erring mortal."

But the strangest part of Dora's history (which is not indeed strange, but unutterably sad,) is, that this very property upon which we now live, and the half square which surrounds it, is the estate to which she is heir. There are so many intricate law questions involved, apart from the original point at issue, that now, although all argument as to the rightful heirs is over (Dora and Agnes being the sole representatives of both contending parties) nevertheless the case is still unsettled, and the proper owners kept out of their property, which could they gain possession of, would make them among the richest persons in the city of B—.

So, rightfully, we are the tenants of Miss Dora Gleason, the heiress of one of the most valuable estates in the state, but she says sadly:

"Too many lives have been sacrificed in the futile attempt to win it, for me ever to hope to gain without effort, what so many brilliant intellects and earnest hearts have been crazed or broken, in striving to possess, this last half century."

And I tell her most likely she is much happier now than she would be, did she wake up some morning and find herself a millionaire. For now, we trust, she has found more enduring riches, laid up for herself treasures in that storehouse, 'where neither moth nor rust can corrupt or thieves break through and steal.' Already, dear child, her face looks less sad with the thought how soon she may clasp her poor little suffering sister to her heart, not only for one night or a few nights, but always.

Marion, with ready thought for the comfort of others, says:

"Dora and dear little Agnes shall have my room to themselves, away from the noisy dormitories."

To-day came Lela, and with her Mary Lea and her sister Laura, a pretty child of six years. Also Jennie and her two young sisters, Meta and Maud Chalton.

They have had a joyful summer, under kind Mr. Lea's supervision, 'having been hurried by steam-boat, and railroad to and from so many places, that they can hardly keep still even now.'

My enthusiastic Lela, has for the first time, beheld the majestic falls of Niagara, and stood upon the topmost summit of Mount Washington, watching the sunrise, so I wonder not to see the color in her cheeks and the old brightness in her dark eyes. Oh I am very grateful to Mr. Lea!

Last week, Dora went for her poor little sister, they have also returned to-day. Therefore with little Agnes Gleason, we have ten boarding scholars, and opened school with thirty day-pupils.

The first day of anything is always the greatest trial, but now it is over, I find the thought of it was after all the worst. I did dread inexpressibly to meet the gaze of such an assemblage, but I went through it bravely.

Estelle is to teach drawing, beside a hundred other things, Mr. Raymond and Dr. Wilbur, although they have little enough time to spare from their own duties, have promised to give us the first hour after breakfast every day, the for-

mer, teaching on alternate days, Latin and Composition, the latter German and Algebra.

Then Lela is to give an hour's music, and Marion to teach the younger classes for a couple of hours each day, this is all the work we will require of them, so they will be scholars still.

Then I am to be principal teacher of all the English studies, beside giving French and Music lessons; surely we all have our hands full, but we have endeavored to arrange our time so as to relieve each other, though with all our efforts we can not get through by daylight.

Mrs. Wilbur is our invaluable housekeeper, and Sandy and Milly *her* invaluable coadjutors.

Stuart and Clare, are very importunate to be allowed to do something, but we tell them to be agreeable will suffice.

NOVEMBER 30.

What a busy community we are—how we work—young and old, all doing our very best—or striving so to do—and accomplishing a multitude of things. In our school, through the instrumentality of Madame Dugrade—who before her departure, gave us the highest recommendations—and because a few ladies, the parents of some of our pupils, have most kindly interested themselves in our behalf—we have as large a number of pupils as we can accommodate, and indeed have been compelled to reject some.

During the morning we are very busy, having scarcely time to cast one thought beyond the occupation of the present moment. At three the house is cleared of the day-scholars, and then the efforts of all save Lela and myself, are in a great degree relaxed,—but we, have our music lessons to attend to from that time, until dark—so they may in no wise interfere with the school duties.

Our hour for tea is six—from that until eight is study-hour, of which we all take charge in turns,—resting and watching in one. But after that, with the younger ones in bed, we still have our pleasant evenings—only the old room has a greater number of smiling faces, and laughing voices ringing within it.

"We have such grand times at home, one never cares to go abroad for amusement," declares Louise Dutille.

"I wonder what my good mother would think, did she know I would rather pass one evening as we do, reading something worth reading, and then talking it all over,—than be her companion in that whirligig of fashion—that maelstrom of folly, which makes up her daily and nightly life," says Ada Lawrence.

"Oh dear Mrs. Lawrence, she would think you meant to eschew the world, and take holy vows upon you, thus blasting all her brilliant schemes for you, her only daughter, her pearl of pearls, her hope, her pride, etc.," laughed Clara Robbins.

"Well, I own, three months ago," said Jennie Chalton, "if any one had told me I could have passed evening after evening, with just the same faces round me, no variation in the same, I should have deemed the matter apocryphal, fictitious, uncertain."

"You see the effects of association my jewel, *we* are so agreeable, so irresistible—and then we have a world of variety, why I have learned to do six new stitches this last week—have become intimate with that blessed Mrs. Jamison's 'Loves of the Poets,' 'Sketches of Art,' and so on,—can tell precisely who Laura, Beatrice, and Fiammetta were,—how they looked—and why their lovers made them immortal, have learned to look with the utmost complacency upon my plain phiz, since you all assure me I may boast of being '*La Bella Mana*.' And then, what exquisite music we have, my worthy compatriots I am actually of the mind that we all sing like nightingales, now we have such good practice with the queen of nightingales, as Rolf Livingstone, pathetically dubbed Nora—"

"Ada! Ada! you distract me, what vast conversational powers you possess. You will never do for a nun, you have no vocation my dear, that is certain, your mother may safely give up that frightful conception, if she has ever imbibed it."

"Oh dear, how envious our good Dora has become, why my dear can I help having rare gifts?" answered the saucy girl.

And it is true the hours speed away. Time has his wings golden tipped, and they bear him swiftly by, so swiftly that we catch but a gleam of his brightness as he glances past.

—I am almost willing to join with some of my rattle brain family and wish:

"Each day was forty-eight hours long."

It is a pleasant reflection that all are so thoroughly content,—that our system of love has worked so well—that these warm ardent hearts, meet ours so kindly, that with all their girlish impetuosity, they submit so readily and cordially to our strictest rules, and of course some such are requisite when so many are to be governed, and trained aright.

Clare is the beau *par excellence* of all, boy though he is, and likes his "important position" mightily, but Stuart—

"Has no time for such nonsense."

"As if ladies were ever such a dreadful thing," cries Clare.

DECEMBER 15.

We are so happy about Adèle, poor little darling, God is so kind to her, indeed I think He is to blind folks in an especial manner always, bestowing some rare gift upon them in place of that of which He has deprived them. He has given her such a comfort, and all of us through her, in her passion for the organ—dear child, she is never lonely or sad—it fills up all the hours which else might be weary.

"It talks to me, mamma dear, says the sweetest, nicest things. As I play, it seems sometimes to be the voices of flowers holding long consultations; then the songs of the stars sparkling and bright, and often sad plaintive wind voices, weaving tales of the far-away lands through which they have come. Oh, all these voices gladden me so, they steal upon me softly and tenderly, seeming to love me; they are as gentle to my heart as the perfume of violets, and as sweet too. Oh, I pity my Gracie, that though she loves so to sit beside me for hours while I play, she cannot understand the meaning of the strains, they tell her no beautiful things; poor Gracie, her eyes have to work so hard for both of us, she has no time to learn this newer blessing of mine."

My dear child, my Muriel, God love thee ever!

The Christmas tide which draws near, promises a thousand joys to all the young folks; how I wonder while I

rejoice, over the light hearts they bear; how good it is to witness what pleasure even the anticipation of what may fall in the enjoying, has for their untouched hearts.

And yet, methinks it is blessed to suffer, to be purified in a furnace of fire—it is hard to endure trials—it makes one groan and shrink when the fierce storms beat about us, when the sword so sharp and piercing, penetrates ruthlessly our warmly beating hearts; and yet it makes heaven so bright, it draws us so near home and happiness. These bodies, poor and frail we call them—frail, but not poor—we dare not think them that, they are the “temples of the Holy Ghost,” his dwelling-place, and pains and sorrows entering in, cast out sin, making us more worthy.

JANUARY 4.

The house is cleared again, all having gone home for the Christmas holidays. Not only all the pupils, but even my own children and Estelle are away, some with one and some with another, only Mrs. Wilbur, Adèle, and poor little Agnes left; but next week will see them returning.

Our four gentlemen (for my two boys have grown this last year to be so named) have all gone together upon a jaunt of pleasure to the South, taking Howard with them.

Gracie cried sadly at first, at the idea of leaving Adèle, the first time in their whole lives they had been parted for a night, but Adèle said she must go, and so, writes Marion:

“She grieved a little when we first started, but the novelty of every thing, and the kind attentions of Meta and Maud have quite set her right, and she is as gay as our demure little Gracie ever sees fit to be.”

Dora went only because I made her, casting many a look of regret at Agnes, least she would trouble us.

We have all worked very hard this last three months, and I am glad these weeks of holiday broke in just here, for we all needed it, not that we are wearied with our new occupation, but that we required a little resting on account of the extra efforts we are compelled to make to get all right at the starting.

Oh, we are not tired of our new work, but so thankful, so unutterably grateful, that God has permitted us so to prosper.

Then, beside prosperity, we have so much love, love for each other strengthening each day as we labor with and for one another; then because it is love which is the prevailing spirit in our midst, there is no fear, and we who teach, teach lovingly with our hearts in the work, and they who learn, do it because, although they dread no punishment, they fear to grieve the hearts they love.

FEBRUARY.

The months go by leaving us busy and contented,—we work from day-break until even-tide, and then after our pleasant evening chat, go to rest well tired out, and sleep that dreamless sleep, which few but those who earn it know. Thank God for the laborer's peaceful slumbers—the tired hands' resting time.

Clarence has just completed a picture, which has won him many encomiums—and which his masters who are very proud of him, and prophecy great things for his future—have caused to be hung upon the exhibition walls of the ‘Artist's Fund.’

Poor boy he gets his talents by a sad inheritance, I dread to see his bright life wasted, in a hopeless feverish battle with an unappreciating world, which cannot understand his beautiful genius, nor comprehend his wild struggles for the lovely and true in art.

He calls this picture the first of any importance, which he has painted, and which he means for the first of a series. ‘The Dawning Light.’—— It is a picture of a fairy-like child, who stands in the light of the breaking morn, her fair face tinged with the early sunbeams—standing poised upon her toes, her tiny hands clasping bright flowers which lie clustering in her golden curls, which the wind is blowing back—upon her fair white bosom, and thickly strown at her feet are the brightest, earliest, fairest flowers of summer tide, her sweet eyes are turned with an eager look of wonder and delight to the sunshine,—the dawning day is beautiful—but the dawning beauty of the fair child is a brighter, fairer, lovelier thing.

And Tiny's own face is the fairy child's—although it was

unintentional upon Clare's part,— and gave him a surprise when we discovered it.

"Well," he declares, "I never knew or loved another child, what more likely than that she should form the warp and woof of my dreams."

The certainty of the likeness was decided beyond a question, by the little lady herself—who when taken one day by her sisters, to the Exhibition rooms, sprang from May's detaining hand, the moment her eyes rested upon it, crying to the amusement of the bystanders,

"Me! Me! oh pretty me, let me kiss pretty Tiny!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MARCH.

Mr. Lea, a widower of perhaps forty years of age, has been staying in this city for the greater part of the last winter. He is a man of wealth and high respectability, and has but two children, Mary and Laura. He has done me the honor of making me an offer of marriage.

He was very manly and open in the manner of his proposal, stating that it was because his home was so desolate that he sought to make another the sharer of his life.

"The wife of my youth must ever be loved, although with a mournful affection. My Mary in Heaven must ever share my heart with the dearest upon earth."

But for the sake of his daughter who loved me, for the sake of himself, who needed and would cherish me and mine so tenderly, he besought me to give him hope.

Of course I refused him, thanking him for his kindness, but assuring him that my intentions were, never to contract a second union.

He was grieved, hoped it would make no difference in our relations as friends, and so on, which, of course, I gladly concurred with, and there the matter rested, my quondam lover becoming my esteemed friend.

Mary was grieved and disappointed for a while, and let the secret out (by her efforts at pettishness) to the elder portion of the family.

We talked the matter over. Ernest was disposed to be very indignant about it, and say some very severe things.

Harley looked unutterably uncomfortable under his re-

marks, and to relieve him, and silence Ernest, I made light of the affair, acting as though such things did not wound and hurt me terribly as they in reality do.

Before the night was over, I had cause to regret my slight attempt at diplomacy. Regret it with bitter scalding tears, and the heartache of a whole week.

We were talking late in the afternoon, and as soon as it was passed, I thought no more of the conversation.

During study hour, which is always immediately after tea, while the rest were busy, I was seated alone reading, when Estelle came in, saying:

"Harley and I are going to Thackeray's lecture; I wish we could induce you to go, Bertha."

"Oh, I will content myself with hearing you deliver the lecture when you return," was my answer.

When they had been gone awhile, Ernest came in and throwing himself into an easy chair began to read. We sat so long silent, and my book which was "The House of the Seven Gables," enchained me so completely, that I had forgotten I was not alone, when suddenly his voice brought me back from Miss Hepsibeh's little shop to my own little sitting room.

"Bertha, what did you mean to-night, tell me?"

"Mean, when? what on earth is the matter, Ernest? you look as if you meant to eat me, do you?" and I drew back in feigned alarm.

"Oh, Bertha, Bertha," he said in a low tone almost like a groan, "pity me! pity me!"

"I do, Ernest, I did not know you needed my pity, what is it, what ails you, dear?" I replied, going to his side quickly,

He clasped me suddenly in his arms, and holding me so tightly to him I was almost breathless, said:

"Darling, darling, sweetest, I love you! God help me, I love you. Day and night for years have I knelt praying to you with wordless agony, and never daring to tell you of the burning love in my heart. How that heart was bleeding, loving you always in vain, my angel, my darling, my Bertha."

At first I was stunned. I heard every word so distinctly, never losing one letter, every sound fell upon my brain like burning lava; and when the last words were said, and he