

scene—the pale, dead face of her cherished friend and play-fellow—came upon her, she flung herself upon the floor at his feet.

“ Louise, my Louise dead ! dead ! ” she cried frantically.

It was now his turn to comfort, and lifting her up, he sat for a half hour, with her upon his knee, soothing and cheering her.

I let them be, for I thought, perchance when this man is far away, the thought of his talk with the child will comfort him, and do him good.

When they came to tell him he must go, he laid her gently upon the sofa, and kneeling beside her pressed kiss after kiss upon her cheek.

“ Birdie my little friend you will not forget me, you promised me pet ? ”

“ Never, never, indeed I could not ; I love you so dearly. ”

“ Kiss me good bye, for I must go now. ”

With a shy, but exquisitely graceful action, she laid her head a moment upon his breast.

“ Will you never come again sir ? ”

“ Yes perhaps, if you want me to, shall I *mignonne* ? ”

“ Please, please do, I want you to so very much. ”

“ Then I will come next year ; ” then he added, “ but I must go now, give me my kiss dear child. ”

“ I will give it to you then, ” she said.

“ When ? ” he asked with a look of surprise, “ when do you mean ? ”

“ The time you come again, ” she said, “ next year sir. ”

“ But why not now too ? you have let me kiss you ever so many times to-day ? ”

“ Yes but that is different, ” she said with a pretty conscious dignity.

“ Well my little lassie has more art than I dreamed after all, ” he said smilingly “ I will come a long way for my kiss. ”

“ No not for that, you would come anyhow. ”

“ How do you know that, Birdie ? ”

“ Because you promised sir, that you would. ”

“ But I might change my mind. ”

“ No you will not, I believe in you, I trust your word. ”

“ Thank you dear child, I will come, ” and pressing a kiss upon her brow he went away. Birdie wept a heart-full of tears for him. The rest of us pity him, so much of good, and yet so sadly marred by evil.

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## CHAPTER XLVI.

MAY.

THIS whole winter has been so busy, and yet so utterly empty of incident, that I have not felt it requisite to keep a record of each week as hitherto.

When we came home last summer, Marion and Dora did not come with us ; but because of the urgency of Mrs. Dutille's prayers, went with her to pass the long gloomy winter she so much dreaded, at her home upon the blue waters of the Potomac, and they are still there.

Of course this sad bereavement, the loss of our little Louise, which had been so sudden and awful, precluded the possibility of the Lawrences' going this year into gay society, and Ada has been permitted to come back to us.

Cora had a long spell of illness caused by the shock of her accident and the sad fate of Louise ; but with the return of spring, her strength and spirits, which have been sadly depressed for the first time in her whole life, are reviving, and we think her almost well.

Mary Lea, in a letter sent with the return of her sister Laura to school in the autumn, wrote me sad news, because it was the sundering of another of those ties, which for the past three or four years have wound round my own and the hearts of all the others, weaving us together in a close and loving fellowship, and the snapping asunder of these cords of love which bind us thus tenderly, sends a pang to each heart, she writes :—

“ With many a heartache, and a few hearty weepings, I have decided not to return this year to school, if indeed ever again. Oh, Mrs. Percy ! can I say it, can I much less adhere to such a course after I have said it ; and yet I



know were you here, and knew all my circumstances, you would tell me what you have an hundred times, 'whatever is your duty you must do without shrinking, cheerfully with a brave heart,' and I will, although this duty leads me away from all pleasures and loves that I have cherished before.

"The only relation of my mother is, you know, my grandmother, she is old and feeble, and needs constant care, she loves me very dearly, if I do as my heart dictates, and come to you, I shall have it ever before me that the duty I owe her, the care I should take of her, are being performed by the hand of an hireling, and I know even the joy of being with you all again, would be quenched by the thought of such a thing, therefore I must stay."

Dear Mary, I think she is one of those, the very few of this earth, who have their reward here, at least the beginning of it, her letters are full of peace and contentment, we manage it so, that she has letters from some of us every week, and we in return from her.

We have long letters every month from Nora. Mr. Audley can never say enough in her praise; but he is a partial judge, and we would scarcely rely upon his panegyrics, were they not corroborated by other witnesses. Mr. Marstone who accompanied Mr. Livingstone to Europe, has written one or two letters to Ernest.

He has seen Lela several times, and speaks in the highest terms of our darling's wonderful voice and exquisite beauty.

The boys are busy at their studies; in their weekly letters they describe Lester as much changed, but not for the worse. He, Stuart, and Carrol, expect to graduate next autumn.

Clare not having worked so hard before he went to college, or indeed, not having Stuart's abilities, went in, in the freshman's class, while Stuart entered at once as a sophomore. Since his terrible downfall, poor Clare has done up a world of troublesome study, which should have been done before; he is to be promoted among the juniors this year.

Howard astonished us all (but Stuart,) by passing such an examination as admitted him at once to the class, into which Clare is about entering, so though there is at least five years difference between them, they will work side by side.

But Howard is Walter Percy's son; how could it be

otherwise? the only matter to be astonished at would have been, if he had not been brilliant as a scholar.

Then, too, he is not an artist, with a world of fairy visions to escape from, ere he can settle down to study. Oh, Clare deserves more credit than any of them, if they do leave him a little behind in the race up the hill of knowledge, for the rest have not such a cloud of bright dreams enveloping their brain. If they are great in some things, so is he; they may read Greek letters, but he can rear a Grecian temple; they may know a deal about the philosophy of nature, but he can make nature look like life itself with his sun-tipped pencil.

Oh, I am very proud of my artist boy, and his comrades love and cherish him as if he were a fairy gift.

We give all our spare time to Adèle. I have oftentimes spoken of her love for the organ, and we have paid great attention to her in this respect. It will in coming years be of benefit every way; for in case we should all be taken from her, and she be left, alone and portionless, to grope her way through life, (and such things have occurred ere this,) it will be a blessed thing that, though blind, she is not helpless. She already plays in our little church.

Gracie is nothing in particular, but a blushing, shy little damsel, with sweet blue eyes peeping from behind her brown curls, which seem made especially to hide them. She has no particular love for music or drawing, is not remarkably brilliant in any one study or any one thing, only loving and clinging to everybody, (Adèle above all,) made happy with a kiss or kind word, everybody's helper, a pair of willing hands and ready feet, which every one uses, and thinks they have a right to. A demure, blushing, timid, useful little dame is my Gracie.

She has such rosy cheeks, is so short of stature, and so round and plump, that the wild ones make her the target of many a witty shaft.

"Mamma, do you not feel distressed for Gracie's astonishing rotundity? Why, I fear we shall have to lock her up, least the uninitiated should mistake her for a crimson pin-cushion, and make use of her accordingly," says Cora, with a pretty look of horror.

"Oh, is this a little girl? Why, I declare one is not to be blamed for mistaking her for a blush-apple, taking madem-



oiselle's *toute ensemble* and cheeks into consideration," was Stuart's parting salutation. Clare writes:

"Tell Gracie for me it is time for partridges now. I trust she will keep in cover." But, though Gracie blushes a little more, she does not mind their naughty speeches much.

Next month, with the Spring's breath, will come my May-flower. Darling! I have missed her sadly, but another needed the comfort her presence brings, and I could but spare her. Dear, dove-eyed Dora, too. It will be pleasant to see her home once more.

Our school is very prosperous. Indeed, we cannot accommodate all our applicants. We live contentedly, working unceasingly through the day, and sleeping peacefully through the night. We mourn for the loved and lost, but we mourn with a blessed hope; and when oftentimes I start from a dream, thinking Tiny's arms are about my neck, or Walter's voice in my ears, I comfort myself for the disappointment with, "Though not now, afterwards!"

Ernest has been working very hard this winter, and has quite electrified the scientific world by some discoveries, which his extensive travels and keen observation, in almost every part of the habitable world, have enabled him to make: and now that people begin to find in the haughty, reserved, although humble physician, a great scholar, and man of profound erudition, he is much sought after.

But the cruel trials of life have embittered him; the chastenings God has sent him in various ways fell not upon a Christian's humble heart, but upon a proud, self-reliant spirit, and they have hardened him. Out of our own circle he is a cold, haughty man. Even here, sometimes, the children deem him stern; but he is not, dear brother. To me he is all tenderness.

His mother and the rest of us have to do all the "being proud and honored" by the attention shown him. He cannot forgive the world the wrong it has done to him and his; and although I know at heart he exults thus to oblige men to acknowledge his superiority over them, though he is proud thus to have won, unaided by outward circumstance, the notice and approbation of the best of men, yet he never by word or sign shows that it is so.

Harley keeps the even tenor of his way, winning not lau-

rel wreaths, but friends to love and prize him, to look for his presence as a blessing. He is the light of many hearts, and the adoration of the people among whom he labors is the best commentary upon his faithfulness. But these last two years he grows strangely grave and quiet, working more zealously, allowing himself little rest. Ernest has been very anxious concerning him, and thinks this city life and work is doing him a world of harm, but we know not how to help it.

"He must look out for some quiet parish among the mountains, or else I fear me much he will betake himself off in search of that crown, and those treasures, which he has been so zealously laying up, over the dark waters of the much abused Styx," says Ernest, in his half-heathenish, unchristian lightness.

But Harley only laughs at our anxiety, and declares himself quite well, and that hard work and plenty of it is good for him, although he acknowledges that, in their excursions into the unsettled country, he seems to take a new lease of life.

Estelle and I have our hands full of employment, but we like it amazingly, and are only thankful to have it to do.

JULY 1.

To-day our vacation begins. The boys are to be home next week. We have left counting months and weeks now, and say, "in so many days they will be here."

We had thought to stay quietly at home this summer; but our fate, in the shape of Mrs. Lawrence, forbids it.

She has taken a home somewhere, she knows as little where as I do; but her agent, who has rented it, says it is a beautiful country-seat, in a most healthful and charming location. It is to be tested this summer, and, if it prove equal to the meed of praise bestowed upon it, she intends purchasing.

"So that we may have a home of our own somewhere," she says.

She proposes we shall come to her "*en masse*" bringing



Sandy and Milly, "for whose services she will be unutterably grateful," and close our house until Autumn.

But this is simply an impossibility. Ernest cannot leave the city this summer for any length of time without great loss, and Mrs. Wilbur will not be induced by any consideration to enter again the world which so ill-treated her.

Stuart considers it very essential Howard should spend as much time as possible during the vacation in quiet study, as he is so much younger than his classmates, and of course has to study very hard to keep up with them; so Harley spite of our entreaties, and Ernest's expostulations, has decided to stay at home and take charge of his studies.

Therefore, as Mrs. Lawrence has given Ada her solemn promise if we come, to make a quiet family party of it, we have concluded to go to them.

We have had one great pleasure this last week, in the return of Jennie and Mr. Lea. We had hoped Mr. Audley would have brought Lela home this year; but there is now little prospect of such a thing, precious darling, how my heart aches with longing to see her.

Jennie is the personification of a happy wife. Mr. Lea makes her a good true husband, although he pretends she plagues him mightily, and "is such a shrew;" but his fond looks tell another story.

We are to meet Mrs. Lawrence at the cars in the city of P——, which is the city a few miles from which our old home lies. It will seem very strange to be even that near to "Percies' Cliffe," and I fear there will be more pain than pleasure in the familiar city of P——.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

"ROSEDALE," JULY 20.

We came as we had agreed, to this country-house of Mrs. Lawrence's, whither she and Ada had preceded us by a week.

We met them at the depot in P——, where they do, not only their shopping, but their marketing, although it is a good five hours drive from their house by railroad.

How strange it seemed to sit there. May and I winced under the remembrance of the time when, after a tour of calling or shopping, we had sat here in this smoky station-house, waiting for "papa" to come from the office, and after being whirled along the road for an hour or so, to arrive safely at home, away from noisy, dusty, tiresome, and tiring P——, amidst the old mountain-like hills, the cool, shady forests and the bright flowers of our own country home.

Oh dear happy time never to come again! We may sit as we did yesterday in the old waiting room, and watch the ebb and flow of strange faces, as we oft have done before. We may look out at the door to spy out the old landmarks and find them all, or else note the change which five years of absence have made.

But though glad voices may fall upon our ear, though smiles may greet our eyes, though the hasting of coming steps may break upon us, yet the old time may never come again. All remains unchanged, the room, the street, the whizzing in and out of the cars, the starting hour, the bustle and flurry of getting settled, all, all as of old; but how the hushing of one voice, the missing one radiant face, the needing one strong arm to care for us, changes all! changes all!

Oh dear steps never to come quickly towards us! Oh dear voice never to break upon our listening ears! tender father, loving husband! To know the realms of heaven are thy pathway, to know songs of angels tune thy voice, should comfort us that we are desolate; but God forgive us, it does not.

It seemed like a dream the being hurried, upon Stuart's arm into the very cars, which in the old times had carried us home, and for one instant the thought flashed over me



"perhaps it is even our old home Mrs. Lawrence has taken;" but then I knew how foolish such a thought was, how impossible. Then I strove to remember where this could be, once I knew every cottage and villa along this road for miles beyond our own house; but I could decide upon none, it was a new place, I could not get at it.

I had half hoped, half dreaded that the train would pass by "Percie's Cliffe," but suddenly a new road opened upon us, and turning from the old track about four miles below our lost home, we whizzed into a strange country as well. Until then, I had done nothing but watch from the window breathlessly, but as we turned and the old association was broken, I looked at Marion: her face was very white, and clasping my hand, she said:

"Mamma, mamma! If we only could! Oh, I had hoped so!"

"It was better not, daughter. It was better not!"

While we clung to each other for an instant, a thousand thoughts overwhelming us, we were suddenly aroused by Mrs. Lawrence's voice.

"What is the matter, Birdie? What ails you, child?" Then, for the first time, I remembered that she, too, must recognize these scenes, child though she was when she left them. She, too, had watched and hoped until the turn had caused the bitter disappointment, and now she sat, sobbing half hysterically, beside Mrs. Lawrence.

Stuart, with his quick intuition, saw some trouble was upon us all, for I was speechless to comfort my poor child. He said quickly:

"Clare, change seats with Birdie, and let her sit by me." Then, with a smile, "Mrs. Lawrence, you must not be surprised at Birdie's tears. They are like April showers, and dried as soon. A beautiful scene, or continuation of scenes, like these we are being whirled through, are just the things to excite her emotions. You know she has, like Clare, an artist's eye for *la beaute*."

Mrs. Lawrence was satisfied, and Stuart kept Birdie's eyes and tears very assiduously out of sight the rest of the way.

This place, at which we arrived just at sunset, is very pretty and picturesque, perched up on the side of one of the high hills of which this region is composed; and now I have found my reckonings, I know just where we are.

Many and many a long year did this place belong to an aged couple, who, withstanding the tempting offers made by city gentlemen, who would fain have possessed the beautiful site lived here in an humble thatched cottage, preferring to keep their old home to making money.

"Not if you cover every acre with gold," was their invariable reply to purchasers.

But now they have gone to that "other home," and the place has been purchased, and a cottage '*a la Suisse*' erected upon it by some one, who with larger expectations and desires than means, is compelled to sell it.

The river, which runs at the foot of the hill, (so small as scarcely to be so called at this point,) winds round its base for five or six miles, gathering breadth and strength as it rushes on, and sweeping through a forest of oaks, forms the boundary line for a quarter of a mile of the vast estate of "Percies' Cliffe."

In yonder boat, which lies so lazily in the moon-beams. I could glide quietly along, and in an hour's time stand in the rocky summer-house, where a thousand times, with dear eyes now dimmed, I have watched the moonlight shimmer on the murmuring waves. Then a spring down the stone steps, a single turn through those trees, and in all its beauty, "Percies' Cliffe" would lie before me, its white towers gleaming in the silvery light, and falling upon my heart like the melody of heaven.

Oh, that I might go! Oh that I might——, But I will not. Harm, and only harm, would come of it. It would prostrate me for days; the old longings, the old repinings, would come again. No, no; I will not go!

Marion and I alone know all this. She it was who first remembered the spot, "old Gilbert's cottage," we used to call it. We have wept and longed together over the thoughts these memories brought us, as we do over everything. It is some comfort always to share our sorrows with each other.

But Cora has no idea of the neighborhood, although she has bounded along the road, which lies at the edge of the mountain upon her nimble-footed "Fairy," and come with her sunny smiles and curls to the "old man's cottage," an hundred times before; but it is as well she should not know that just over the brow of this tall hill, lies her idolized birth-place.



It is very lovely here; the garden is a wilderness of roses; the river below murmurs ever a sweet song in our ears,—pleasant I deemed it once. Now it sounds like a mournful cadence from the grave, and seems ever singing a “miserere” for my lost Ernestine Lillian, my lost baby!

Thus, weak, faithless creature that I am, I turn even God’s beautiful gifts into a cause for sorrowful remembrance and mourning.

The children enjoy the wildness of this country exceedingly, and never weary of clambering the mountain’s side, and losing each other in the woods; all day long they have been out with Sandy.

How thankful I am he came instead of Milly, who knows every inch of this country, and would distract me by her grief, beside letting the children know where they are, which is not necessary.

Estelle did not dream, until I told her, where we were, although she spent a year with me when I was first married.

Mrs. Lawrence has sent an invitation to Carrol and Lester to come; there is also a brother of her husband’s here with his wife and a son of about Howard’s age, just home from his first vacation at the naval school of Annapolis; he is a wild boy, a great pet of his cousin Ada’s, who is his especial darling. The children find him the greatest addition to *their* party, as he is forever getting them into some trouble and mischief.

There are two or three families living within a mile or two of this place, of whom Mrs. Lawrence hopes great things in the way of variety, although the rest of us are well pleased with our present quiet.

Then, too, the city of P— is so conveniently near, she has no dread of the solitude the rest of us covet. She is so charmed with the spot, as well she may be, that she has decided to purchase at once, and Ada has already christened it “Rosedale,” with which I have headed my leaf.

Oh, I think the sky is more fair here, the flowers more sweet and luxuriant, than anywhere else in the whole world. Oh, though it has brought some pain to breathe this air again, yet I am glad, I am thankful to be here.

God is very good to me, granting me many, many mercies.

Oh, the sunbeams gliding softly down upon me, stealing

silently but tenderly through the forest trees, tell me a tale of hope, sing a sweet song of *Espérance*, and rest me even while they pain.

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CHAPTER XLVIII.

JULY 22.

THE other day a gay party started out to walk to the “Lion’s cave,” a few miles up the mountain.

On their return, Stuart and Clare were as usual with Marion, as they came running down the rocks she stumbled, and falling, struck her forehead near the temple, so very near that now when we look at it, we shudder to see it, and say, “Thank God, it was not lower down.”

Although not much hurt, the blow stunned her; both sprang forward to lift her up, and while Clare held her, Stuart, with his usual quick decision, leaped over a fence and hastened towards a brook which gurgled near by.

When he returned, bringing his hat filled with water, he beheld Clare with passionate gestures striving to restore Marion.

“Darling, precious May, speak to me.” These, and a thousand like words of wild love uttered in tones of the most thrilling entreaty, broke upon Stuart’s ear, and as he stood still for one instant watching the kisses rained upon her cheek, and listening to the words Clare’s eloquent Italian tongue poured forth, he learned a truth which blanched his cheek, and sent a chill to his very heart.

For no brother’s love spoke in such a way, none but a lover’s lips could rain such kisses, so wild, so passionate, and with a sickened heart, Stuart stood, unmindful of the aid he had brought, watching with folded arms and ashen cheek the scene before him.

Suddenly, the delicate eyelids quivered, the faint rose-tint came into the white cheeks of the fainting girl, and with a smile, she murmured: