

half that night. For on the morrow, with Mr. Lee and Jennie, she joined Miss Weston in New York, and they all sailed for Europe. There is much comfort in knowing she is under such safe protection and pleasant companionship as Jennie and her husband.

CHAPTER XL.

NOVEMBER 14.

WE are quiet once more. I think the wedding did us a world of good. Keeping our hands so busy with wedding favors, our hearts had little chance to show their mournfulness.

The house is desolate without Lela and Jennie, each hour we have fresh need of them. Oh, my darling, my heart pines for one look into your gloriously beautiful face, my queen, I mourn for one more kiss of your dear lips.

I love the light of your dark eyes, my Nora, the world seems strangely dark, missing their radiance near me. God love you, sweet daughter, and I think He will, my true-hearted, all-enduring girl.

Birdie, as usual, has an ocean full of tears, for her sister's loss. Marion is quiet, but her pale cheeks and downcast eyes, tell how her heart goes forth after the sister, who has been her companion and friend so long, round whom for so many years so much pride and love has been garnered.

My May is nearly eighteen now, a gentle, quiet, little lady, dear dove-eyed treasure, her grief, like every other thing, is borne with a graceful dignity, the depth of her sorrow kept for the night time, when only God sees her.

The parting with the boys, which would have been a great trial, has been completely swallowed up, in this other parting, which was for years, and to cause an ocean tide to swell between.

Then we hear from each one of them once in the week, so that we scarcely seem so entirely parted; for Lela's letters

we will have to wait a month at least, but then they will be a blessing.

We have settled down very quietly, quite a diminished family, since this Autumn tide flowed in upon us, two flowers have been gathered into the marriage wreath, Clara a fair pale lily, and bright-eyed Jennie, a blushing rose. I have put my veto upon any such doings in the future, and tell the girls since they are so sought for, I shall have to put my treasures under lock and key.

NOVEMBER 31.

Our boys are getting along bravely. At first it was all up-hill work, especially for Howard, but now they are getting accustomed to it.

Clare writes about Howard: "He bore up like a man, though his lip would quiver, and his voice tremble in a very suspicious manner, when we spoke of home; but now we are getting broken into the traces and are hard at work it is better! 'Hard work drives away dull care,' sure enough."

Stuart is entirely satisfied with the school at which we have placed Howard, and writes:

"The discipline is most excellent. How' is kept amazingly busy; but I am glad of that. I will take care he is not over-tasked, of course some of his companions are not at all desirable; but as he tells me all they do and say, I think I can keep them from harming him; besides, I find his 'Percy' blood, young as he is, keeps him from low associates; how I can picture the way Lela would flush up and proudly say, 'of course it will,' were she only home to hear you read that last sentence. I shall have far more trouble with Clare, dreamy, poetical Clare, than with impulsive Howard, for he takes for granted every thing which is pleasant is right, and gets *in* to trouble because he will not take the trouble to keep *out* of it.

"For myself, I get along indifferently well, for have I not both of them to help me, and your dear letters to comfort and counsel me. Every time you write the precious words, 'my boy,' I kiss them, as I would yourself, my gentle monitor and friend. God bless you!"

We find a world of comfort in these letters, it is next to

having them home again to know day by day just what they are doing, and I know full well how very precious the home letters are to them.

"Like a breeze laden with the sweets of a heliotrope bed, your words from the dear old home come to our waiting hearts, and if the old truism holds good, 'distance lends enchantment to the view,' I suppose that is the reason we cluster such bright hopes and loving thoughts round the old weather-beaten house, and all it contains," says Clare.

And my Howard, my Espérance, says, "Oh the thought of mamma, and all at home, is like a dream of golden beauty!"

DECEMBER 26.

The middle of this month, brought us letters from our precious Lela, and the others. Their voyage across was prosperous. Mr. Audley met them at "Havre." Of course the meeting was a trial to both of them because of the sad loss which both hearts had known since they met years ago. But Jennie writes,

"Now, Mr. Audley has got over the sad memories Nora brought with her, he raves about our 'queen's' glorious beauty. I could not have dreamed a man of his age, and dignity, could have been so exstatic, for he is at least ten years older than my gudeman, and I tell him I have not seen him get up half so much youthful ardor yet."

Leanore describes their hotel, as surpassing even the ordinary magnificence of Parisian life, in its appointments, "I have my dressing-maid and waiter, beside a coachman and footman at my command; I am prone to confess, their numbers and attentions oppress me, who have been used so long to be my own servant, but I never let them know it, but treat them regally, I assure you," and she continues:

"Dear Mr. Audley, I wonder what he would think of me, did he dream that one of 'Walter Percy's' children could find wealth, and its luxuries oppressive."

"Dear me, mamma, I suppose he would be horror-stricken did he know I have been obliged to wash, bake and brew, make beds, and do all myself! dear aristocratic old friend, I am sure he will spoil me for you mamma, for I shall be lazy beyond all comparison, when I come back.

"Mr. Audley has no idea of our poverty I am certain, nor am I going to let him have, I am proud too. He knows of course you have a school, and it chafes him terribly, but I assure him no amount of pleading would induce you to give it up, and become dependent upon him.

"He does not know how sweet we have found the bread of poverty, after it was earned, does he mamma?"

"Mr. Audley knows no limits to his generosity, and my purse is so profusely filled, that even were I inclined to be selfish, I could scarcely expend it all upon myself, so please tell 'May' and 'Birdie' I mean to buy all they wear in the future, in Paris, and send a box with every letter, will it not be good to know just what they are dressed in, though I am so many miles away?"

DECEMBER 31.

Clare writes to me, in one of his weekly letters, after this manner:

"Oh, Aunt Bertha! If I only had the steadiness and determination that Stuart has, or even the half of it, I should be so thankful. When a gay party of students come to our room, and ask us to be one of their number in some mad frolic or other, it is only one time in ten that I am able to resist their persuasion, while it is ten times out of one he does not refuse them. I believe that is not sense; but I mean he hardly ever leaves his books and takes part in the sports.

"At first they tried to make a butt of him, and called him 'spooney,' and so on; and once some fellow laughed, and called him a 'deuced Puritan.' But he drew himself up, and gave the chap a look, he dared not repeat it. You know the power in Arty's eye when he likes.

"For a long while they used to persecute him, and he used to laugh at them. But once there was something on hand in which we all wanted him to join us, and I as well as the rest was certain he would this time, and was provoked because he would not.

"We tried to force him, by threats and anathemas, which he parried with a good-humored laugh for a while, when suddenly he sprang up, and said, not at all in his usual laughing way, but very sternly:

“Now I will tell you, once for all, what is, to-be-sure, none of your business, but nevertheless I will tell it you. I did not come here to play or fool my time away, but to study,—to gain by hard work an amount of knowledge wherewith in the future to make a name. Nay, more than that, to enable me to earn a subsistence for those I love better than my own life.

“Therefore, I will work with might and main as long as my kind friends send me here, and not spend the money they so kindly provide me in frolics.

“If I had powerful friends to back me with their money and influence, as most of you have, as Clare Beaumont here has, I might, perhaps, do otherwise; but I have not: therefore, I must work.

“It is a great crime, I know, to be poor; but poor I am, nevertheless. Now you know my reasons, I am quite certain you will cease to desire the companionship of a poor, hard-working fellow like myself.’

“He stood so bravely, looking so handsome in his careless, graceful actions, his nobleness of character came out so boldly, his contempt for the sneers of his companions was so evident, I could have worshipped him. As it was, I sprang to him, clasping my arms about him, loving him—my noble, whole-souled brother—better than ever.

“By George! you are a noble fellow,’ said young Carroll, who is one of our chums. ‘I would give all I am worth, or ever expect to be, to own half the goodness of your heart, Aldrich.’

“And that is so,’ added Harry Lester, who is another of our ‘peculiar,’—the son of one of our professors, and a glorious fellow. ‘You have conquered us, old fellow, and by my head! I’ll knock the first fellow down, be he freshman or scph., who dares to interrupt you with his nonsense. Count upon that! I am a good-for-nothing vagabond myself, but I have sense enough to honor all brave, true hearts.’

“And the others, following the lead of these two, (which, by the way, they always do,) overwhelmed Arty with compliments. And coolly enough he took them all, save the first two, which he knew were heart-felt; and the way he grasped their outstretched hands told them that he understood them.

“Aunt Bertha, I tell you I am proud of my brother. I glory in him. I love him better and better each day I live: the best of anything else in the world, except yourself and little May.

“But I do wish I was not such a confoundedly unstable fellow. I make a set of new resolves every day of my life, and the very first temptation knocks them head over heels, plague upon it.”—

Dear boy! I know how hard a matter it is for him to strive against this weakness: yet I hope, with Stuart’s help, he will weather all storms, and come off victorious, after all.

We are so well at home and abroad, so prosperous and so contented, surely, with God so good to us, so very near to us, we have need to serve Him more entirely each day we live.

Adèle improves wonderfully in everything, but especially in her music. How she has that strange gift of harmony, which seems to come with blindness! She says:

“The organ is birds, flowers, books, and all beautiful things besides, to me, now.”

JANUARY 10.

We have entered upon the duties of a new year, with hearts filled with gratitude for past mercies. God has bountifully cared for us, and we have joy and peace in Him.

Ernest’s practice is all we could desire. He has treated himself to quite a handsome little establishment, for which Adèle and Agnes, and sometimes Gracie and Tiny, think they have especial need to be grateful.

“It is not at all like a doctor’s gig,” says Gracie, very zealous for its honor; “but quite like a genteel carriage.”

Adèle enjoys perfect health, and as I watch her merry face this moment, and hear her ringing laugh, as Sandy gives her and half a dozen other girls a “guid bit o’ skatin’ in the garden,” I think I may add of happiness, too.

Gracie is still the shy, blushing damsel of old, not pretty,—at least, when compared with the rest,—but a truthful, happy little soul, with one absorbing passion,—her love and devotion to Adèle, who repays it in its kind.

Tiny is a witch. If she got compliments in her baby-

hood for good behaviour, she will not now, I can assure her.

"The 'tarnalest little plague that ever trotted into all kinds of mischief," says Milly, who, however, will allow no one else the liberty of finding fault with her.

Sandy and Milly, and indeed everybody else, spoil her, I fear; but I cannot help it. Poor, fatherless little daughter!

Marion and Cora are just what they have always been,—the best of children to me. The latter—as wild as a kitten—keeps the house in a constant state of excitement by her antics. The former, as ever, my gentle, faithful helper and friend in all things.

The great pleasure of our lives, beside the comfort of each other's love, and the boys' weekly epistles, is Lela's dear letters. They come every month. Such a budget of them, Estelle declares:

"I do not see how the child finds time to do anything else, when she writes such hosts of letters."

But Lela always had the pen of a ready writer; and now her heart is in it, I doubt not she finds it easy.

In her last box of pretty things, was a hundred dollars for the children from Mr. Audley, who, I am sorry to hear, has just sent Clare the same amount.

CHAPTER XLI.

APRIL.

I AM at New Haven under the shadow of old "Yale," and have been for the past two weeks; this note from Stuart and Marion brought me.

"DEAR MAY;—Clare has been getting into trouble, and now he is very ill, at the house of one of our friends, Judge Lester, of this place. Break the news tenderly to your mother, dear May, we fear he is dying; ask her what I am to do. In haste and love."
ALDRICH.

Of course there was but one thing to be done, although I dreaded it inexpressibly. I came at once, Stuart met me at the cars, and took me to Judge Lester's house, where Clare lay. He had been attacked while coming from college, fainted in the street, and was carried by Harry Lester, who was one of his companions to his father's house, which was near at hand.

A fierce fever set in, with determination to the brain, and when I reached him, I found him entirely deranged, and his life despaired of, but now after two weeks of struggling with disease, we trust he is recovering.

A sad tissue of events led to this illness, which such as they are, it is my duty to relate. With his gay comrades, he had been off, against the earnest wish of Stuart, and his own better judgment, five or six nights in succession upon sleighing parties.

The last night, wild with frolic they came home, went to a gambling house, and for the first time he played and betted, winning several hundred dollars. As he came out, he saw in a mirror the reflection of the face of the man with whom he had just been playing, its wild ghastly look of hopeless despair, struck a pang of remorse into his heart, and he turned to hand back the money he had just won from him, but swiftly and silently the young man had passed from the room.

The next day when he arose ashamed and disgusted with himself, a throbbing pain in his head, and a worse one at his heart, he saw ever before him, the pale, beseeching, anguish stricken face of his opponent.

Ashamed to confess his last night's employment to Stuart, he bore moodily, all that long day, the secret of his successful sin; with the evening came his companions who when he refused to go with them, taunted him with cowardice and meanness, in winning their money, and then denying them a chance of winning it back. At last stung by their insinuations, he agreed to go, excusing the act to his own conscience by saying, he was going to seek out the young man, whose face of misery had haunted him all day, and see if he could not befriend him.

Again he played, but this time was not allowed to win, and lost not only his last night's winnings, but the money which he had just received from his uncle. Fired with the wine with