

Howard will graduate next autumn, and if his health is not too much prostrated by his close application this last term, he will enter at once into the same office where Stuart has been reading law.

Ernest talks more strongly than ever of going abroad, and I think will go now very soon. It seems the chief obstacle to his departure has been that he desires the next year to be able to send for Adèle, as it is entirely on her account that he is pursuing this study of ophthalmia, so intensely, but he has not felt assured that his funds would warrant such an expensive proceeding, but I have given him my promise that if he really thinks it would be preferable to have her in Paris, if he concludes to attempt the operation, which it makes my heart tremble to think of, I will raise no objections to her going, for she will be as safe with Lela and Estelle, as with me, although it will be terrible for me to be separated from her at such a time; but of course the expense of her journey would swallow up all our earnings, both Ernest's and mine, and I must not think even of going.

CHAPTER LXVII.

"Again I sit within the mansion,
In the old familiar seat,
And shade and sunshine chase each other
O'er the carpet at my feet."—BAYARD TAYLOR.

May's first letter, written a few days after her arrival, says,

"Dearest mamma, to think where I am sitting, in papa's own little study, writing to you! oh the past seems all a dream, mother mine, the only waking part, the time when we were here so happy—papa and all.

"How every book and cushion reminds me of the old times, even the way the shadows fall across the carpet, making it

sombre and brown in the shade, until some bright sunbeam peeps in and makes it bright and gay.—Now, as I sit in the high chair papa bought me long ago, that I might sit nicely beside him at his own table and learn to write, I mind me of the many times we three have been here, papa writing, with me perched up beside him, while just opposite us, sewing and rocking, with her little feet placed so cozily upon the very largest cushion the room contained, sat the fairest of ladies, "the mistress."—

"And bye and bye when papa had grown weary of writing, down would go the pen, springing up suddenly he would sit upon the cushion which had been chosen so large,—

"Just to tempt me from my work to come and rest me with a look into my Bertha's eyes,' he declares, with his proud head resting against his little wife.

"Oh the tears are blotting my paper mamma, and yours poor darling will be rained upon it.

"The sunshine glistens on my paper, and it grows a blank, until one little ray shoots into my very eyes, I think I hear papa's dear voice.—

"The wicked sunbeams, how they dance with their naughty pranks into my May's eyes,' and he goes and shuts down the curtains, or at least it seems as though he did, just as he used to in the old times, for oh, the room has grown suddenly so dark—but that is because I have hidden my eyes away from the dear old things, and am weeping such bitter tears upon the cushion before mamma's chair.

"But sweet mother, I am making you sad, to no purpose. Our old home is just as we left it, oh it would almost frighten you, to see how exactly everything is as it was. I find in your boudoir, a dress which you had been working for our poor little Tiny, the baby who had not come yet, just rolled together with your thimble and scissors as if you had been hurried away and left it in your work-stand drawer. Oh it broke my heart to look at it, you were working upon it, when they carried papa up the walk in that dreadful insensibility, which lasted so long; and underneath it lies a little book from which Howard was saying a lesson while the rest of us played about—oh mamma, since the day nine years ago you huddled them together into the drawer, they have never seen the light till now,—for you did no sewing for a long time after that day!

"But for all this, it is changed here, this hushed stillness over everything, the wanting the old familiar faces and voices—is a sad, sad change.

"The men who have worked here have been very faithful for the sake of the old family, but they lacked skill for all but feeding and weeding, and I think the flowers are brighter when they bloom for merry eyes, and the fawns and birds are gayer when there are laughing hearts about them.

"When I arrived at Glen-dora as soon as I had kissed Dora and that jewel Agnes, Harley brought me here. Poor old Mr. Hartley, he raised himself up in his bed and rained tears and kisses upon my face, Oh, Stuart and the rest would have pardoned him his sternness in the past, to see him so gentle now. Papa, dear papa, it is good to be loved so well—knowing it is for your sake.

"'Did you come willingly little Marion?' he said, 'or did you hate to come and stay with the old man his last few days upon earth?'

"'No sir, I was very glad to come to you, so happy to know you wanted me.'

"'But you know as soon as I am dead my heir will come and turn you out, but I have bade him pay you a little, if you came willingly.'

"'Please do not talk so, I only want you to let me love you, and love me a little in return, I do not want any other reward then that, I shall not take his pay,' I said a little crossly, I believe, for it made me angry to hear him talk so.

"'Why child you must not get miffed at me,' he said laughing.

"'I am not sir, only I wish you would think I should have come to you as soon if you had not had anything to pay me with.'

"Since then he has never spoken in that way, except once to tell me his heir (whom he never calls by name) is very good and will act well by his inheritance.

"Harley (how strange it seems not to say uncle) is constantly with him, and we are both so grateful to see that now he receives every word of counsel with gladness.

"Before I can write again I fear he will have passed away, but we trust with a sure faith in a merciful Redeemer to sustain him.

"Hope is in my heart—that I may do him good,—hope

is our boon, our watchword, is it not dearest, even in darkness and clouds we ever say, the old war cry of our house, 'Espérance, O Percy!'

APRIL 12.

In another letter a week later she writes,

"I am just come from Mr. Hartley's room. He had been very ill all night, but towards day-break grew so much easier he could bear to have me sing to him as I often do.

"Oh mamma, he is so gentle you would scarcely know him. His way through life has been a dark hopeless one until now, when it is growing narrower and very short.

"He can almost see the river of death—but just across upon the other shore, stands surrounded by light the 'Cross' and the rays from it shine over the heaving water, and mark a safe clear pathway for his boat to launch upon. Is it not true that,

'God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform.'

"Was it not God's providence which brought Harley Raymond with his fervent zeal and winning voice, to dwell in this place. Oh I am sure God's hand led him here? for scarcely any other could have won upon Mr. Hartley's worldly heart as he has done—

"Soon all will be over,—then I will come at once to you, but not until after the funeral, for Mr. Hartley has asked it of us, that we, Harley, Dora, and I, will go alone with Alison Williams, and bury him in the little church yard.

"I have seen no one since I have been here, I could not have borne it, without the rest of you, and Allie and I have been very busy in the sick room."

This letter came four days ago, and last night we were sitting anxiously expectant of her arrival, when Stuart came in saying with a sigh,

"No May to night, I have been down to the cars, but could see nothing of her," and he sat down looking very cross indeed.

"Is there not a later train?" asked Howard.

"Yes, but that does not come until about ten, she would never travel so late alone,"

We sat a couple of hours longer until Milly came in declaring,

"Its near as nuffin to leven o'clock, and I am jist going to shut up the house, and take dese old bones off to bed quicker, I tell yer, for thar'll be no May to-night."

"Oh no, of course not, but she will be sure to come to-morrow," said Lela.

When Milly had been gone down stairs a little while some one said,

"Hark, did not Milly call somebody?" but we listened and hearing nothing, concluded she had been only singing, as usual, but an instant after the door opened, and Marion in the deepest mourning knelt at my feet, in such a passion of tears as none there but myself had ever seen her shed.

She gave us no greeting—it was so unlike her usual quiet self possession, that for a moment all were astonished. Then Stuart put his arm tenderly about her.

"Do not, May dearest, do not weep so," he said softly.

She sprang up and flung herself into his arms, and when he had held her closely for a moment stroking back her hair, she grew calm and smiling up into his face for an instant, turned to me,

"Dear mamma, I am very foolish, but I have borne so much, all my self control is gone, oh I have borne so much!" then going up to where Howard stood, she drew him into the middle of the room, and winding one of his arms around her waist, she said in a distinct tone,

"Marion and Howard Percy, sole heirs of 'Percies' Cliffe."

After that I do not know what happened, for I am one of those weak women who at first always lose in darkness the knowledge either of joy or grief. When I came to myself.

"What did you say May?" I said sharply, seeing her bending over me:

"That Mr. Hartley is dead mamma, and that in his will he has left our father's 'old property,' with its accumulated income of nine years, to the rightful heir Howard Percy, and his own property which is vested in the funds of S—, to Marion Percy, thus the will which was opened yesterday by a lawyer of P—, reads," she said it in a calm collected

voice, her excitement all over now her tale was told, and her only care how to keep me quiet.

"Thank God for all his goodness," were the only words I had to say, but Howard who until now had knelt with his head buried in his hands, by my side, arose suddenly, and said in a sweetly solemn voice raising his clasped hands and looking up—

"And thank Him that he has been so good to us in all our ways, tender and kind to us, ever in poverty; learning us to look to Him at all times."

"But are you not glad to be the heir of the Percies once more, my brother?" said Gracie softly, stealing her hand into his.

"I am glad to be Walter Percy's son, my sister," and his eye kindled, "we have been poor, very poor, yet I was always that, spite of all, Walter Percy's son," then he said gently, "but I am glad, very glad to tread my father's halls once more."

We had forgotten Lela all this time, but now she came her face all aglow, and bending her proud head down before Howard kissed his hand softly.

"My father's only son, the head of my house," she said in her clear ringing voice and throwing her arms wildly above her head cried, "oh I would willingly die now, the honor of my race restored—'Percies' Cliffe,' our own once more, oh the joy is greater than I can bear,"—before we could reach her she fell insensible at her brother's feet, murmuring 'Espérance!' 'Espérance!'

It seems strange we should take this great blessing so solemnly and sadly, but oh, we know though all the rest has come back, one presence is lost forever.

Then too, sadder and wiser hearts will go to their old home, for we have known much sorrow, but nevertheless we are glad and thank our God.

Late in the night we said our prayers together, and went to our rooms, very humble but happy.

The next morning we could bear to hear all of that last scene, from Marion. I may not tell of the many gentle deeds my daughter did to soothe the last days of that old man's life, but I treasure them in my heart, as they were told me by our gentle Dora and her husband, who came with her that night even to the very door but turned aside bidding her

a good night; because "it was right she should tell her story to her own family alone" they said, kind friends, who would not look upon our joyful grief.

Nor can I tell as gently, in such sweet and tender phrases as did Marion, the story of the old man's life, as he told it her with his last breath, but this much I know that his history teaches me anew, "that every heart knoweth its own bitterness," that every life has the echos of some sweet, sad tone ringing like bell notes through it with each pulsation,—or rather pealing out knell after knell, which sadden heart and brain because it is the requiem of dead and buried hopes. All, even those we deem most stern have some flower, some leaf, some beauty which memory treasures, which is cherished the one bright spot of a dreary life-time.

—Long years ago, "I will tell the story, in a story-tellers guise," long years ago, four young men started in life nearly together, the oldest and wisest of them was rich, past all reckoning, and had great influence because of his high birth,—and to the best of his ability he aided the others who were his friends, in pushing their way in life. This was Clarence Percy, my husband's father; in his early life he had come from England and purchasing a large estate, brought hither his fair bride, who was a Percy too, and a distant kinswoman of his own.

A few years they lived happily in their pleasant western home, but then their lives grew sad, because one by one three fair babes were laid to sleep in the church-yard. Then last of all, the young mother died, giving her life for a little son whom she left to grow up, never knowing a mother's gentle care.

Sadly the husband mourned for his lost one a few short years, and then he rested beside her and their children, and his three friends bitterly mourned for him. The orphan boy was left to the guardianship of one of them—his property, to that of the other two.

The one who was to guard the boy was Gracelon Audley, "my dearest friend, a brave true man" the will said. He was a lawyer, and had through his friend's influence and his own talents, won himself even then a name.

The other two were Mr. Hartley and Mr. Marstone, the first a wild gay youth with just enough fortune to make him careless about working steadily at any thing. The latter,

like Mr. Audley a lawyer, who by earnest industry, was earning back to himself the lands which bore his name, and which once had belonged to his own family, in the village of Marstonville.

How the boy thus guarded, lived and grew a noble man, —winding himself not only round their hearts, but those of all who knew him, I need not write, for he was Walter Percy.

Year after year went by and the world treated kindly the dear friends whom Clarence Percy had spoken kindly for, and the old friendship was very close between them, but Audley and Marstone were for many reasons the dearest friends. They were connected in their business, in their habits and tastes, but the closest bond lay in another cause. Marstone had a little sister who had passed her life at school, and who, now her brother had a home for her, came one summer to spend her vacation with him. She was young and fair and Audley loved her, and because her good brother willed it, more than because the proud grave man had won her heart—Marion Marstone went back to school the betrothed of Gracelon Audley.

They had met and passed one summer together, that was all, after that the love making was to be carried on by letters, for Audley was busy winning a home for her, and could not go to her distant school home: thus they arranged it.

Hartley in his wild mood was chasing some fancy—and ere his return the bird had flown back to its shelter, he frowned and said,

"He never could get a peep at Marstone's pretty sister," but that was all, and they did not tell him that his friend's sister had promised to become the wife of his other friend, when her school days were over.

Months passed and Marion never saw the man she was to marry, but letter after letter brought word of his constancy.

But one spring day, some pleasure called Hartley to the city where she was, and thoughtless of evil, his brother sent a package by him.

That is all—they met—they loved, his wild gay humor pleased her better than the grave young student whom her brother had chosen.

They rode, they walked, they met in sweet stolen interviews in the school-park, where she trembling like an aspen,

waited, while he in true lover-like romance, scaled the high wall to reach her side, "coming through unheard of dangers to kiss her hand and look into her eyes."

He won her heart with all its first pure love, and he who so oft had played lightly with the meshes of love, was at last caught, and gave himself up with his wonted recklessness to this new and intense passion.

Even when he had won her to confess her love, she told him with white trembling lips of another's claim, and that other his friend, but he only grew more reckless, vowing no man should separate them, that she must be his at any cost.

For weeks this went on, he lingering by her side, and she only too willing to keep him there, until tidings came that his father lay dying in a distant city, and even then he was loath to go.

But at last wild with regret, and bitter repentance for the consequences of this love, he tore himself away, vowing to return as soon as he could, and make her his bride. Alas, what was his grief to hers when she stood condemned and horror stricken, before the tribunal of her own conscience, perjured, disgraced! Her noble brother deceived, the name which he was laboring night and day to redeem from the stain of poverty, dyed with a double stain by her sin. Her kind true brother who loved and trusted her so tenderly. It drove her mad, and in her wild despair, she wrote a full confession to him and then fled, from his wrath.

I cannot tell of the weary search that miserable brother had ere he found her and brought her home. Nor of the bitter anguish of the man to whom she had been promised, enough to say that wounded and broken hearted he went abroad, with his ward, and never looked again upon the face of Marion Marstone, his perjured love. And the brother who had been once so kind, grew a stern cold man, and she lived few short months secretly within his house, always with his frowning face keeping watch over her, lest she should escape and blazon their shame to the world, or else seek once more the arms of her destroyer.

And she waited and watched for his return, in vain, nor did she ever know that he did come once, while she sat pining for him in her lonely chamber, pleading with his former friend, in a wild agony to know where she was hidden, and then went forth a broken hearted, reckless man into the gay world,

because he had been told that when she came repentant to her home, Audley had received and pardoned her, for she said, "after all she loved him best," and that they were married, he forgetting her sin in the infinite love he bore her.

Oh how her brother's heart was changed ere he could thus stain his lips with a lie, but neither knew it was not true, and each mourned the other as false, and they never met again, but he went forth with a cold seared heart, and she heard of him amidst the gayest of the gay, and deemed him careless of her fate.

And after a few months she went to a far away home with a husband her brother's wealth had bought for her, and lived a sad weary life, but not worse than the brother who had loved her so, and cherished her as the apple of his eye.

In after years Audley and Marstone met, but the name once so dear to both was never spoken, by either. Hartley disappeared and only came back when my husband was a grown man.

It is a strange, sad history, the lives of three strong men made desolate by the act of one frail girl, but so it was.

Her fate I can not tell, but my mind misgives me, that this Paul Marstone, is her son. Who is his father if it be so? Mr. Marstone had but one sister, and no brother.—If she married a stranger, why is her son called by her maiden name? I say it is very strange. Will Lela's proud heart still love this man when she knows a fearful stigma lies upon his birth? It will be a hard struggle between pride and love.

And poor old Mr. Hartley never knew until Marie told him, that Marion Marstone was never Marion Audley. How much this history reveals and explains,—why Mr. Marstone and Mr. Audley never mentioned his name, and why Walter who I suppose knew all, never sought to make his guardians friends.

And why too, Mr. Marstone would take my Marion upon his knee so often, and gaze so mournfully into her face, saying softly and sadly,

"Poor Marion, poor little Marion."

And why Mr. Audley started when we told him what we had named the child, and said turning very white,

"I wish you had not done it Walter, it was cruel," and Walter replied with such a look of sorrow,

"I did not mean it in that way sir, but Bertha desired it because it was her mother's name."

And why to this day, he seems to love Marion the least of all our children, and will call her any thing but her own name.

But above all—why Mr. Hartley who loved very few should have loved my child so tenderly, and when we first told him her name, made him take her so tenderly in his arms, saying sadly,

"My Marion, God love thee Marion," and then putting her quickly down, go rapidly from the house.

This was the reason that when they told us Mr. Hartley had purchased the whole estate Mr. Marstone covered his face as if a lightning stroke had blinded him and said fiercely,

"God help me, I might have known it, why did I not sacrifice all that I had been working for, for years, rather than permit this? Audley will curse my miserable folly, he would have spent his all, before that fiend should sit in Clarence Percy's hall, God help me!" and I think the agony of memory which all this brought, caused the fearful stroke which lost us our last protector.

And now partly for her father's sake, partly for the sake of this unhappy woman, my Marion has been made the heiress of a great wealth, and I must tell what she did not, that when the old man told her, that years ago—even the very day we were banished from our home, he had made a will leaving every thing to her, that then, while his heart was softened she induced him to send for his lawyer and have the name of her brother placed instead of her own as the possessor of "Percies' Cliffe."

"I shall be so very rich, with what you have given me sir, and I will like to remember when you are gone, that all which I inherit was only mine because you loved me, not because it was once our own," she said, as Dora has related it to me. Sweet daughter, how good a thing it is, to remember that now your own unselfish heart can take its happiness.

We are in a sad state of excitement, and scarcely know what has come upon us, but Mrs. Wilbur and Marion keep us straight by their *sageness*.—But it is a strange new thought

that our days of poverty are over, that even when no thought of such a thing as even an independence, other than our boys could win has crossed our minds, there should pour in upon us this mighty flood of wealth. It will take a long time to get used to the thought, longer even than it did to grow accustomed to the straitened ways of poverty and toil.

Thank God for all his goodness and loving kindness, to us who are so unworthy of his many benefits. O Esperance! O Percy!

JUNE.

It is a month and more since Marion came home bearing to our ears news of such intense and startling interest, and we have been quietly living in our old way, doing our old duties—getting used to the thought of what has come to us.

In what a dreamy way we speak about it, how quietly we talk over it of evenings, when none but our own are about us, not at all as if our every being was filled with trembling at the thought—but as if we deemed it a small matter.

But it seemed our duty to finish our course here—we had many pupils whom we had taken for the year, we were under many obligations to them for kindness in times past, and so we have abode here keeping our secret within our own doors, until all duties should be fulfilled, and we might go forth free from any blame. We have had a very pleasant life in this old place, and though we go to our own home with grateful hearts, yet we cast many a kindly look at this other one, which has been such a safe shelter, amidst the storms of poverty. But above all, we have learned to love our school with its *toilsome* pleasures, and it is with a half indescribable feeling of pain that we view the idea of parting.

Yet many things are changed these last two years, which make it less of a trial to leave this moss-grown mansion with all its belongings. Beside the knowledge that we are going to that place which is the Mecca of our earthly pilgrimage, we know we are to live once more within call and sight of two of our old home friends, Dora and Harley. Then Estelle and Birdie, will be as near us there as here, how far from both!

It was a trial to think of our pupils being disbanded, and scattered, but even this has been overruled for our benefit, Mr. Gray has sent for his mother and sister, and since they have been here so pleased are we all with their lady-like refinement, that we have concluded the best thing we can do is to make over to them the right and title of our house and school, we are very rich now, and they are very poor, once when we were in sad distress a kind woman put us in the way of earning an independent living, so now we have good reason to be generous.

With the assistance of their son and brother, these two can fully supply our place and it will be a mutual favor. It will be pleasant when we are away to remember the old place in Elm st., is in the hands of friends, and that merry faces still gather under its roof.

—
AUGUST 1.

The last time I write before I go home—my Father I thank thee. Oh it is very necessary for us to remember it is God's goodness which thus encompasses us with tender mercies and loving kindnesses, lest we should grow forgetful and learn to make idols of gold, the very gold which has been lavished upon us.

Walter, my lost one, I am going back to our old home, come back to me there, comfort me with thy presence there, as here—now I may die where my husband died, and be buried by his side. I suppose it matters not much what befalls these poor bodies after the soul has gone forth, yet methinks it will be pleasant to know that when the last trump shall awaken us we will not be far apart.

But in all this radiant happiness there is a cloud. It is always so, even the fairest sky is never cloudless, never all bright. It is a shadow over our joy, that in all this happiness, we may never share one morsel with the little one who has been nourished all her life long, with the same good or ill which has befallen us. That though "Percies' Cliffe," is ours, Coralie is not, that though we go home, she will not. Oh my daughter, my bright-eyed, laughing, golden-haired sunbeam, where do you hide yourself, that we may not even tell to you this new goodness of our Father!

Walter, wherever she this night rests, watch over her, pray the Father to turn her heart toward us once more; guard our darling from crime and harm. I may not! I may not! She is gone beyond my reach!

It seems a strange fate which ordained that our Lilian should never dwell in the home of that father whom she never knew, and yet perchance it was the better way, for she had not the charm of her father's memory to keep her unspotted, and poverty might have been less gentle with her young heart than with the rest, who loved to do his will.

I desire to return my humble thanks, that in all these years, nine long years, God has dealt tenderly with me and mine. That even when our *Espérance* seemed darkened, it was our Father's hand which held the cloud, and warded off the evil, making the gloomiest night have some brightness shining over it.

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CHAPTER LXVIII.

—OCTOBER.

"Alas! how many hours and years have past
Since human forms have round this table sat,
Or lamp, or taper on its surface gleam'd,
Methinks I hear the sound of time long pass'd,
Still murmur o'er us in the lofty void,
Of these dark arches, like the lingering voices
Of those who long within their graves have slept." ORRA.

CAN I write of this home coming—can I tell of the strangeness of being here—of the sad and tender memories which hover over every spot,—of how I weary myself with the wondering, whether such and such a thing is where I placed it years ago, and go to see, and find it just the same,—and then must needs sit down and weep over a tender memory which it holds for me.

Save that the trees have grown older, and spread their