

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

branches thicker and broader over the land, hiding many things from our view,—the summer-house by the river-side,—the old farm house in the glen, once the mansion house of the estate, and letting us have but an occasional glimpse of the village; save for these it seems as if time had forgotten this place, and passed it by untouched.

The coming here, the starting from Elm st., the many farewells, the tears, and smiles, all are a confused maze, the only certain thing, that we were going home.

When we came to the entrance, Dora met us, and clasping her arms about me, said, "Our Father brings you home once more, dear friend." While we stood for one instant upon the threshold, Howard laid my hand upon his arm, saying proudly,

"Lean here my mother, mine be the arm to shield you now," and with his firm proud step, the heir led his widowed mother back to his inheritance.

We were all very quiet. None of us are ever noisy either in our joy or grief, save one who is far away, and in this home-coming it was sad to miss the passionate gladness of Birdie's weeping, the fountain of her tears lay ever near her eyes.

Gracie, always soft and tender hearted, had a few loving tears for the old memories, but more that were very sad, because the only words Adèle said were,

"And I may never see it more, never look upon the dear old home again!"

Milly poor old woman took her joy into some far away corner of the beloved home, for she has learned in the school of poverty that tender regardfulness of others, which sorrow oftentimes teaches.

Léanore went into the shadow of a deep window, and late in the evening I found her there, the heavy damask curtains shielding her from the light, her face very calm and white, save for the crimson spots upon her cheeks which always tell of intense but suppressed emotion.

She kissed my hand tenderly, as she placed me upon the divan where she had been seated, then with a quick deprecation in her manner knelt at my feet, and laid her head upon my knee, stroking my hand gently the while,

"I am not to talk, daughter, is that what you want me to understand?" I said softly. A kiss upon my hand was

the sole reply, and indeed I knew very soon she could bear nothing more, not even my presence and so I took her myself to a distant chamber, far away in another part of the house, a room which was not filled with old associations, and like a little child she let me undress her and put her to bed.

But though I left her very soon with a gentle kiss, I felt strangely anxious about her, and many times through the night stole through the long corridors to her side, but at last ashamed of my fears because I always found her in a seemingly quiet slumber, I laid myself down to rest, not to sleep, I knew I must wait for that, until this excitement had spent itself.

But hardly an hour had passed ere there came a hurried step along the hall, and then Stuart's voice at my door,

"Auntie, may I come in? do not be alarmed, I am just going to arouse Uncle Ernest, for Lela has broken down under this great excitement, I feared she would."

"Lela! why I left her a short time ago, in a deep sleep, what has happened? where is she?" I answered, hurrying out.

"She is in the larger drawing-room, I have just sent Marion to her."

I went quickly down, but ere I reached the lower floor, I heard Lela's voice, carolling a gay song, and then bursting into a merry laugh, the sound sent a thrill to my very heart; as I opened the door May was saying,

"Lela, Lela do not, please do not," and for a moment I paused upon the threshold in dismay.

With her long black hair streaming almost to the floor, she danced gaily up and down the room, singing and laughing, her eyes flashing brightly, her cheeks scarlet, and ever and anon she would fling her arms wildly above her head.

Marion stood white and trembling, in the centre of the room striving in vain to stay the course of the delirious girl, but at each attempt she would spring by her with a gay ringing laugh, and a mocking smile. As Marion saw me, she sank upon a sofa with the words,

"Oh mamma, this is dreadful." Lela turned quickly as she spoke, and coming towards me said with a low courtsey,

"This is the lady paramount, good friends—the heir's mother, and rules the demesne in his absence," and she

looked round proudly as though the room were filled with a large company. "The heir is a minor, but he will be of age in a few years, and rule in his own right. This is the Lady Percy."

"Leanore, my child, what does this mean? what are you doing up at this hour of the night with—" but she interrupted me,

"Oh we have no time to sleep, for to-morrow the heir comes home from his travels, after that you may sleep 'an it please you,' but now there is work to be done," then springing away from me, she sang,

"Prepare ye—prepare ye the way,
Make ready, make ready the feast."

Just then Ernest came into the room, and with a warning gesture to the rest went up to her, catching hold of her hand.

"What does this mean, Leanore," he said coolly as if in amazement.

"Mean sir," and she drew herself up, and threw off his grasp scornfully. "Mean! simply that Howard Audley Percy the heir is coming home, and that I, his sister am making ready to receive him."

"By my faith," he answered, "would you, a child, in your pride assume the place of your mother and elder sister"? then, as if horror stricken, he added, "nay, you shall not while I am their friend, I will protect their rights, no one shall welcome the heir but his mother and Marion, go you to your room."

She stood abashed, as if this new idea shamed while it startled her,

"True, true, I am always too bold and wilful," she muttered. I can never wait until mamma directs me," then turning to me "can I help do anything?"

"Nothing to-night my dear," I said as calmly as I could, obeying a warning glance from Ernest.

"What must I do then?" she asked humbly.

"Go to rest, and bring bright smiles and rosy cheeks to welcome your brother."

"Oh yes, roses for the heir," she cried, something of the wild manner coming back again, and laughing gaily she dragged

Marie out of the room, "come little pale face to bed, to bed, will lilies do for May to bring to the welcome, mamma? poor little pale cheeked May she has no roses even now."

Thus by humoring her mood we got her to bed, but since then she has been very ill, and our home-coming has been full of anxiety.

But she is better now, and to-night sits before me, listening to Stuart's account, of how he was awakened the night of her attack by her gay song as she passed his door.

"I knew something was amiss, and dressed myself in double quick time, and followed you, but such a chase as your voice led me, as you danced from room to room, from hall to hall, through the house you knew so well, and of which I knew nothing, until you brought up in the drawing-room where there was a light burning. Then when I saw you safe I shut you in and went up-stairs to find your mother, but met poor little May with a very white face, trying to find you."

"Oh I am a foolish girl, but now I am safe, in my own home I will learn to behave less like a tragedy queen," she replies.

We have been here already a month, but it seems scarce a day, because of the time being so engrossed by Lela's sickness.

We have seen, and had kind greetings from such of our old neighbors as death and change have not parted from their old place, yet though the angel with his sickle has cut down some, and their places are filled by those who were almost children when we left, yet there are enough remaining from the relics of the past, to make the old times come again.

Adèle has learned to *feel* herself about her home, and now finds an unutterable consolation, in sitting for hours, drawing grand tones from the same organ which years ago was such an infinite comfort to her father, I am thankful my poor child has this gift, which fills her darkened life with light.

Howard, grave but quiet, even more impressed with the duties of life now than ever, left us as soon as Lela was pronounced out of danger, for college, to undergo his examination and if it was successful to graduate.

To-day he has returned with all his honors upon him, and

very proud we are of him, so young and yet already so successful. To-night as we are seated around Lela, he came to where Stuart and I sat.

"Mamma, now Nora is nearly well, I have a request to ask of you and Stuart," he said, "will you grant it?"

"If your mother will, I will," said Stuart, smiling up at him.

"And I will if I may of course," I said.

"Oh you both may, if May will, I want Arty to hasten his wedding day."

The start and flush of pleasure, which came upon Stuart's face, showed how gladly he would hasten it could he, but suppressing his emotion, he said sadly.

"Not now Howard, it is all changed now, May is an heiress, and"—

"What do you mean 'Arty,'" said Howard, springing up.

"That I must not marry an heiress, Howard, until I have at least won a name to grace her fortune with," he said passionately "oh why did this fortune come to her, why was not my darling left to me, that I might toil for her, as I had so proudly hoped to do!"

"And is this fretful foolish boy, my noble, brave-hearted Stuart, who in all my trials has helped me so by his faithfulness? Oh I do not know my boy at all, he is a changeling," I said bending towards him and drawing him to my side.

"Oh Aunt Bertha, I ought not, I must not keep May to her promise now all is so changed," and he flung himself in his old boyish way at my feet. Just then we heard May's low voice upon the stairs, and Gracie sprang to the door crying,

"Oh May come here, come here," and as she entered the door, "poor sister weep that you are lady of Percy, for Stuart will not have you, nay do not smile, it is true, he thinks a lady with houses and lands, and a rent roll of some thousands, is too high a prize for him, although the gentle quiet heart which for years had been a resting place and comfort of all she loved, was never a whit too good for him, oh Stuart I am ashamed of you."

"Gracie turned speech-maker, well what will happen next," said Marion with a smile, "and Stuart saying silly

things, why mamma we have fallen upon strange times. What has started them up thus?"

"Because I wanted to know when your wedding day was coming," said Howard. She blushed a little, but answered in a moment quietly.

"And did they tell you brother mine?"

"No, will you my lady Percy?"

"Whenever mamma who is to have my entire obedience until—until Stuart takes control of me," she said quietly, "whenever mamma says it must."

"But," Adèle began, "Stuart says he will not have you—"

"I think he will," she replied. "I think he will."

"What makes you think so, will you burn the will which made you an heiress?"

"Oh no, I like to be rich, I like to know we will never have to work again. I am a lazy little body—but because I know," and she went softly up to him and laid her little hand in his brown curls, "because I know he loves me too well to break my loving heart."

He sprang up and clasped her in his arms crying passionately,

"Oh May, sweet May, I love you so."

"And yet would cast me off for filthy lucre's sake," she said playfully. "would let Mammon come between two hearts that have withstood many trials without wavering in their truth, O Stuart! I am disappointed in you."

"May! May! good little May, have patience with me," then turning to Lela, "all the rest having spoken for me, Lela, proud Lela, are you too willing your pearl in her golden setting, should take the poor drudge?"

"Unless the drudge, aforesaid, will cast her off, and take poor me instead," she said holding out her hand gaily, "now 'Arty' could you not do that? you know I have not the disadvantage of having a fortune, but will bring you naught but a vixen of a temper."

But the way Stuart drew May to his embrace answered her merry words.

"Well then mamma when shall it be?" asked Howard, "for oh I do need Stuart so sadly, there is much to do on this great property, and I am so young, but when 'Arty' is my brother, and my fellow-worker, it will be all right. —"

With 'Arty' to the fore, I have no fear, he is a sure pilot, and we can trust our bark to him," then turning to him with an infinite tenderness,

"My brother, it will take much care and anxious thought, for us to keep this charge rightly for our mother and our sisters, but I have no fear, if you will direct and counsel me. I need you so, my brother."

And so it was settled that upon the coming Christmas, our gentle May should stand beneath her father's hall a bride. Now we are very busy preparing for it, for as Lela says,

"The heiress of the Percies, must have a sumptuous *trousseau*."

Now Lela being well or almost so, we have concluded although very regretfully that she must fulfil the promise made to Mr. Audley, and go to him for at least one year; he constantly demands it. The other day Marion came to me and said,

"Dear mamma, would it break your heart to have us go to Europe with Lela, you know how Stuart used to dream that some time in his life, he would earn enough to take him to Heidleburg, for a course, I was thinking we might go now, only for the leaving you."

"By Jove, the very thing," cried Ernest, "and now you have the where-with-all, you can bring Adèle to me in Paris, it will be a comfort to your mother to know you are with her, during her trial, I'll go home, gather up my traps and start next week." And spite of entreaties and expostulations he has gone already.

"Doing just as he takes into his head to, spite of every body," his mother declares. So poor Gracie and I are getting, or trying to get used to the thought of living at least a year without one peep into three of the faces which make our world, dear faces, of our own.

Now we work for the others as well as May, and are glad we have Margary to help us, and is not her poor old mother more glad than all, that the coming back of "the family" has restored her wanderer as well.

CHAPTER LXIX.

DECEMBER.

"She was not very fair
Nor beautiful — these words express her not,
But oh her looks had something excellent,
That wants a name."

THIS morning Howard was sitting by my side writing, when looking up he said,

"Would it grieve you very much to leave 'Percies' Cliffe,' so soon?"

"Not if I knew I was to come home to it, whenever I liked," I said, "but why do you ask?"

"It has come to me many times that Adèle will need you, so sadly mamma, and I do not know why, but it seems to me Nora does not get back her strength, and I know you see it, and will worry and grieve for them both when they are gone. Then my father was just my age when he went abroad to perfect his education, and by his observation learn the best way of being a true man in his own land. I have thought I should like to do as he did, as nearly like in every thing as I can. Suppose we all go abroad, even though we have to leave the dear old home we have longed to see for years, we can always come home again you know, and the Raymonds, will be safe guardians of our interests while we are away."

"But can we afford such an expensive plan? there are a great many of us." I asked, "it will take almost a fortune to pay the expense of all."

"Now mamma," he replied laughing, "I am not talking to the teacher of Elm st., who was obliged to count the pence, she owned, but to the lady of 'Percies' Cliffe Manor,' which for nine years under the hands of skillful business men, has been made to yield by its rental estate an unfailing income, which all this time has been left untouched, to accumulate until now, even the extravagance of taking a whole family to Europe will scarcely consume the interest, beside Marion bears her own expenses you know."

"Is it so indeed? then we will go," and my heart gave a great bound at the thought. It seems strange I should be glad to go away from Percies' Cliffe, upon any cause, but it

only proves how much dearer one's children are, than even the tenderest associations.

The jubilee with which this arrangement was met, was somewhat hushed by Mrs. Wilbur's determinate,

"No I will stay here and keep house with Ally, and Margary, for never again, will I trust myself upon that false ocean which has cruelly wrested my own from me."

I wrote some time since to Mr. Audley that he might expect Lela early in the spring, but said not a word of the coming of Stuart and his bride, because we meant to surprise them, but now, methinks there will be amazement enough when we all arrive.

Clare writes me in a letter which I have but now received.

'Oh Auntie dear my heart gave such a leap, when your letter came and Uncle Audley bade me hold myself in readiness for a journey to Liverpool to meet Lela. Now the next best thing to seeing you once more will be to have Lela just fresh from amongst you all,—laden with your kisses and love, for you do love your exiled boy, I never doubt it. It has been my comfort all this while, that though so far away, you have still that little corner, warm and bright in your heart for me. That thought, and your dear letters have been my good things for many a weary day, and now I shall see 'queen' once more, and verily I will make her, proud or what not, give me all the kisses you send.'

Dear Clare it were worth the going, were it only for your sake, how proud I shall be when I am in the midst of my boy's triumphs, the echo of which has resounded across the great deep, making his name and works, the talk and wonder even in this land, where art is reckoned a small matter, in comparison with the all-powerful dollar. And we will see his grand paintings, and listen to his praises, from those who honor by their commendation.

It will be very pleasant to go after all, the old way, half pleasure, half pain, like all life work, many lookings toward the hopes of the future, and some backward glancings of regret for what we leave behind.

But the pleasure over-balances the pain in this, for so many faces wait to greet us on that other shore and—perhaps, we may find Coralie, and win her back to love us once more, she surely cannot escape so many anxious, loving, watchful eyes, we will pray she may not, this shall be our *Espérance*!

DECEMBER 1.

My daughter's wedding-day—a marked one in our lives. It was a fair spring-like day—the sun shone softly upon the white snow which was flung over mountain and moor, like an angel's mantel, all purity and whiteness.

Good mother Nature was in a gentle mood, and looked pleasantly on, while the loved of many hearts plighted her maiden troth. A fair sweet thing the young bride was in her simple dignity, so calm yet so very humble in her happiness.

After a death-bed, a bridal is the saddest thing in life. The parting with one's old life, the vows then made, 'until death doth part us,' a pointing though upon the verge of a new life, to the grave which must come at last.

We had a quiet wedding, any other would have been strangely out of keeping with our gentle Marion's whole life. Our guests were the Lees (Mary coming after many years of absence to see her girlhood's friend.) Our old friend Mr. Osten, and the Grays, beside a few neighbors from the village who loved the bride for her father's sake, were all, for we are a strange people, and make few acquaintances, only keeping some faithful friends very near our hearts, and making our world in them.

As Marion stood before the friend of her youth, beside another friend of her life, surrounded by her sisters and her friends, I thought, 'the brides-maids are very beautiful, but the little bride seems fairer than all.' And Stuart reading my thought came to me, and said softly.

"Fairest among thy daughters and altogether lovely."

"My dearest and my best, I have given into your hands Stuart."

"And please God, He giving me life and strength, no rude wind shall come nigh my fair pale flower," he said fervently.

"I know it my boy, my own son now."

"Oh mother, my mother, that is the next good thing after May," he said.