

## CHAPTER LXX.

HOTEL DE K——, MARCH.

THE arrival, the greetings, the tears and kisses, are over, and we are settled at last. We had a quick and prosperous voyage to Liverpool, where we met Clarence. It was something to see his delight, and to feel his dear arms about us and his warm kisses on our lips. My tall manly looking Clare. I could hardly believe he was the pale slight boy who had left me years ago. Gracie insists upon it,

"He has not grown handsome a bit, and only his paleness and his immense black eyes, are like what he used to be. Then I hate a moustache!"

"But do you not know artists are obliged to wear them?" said Clare, making very *big* eyes at her.

"No, why should they? I do not see," she asked innocently.

"Oh to make new brushes of my dear, and to look distinguished with, combining the useful, with the ornamental, you understand," and he escaped from her laughingly.

When we separated for the night, Clare whispered a request in my ear that if I was not too much wearied, he might come to me.

"It will seem so much like old times, to come to your bedside and talk to you in the old fashioned way;" he said.

And he did come, telling me all his hopes and fears, his trials and temptations, and his triumphs too, which have been sufficient to have turned the head of almost any one, not so thoroughly humble and distrustful of themselves as he.

"My mother's presence in the spirit, and your prayers and letters my other mother, have helped me, and kept me through all," he said fervently.

His meeting with May quite satisfied me that the wounds she had once made in his heart, were healed without even a scar.

"My dearest sister always," he said answering my look, "both for her own sweet sake, and because she is Stuart's wife."

The next afternoon we went to London hoping to meet

Ernest, but to our disappointment learned he had gone to some town in Germany, with one of the usual unpronounceable names. So we shall not see him for some time.

Howard's appearance, and the change the years of separation has made, seem to astonish Clare exceedingly, and I was amused at the way he would sit and watch every change in his face, seeming to be trying to find what variety of expression it was capable of, but now he has told me the reason.

"Aunt Bertha," he began, "shall I have your permission to put 'How' in my picture, if he is willing?"

"Certainly, but have you a picture on hand? Bad boy! never to tell me such a thing in all this time."

"Forgive me, but it is the one thing, of which I cannot speak. After the picture is done, it makes no difference who talks about it," then he added, "but I must not feel so with you, if I do with the rest of the world."

Then with a kindling of his dark eyes, which Gracie thinks too large, but which to my mind are true artist's eyes, through which the soul of an enthusiast glows, he began in his rapid nervous way to describe his subject, walking quickly up and down the room,

"It is that scene from the life of Joseph, when he discovers himself to his brethren, and they conscience-stricken cower in his presence, you remember the words—"

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood with him, and cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known to his brethren."

"And he wept aloud and said—I am Joseph, doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence."

"How they looked—what a scene that was.—The room in which they were assembled, filled with all the gorgeousness of Egyptian splendor, strewn with rich carpets, velvet cushions of the richest dye, piled upon each other, curtains of rare silks sweeping from ceiling to floor, all that the rarest taste could gather together, of the splendors of the luxurious East, were clustered in this hall of princes, and in the midst in his robes of state the king's favorite, Joseph, the first ruler in the land stood, his noble form arrayed in the sumptuous robes of state, purple and fine linen, with chains of

gold about his neck—the judge of the rude men around him, and yet their brother—a look of yearning love upon his handsome face, for doubtless he was a very handsome man, else he would not have captivated the heart of a bad woman.

“And then those men,—Rueben, Simeon, Levi, old grey-headed men, those old men, with long white beards which their nation wore making them look—true fathers in Israel, cowed down before their young brother, whom they had so cruelly wronged. And Judah, the noblest of them all, in the pride and strength of his middle age—just through his touching appeal, standing but a little way from his judge—alone—his proud form quivering with the intensity of his urgency, his haughty eye, flashing though he strove to make it humble, as he sued with this man, almost a boy, when compared with himself for—his little brother’s liberty.

“Oh I have thought it over a thousand times,—the look of those dark fierce brethren, whose mothers were slaves. Issacher with his dull lazy look apparent even amidst his fear, standing far behind the others, that the brunt of the whole matter might not come to him, ‘a drudge stooping between two burdens.’ Dan with his fierce keen look, and snake-like eyes,—Gad strong and like a giant in his towering form. All the others, bearing upon their faces the impress of their nation, and their occupation, standing startled and dismayed in the presence of their injured brother.

“All but one, a boy, have *such* a look upon their faces, as makes you sure a sin to be repented of lies behind—a fair boy,—a beautiful boy, a very child standing innocent of sin among those guilty world worn-men.

—“His father’s darling—nourished tenderly in his father’s house—the little Benjamin, the child of his old age, whom the old man loved for the sake of his dead wife, ‘the beautiful well favored Rachel,’ whom he had toiled for years to win,—and for the sake of the brother of the boy whom he mourned as dead—Judah in his touching appeal had just now called him, ‘a little one, whom our father loveth.’

“Benjamin has been my desire to make perfect, but in vain have I striven to give his face the attributes which I imagine belong to it. The soft lovely look of his gentle mother, with the eagle eye of his father, the characteristic of his tribe yet in a boyish face rather felt than seen,—oh I have

dreamed over it, I have worked over it—but in vain, it never pleased me—but the other night when Howard stood before me, I could have sprung up and shouted, ‘Benjamin.’ Since we have been together I have studied every lineament of his face, and now I have my Benjamin, his lithe well knit figure, his dark earnest eyes with their dusky lashes, sweeping his cheek, the long black shining hair, flowing down below the collar, the straight nose, the full chin and throat, all my long sought Benjamin’s belongings entire. Tell me Auntie mine, will not that do for my *chef d’œuvre*, think you? I sketched it last night.”

And he drew forth a small piece of canvass, upon which was sketched a head of Howard,—like exceedingly, but with a glory around it, a holy expression about the eyes and mouth, which Howard has not. It was Howard idealized. Or, as Stuart says,

“Howard, as he struck the painter.”

This was weeks ago that I had this description, but we have none of us any idea of the progress of the picture, save what we can form from the amount of time expended upon it; but I have seen other of my artist-boy’s productions, and no longer wonder at the praises he receives.

It is not my partiality alone; but all say—those who have a *right to say* in such matters—that if his coming years fulfil the promise of his youth he will stand before the world the painter of his age.

We rested awhile in London, and then came to Paris, having of course the usual trouble in getting here. Oh if we only had Americans at Calais what a blessing it would be to *benighted* travellers.

When we got into Paris, and drove to Mr. Audley’s hotel, the sad remembrance of the last time I had traveled through these streets with Walter, Marion and Lela, beside me, and poor Birdie, a wee baby in her nurse’s arms, came over me; how glad we were, that our journeyings were coming to an end, and we were going home.

I was glad when Clare and Lela exclaimed as we neared a hotel from which many lights were flashing,

“Here we are at last—” and the carriage stopped.

We were lead up a broad stair-case, (the glitter of which dazzled us, coming out of the darkness,) into a spacious hall, at the door of which we were announced.

The elegantly appointed drawing-room was one blaze of light, there could be nothing more refined and *recherché* than the fitting up of the apartment, no particular style, or taste, was portrayed, but over all there was an appearance of rare beauty, a grouping together of the graceful and stately, the lights and shadows of art and science, and the eye and senses were charmed—entranced.

Here stood a noble harp, its golden form leaning against crimson velvet, there a piano whose keys of pearl glittered in the soft light.

On etageres lay strown thickly *bijouterie*, in Parian marble, or Bohemian glass.—Exquisite paintings hung against the wall. On tables of antique forms, were piled magnificently bound volumes, and in vases at intervals through the room were the rarest hot-house flowers vieing in brightness with those which lay in clusters upon the floor, the furniture, and the hangings upon the walls.

At the furthest end of the saloon, at the entrance to the conservatory from which a thousand breaths of fragrance stole softly in, where the light fell very dimly, lay stretched upon a couch of azure velvet, a lady—yes you knew she was a lady, by the curve of her white neck, by the elegantly draped form, and above all, by the proud face, which one white hand half concealed. At the entrance, the servant who ushered us up, announced;

“Madame, your expected guests from America,”—but we saw the lady was asleep, and Clare waived the servant from the room.

Then we all stood about her for a little while: dear Estelle, how good it was to see you, so regally surrounded; while we waited she slowly unclosed her eyes, then the shriek, the embraces the tears of joy which followed who may write? Not I forsooth.

“And Mr. Audley has a dinner party for the Prince De Q——, she said, and I shall not be able to get him word for hours.”

So we settled ourselves as comfortably as needs be. Estelle denying herself to all visitors, and waiting until past midnight, talking over a thousand things. And when Mr. Audley came, the greetings were all to go over again, but though he was kind to us all, Lela and Howard, had the tenderest welcome. And the guardian of my husband

turned aside, his heart filled with emotion, because, as he said,

“This boy is just what his father was, in outward form, pray God he may be like him in all inward things.”

But he was sadly distressed to see Lela so wearied with the journey, but now after we have been here a couple of weeks, and the effects of her travels have passed away, my daughter has regained much of her wonted health and spirits; it has done her good to come.

MAY.

We have been here about two months, and Lela's health is wonderfully better, Ernest is here busily engaged in his studies, so busy indeed that we rarely see him. He says,

“The acme of good with me, is to feel sufficient confidence in my skill, to attempt an operation upon Adèle's eyes.”

Ten years have made great changes in the society, we once knew in Paris, or at least which Ernest knew, for it is far more than that since we were here. A thousand changes have swept away not only the people we once knew, but the very houses and streets. Revolutions are sad havoc-workers, and throw down, and build up in a manner more marvelous than the famed nights of Arabian memory.

But in the brilliant circle which Mr. Audley's high position gathers about him, Lela reigns queen, “*La belle Americaine*,” as she is called.

Stuart and Ernest, find much that suits both their different tastes, (and their could scarcely be two so unlike) within this circle, but little May says,

“Such a whirl of pleasure is rather a pain, than a happiness.”

Adèle and Gracie go no where of evenings except to the opera, which is their delight. Through the day they are busy enough, going all sorts of places, with a variety of escorts, chiefly however with Clare and Howard, and attending to the instructions of several masters of Mr. Audley's choosing, whom Clare calls,

“Uncle's finishers, who give the fancy touches, requisite for Parisian society.”

Last week Estelle received a short note from Ada Lawrence, bearing the intelligence of her mother's death, she writes,

'I shall go home now, for because I so earnestly desired it, and because she knew how safe I would be with her, mamma has written a letter to dear Mrs. Percy, asking her to take the place which her death has left vacant, and be a mother and guardian to poor orphan me.

'I will stop in Paris with my Uncle Lawrence's family, who are also going home; Willie is a cadet on board the sloop Washington, and will cruise for a year longer in the Mediterranean.'

When she came I met her, and brought her here, poor pale-faced Ada, henceforth to be one of my daughters.

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CHAPTER LXXI.

AUGUST.

"Deep as first love and wild with all regrets,  
Oh death in life—the days that are no more."

TENNYSON.

If I had been told that to-day, the first day of those which marks my years, the only one which has passed since my home has been restored to me should by my own free will have been passed away from that home, how would I have scorned the idea,—yet to-day I write not at my beloved, "Percies' Cliffe,"—but in Paris. But it is right, that is the comfort, even though it is not the most pleasant, it is right, therefore I am content.

I have much to thank my Father for, but above all, that my Lela is restored to her wonted health. My stately flower is blooming again, though a little while ago I almost deemed she was fading from earth.

All the others are bright and well, and very happy, and so gay, I almost scold them for the whirl they live in,—Ada

Lawrence and I are the only sober ones, and we think we have as pleasant times in our quiet rooms as they.

We mourn for one thing, but we hope even for that, Coralie our lost one. It cannot be we never again are to look into that bright laughing face, never again to listen to the rippling notes of her bird-like voice.

Oh my sweet child, come to me, I wait, I pine for you!

Walter dearest wherever she is to-night, pray the Father that he will send his good Spirit upon her heart, and soften it towards us.

Dearest, another year, nearer thy rest, Jesus my precious Saviour is ever with me, giving me comfort and strength, to "bide his time."

All is fair about me, our children are heavenly boons, in which my heart finds comfort, my friends are faithful and true just such as the widowed heart can rest upon.

Walter, dear Walter, God is very good to thy wife! and I will have faith to believe that He will make all things work together for my eternal good, and that of my loved ones.

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SEPTEMBER.

We came home late one evening from a drive, meeting Estelle and Lela at the door, dressed for some gay party, and looking so lovely we must needs stop them for a kiss.

"We will take Adèle and Gracie with us to the opera, if they will consent to sit out of sight for this one night, as their dresses and hair are not *comme il faut*," said Lela, "we are just in time and cannot wait for them to make *une grande toilette*, and we will send them back by Uncle."

So, glad to go under any restrictions, they sprang into the coach and were whirled away, leaving me quite alone, for the rest had gone to a lecture.

"Madame," said a groom as I came down from my room, "would you have the goodness to speak to a lady, who is waiting in the drawing-room, for Mr. Audley, she has been there a long while and looks sadly ill?"

"Certainly, why did you not tell Mrs. Audley, perhaps she would have done as well as your master?"

"I did, but she was in haste to be away," was the reply.