

"Enough," he said, his face flushing painfully, "I will come at once." Livingstone gave a prolonged whistle, but when Mr. Marstone turned a look of deep meaning upon him, he said quickly:

"Pardon me, Paul."

"Mrs. Percy will have the goodness to excuse me, as I am thus suddenly called home, upon a matter which another cannot settle, and as I go from such a pleasant party, mine will be all the regret," he said it gracefully but very sadly. As he saw Livingstone preparing to accompany him he said:

"Stay where you are, Rolf. I do not need you, or want you either—nay, I insist, your room will be better than your company. I can manage better alone, old friend," he added pleasantly.

"I should think so," muttered a voice beside me, just loud enough to reach my ear, and turning quickly, I caught the expression of Lela's face as she said the words. Every shade of color had flown, but her eyes were fierce and bright, and a look of the most unutterable contempt and abhorrence lay round the mouth, as she looked full upon Mr. Marstone.

"Lela, my child," she started as if from a dream, the blood pouring in a crimson flood over face and neck.

"Oh, mamma, forgive me, I believe I am mad,—am mad," and she sprang quickly from the room, and when I would have followed her, to comfort her, she waved me back beseechingly: "Please do not come, only let me go alone—if you love me, do."

Oh, what is this mystery—why will my child not trust me! When she came among us again, towards evening, for at dinner, she sent an excuse that she was lying down,

"With such *un mal de tête*," her maid said.

But though she was a shade paler, that was all, her laugh was as clear and far more frequent, her songs as gay, and her wit more keen and brilliant than was usual with our dignified lady. And only my eyes knew there was a shadow upon the heart of my child—a weary one of some kind.

When she caught my look of sorrowful wonder, she came quickly to me.

"You said you would trust me, sweet mother, do! do my own dear one! if not because I am worthy, only for papa's dear sake, trust Walter Percy's child. He does, looking upon my heart this moment!" and she was gone.

Oh I will trust her now—but I am so glad we are to break up this party and all go home next week. Lester, Stuart and Carrol graduate next month, then Harry starts for the continent while the others study their professions.

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## CHAPTER LVII.

### AT HOME, OCTOBER.

LOOKING upon many things, I have decided that the best thing for Clarence is, that he should go abroad. Not alone for his own sake, that by new scenes he may wear away the misery he now endures—but for the sake of the other two, also.

I dread that Stuart's keen insight, which enables him to read so entirely the hearts of those he loves, will make him suspicious of the truth of what Clare has given up for his sake. No good would come of this, but much harm.

My noble hearted boy's sacrifice must remain unknown to any, save the two who know it now, myself and him.

The humble way he takes this heart trial which is making him grow so grave and quiet, is very touching to see.

"It is right I should expiate my sin, even by much suffering," he says, while I think to myself, how very few would accept it thus.

It is a good thing to sorrow—but while with penitential tears and aching hearts we expiate our offence, we cry the while, alas for the old time, the pure, true time, before our heart's gold was stained or dimmed, tears may never bring back the old brightness, though they wash it never so clean from the sin.

At first Clare was shocked that I deemed it needful for him to leave me, but even while the newness of the thought surprised him, the look of gratitude, the involuntary sigh of relief, showed it would be easier to go.

So I have persuaded Mr. Audley, as his *forte* is not literature, but art, it will be better for him to go to Italy when Harry Lester does, and study painting at Rome and Florence, with the old master pieces for models. It is hard

to give him up thus, perchance for years, but it is better so.

We are at work again, although Mr. Audley frowns and scolds, and would prevent us if he could; but we laugh at him, and tell him we will not be his pensioners.

He has taken a suite of rooms at the A—— Hotel for himself and Lela, and to please Ada, the Lawrences have also gone there for the winter.

As the acknowledged heiress of Mr. Audley, Lela is very much sought for, and sees much company; chaperoned by Mrs. Lawrence.

Stuart is hard at work already at his law-books; Ada tells him crossly, "You are the veriest old book-worm, and altogether the most uninteresting and useless personage, for all practical or society purposes, I know of; I pity your wife, when you get her, she must always expect to see you peeping from behind a mountain of books."

But he laughs, and looks slyly at a little, demure damsel who sits, sewing, in a corner, and says, saucily:

"It is well for me, Ada, dear, everybody does not think alike, for some folks I know of, think me a real good sort of a fellow."

"Oh, Mr. Vanity! you need not think May does, for I am impressing her gradually, with a firm conviction of your no-accountedness."

But a little nod and smile from the corner, although a blush comes shyly along with it, tells Stuart a different tale, and sends him off to his work with a light heart and a merry song, so glad to study now, it is for May again!

We had been home a very short time, ere there came a petition from Louise's mother, for Marion to come to her, she writes:

"I am so lonely, in this great house, the brightness of my life all gone; you have a troop of merry children about you, while we are childless. Oh, I weary for the sight of a young face to lighten the gloom of the house; send me one of yours for only this winter; by a mother's broken heart, I beseech you."

We could not turn a deaf ear to such entreaties—but who should go?

Birdie, I could not trust alone, without Marion or myself, Gracie might go, only she can scarcely hold up her head

and speak to strangers, when her family are about her to keep her in heart; and then what would Adèle do? no, it was plain Gracie could not go, she is everybody's right hand, the helper of every one, just the one everybody always wants.

"Therefore it is plain I must go," said Marion, "no one else can,"

She said it without a sigh, but that was only to spare me a pang; I felt before she spoke, how it would be. Of course if there are to be sacrifices, or putting away of self, it is Marion who steps in quietly, and does what is needful; it was always so.

But this seemed too much, even for her to do, Stuart at home this whole winter, so happy and glad to have her with him; so many pleasures planned, lectures to be attended, books to be read; so much to be done which must all be given up.

Oh, it seemed too much to ask of either of them, and they had so lately learned their perfect love song; so lately grown to be all in all to each other!

"But Stuart, Marion," I answered as I thought of these things, "what will he say?"

"What is right and best I am sure," she said with a little blush, "poor fellow it will be a great disappointment to him though; he has planned so much."

"And to no one else, I suppose."

"Oh yes, mamma, I shall be very sorry to give up all, but I ought not; I must learn to be more unselfish, now I have so many more sources of happiness. New pleasures and joys bring new cares and duties, do they not?"

"Yes, pet, but how can I spare you? I said."

"I should be glad to think you could not, mamma; but I feel you can. I was trying to make myself believe all the while you were reading the letter, that I could not be the one to go, because now I had begun to teach I was needed in the school, but I could not make myself believe so; for unless you will stop tiring yourself by taking the hardest part, indeed by staying out of the school-room altogether, I know I am only a fifth wheel to the coach. And for the rest," and her lips sought my cheek, "you have so many comforts—which poor Mrs. Du Tille, has not, not alone in an earthly, but an heavenly sense, and perhaps God will let me help her bear her burdens, as I have seen you bear yours for so

many years. Oh the blessedness a sure hope, a certain rest, has been to you, all this while, dear mamma, how it has helped you to bear the storms of life."

"And you, Marion, you too, my darling, know the same hope."

"Only lately, mamma, before that it was only love for you and dear papa, but now," and her face had a sweet, happy look in it, "now it is different. God, my Father, is first now. Oh, He is, mamma. I am sure my Saviour enables me to say it with my heart as well as with my lips, dearest mamma; we must not grudge of our blessings to any whom they may comfort. You will send me away for the sake of the good which may lie at the end."

"But what can my May do?" I asked.

"Nothing of my own strength, but God may let me do some little thing, if it is right I should, He will know that. And oh, it would be a thing to rest upon, and take comfort in, for the remainder of a life, if one could take the good of the text home: 'Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.'"

"My daughter shall go, and God himself, I think, will bless her good intentions," I said, taking her to my heart.

Of course there was the loudest disapprobation expressed throughout the house, for Marion is needful to every one of us, in one way or other we all count upon her.

"But what is to come of our charity visits, and our mission school, and all the schemes we have laid out to do good among the poor?" said Mr. Raymond in dismay.

"The rest must work harder, under Dora's management. Birdie and Lela may both help you somewhat, but you may depend for everything in the shape of hard work upon Gracie, she can do better than I, because she is more earnest."

"But are you not leaving your duty, May?" Mr. Raymond said, selfishly, I fear, for he had no notion of losing her.

"A greater duty lies there, Uncle Harley. I mean to try to do good where I am going; there are so many here, none there to try."

A sweet look and an earnest pressure upon his arm, won him to think her way was right.

All had some expostulation to urge, why it was wrong for her to go, but all were silenced in a firm, but gentle way.

Stuart's first words were, when he was consulted; "You must not, I cannot spare you."

"Not if it is right, dear Stuart?" she said.

"But it cannot be needful or right that you should go, my May," and at first he held to it stoutly, but after a little more talk she had won him.

"But you do not need discipline, May, dear," I heard him say, "no one requires it so little."

But she laid her hand over his lips and said in a half-playful, half-earnest voice:

"There do not over-value your own property, or you will grow a miser," and then changing to a serious tone: "it is wrong to say that, dear Stuart, even if I were as good as you think me, I could not have too much discipline; Jesus himself has told us it was needful. He draweth us home with it."

"I know, I know, but do not talk of home, *that* home yet; do not go there, May, my precious one, before me! I can spare you for months, but not forever," and he wove his arms passionately about her.

"Stuart, dear Stuart, you must not grow faithless. What am I to do for a guide and teacher all my life long, if you cannot teach me aright."

And so it was decided that Mrs. Du Tille should have our Marion for the next two months at least. When we had finally concluded for her to go we thought it best it should be at once. But what was our amazement, and her mother's utter dismay, when Ada Lawrence, learning Marion was going, declared she would go with her, and she has held to it obstinately, against all entreaties; her mother thinks her demented, "Just at the beginning of a gay season, too." But she always does just what pleases her best, and this new freak will have its way.

NOVEMBER 10.

This week has been a sad one, filled with partings.

First, as it was not best for Howard to come home so near his long vacation, Mr. Audley, took Marie and Ada

with Clare, to spend part of a week with him. Then they returned bringing Harry Lester with them, and in three days more the boys were to start, to be away perhaps for years.

I suppose the thought of this took what little color yet abides in my face away, for they were all very careful of me, prophecying a spell of illness if I did so many things for, and thought so much of my exiled boy's comfort.

He would look at me with wistful eyes, and then springing up kiss me again and again.

"Do not look so, do not, Auntie, dear, if it grieves you so, I need not go; let me stay—it is not too late."

But of course that could not be thought of, so the sorrow was with a weak hand held back until they were gone.

At the coming of each of our children we had chosen a bible of missal binding, and written their name upon the leaf with some motto. These have been very precious to them all—more so, because upon many a leaf was some token of their father's hand. I have one of the same kind, which had been one of my wedding gifts; of late years I had meant it for Stuart, but now he must content himself with Marion's, for with blessings and tender love Clarence has it.

The motto my husband's hand wrote for me was "Endure unto the end," for Clare I have added two others, "A patient continuance in well-doing," and "Let us not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

As soon as they had gone, the girls went too; then Carol, who is going to study medicine with Ernest, came from his home in the south, to make one of our household for the winter. And we have all settled down to our duties, quiet once more, save in school hours.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

DECEMBER 10.

WE have letters two and three a week, from either Marion, or Ada, also from Howard. The last I have from Ada is full of comfort. She writes:—

Marion is an angel, one of God's blessed angels. In her proper person, I reverence all that is good and pure in Christian womanhood. The manner in which she has ministered to my poor aunt, not only in temporal, but spiritual things is past believing. Last week, one day we were sitting sewing, in Aunt Louise's room, she lying as is usually the case with her now, upon a couch with closed eyes thinking sadly of the past. Suddenly opening her eyes she asked,

"What day is this girls?"

"Thursday," I said quickly, before May could answer, I had been trembling and dreading this question all day.

"No, I mean what day of the month?"

I made no reply, but May quietly answered.

"The fifteenth, dear Mrs. Du Tille."

"I thought so," she replied springing up with a strength she has not shown since we came here, her face very pale.

"Oh! this used to be my darling's birthday, *used to be!* God pity me! My bright eyed Louise would have been eighteen this very day."

I had remembered it all along but could not speak of it, and now could do nothing but weep, my sympathy for the poor stricken mother, thereby in my selfishness only adding more sorrow to hers.

Not so dear May, for a single moment she was quiet, still as death, then she went softly to Aunt Louise's side, and putting her arms around her neck said in a low tender tone,

"God will pity and help you Mrs. Du Tille, if you will only ask Him. He is very tender, and very merciful."

"He is not kind Marion, do not say so, was it tender to take my only child, my precious little one away from me? what? was that being merciful? no, cruel cruel," and she flung herself in a passion of weeping back upon the couch.

"So He draweth his children home. When He from his far away throne, looks down and sees some heart with sinful love setting an earthly idol upon the place which should be his alone, in pity and love he removes the thing, which because so precious is doing his poor child harm."

Her voice was so low and sweet, and yet so firm and distinct that Aunt Louise against her will, lay silently to listen to her words, but when Marion had ceased she moaned again piteously,

"If it had been anything else, friends or fortune, anything but my sweet Louise, I could have borne it better."

"Dear Mrs. Du Tille, I do not mean to strive to make you think your trial is not a very grievous one, almost the worst and hardest to endure of any other, but it is so dreadful to me to hear you accuse God of injustice. Oh, He is not unjust or unkind He has not afflicted you or any of us beyond what we are able to endure. He knows what is best for us, his poor weak rebellious children, wandering so far from his love.

"Oh that you knew and felt the comfort, the safety of his promises,—these very afflictions which He sends upon us work out for us, if we will accept them rightly, a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory."

"Marion, would that I could, but I cannot, he has taken my child, I can only remember that," said Aunt Louise, growing more calm and humble as Marion talked.

"He spared not his own Son, but for your sake and mine, delivered him up to the cursed death of the cross, think of that gracious deed, dear friend, God spared not his only and well beloved Son, else, were we all this day lost forever more."

"I wish I might find the comfort, your words point out; how can I? Oh, Marion, help me," and her tone was piteous to hear.

"I cannot, God will, if you will only ask Him, 'for He is ready to forgive—plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon Him.' 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, he will sustain thee.'"

"But I cannot, I do not know how to ask aright. Pray for me, Marion, that I may find this peace."

"I will pray with you, dear Mrs. Du Tille, that will be

better. Remember the words, 'in thy day of trouble call upon Me, and I will draw nigh to thee.'"

Then we knelt down, and Marion made *such* a prayer. Oh I never heard such an one, it touched even me who am so cold and faithless. She prayed first for God's spirit, upon us who were kneeling there, especially that good words, which would be effectual to the saving of the souls of those about to perish, might be put into her own heart to say.

And dear Mrs. Percy, I think that prayer was heard, for not of her own strength could she have so spoken, or have have been the means of doing so much good.

Oh, even to me who am so thoughtless, so very wicked, the change which since that day has come over my poor Aunt is happiness. Marion and she will sit for hours searching for some "morsels of comfort," they say, from the Bread of Life, and every once in a while Aunt will say softly, after reading some passage:

"Wait dear, let me take the comfort of that a while; such a blessed rest there is hidden in those words."

And again May will say with a sweet smile:

"Mamma loves this verse dearly, do you see the comfort in it yet? 'The shadow of a great Rock in a thirsty land,' or this, 'A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.'"

And then Marion every night puts her to sleep, singing some beautiful hymn. I never dreamed there was so much beauty in hymns, until May's sweet voice sang them, and I saw how they calmed and quieted poor Aunt's tried heart. "How firm a foundation," and another, "Whilst Thee we seek protecting power," are, I believe, the favorites of both of them; but Uncle who also seems to have found this "peace which passeth understanding," always asks for "I would not live always," or "God moves in a mysterious way," and at the verse

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds ye so much dread,  
Are big with mercy, and will break  
In blessings on your head."

He always joins in, and once he told us with streaming eyes, how true it was in his own case. That once he had when a

young man, striven to live for God's service, but when riches and cares increased, like the seed sown among thorns, they had choked up and over-grown his faithful endeavors. Until this great affliction, this lost treasure, had awakened him to a sense of his evil life, and made him seek since then to live nearer his God, and he ended by repeating a verse from some hymn which May loved well :

“ Trials make the promise sweet,  
Trials give new life to prayer,  
Bring me to my Saviour's feet,  
Lay me low, and keep me there.”

It is a good thing, dear Mrs. Percy, that you let May come, for she has been such a balm, such a helper to these sorrowing hearts. Oh it must comfort you when you know this. \_\_\_\_\_

And it does infinitely, more than I can tell. My darling is laying up for herself a crown of joy.

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## CHAPTER LIX.

DECEMBER 15.

WE are all to go down to “Ingleside” and “Rosedale,” to spend the week's vacation at Christmas, because Mr. Audley insists :

“For once we will keep the holidays in true English style, with a whole week's merriment for rich and poor : we will have Lela's anthracite coal in the grates, and a yule log on the hearth.”

“Why do you say Lela's anthracite coal, Uncle?” asks Adèle.

“Because queen likes it, better than anything that was ever lighted before, even than the light of a lover's eyes,” was the reply.

Orders were sent down for the men to trim the house, but the girls countermanded that immediately, declaring :

“The chief sport will be in that.”

Holidays are but sad things after all, for at best they are but way-stones which mark the distance we have come, and the ills we have endured since the last was reared. Even worse with some they are cold, white monuments beneath whose shadow lies buried some tender memory, some vain regret. We sigh and think once it was thus, such and such a presence lent a beauty to the time, now—now though gay laughter, and smiling faces greet us, we sigh wearily for the old happiness.

This year we miss the presence of four accustomed faces. Clare and Harry, with a thousand miles of deep, dark water between, think of us to-day.

Marion and Ada, in their sorrowful, far away place, will pine to be with us but will try to be contented away.

Howard comes home for his vacation. Oh, the blessing of having him with us, is some compensation for the loss of the rest.

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“INGLESIDE,” DECEMBER 31.

We came here the day before Christmas, and found Mrs. Lawrence already settled at Rosedale, with a house-full of friends. Mr. Audley has also been very lavish of his invitations, therefore as he insisted upon every one of our own family coming, we are pretty closely stowed away.

It is a long journey from B—— to this place ; in summer we thought nothing of it, but in the depths of winter, the idea of it was rather intimidating, but Mr. Audley like many another man, knows of no impossibilities, or impracticabilities, if there is pleasure to be won at the end of the effort.

So, very much against the will of some of us older ones, but to the joy of the young folks we were bundled up and brought a two days' journey by railroad, to spend the holidays,

“Half the fun was in getting here,” giddy Cora declares.

The first day was passed in trimming the house with wreaths of ever-green, holly, and other things, until we seemed to be living in a perfect forest. From the merry shouts which reached my room, I judged this decorating process was the gayest time of the whole.