

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.

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.

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.

the personage you refer to will take the trouble to interfere."

"Oh Rolf, it is wicked to talk so, even in sport, it frightens me to hear you say such things."

"Then I am mute, little wife."

But though he petted her, the while, these talks left a strange weariness behind them.

And they did not mend the matter either, for he only staid the longer, and went the oftener, and without her—

All this time they were living in England, never in one place long at a time. Sometimes in London, then when it was fashionable, at Bath, and back to London again.

But one day a letter came at breakfast. When Rolf saw the superscription he started and changed color, took it up as if to open it, then laid it down once more. He looked up half sorrowfully at her, and then seeing her glance of enquiry said quickly,

"From an old friend on the Continent."

"Oh I thought, I hoped it was from home," and she burst into tears.

"Nonsense, I should think you had got over that foolery by this time," and taking his letter he started up and left the room.

This was the first unkind word he had spoken. That and the manner of his leaving her, sent a chill to her very heart, and the first doubt of his entire love came upon her, almost crushing her for a while.

The next day he told her, he must go to Paris for a few weeks on business.

"Then I will prepare at once, when shall we start?" she asked.

He looked abashed for a moment, and then said with a half laugh.

"Why Birdie! I did not intend to take you, as I must make such haste."

"Not take me? leave me here alone? oh surely you will not do that, oh Rolf please let me go, I will be so good, and give you no trouble, indeed I will not," she said beseechingly.

"But I will be gone only a couple of weeks."

"Oh it will seem like years if I may not see your face, it will break my heart."

And after more pleadings and tears, he gave consent, not very willingly she saw, adding,

"Well then if you must go, why we may as well make our arrangements not to return, but spend the winter in Paris, instead of London."

And they went. He fixed her in a beautiful villa out of Paris a couple of miles, every thing that wealth could buy he surrounded her with, and for a while she was a happy wife. But soon he absented himself again, and now not for hours but sometimes for days, saying,

"His business required his presence in Paris." But he never took her with him.

Thus month after month she lived here, surrounded with all that could entrance and delight the eye, but with an unsatisfied wearied heart. A stranger amongst strangers.

No friend to go to, none to expect. Her only relief from wearisomeness the glimpses of sunshine her husband's presence brought, and the long solitary rides which on fair days she took, but which only made her more sad as the contrast between her own loneliness, and the gay laughing crowds she met in her drives, came upon her.

But one day as she drove listlessly alone, too *ennuied* even to notice the gay carriages with their inmates, which passed her, a laugh was wafted to her ear, and springing up, she cried,

"Aunt Estelle," but before she could catch one glimpse of the faces within, the carriage was whirled away, and lost amidst the maze of others, with which the highway was lined.

After that, day after day she drove at the fashionable hour and out of it, with but one aim, one desire. The hope that she might not have been deceived, but that one of her home friends was near her, and that she could find her at last.

Thus she drove with eager watchful face, never dreaming of the sensation she was creating by her beautiful establishment, and still more beautiful face. Once in a while, she would think she saw her husband amidst the crowd of gay loungers, which gathered round some doorway, or balcony, or perhaps seated beside some lady driving quickly by, but of this she was never certain.

When he came again however, it was with a frown and an angry expostulation that,

"You shall not make yourself, as you have been doing, the talk of Paris. It displeases me to have any woman, above all my wife a town talk."

It took her a long while to understand how or why she was conspicuous. But then she said sadly,

"I never thought of that Rolf. I thought once, a week ago, that I hear Aunt Estelle's voice, and since then I have always been looking for her."

"Nonsense, what silly notions you do get," he said with a frown, "but you are moped to death here, and I am going to take you to Florence with me next week."

"To Florence, dear Florence, oh I am so glad."

"Why little wife how you brighten up, if you would look like that oftener I would give you more of my company I think; bright looks such as you once had are the only things to chain me."

"But I am not quite well I think, not well as I used to be, I fear," she said with her ever ready tears, but then as she saw the frown coming over his face, she dried them, and added quickly.

"But Florence, dear Florence, it will do me good to see it once more."

"Once more, why were you ever there, Birdie?"

"I was born in Florence, Rolf, and I should like"—

"Like what sweet? you shall have just what you like."

"My baby to be born, in the same house where I was," she whispered, hiding her face upon his bosom.

"Then we will go there my own," he said tenderly.

And they did and for many a day her husband was her lover once more, and Cora was strangely happy.

And weeks after when she lay, a fair young mother, with a "birdling" nestled closely to her heart, the darkened room seemed to have a glory in it when Rolf came, and kneeling at her bedside, took his darling in his arms, and told her over again his love tale, even before he looked upon his son.

"Shall we call it Walter my sweet?" he said.

"No, no, I am not worthy, oh that I dare! but I have sinned too much, alas!"

"Naughty Birdie, sinned in loving me."

But the look of love she gave him, showed how very dear the sin was.

"Then what will my darling call her son?"

"Rolf," she answered tenderly, brushing the heavy locks from his brow with her weak pale fingers.

He started up as if a dagger had struck him, and paced quickly up and down the room, then seeing her look of fright he came back again.

"No my dearest, name it after a better man, in the hope that the name may make it more worthy."

"Rolf, my Rolf, do not talk so, your sins are better worthy of love, than any other being's goodness." And raising herself she threw her arms about his neck so proud, so tender, so loving of him.

"And I *will* call our son Rolf," she said.

But with a shudder, he answered.

"No, no, not if you love me, be contented pet to think I know best, and have a good reason for my no."

"Then I will call him Leonard, for my sister Nora."

"Why not Marion, since you love her best, or for your mother, pet."

"I am not worthy," she said meekly, "and besides Lela will see that I forgive her, that she was unkind to me, if— if I ever see them again."

"What tears coming then I am off?" he said but as he stooped to kiss her, she held him fast putting away the tears he hated so.

"No, no, I will be good dear Rolf, only let me look at you a little longer, it makes me happy, so very happy," she said.

But after she grew well again, the old absences were renewed, but this time she minded them less, for had she not her child, her little Leonard, to comfort and engross her?

If sometimes a pang went through her heart, at the thought that Rolf loved her less, she smothered it in kisses on her baby's soft lips. And then he was always tender of her, and petted her, perhaps less often but still tenderly.

And while her baby was left her, she cared not much for any earthly thing. But God looked down and saw the fair child, and knew it was best it should come to dwell with Him. And so one night with only her servants round her, and they almost strangers, the pale watcher was made motherless. So quickly, so suddenly had death come, they had no time to summon the father, until all was over. And

I went in unconscious of what awaited me, with slow steps, entering the room where such a treasure welcomed me, for as I stood on the threshold, the light beaming upon me, a girlish form sprang towards me, and a voice said,

"Mamma, mamma, can it be?"—and Cora lay insensible at my feet. Oh my child, my fair pale child, my arms were about her, I cradled her dear head upon my breast, while I said a prayer of thanksgiving over her. Then I went feebly out closing the door behind me and knocking at Clare's studio brought him with me in silence. Then hushing his exclamation, I made him carry her to my own room where Ada Lawrence sat writing. As he laid her down she opened her eyes and said in a low rambling tone,

"I have sinned against heaven and before thee and am no more worthy to be called thy child," and then swooned again, and lay so long insensible, that frightened Clare went to find Ernest, while Ada and I vainly sought to revive her.

How the others received the news of our lost one's return, I know not—I was conscious of nothing beside that pale sweet face, those closed eyes which only awoke from their stupour to stare and flash in fever. And then we shaved off her golden curls and I wept over them, and kissed my darling's sun-bright hair.

But after many days, she grew better, and now is able to walk with a supporting arm, through the long corridors. Poor child, all her bright merry ways gone. Oh Cora, I dreaded this—I deemed it might be thus,—but you would none of my advice, but loved another better, and chose to serve him first! Now I must tell how it came, that I found her sitting alone at night in Mr. Audley's drawing-room, when she and I, knew not where to find the other, whom we needed so.

For a long while, all was brightness and beauty—her husband was her lover—she lived in his smile and he—he said, she was his star, his all on earth.

When they reached England, she wrote that one hurried letter—the only one I ever received, her husband mailed it, saying, "he had enclosed it in one of his own, pleading that we would forgive and receive him as our own."

This of course was false, such a letter never came although the other did.

Then she waited a little while and wrote again and again, though no answer ever came—such loving letters, I have them now—but I must not anticipate.

She waited and watched month after month, for some kindly word from home, but it never came, and at last she gave up hoping for it, and grew to believe the words of her husband, that we had cast her off. And then he would take her in his arms and say,

"For my sake Birdie, they do not love Rolf Livingstone's wife, you must love me better to make up, I must have their share, and my own as well."

And she did love him fervently, yet, though she strove she could not forget the friends of her childhood, her widowed mother over the sea, but pined for them, until her cheek grew pale, her merry laugh stilled, and her bright eyes dim.

Then when her beauty was on the wane, or its brightness clouded, his boasted love grew cold—he was not unkind, but he left her often, staying out late at night, and laughed when she said she missed him, and kissing her gaily called her,

"A foolish child, who expected a man to be always a lover, even after he had been married a whole year."

"But you do love me you know Rolf, so why not be what you are, my lover-husband," she said.

"So I do little one, but then you must not worry me, if I sometimes stay out late, I always like perfect liberty, and soon learn to hate those who seek to shackle my movements."

"But you could never hate me, that would be impossible," she said in a frightened earnest tone "your own wife you know!"

"Why not?" he said laughingly, "if you were not such a pet, I could hate my own wife, as cordially as anybody else."

"Oh you do not mean it," she said with a shudder, "God heard our vows, and would punish you for breaking them, even if your wife was not all she should be, as she is not, I know."

"Yes she is, little pet, don't slander my wife, I will not hear it," and he drew her head down upon his shoulder, "but about the being punished for doing wrong, I do not think