

here, and sometimes, when her health required taking her abroad. The village gossips give out the whole affair of this lady's life as a grand mystery, which even they were unable to fathom.

"Although living a part of each year in their midst, since the present Mr. Marstone inherited the estate, yet the most inveterate seeker after other people's secrets, has never been able to catch more than a distant view of the lady.

"An old lady and two servants, quite middle-aged men, composed Mr. Marstone's domestic establishment, and from them nothing could be learned. Although according to all accounts they were well plied with questions, upon every available opportunity."

Dora related all this in a quiet, matter of fact way, never dreaming how nearly it affected the life happiness of her dearest friend. But when she was done, I asked Mr. Livingstone if he could not explain the mystery for Dora and her village friends.

"There is no mystery, dear madam, which is at all explainable, only some scheme of philanthropy, which Marstone has been working out. I believe I told you duty was one of his inveterate hobbies; I am thankful this one is out of the way at last, poor Katie," he added, a cloud overshadowing his handsome face.

"Then you are more fortunate than my neighbors, Mr. Livingstone," said Dora, smiling, "since you know the mysterious lady. Was she beautiful as report says, or did distance lend enchantment to the view?"

"Beautiful! do you think, Mrs. Raymond, the worn, weeping Niobe was beautiful? no, such a life as Katie Linn's left no beauty behind it," and he rose quickly and left the room.

Katie Linn, then he had given her a part of his name, if not the whole. What could it all mean? and why did Mr. Livingstone, so reckless, and careless of goodness, speak thus tenderly of her? I cannot make it out.

At Dora's request, I have named her home for her, — and as she likes it and all the rest also, I have called it Glen-Dora.

Lela is much better, Mr. Audley thinks her quite well, save that he scolds terribly because she is so much more grave than formerly.

It has come over me very sadly, to-day, after a long talk with Gracie and Adèle, that had God spared our little Ernestine, she would have been seven years old, next month, dear little daughter, but perhaps it is better she is taken from the evil to come; of course it is, God pardon me, that I doubt, and long for my darling so sadly.

Ernest was down to-day, and declares that next year if he can get an appointment from some scientific society, he will go abroad, and study what has become his favorite branch of surgery, ophthalmology. He always hopes to be sufficiently skillful to operate upon Adèle's eyes.

How it makes my heart throb and tremble to think of it — and yet my blind daughter is very happy, and Gracie very faithful.

---

## CHAPTER LXIII.

"Love may slumber in a maiden's heart, but he always dreams."  
JEAN PAUL.

JULY 26.

AFTER dinner is always a very quiet time with us, the ladies going up to their rooms for an afternoon nap, and the gentlemen strolling into the woods or into some out of the way corner, for a smoke and siesta.

I am lying upon the lounge, in the "alcove" of which I have before spoken, shrouded by the crimson curtains which swept round me, when my slumbers were disturbed by a murmur of voices in the library, which goes out of the place where I was lying, for a moment I lay but half awake thinking I must tell whoever it was, I was there, ere they let me know their secrets, but in a moment all sleep was gone, and all other thought save a desire to hear every word of that low toned conversation, for it was Mr. Livingstone and Birdie.

They had, I suppose, been conversing some time ere I noticed them, for the first words I heard were,

"Then you think people should always pay their debts, especially when they were voluntarily assumed?" it was Mr. Livingstone who spoke.

"Certainly sir, do not you? I am sure I shall always try to do just as I say I will, no matter how disagreeable it may be. The wrong is in making the promise, it would be a double wrong to shrink from it because we do not like it, I think."

"Why you are a perfect little Herod, but I am mightily glad you think so, for I am come to claim the fulfilment of a promise you made me long ago."

"I sir, I do not remember, ever having promised you anything, what is it?" "A———" and he whispered the words in her ear, whatever they were she started, turning crimson, and her eyes flashing through fast gathering tears, she cried, "Oh no, never, never. I did not sir, you know I never could have promised that."

"Naughty Birdie," and he caught both her hands in his, "naughty girl do you not remember, one day long ago, when I bid you good bye, to go on a long dreary journey, you promised me when I came back you would give me what you refused me then, did you not, little one?" and he held her face up, and gazed with his thrilling eyes, on its blushing confusion.

"But I said the next year, sir," she said drawing quickly back, "and you did not claim it when it came due," and looking up archly, "the bargain is canceled, completely outlawed, you come too late by a whole year."

"No, not so, you owe me interest for waiting so long, naughty thing, and now little lawyer that you are, you would cheat me of the whole," he replied, still keeping fast hold of her little hands. But she drew herself up proudly as he said this.

"Not cheat, a child could have paid what a child promised, but a woman cannot you know, it is so different," and she stood with downcast eyes, and blushing cheeks before him.

Oh, then such a passion of love swept over his face, though he did not speak.

"Please let go my hands, I must go now," she said after a little pause.

"Never, never, my darling, my flower," and with a pas-

sionate gesture he drew her to his breast, "may I not hold you here my darling, thus closely and safely?"

She shrank away from him for an instant white and trembling, startled by his words, which struck me dumb and cold where I lay.

"Stay with me Birdie, be my own love, my little one, my cherished flower," he said in a low tone of thrilling entreaty, holding his arms open to receive her, "come to me, sweetest, be my all on earth, the only thing in the whole world I love."

With a wild glad cry she sprang to him, and was buried in his embrace, yea buried forever. I felt it then, forever parted from us all.

"Mine! mine!" he said tenderly, my very own Coralie Percy ever mine, no one else's in the whole wide universe, is it so my treasure, my sweet love?" Rolf Livingstone's own true wife, forever more?"

"Forever, forever, in life or in death yours, only yours," she said in a soft low tone making her woman's vow.

"Birdie, Birdie," he said, pressing passionate kisses on her lips and eyes, "then though hell itself stand in our way, I will never give you up, you are mine though I walk through seas of fire to win you."

"Only yours, only yours," she murmured.

"Let me look into your eyes my little one," he said after a pause, "look at me darling."

For a moment she raised her head from his breast, and met his deep passionate glance, then with a caressing gesture she laid her head back, and clung lovingly to him.

"Does not Birdie like my eyes?" he said smiling.

"Dearly, dearly, better than anything else," she said quickly.

"Then why will she not look at them longer?" and he wound her golden curls over his finger.

"They are too bright, they drink my soul away, I cannot breathe while they shine in mine," she said raising his hand caressingly to her lips and keeping it there.

"My sweetest, my darling, so pure, so good," and he kept playing with her hair, holding her tightly to him, then he said softly,

"Now give me my kiss, darling, you know you have the right, now," and he drew her face to his.

Timidly and reverently, as though he had been some

great and good man, she stood and looked up at him, then rising upon tip-toe, she clasped her arms about his neck, pressing a kiss upon his forehead, and was gone before either of us knew it.

And all this time I had lain quietly and seen the tempter wooing my child from me, and never stretched forth my hand to stay his power, but I could not, God pity me, I could not; I was stricken, crushed, I had no strength.

But when they were gone, the spell which bound me was broken and I sprang up.

"My fault, my own fault," I cried. "I have thrown her in his way, deeming her but a child, to shield Leonore, and now the deed is done; too late! too late!" and I flung myself upon my knees.

Here an hour afterwards, May and Lela found me, and I told them all.

"Birdie, Birdie, oh it cannot be—such a bad, bad man, why she knows he is an unbeliever, for I heard her say so. Oh she cannot love him, she is mistaken," cried Lela in dismay.

"Oh Lela, my sister, do you take it thus, I feared it would not be so; we had dreaded, mamma and I, for a long while, that this bad man had woven his meshes round your heart," cried Marion.

"Oh I knew better, daughter, Lela told me I was wrong while we were here alone before you came."

"Oh Birdie, and we have never guarded your impetuous, loving heart, from him. Oh sister, sister!" cried poor Marion.

But though we mourned, it brought not back the past, dread thought. At tea Cora sent word she had a headache, Mr. Livingstone looked unconcerned and cool, too much a man of the world to be disturbed.

I went to Birdie, but she turned her face to the wall and would not speak to me, because,

"My head aches so sadly, and I am so sleepy," she said fretfully.

Oh, Birdie, to deceive me thus. Oh my child, my sweet child!

JULY 31.

This last stroke crushes me,—my precious little blue eyed girl. Oh, it breaks my heart that she leaves me for this bad man.

He has asked me for her—and bitter words the most bitter I have ever spoken to a human being in my life, have passed between us.

But it has done no good, for though it has banished him from our home, it has only done evil in every way,—it has weaned my child's heart from me.

Oh she has grown so cold and proud, assuming a manner unlike herself, and will have none of our company, but fiercely resisting our entreaties wanders away into the deep solitude of the forest.

Oh we miss her sweet voice and merry laugh; Mr. Audley has tried to reason with her, but turned away from her grieved and wounded by her cold contempt.

Her conduct has cast a shadow over the whole house, for we found it vain to endeavor to conceal, what was passing, as we would gladly have done.

Marie with her old tenderness has tried to win her sister's confidence, but been chilled into silence by her bitter words.

"When you receive Rolf Livingstone, you will receive me, but I love none, who cannot love him," and she turned proudly away.

Oh can this be my gentle loving little Coralie who thus casts us from her. Lela, Howard and the others bitterly resent her treatment to me, and will not judge her leniently, and I cannot make them gentle to her.

"Please do not command me in this thing Aunt Bertha," Stuart will say, "I cannot obey you, I think with Lela it is not to be endured, that you should be thus contemned, by one upon whom you have lavished such love."

Howard pale and grave says nothing; but his arm is never woven about his old play fellow's waist as has always been their custom, and he avoids even approaching her. Adèle last night knelt at my feet.

"Mamma, Gracie weeps and weeps over Coralie's sin, but I have no tears to shed; I have asked my Father in Heaven, to take me from off the earth ere I thus weary and break your gentle heart."

Oh though they are all so tender to me it never lightens the burden, and all this time while we mourn for her, she leaves us, to meet him stealthily, and comes back with a bright smile in her eyes from his embrace.

## CHAPTER LXIV.

Mourn O rejoicing heart!  
The hours are flying;  
Each one some treasure takes,  
Each one some blossom breaks,  
And leaves it dying.—ANON.

AUGUST 1.

LAST year when I counted up the deeds of the year gone by, I numbered among the blessings for which I was most grateful, the sparing of Coralie's life,—now I shudder and a pang shoots through my heart like an arrow, when I remember who was her preserver, and that by the saving of her life, he has won her soul!

And I made him go to her after that, so she might thank him, foolish woman that I was! exposing my child to harm, such harm! because I deemed it might do him good. O I did not, I could not know, what would come of it.

She seemed such a little guileless child, I never dreamed that interview would decide her fate,—but that it did, winds long since still, have risen to convince me.

She has idolized him,—since that day he periled life to save her from a watery grave, she had shined him in her heart, the best, the bravest, and above all, her own preserver. Oh child, child you have made him your God, this bad man, this cold, proud Rolf Livingstone with his handsome face, glorious as the face of an angel fallen from "the Presence;" the image of the Creator stamped upon it, but marred and sullied by the hand of the Evil one. Oh Lucifer! son of the morning, why has your syren tongue won my child's heart away from her fealty.

Oh Walter, my husband! I have striven night and day, even as I vowed beside thy dead body, to be faithful to these children, but one of them is lost, and I grope blindly after her, I weep piteous tears over her, I pray fervently for her, but in vain. I may not win her back! may not! may not!

I have been very gentle with her, I have said no unkindly word to her, and that my pale cheeks and weary eyes bear witness against her, I cannot help.

Oh! my child has gone far beyond me, and bye and bye,  
(408)

when she has gone from her home with this man, I shall have lost her, perhaps—but no, when my little one finds the mountain of sand upon which she has reared the castle of her happiness, slowly gliding from under her, and knows the foundations of her love are worthless; weary and sad, with her life experience, will she creep back in her day of sorrow to a mother's faithful arms. Walter dearest, pray that I may be faithful, it is so dark now, the ocean of my life is filled with shoals.

My Espérance burns dimly now—its bright flame quenched in bitter tears!

AUGUST 10.

It was vain, we knew it from the first, to strive to separate them, so now Rolf Livingstone comes here as of old, but only to carry her away with him—to walk, to ride, or sail in a tiny boat, upon the river which beautiful and treacherous as himself, is his delight. Oh he should be a good, true man, thus to have won my Birdie's pure heart! this wild, passionate idolatry which enthalls her, shines in her eyes, adding a new beauty, a graceful dignity to her whole being.

My child, my little lamb, whom I thought to lead so early, safely into the fold of the great Shepherd, the evil one has won you. Oh my sweet bird, he has charmed you with a serpent's wiles. O why is it thus, Walter my husband! wherein have I been faithless, in what have I lacked careful tender watchfulness? As surely as she goes forth with this man, a scoffing unbeliever, she is lost, not only to us now, but eternally. Oh! she has ever been so frail, so easily led away, and we have guarded her so from evil influences—now—now we may never do it more, oh Coralie!

Oh when God took away my Adèle's sight, did I not grieve over it! Now I could almost think it was meant, in kindness, that she is thus preserved from being won "by the desire of the eye." Better be ever in darkness, my Adèle, than to go into the glaring sunlight with blind faith, trusting for guidance to faithless worldliness.

Tiny, my baby, the sea was kind to take you in your innocent infancy from this sin-stained earth. I mourned for

you, my child, but not thus, always with a sure hope, and a knowledge of your joy.

We will go home, to prepare to part from this child; perchance forever, and so soon, for Mr. Livingstone with a haughty tone has informed me, "I shall go abroad at once, without more than the delay of a month, therefore Coralie has promised to grant me the favor of naming an early day for our marriage."

It must be, for she will do as he wills, whether we oppose or sanction it, so we will not strive with her, but only make her ready as swiftly and well as we may through our tears.

---

AUGUST 20.

We are at home earlier than last year, but we longed for the quiet that we could not find in such a whirl of company. Save that it was sad to leave the Raymonds behind us, there was little to regret in leaving "Ingleside" this year.

Harley told me just as we left, that Mr. Hartley who has been away for a number of years, had returned, in very ill-health to "Percie's Cliffe." Poor old man, it is very sad to think of him, alone and in sickness, but perhaps, though Harley did not say so, he has brought home with him the long expected heir.

No one in the neighborhood of Ingleside, except our own immediate friends, knew of our connection with this place; therefore, although we have passed summer after summer, so very near the spot around which so many associations cluster, still we know nothing of our old neighbors, or our old home, save the little which Milly learned by her single visit to it last summer.

None of us, not excepting Mr. Audley, have ever gone back to look upon the lost home of our race,—unless Cora in these last few weeks has gone there, in some of her frequent rides with Mr. Livingstone—I do not know, I heard she went to the village church, with him, one Sabbath evening, but she never told us of it.

Perhaps she has even taken him to look for the first time since she left it, upon the scene of her childish happiness.

Oh Cora, perchance he will teach you to smile carelessly over all these memories we treasure so sacredly, lightly to esteem the solemn past. But I must not let her know I murmur thus, for as she says so fiercely: "I have chosen him, he is my own, I have elected him alone, from all the rest of earth to be my very own. Therefore, his thoughts, his hopes, his will, yea his very fate are henceforth and forever mine, and no one shall dare to speak aught against him to me." Oh can it be that this cold girl saying such bitter things to me, to us all, is my wild, bright, summer bird, whom we deemed a rough wind would blight, if it touched her too roughly? oh I do not comprehend it!

Oh! my golden haired pet you should not have spoken thus bitterly to me, looking the while as though you hated me. I cannot help it that my face tells tales against you, my tongue does never, have patience with me, daughter!

My nights are wearily long, and tear-stained, so the morn looks but coldly upon me. I pray God your heart may never feel the pangs mine now endures, my child.

---

SEPTEMBER 20.

I have more letters from Clare, dear Clare, such warm, bright, joyous letters they are. He little knows how sad we are at home, or what green oases his letters are in this desert of gloom which lies about us. He is studying the Roman masters assiduously.

Stuart works as hard as ever, though the glad hope which seemed so near to him and our gentle May, has been put by. They were to have been married as soon as he had passed his examination and got his license, but now, we all say it must be put off for a while, for Rolf Livingstone shall have no beggar bride; all we have saved, even the little we have laid aside for Adèle, with so much pleasure, we will expend upon her outfit.

Mr. Audley would be generous to her, I doubt not, but he is grieved and hurt by her conduct, and will treat her but coldly, and he shall never hear of our sacrifices, for already we are under a vast weight of obligation to him which we may never pay.

Mrs. Lawrence has been seriously ill since her return, and

has been ordered to the south of France or Italy, by her physician, the change will do Ada good, but we shall miss her sadly; thus they drop away from us, one by one.

Mr. Grey, our new minister is much liked, and is a most excellent man.

Howard would not come home with us, as usual, but went directly to college.

"I will not be a witness of my sister's wicked deeds," he said. Therefore Cora is to be wedded without her father's representative to sanction her vows; poor Birdie!

I am glad Mr. Audley insisted so strenuously upon bearing the expense of Howard's education. It is a comfort to know he is safe from our necessities, that even though trouble should overtake us, he will be able to complete his course.

I am sadly grieved that May and Stuart should be made to suffer for Cora's sake, and Howard is bitterly angry at the necessity, but it was always thus, Marion ever endured trials for the rest, and she bears them patiently.

They do not complain, though it is a great disappointment to them, but with a cheerful looking forward, Stuart says:

"It will be only a little harder and longer working, and then we will take our great happiness, the greater because so long waited for."

---

SEPTEMBER 25.

They are married, and my young child has left me, to walk the rest of her life journey as nearly by the side of this man, as may please him best.

She, whom a reproving glance would once send broken-hearted in a passion of tears to her knees pleading for pardon, for a trifling fault, stood pale and calm through this whole scene—bidding farewell to her old, careless, happy life—crushing back the tears, lest *he* should think she sorrowed to go with him, and be troubled by her grief. They were married privately, in our own house, by Mr. Grey, for Harley and Dora would not come.

She began bidding us good bye very quietly, kissing each in turn; when she came to Marion she wavered in her firmness, and clasping her arms about her, said:

"May, my May, you love me, dearest?"

"I cannot help but do that, Birdie," said Marion, in a low, quivering tone, "you have been my darling so long, I can not give you up all at once."

"Oh Marion, Marion, do not say that!" she said, but she unwound her arms from about her sister, and left her without a look, going at once to Leanore, and holding out her hand irresolutely.

"Good bye, sister," she murmured.

Lela bowed her proud head, and pressed a light kiss upon her brow.

"Good bye Mrs. Livingstone, may you have a pleasant journey," she said it coldly, for Lela with her passionate love for me, cannot forgive her sister the anguish she has caused me, and she has taught the others to be cold and cruel, and resent this treatment, as she says, Percies should, proudly and relentlessly.

"Good bye Birdie—Coralie, I mean,"—said Gracie weeping bitterly, as she hid her face against Adèle.

"But you have not kissed me good bye, Gracie, must Adèle do it first?"

"We can not kiss you, Cora," said Adèle with a look of anguish on her pale sad face, "we could not go to mamma whom you have made so desolate, whose trials, already so grievous, you have rendered a thousand times sadder; poor, gentle mamma, who has borne so much, and whom the rest of us must strive to comfort as best we may, for the sharp sting of ingratitude which one child has selfishly wounded her with; we could not go to her and kiss her pale cheeks and weary eyes, did we bear upon our lips the kiss of Rolf Livingstone's wife—his kisses must suffice you now, my sister; you have chosen between him and all the rest who love you." She said all this very solemnly, but I wish it had been left unsaid, it was more like Lela's proud words than my gentle Adèle's; surely this trouble is developing new phases in my daughters' characters, which I, who have watched them so closely, never dreamed they possessed.

Oh! Adèle would not have spoken thus, could she have seen the white look of agony, and bitterness with which her sister turned away: it wounded her to the quick, it hurt her worse than all the rest, for they were her pets who thus spurned her.

"Mamma!" and her voice trembled, "mamma!" and she paused uncertainly.

"My darling child," and I held out my arms to her, "my little one, come to me," and she sprang across the room into my embrace.

"Good-bye, my daughter, remember your mother's heart will never fail you. Whatever fate awaits you, remember, in trouble and sorrow I watch for you."

"I shall have none, mamma, none, none," and with a bright smile she held her hand out to her husband, who had been standing all this while alone with folded arms watching the scene; he came now and stood by her side.

"Bless us, my mother, and say you are glad," she said softly.

"I cannot! I cannot! oh child! child!" and I clasped my arms about her, "Walter's unhappy deluded child," she drew herself from me, and before us all, laid her clasped hands in his, saying:

"Not poor, rich, rich! not unhappy or deceived, papa's blessed, gloriously happy child! I am ready now, my love," and without one farewell message for Howard or Stuart, they went away.

Married, but oh the thought is agony, though he loves her now, when he wearies of her, this marriage will be a mockery which he will shake off as lightly, as if God witnessed it not. How can he hold sacred a vow made in the name of One in whom he does not believe. Oh my child, my child!—

We are quiet now, talking little of our lost one, and always sadly and softly as if she were dead,—and we are striving, not to learn to forget her, but to live without her. It is strange, but we talk oftener now of Lilian than of Coralie.

## CHAPTER LXV.

NOVEMBER 30.

THE Lawrences have gone, we miss them sadly: for years scarcely a day has gone by without Ada's bright eyes beaming in upon us, now we must only know of her, by letters, white winged messengers coming over the seas.

We have had one short letter from Coralie, written the day they reached Liverpool, announcing they were safe and well, though so brief, "because I want to send it at once," it is full of tender love. The only reference to her husband is this, "our happiness is perfect, without a cloud," God grant it may continue so.

Clarence's letters tell of unceasing toil, and Harry Lester and Carrol write, "he will paint himself to death, he looks like 'Banquo's Ghost' now."

I have written to him, pleading with him that he will not thus trifle with his precious health, for my sake, which I believe is the only sake he cares for now.

Lela is sadly out of health, and her pale cheeks cause Mr. Audley much trouble, and he earnestly desires to take her with him to Paris, where he is peremptorily summoned next month, but she refuses utterly to leave me.

"No, no, '*Bien-bon*,' if I am really ill, no one can nurse me into health as well as mamma, and she must not lose another daughter just yet. Leave me here until next year, and then I promise to come."

"Yes, and before then some one else will be putting in their claim to you, before mamma or me, either of us. And you will say, 'excuse me, somebody else needs me now.'"

"No, no, I promise you that shall not be, now do not shake your wise head, I promise to come and live with you, for I expect to live and die a damsel."

But he laughed at her, until something in her eyes made him bend down and gaze long and sadly on her sweet face.

"What makes my dearie's cheeks so pale and her eyes sad, has any false-hearted loon hurt thee, my pet? I'll make him pay for it. What is the matter, sweet?"

"I want to stay with mamma, that is all, nothing else, please let me stay. I am not quite well, but this quiet winter will cure me for you, uncle."