

Then while they stood silently looking over the deep, Marion said with a smile :

"If you can, will you sing Nora dear?" and in a clear voice she sang "Fear not, but trust in Providence."

Afterwards Marion said, as she stood clasped tightly in Lela's arms, her head upon her breast.

"Let us all sing 'How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord,'" and they did, and then the waters were near again, and the gentlemen lifted them on to the pilot house.

They shook hands quietly, and said some kind words, then Marion whispered :

"Pray for us Uncle Harley, for all of us."

And he did, but as he prayed, the glad shout came from the approaching boat, and as it drew near, Stuart said :

"Marie! Marie! God kept you darling."

"Yes, dear brother, he has been very near to us all this night."

And they were saved.—In their little boat out of reach of danger they saw the noble steamer go down, and the captain and his men took a last look at their beloved craft and shed a tear over her fate,

Of the rejoicing upon shore I need not speak, by an early train they came to the city, sadly wearied by their excursion and its awful ending, joyful to have escaped a sudden death, but many I fear, forgetful of the kind Providence who had succored them.

They came home just when I was growing very anxious at their protracted stay. Thank God I did not dream until all danger was past, of how near I had come, to being bereft of every thing the world holds, that was dear to me.

But all are safe now, not only of our own household, but all who embarked upon that doomed boat. In this thought there is a great comfort, it might have been otherwise, thank God it is not!

Twice since the night of the accident Mr. Livingstone and Mr. Marstone have called to make enquiries after the well doing of their fellow sufferers. Earnest and Harley answered their kind questions in the office, below stairs.

My Father I know not how to be sufficiently humble and grateful, towards Thee, for all Thy mercies to me, Thy carefulness of my beloved ones. Oh time after time would I clasp my little Ernestine, and say 'oh my baby we might

this day have been desolate, alone upon the face of the earth, the rest slumbering beneath the waves of yonder treacherous stream.'

But God was Our Father, he doeth all things well. Oh the riches of the mercy and grace, Our Father sends upon us.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LAST week I had this letter, the date of which is at least three months back :

BERLIN, MARCH 1.

"My poor Bertha: Just as I am upon the eve of a long journey, I have received your letter. My poor child, my desolate child, God pity you! God pity me! My heart is broken! It wails over thee, my poor stricken one! My boy, my noble, glorious Walter, dead! Where was the justice, where the need, of crushing his young life, with its high aims and humble Christian goodness, and leaving such an one as I, or thousands of others of the world-wise, selfish pleasure or gain seekers, who fill this earth, until there is scarcely elbow-room? Verily it is true that Death loves a shining mark.

"My brave, true-hearted boy, never to look upon him again! Why, it has been the one thing I have looked forward to for all these years of wandering,—that at last I should gaze into his young, glorious face! My noble Percy!

"It has been a comfort to me many a time, when, heart-weary with contact with the souless great men among whom my lot has thrown me, to think that there was one true heart, one unsullied nature, among the law-makers of my own land. If all was corrupt and false here, there was honesty at home.

"And then methought that at my home-coming that proud

heart would bow before me in loving greetings. My boy! my boy! Well may we cry, God pity us! But while I bewail myself, I forget you, my poor child!

"Poor little Bertha! poor widowed one! God comfort thee! Two years alone, and none to help or soothe you! How have you borne it? But what is most incomprehensible is, that you say, 'We have lost everything—have left Percie's Cliffe, and are living in the city of B——.' Why were you not more explicit with me? It is strange Marstone has never applied to me all this time. I cannot understand it. And here am I with my hands tied, not able to go for you, and learn all that relates to your affairs: no not even did I know you were starving, could I get away from here now.

"But, of course, I understand your 'all' to mean in a broad sense,—that you have, by some unexplained reason, been obliged to part with 'Percie's Cliffe;' but it comforts me to remember that your own pretty inheritance, is safely out of the reach of any harm which might overtake Walter's business affairs.

"My heart reproaches me for a wrong I have unwittingly done you, in burdening you, already so burdened, with the care of my Clarence. I did not mean it, dear. Forgive the act which has added a new weight to your care-worn heart.

"I am glad you wrote me of the children; especially of Leanore's voice. Will you give her to me? My Walter's own child! You had him from me for years. You have all the rest who were his. Give me this one for my own. I will make her my co-heir with Clarence. Grant me this, the only favour I ever asked of you. My little Bertha, give me this child, with Walter's very image stamped upon her.

"After many wanderings in many lands, I am at last to be stationed in Paris; and my public position makes it requisite I should have a home, wherein to receive my friends.

"I have sent for my cousin, Miss Weston, to come and take charge of my establishment. You know her. A most estimable lady. A little peculiar, but a most excellent woman. I have written her to go to B—— and seek you out; and if you decide to give me Nora, to bring her out with her.

"Walter was my boy almost from his birth. You know the sad history of his adoption. I did not spoil him, though I loved him so exceedingly.

"Will you trust me with your child? Reflect well upon the privileges to be enjoyed in Paris. All that money or position can give her of happiness or pleasure she shall have.

"Her voice, which was always a marvel, you say is growing more beautiful with her years. She shall have Garcia for her music, and his equal in every other study. Then she will comfort my lonely heart,—my heart made sadly desolate by a sad fate. I will bless you for her, Bertha. In two years, I shall come to America for a few months; and I promise you, you will be glad you yielded to my urgency.

"Clarence, too, had better come. The boy wound himself strongly round my heart while he was with me. I fear amidst my many duties I cannot entirely shield him from the thousand snares of a Paris life; but it is not right the burden of his care-taking should fall upon you, so I will look for him

"My dearest love and blessing to each and all of the dear children. Poor little fatherless children! As far as I can, I will supply their loss.

"I am glad that I shall be able henceforth to hear regularly every month from you, when I am permanently settled in Paris. I send you a thousand dollars for Nora's outfit. What remains will do for pin-money for the others. With my sorrowful heart, and earnest wishes, I could write you pages; but time, my hard, relentless task-master, bids me pause just here. God's comfort be with you; and I believe it is, ere you could have written me the letter you did. Farewell, dear child! GRACLON AUDLEY."

The letter, and the manner of it was very good to get, but the gift he asked broke my heart to think of, Lela's first words, were a vehement,

"No, never, leave you, and May, and all the rest, I could not!"

But those were only first thoughts, now we have decided this came from above; and we are grateful. It will be hard to part, but in this life, almost all things have some sorrow next them.

And the shipwreck makes me think—though these two years will be a weary while to miss the light of my Lela's beautiful eyes, yet it might have been forever, her sweet smiles might have grown white and cold beneath the wave, her glad voice been hushed to the noise of its murmuring, and her hands and lips been pressed to mine never more.

So I say while I put back my tears, it might have been so much worse, that this will be a blessing.

All say she must go, that the refusal of such an offer is not to be thought of, therefore I have written to inform Miss Weston where she will find us; now we must set about preparing this traveler (as well as the others) for her journey, so far! so far!

Concerning Clare's going, of course he shall not, Burden! he has been nought but a blessing—an infinite comfort. No no, he is better away from the boy life of Paris; safer within the reach of home influence; his good is more certain here.

JULY 3.

School is over for this year, or I should say for this summer. And most of the girls have returned to their homes. We have decided, this season we will not scatter as we have done, but take a quiet little house on the sea-shore at Rocky Point, where we can enjoy the sea-breeze, and, at a distance, look upon the gay throng which summer after summer gathers at this beautiful spot.

We can thus drink in the health-giving salt air, and enjoy the change of scenery and occupation, without fear of intrusion, and at as cheap a rate as if we remained at home. I was the more willing to consent to this arrangement which was Estelle's planning, inasmuch as I cannot help but see Adèle and poor lame Agnes need a little freshening, and they would neither go without me. Therefore during Mr. Raymond's six weeks of holiday, we will all go to the shore, and gain health and strength for the next year's battles.

All, includes Dora and Jennie with their sisters. I do not know whether I have ever written anything concerning the history of these Chalton girls. They have a stepmother

which, in their case, is the real misfortune, it is generally supposed to be. Jennie is a bright pretty girl nearly eighteen, very intelligent, indeed I have rarely seen a girl more highly endowed. When Meta, the youngest of the three, was only a couple of years old, their father married a second time. Since that, their home has never been a happy place. They were unkindly used by their new mother, who, by every effort, has striven to wean the father's heart from his elder children, and centre them upon her own offspring. The most of their lives have been passed at boarding-schools, with unpleasant vacations at home. The father was too glad to get rid of the bother of them, to make any objections to their coming with us. So all were contented with his consent.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Sweet is the memory of departed friends, like the mellow rays of the setting sun, it falls tenderly yet sadly upon the soul."

OSSIAN.

AUGUST 1.

"Three years since, thou departed, leaving me desolate. My home is very peaceful, Walter, quiet and calm. My life flows on, a steady contented stream. I have no sorrows now against which to strive; but thousands of kind and merciful blessings. God has been such a Father all this while. I am surrounded with such tender, earnest love, children and friends ever true and gentle to me.

"Our children, my husband, are growing up around me like beautiful dreams. Nay, that is a foolish simile, they are real and true, while dreams are myths. They are my comfort, my rejoicing, my exceeding great and precious reward this side of Heaven and thee.

"I think I have cared for them well, no other desire or thought has come between me and them. Since thou didst leave me, they have had my whole duty after God. All I

owned, and gave so willingly to thee, since *then* I have devoted to their service. They are good children, repaying all my care with earnest love; in almost everything they are entirely what I would have them. I think no mother was ever more blessed in her children. Perfect obedience to me, tender love and consideration towards each other, characterizes their daily life. But thou knowest this, dearest, thou seest it better, far better than I with my poor mortal eyes can see. Yet, love, it is pleasant to sit here and talk to thee of these things. This sweet converse, strengthens and comforts me wonderfully.

"Were it possible to love thee better, to cherish thy noble deeds and words more dearly, than we always did, I think now our love is more deep, more entire than even in thy life time. How good the hope is to my heart, that soon, in a few more years, God will take me too,—but not now, I do not even ask the blessing of going to thee and God, while my darlings need me here."

AUGUST 10.
CLIFT HOUSE.

We have been more than a month at this pleasant place. The girls, ever fanciful, have given our plain little frame cottage a grand name; but as it pleases them, so it does the rest of us. I may well say *little* house, for with our immense family of twenty-one, including Milly and Sandy (a very important inclusion by the way), we can hardly get round each other, and as for sleeping room, we manage somehow to have it; but how is the mystery. We were much occupied the first part of the time with sewing. Making all things ready for the time when we are to lose not only our darling Lela, but the three boys also. Our return to home and home duties, will also be a sad leaving-taking. Yet now, although the time draws near which is to sever some of the bright links of the chain which has been hidden away so long and happily in our humble home, still we have determined to put away the evil thought, and let the young glad hearts at least, enjoy the passing pleasures.

"Now that awful pile of plain and fancy sewing is

through with, we will have a good time, to pay up for hard work," says Birdie, as the last stitches were put upon the last garment.

The latter part of the time, the girls have been enjoying "hugely," to quote Howard. For they have not only the pleasant bathing, scenery, and fresh air, but plenty of companionship beside that of our own household. Ada when she found we were to spend the summer within a long walk, or short drive of the gay watering place, persuaded her mother and aunt (Louise Dutille's mother) to change their plans for Saratoga, and come here. This fond and doting mother, Mrs. Lawrence, thinks I believe, one of the heinous crimes of which no sensible person would dare be guilty, is to refuse Ada any request, however unreasonable it may be.

And yet my bright, impulsive pupil is as willingly and gently led and restrained, by a firm hand as any other.

So, pretty soon after we were settled here, Marion had a letter from Ada, and Birdie one from Louise, telling us in two weeks they would be at Rock Point. And they have come, bringing with them the gay circle which the fashionable Mrs. Lawrence always draws round her.

Among them, are the Livingstones, Mr. Marstone, and several other people whom the girls have already met.

There are also here several pleasant young friends of Stuart and Clare's. So that the girls are at no loss for gallants. The distance from the place we live to Rock Point is so small, that the young people are a great deal together. It makes it very agreeable for them, and now they are growing older I am glad they can thus have free intercourse with refined and intelligent people.

Mrs. Livingstone finds her nerves so entirely unstrung by the frightful dangers of the shipwreck, that although as it is fashionable, she comes to the sea-side, she finds no enjoyment in the dear old ocean. Because she has once seen his evil ways, his ill-tempered mood, she will not be friends with him, and never joins the pleasant parties which explore the beach, therefore her husband, who pays far too little attention to her whims, seeks other company, most frequently, that of my merry girls and their party. I have had fears, lest a man of such remarkable fascination, both in person and manners (his conversation is said to carry an irresistible charm with it, when he chooses to have it so),

least a man so endowed would with his reckless, I fear, half-infidel character, exert an evil influence upon the fresh pure minds of my children; but I think now there is no danger, I could not well prevent their meeting him, and others like him, and I think I can trust them one and all, especially as the elder ones have a good hope, resting upon the firm foundation of the Rock of Ages, and with it to overshadow and protect them, they can surely withstand every dart of sophistry and doubting, hurled at either themselves or their younger companions.

Besides it is a pleasant thought that their fresh unworldly nature, may do him good, poor world-weary man, despairing heart. There is a noble nature in him I know, but alas for the thick hard crust of worldliness which has grown over it. A disappointed useless life, and yet they say he had a praying mother.

I cannot account for the strange interest I feel in this young man, perhaps it is because, pleasant memories cluster round the blessed past, in which I first knew him, a gay wild boy.

Mr. Marstone is also our constant guest. All are delighted with him, I have seen him once at church, and I equally with the rest was struck with his resemblance to his uncle, our dear lost friend.

Estelle, who poor friend to her sorrow, knows much of the world, pronounces him a finished gentleman. He is very attentive to my sweet Dora, and always chooses her and her inseparable comrade, Lela, as his companions, in the many delightful walks they take. Cora is wild as a kitten, and fully bent on 'forgetting that a book was ever written, lest the thought of study should mar some mite of her happiness.' Foolish little butterfly.

When we came down here what was our surprise and pleasure too, to find our good friend Mr. Lea, with Mary and Laura already established at one of the hotels. This makes our number almost complete, and there is not a thing to wish for but our quiet, cold Clara's presence. But I suspect her friends are not quite so indulgent of her vagaries as the others are, else our number would be complete.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SEPTEMBER 5.

ALMOST the last thing I wrote, when last I did write, was something about Clara Robbins, and soon after came a letter from her, containing a request from Ada and Marion to come to her, as she was to be married on the last day of August, and had chosen them for brides-maids, "as her dearest friends." Thus one of our little group has flown already, never to return, made for herself a home in another part of the world, far away from all her old friends. The girls have just returned from their visit to her, and report her as prosperously married and seemingly happy. I am glad of that, for although Clara was too cold and reserved ever to have crept into my heart, yet I feel, and shall ever feel the warmest interest in her future. She is young, not over eighteen I think, but she is the eldest of a large family, who owe their education to the kindness of a bachelor uncle, so I imagine, it is pleasant for Clara to have her life of dependence ended, and for her family to have her out of the way of the rest; I should like to have seen her once more ere she assumed the solemn duties of a wife, but as this could not be, I have written her a long letter full of the best counsel I could devise, and have had a grateful answer, from herself and husband.

We came home almost a week ago, and are all at work again, though not steadily as yet, for the breaking up is to come.

Last night as I sat at work within my own room, I heard a long confab going on between a party of girls; I peeped in at them, gathered round the sofa in all conceivable attitudes. Dora and Mary with Marion between them on the sofa, Ada kneeling with her elbow on Marion's knee, Louise and Birdie perched upon the arms of the sofa, and Lela and Jennie on either side of Ada on the floor. When their chatter tempted me to look in upon the pretty *tableaux vivante* they made, they were discussing Clara's wedding, or rather her husband.

"What would your choice be, could you make a choice in the matter?" was the first I heard. It was Ada who asked the question.