

We did not tell her Rolf was ill again, it would have done no good and she never asked after his welfare; at last Ernest said to me as we watched beside her,

"This will never do, she can stand this no longer, she must be taken away from here at once."

"But she is so weak, will she be able to endure a journey?"

"She can bear any thing better than this, and she must go." So in as short a time as we could arrange it, Stuart and Marion took her away with them to their home in Heidelberg. They write me every day, of her welfare and hope she is better, but it is only hope as yet.

Now that Rolf is out of danger, or at least immediate danger once more, Mr. Audley has taken Lela and Adèle to town with him, but Gracie chose to stay with me, "and help nurse brother Rolf," she says.

This week or next I hope to have Ada back, for though I doubt whether I remembered to tell it before, when we first came to visit the Lembert's, she went with her uncle to spend the last days of their stay abroad with them, somewhere in Holland where Mr. Lawrence has some business.

I think I have told before of a little girl whom my daughters made much of when they were here, she is a child of strange beauty, and now I have more leisure to take notice of her, I am surprised to see how strong is the resemblance to Coralie, only she has not her merry tongue, but with much brightness has a constant looking back, as if for a lost memory, dear little girl, she is a great pet with us all especially with Ernest, who has her with him constantly.

"She is just what you were, Bertha when I first knew you," he says sadly.

CHAPTER LXXV.

FEBRUARY.

LELA is very happy in having Adèle with her, and writes me a billet-doux every day, telling of the sensation her young sister's pensive beauty is creating, in the circles they frequent. Estelle was out last week to stay a couple of days with me, in reply to my enquiries as to how Adèle received so much attention she said,

"With the most astonishing indifference, evidently considering it a part of their homage to Lela. Indeed her naiveté is the most charming thing about her, for her angel like beauty, does not compare with the glory of Lela's charms."

It is strange to know this is my poor blind child over whom we have wept such bitter tears.

"Oh mamma," she says, "all things are so beautiful, the sky is so fair, the earth so green and glowing, and the flowers have a sweeter perfume, when their soft eyes look into mine; it is blessed to live ever in the light, to know your dear face by sight, instead of touch."

Ada writes that she cannot come yet, but sends a most pathetic appeal for some one to come to her, so that she may be permitted to return to us, instead of going to America, as her uncle desires. After some consultation Lela and I have decided that Gracie shall go, although at first she opposed such a thing very strenuously, because I would be alone with Rolf, but he is so much better it is needless for any one to be with him now, save for companionship, and Ada will be so grieved did no one go. However after it was decided she should go, I could not help thinking it was with a kind of gladness; when she had settled it with herself that she was not needed to help me, or as she expresses it, in her quaint way,

"When the road seems plain and right before me," which however it did not for some time, as we could find no escort at all suitable.

"If Willie Lawrence were only here," said Adèle.

"I should not allow her to go with him, if he was," I replied.

"Why mamma?" said Gracie, her face crimson, and tears in her eyes, "I thought you liked Willie."

"So I do, but he would be but a poor protector, I think he is rather too wild for a guardian."

"But Gracie is so wise and steady she would suffice to take charge of both," laughed Adèle.

But our troubles were ended, by Mr. Marstone's coming to make his usual enquiring for Rolf, for when he heard the matter of trouble,

"Will you trust her with me, Mrs. Percy?" he asked.

"Are you going away?" I asked. "At least in the direction of the Lawrences?"

"I think I shall, and will promise to take good care of this little ladye, and bring her safely to her friends, if you will trust me."

"But is not this a sudden move? Will not it inconvenience you?" I asked.

"For your first question," he replied, with his grave quiet smile, "it is rather a sudden thing, as I had no idea of going until this afternoon: for the trouble I shall go after Miss Gracie whether I go with her or not."

Oh how pale Lela was, and how my heart ached at his words, for they seemed but to confirm what we have thought all along, that he has transferred his love to Gracie. Oh man! man! can I ever trust her with you! But when Gracie knows all, as she must, before she gives her happiness to his keeping, all this treachery and sin, which has wrecked her proud sister's heart, what will she do, will she trust him? Oh she could not, with Coralie's blighted life before her. Some words of her's though they were simple ones, haunt me; the other day she said:

"Mamma, Adèle seems to get along nicely without me now-a-days, at first it grieved me, but now I am glad, for I am sure she loves me, just the same."

"But why, why are you glad now?"

"Because even though we had desired it never so much, we could hardly have hoped always to be together, you know," she said simply.

I do not know why but it makes me sad to remember now, though at the time it did not strike me much, that she is glad that Adèle needs her no longer.

Oh for one peep into the future,—nay that is an evil

desire, I will rather pray for a better faith to trust all to my Father's hand.

But though I do not like it, I must let her go with Mr. Marstone, I cannot refuse.

MAY.

Gracie has been away several weeks, and writes of a safe, pleasant journey, and also of her deep regret "that Mr. Marstone has gone away for a while."

Rolf was seated in an easy chair, one morning this week, with closed eyes, and bent head, silent as usual, only looking up to answer some question, or take his medicine. I sat looking at him for a long while, wishing I knew some way to comfort him, and thinking how very hard it was to say cheerful things to people in affliction, when they had no hope, no up-lookings, nothing beyond, to which to turn.

And now I thought, "I dare not try to make him know these things, lest the excitement the memory would bring, should make him ill again."

Bye and bye, the merry laugh of a child's voice was borne upon the wind; looking out of the window we saw the gate keeper's little girl Lisette, or as the girls call her Lilly, (from her fancied resemblance to our own lost pet who would have been but little older than this,) springing along the walk: She threw herself upon the bank where Ernest sat reading—

"Ah? *mon cher ami, je suis*—"

"Nay Lilly, try to speak English, you will never learn, and you promised to try to remember," said Ernest smoothing her curls softly.

"Pardonne, so I did," she said with her pretty accent, kissing his hand, "you are so good as to take such trouble for me, ingrate I am, *tres sottie*, no, no," she said as he held up his finger reproachfully, "I mean I am so silly I cannot learn, so careful, no, no so *careless*, I never remember what you want me to, my kind master."

"But what were you going to tell me, Lilly-bell?" he asked.

"I have been up in the very top of the elm tree, it was *tres belle*, so free and fresh up there, and I lay among the

branches, and let the sunbeams talk to me of my other home, then I sang for the birds, and they sang for me, then the leaves began to sigh out a long story of their troubles, and trials, and I had to stay and comfort them—and—then I went to find where the fairies' dance in the moonlight, as old Elsie says they do. I have often looked for them, but I can never see them, and that is the reason, my master, I have been so long away; now I will be a good child, and learn my English well, so to write pretty letters to you when you go away over the great water—oh the sea," and she hid her eyes a moment, "I do not love the sea."

"Why, did my little Lilly ever see the sea?" asked Ernest.

"Oh yes, I used to live upon the sea, so long, so long, until old Jack died and this father brought me home. Oh do not let us talk about it, I cannot make it out, and—it tires me to try."

"Cannot make what out? tell me Lilly, what do you mean?"

"I do not know, only something I have forgotten which only the sunbeams know, and they will not tell me, but only laugh," she said sadly.

"Foolish child, then come and learn what they do not know, so you may laugh at them," he said, and they came into the house, she dancing before him like a glancing sunbeam herself.

"It is quite amusing to see what a wonderful fancy Ernest has taken to this child, and how much time he wastes upon her, which he used to think must be spent on books or experiments," I said as they passed out of sight, but Rolf with a weary sigh said, sinking back on his lounge:

"How much she is like what Birdie was at her age, just the same merry little fairy she was the summer of the accident; how it maddened me to see her bright face sinking beneath the cold unfeeling waves. Do you remember how fearful she was lest I would not come and say good-bye to her, and how tenderly she wound her arms about my neck, and thanked me.—Oh Birdie! Birdie! my darling, so cold, so cruel now," and for a moment he stretched out his wan hands as if to woo her to him, and then bowing his head upon the window-sill, sat looking such a picture of desolation, it cut me to the heart. I went to his side, and laid my hand upon the thick

dark hair, where sorrow, not age, was already leaving white memorials.

"Do not, Rolf, please do not, I cannot bear to see you so."

He looked up piteously into my face, with that weak, helpless look which suffering only leaves. Something he saw there, perhaps the pity which from my heart I felt for him—or a surety that I had at last taken him into my heart, and loved him, and grieved for him—whatever it was, he said, laying his poor head upon my arm.

"Teach me the way! please teach me the way."

"What way, dear Rolf?" I said.

"The way she would have me believe, make me to believe, I will try. Oh with my very soul I will try, if I may win her at last."

Oh what a motive, it struck a chill to my heart, a chill of fear lest God would not be found, when so sought, but then came the hope, if he loves the creature so frail and sinful thus, because he knows her, may he not be taught a greater love for the Creator whom now he does not know?

"How can I help you Rolf? how do what your Bible has failed to do?"

"My Bible, I never read the Bible, I never had one," he said.

"Oh Rolf! Rolf! then your unbelief, your sins are not a strange thing. It is only God's grace which has kept you through all, that you might be saved." And then for hours with a prayer in my heart, and sometimes on my lips for strength and grace, to say what was best and most needful, I told this man, of the message of life, taught him like a little child, what almost any child would blush not to know, but of which he, a man of great ability, knew not even the first rudiments.

And the proud cynic, after a few sneering words, and gestures, laid aside his worldly wisdom, and his pride, and like a little child sought eagerly for this beautiful mystery, this priceless pearl, marvelous though easy, of a God over all, a Ruler, a Creator and a Judge. And farther on, of the dear Saviour, of His great work, of His nearness and tenderness to those who call upon Him; and of the Comforter whom He has sent to be with us, until He come again.

When he grew too weary, with the intensity of feeling

which all this long rejected message brought to his heart, I left him with the tale but half told, to go and pray for him.

But the next day almost with the day-break he was up and waiting for me, feverish to know more of these things, which he had neglected all his life, and his only words were,

"Tell me more! tell me more!"

And I did, reading to him often from the "Book," such things as seemed to meet his case, and there is always just what all need, to be found therein. When I read that invitation to the stricken soul "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," the tears sprang to his eyes, and he said in a low voice.

"Please read that again," and when I had done so, he took the book and read it himself saying, "What a comfort that must be to those who can accept it," and he added, "let me think of that until to-morrow," and I left him.

Since then, sometimes with my aid, but oftener alone, he has studied this blessed Word, through much darkness, and bitter prejudices. At first the hope of winning Cora was his only incentive, but in a little while this was past, and he read and studied for his very life.

"My master will do himself harm, my lady," said his valet, "he reads late in the night, and I find him reading again with the day light." But when I asked him,

"Are you not applying yourself too closely, in your weak state?"

"No I must learn now, if all this is true, I have no time to lose," and he was buried in his book again.

One day I read to him that glorious description of the heavenly Jerusalem in the 21st. of Rev., suddenly looking up he asked in an earnest tone,

"And do you believe that this plan of redemption includes all who accept it?"

"I do, all who accept it in the name of Jesus."

"Yes of course, 'the only name under heaven whereby men may be saved,' I remember is written, but does this include little children do you think?"

"As truly as I believe in a heaven, a blessed life to come. Christ himself says, 'of such is the kingdom of Heaven,' and that, 'their angels stand before the throne of God.'"

"Then if this be so, I shall not have lost my little Leon-

ard forever, but if by faith I win a crown I shall at last meet him in the streets of the beautiful city, clothed with the robes of righteousness, and tuning his golden harp to sing the praises of his risen Lord," and his eye kindled as he spoke, then for an instant the glad look upon his face was overcast with a touching sadness, and he said, in a low tone.

"And though upon earth I may never see *her*, if I am faithful to the end, I shall have her for my own at last," and rising he laid his hand upon the open bible and said in a deeply solemn voice,

"Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief," and kneeling down prayed such a prayer! Oh there was joy in the presence of the angels when that humble prayer reached the gate, and methinks thousands of glorified ones carried it on to the throne, with songs of gladness, bringing back a blessing, for the peace which followed is beyond description.

With the zeal and whole-heartedness with which he followed after sin, will he now seek righteousness, and I felt fully assured of his deep conversion, ere I could say, "Cora has my blessing dear Rolf, that she ever gave me such a son." To-day as we talked he said sadly,

"If I had only listened to Paul Marstone long ago, he used to try to make me understand all these things, and told me my evil deeds would find me out, but I only laughed at him for preaching."

"That sounds to me like Satan reproving sin, Rolf," I said.

"What? for Paul Marstone to reprove me?" he said quickly, his eyes flashing, "you misjudge him, Mrs. Percy; few men are so free from sin as he; even in my worst, most reckless days I dared not bring my evil deeds into his presence. I loved him and respected him, for his pure self-sacrificing life, even while I scorned his advice and example. I was always a better man when his influence was upon me."

"I cannot think what you mean by such words, Rolf, when I think of what I have heard and seen, they are to me inexplicable, but I may have been deceived; God knows how gladly I would think so, I would not judge any wrongfully, but appearances are strongly against your friend?"

"Appearances against Paul! then what is the use of a

good true life," he said vehemently, but added the next moment, "in the eyes of men I mean, with God it counts more a thousand-fold, that his fellow man condemns him,—but what are the complaints against one of the purest, noblest hearts which ever beat?"

Then I told him all, knowing I might trust him, glad to show him that I did—of Lela's love, of the offer she received from Paul Marstone, at the very time when she had first learned so surely of his perfidy. Of that summer at Ingleside, what we had seen there, everything just as I have written it here.

He heard me quietly from first to last, but with a restraint upon him which showed itself in the heightened color, and the way he shut his teeth over his lips, then he said:

"Oh Mrs Percy, it was not like your good true heart to harbor evil thoughts against any man; and yet all things were against him," and he murmured sadly, "poor little Katie you have done much harm by your suffering life, to this noble man, but innocently poor child, yet this exceeds them all tenfold," then turning to me he said: "Oh you have done him wrong, the poor girl was his sister, his only sister."

"Oh Rolf," and I sprang to my feet, "why did I not think of that, wicked woman that I am."

"No, no," he said gently, "do not say so, you could not know it, that was the secret of their lives, or at least of her's, but Mr. Audley knew it, if you had only told him, but I will tell it to you now, it can do poor Katie no harm."

And he did, making so plain all that was dark before Mr. Hartley's story should have made us know it. Rolf told me briefly all I before knew of the way in which Mr. Marstone hurried his erring sister away—explaining what had been a mystery to poor old Mr. Hartley to the day of his death, as to what had befallen her. In a far city of the west, lived a man by the name of Linn, who by indefatigable industry at some mechanic's trade, supported himself, and an aged mother and one sister. By a fortunate investment he gathered a little sum of money; it was a season when the spirit of speculation was rife all over the land, and when the tales of wonderful fortunes being realized in a day, had spread everywhere even to the most remote corners of the west.

Gathering his all together, full of wild dreams of wealth, Mr. Linn came east, made an investment, and lost everything. Half-crazed, he applied to Mr. Marstone to whom he was known for advice. Hearing his story of the poor old mother and sister at home, upon whom this blow would fall so heavily, Mr. Marstone suddenly conceived the idea of saving his sister from open shame, while he aided the man's necessities. At first Mr. Linn's honest, upright heart rebelled against independence at such a price, but after Mr. Marstone had explained all to him, and shown him the poor girl whose name he was to shield, pity if not love for her, won his consent, and they were married.

She, helpless, and heart-broken, assured of the falseness of her lover, cared little what became of her, and feared less the stranger, than the cold, stern brother, once so kind.

With her young child, a little girl of a few months, she sought his western home. To his mother and sister he told all, but to the world they gave out, "she was a widow," and the report went forth, he had married her for her money and she him for a protector. So for a few years they lived together. Paul was born, and then the poor, erring girl, the sad heart-broken wife went to her God, leaving her baby motherless. When Mr. Marstone came to look the last upon the sister he had once loved so fondly, he would have taken little Paul back with him to be his own, the child of his sister's sin he never noticed, but Mr. Linn with a good, true heart, kept both his children with him, and so faithfully did he and his sister fulfil their duty, that these children grew up, never knowing the right of one was greater than the other.

As he grew older, Paul went to college, then to study a profession, according to the request of his uncle. And Katie grown to woman's estate, was sought in marriage by one she loved, but ere the tale of her love was half told, the father died, and with his last breath told his children all, asking their forgiveness for having kept it from them so long, and bade Paul, as he hoped to meet him hereafter, guard and protect his poor desolate sister.

But though with all the tender love of their hearts, Paul and the good Miss Linn strove to lighten the sorrow to poor Katie, she could not endure it, and for years these two,

faithful in their love, watched over her: for after a fearful illness which brought her to the verge of the unseen land, she never was herself again. This mighty burden of shame crushed out the light from her brain, and left her sadly distraught. Thus it was, as the gossip in London had said, "wild screams were heard, which only the gentleman could quiet," for though humble and obedient to her aunt in her lucid moments, she was only manageable in the least by her brother in her fits of insanity. So it came that where ever his business or his inclination called him, this sister with his aunt and two faithful servants followed him. When old Mr. Marstone died, he left all to his nephew, "on condition he assume my name," the will said, and therefore it was that instead of Paul Linn he bore his mother's name.

Oh how easy a matter it is to see all things plain and right if one has but the key wherewith to unlock the mystery. And how prone we are always to judge harshly instead of looking hopefully for good in all. After Rolf had made all this clear to me, I could but cover my eyes and think. Alas! too late, too late for Leanore! but then came the thought, we have misjudged this noble man, therefore it is right we should suffer, there may be happiness for him with little Gracie, and although I cannot greatly rejoice over it, yet it is some comfort that her faithful heart may in some degree recompense him for the sorrow he once endured for Leanore, it is right he should find peace at last.

Late one night, seated with my arms about her, I told my daughter all; when I had finished, she sat very still for a moment, then with her eyes shining softly, and a sad smile upon her lips, she said gently and patiently:

"Oh it is not so hard to give him up now, dear Paul, true and good. God love you Paul, and make you happier with Gracie, than you could have been with me," and with a kiss upon my brow she left me.

Since then we have never spoken of it, but she is oftener with me, leaving the gay scenes of her city home, and sitting here with us,

"Learning the true happiness which my brother Rolf has found," she says.

"And thank God, my sister, they who seek, never are turned away," he says tenderly and fervently, dear Rolf!

CHAPTER LXXVI.

JULY.

It seems a strange thing, that I who have had so many children of my own to protect and guard should ever be called upon to take those of other people, but so it is.

First came Ada—but we have known her so long, and loved her so well,—that our only distress has been lest her guardian-uncle, should think it better for her to go with him, and so, to help him decide in our favor, we have sent Gracie to them.

But now comes another—and, yet though the change will be in many ways a great one—we have taken her into our hearts.

A few nights ago, Ernest who spends a part of every week with us, came out saying, that he was going home, having received the offer of a valuable professorship in P—— College, and that it was too good a chance to let slip.

"So I will go home and help my mother take care of 'Percies' Cliffe,' until you go back," he said.

Although it was a sad thing to part with him, yet we were urgent for him to go, because when we are at home once more, it will be a pleasant thing to have him settled permanently so near us. To my dismay when we were through talking of his journey and prospects, Rolf after a moment's pause said;

"I will go with you, Dr. Wilbur; nay, my dear lady," he said, as I began to expostulate, "my duty bids me go, I must begin to live so as to redeem the time." And he maintained this decision against all persuasion.

But while we thus sat talking, the door was flung suddenly open, and Lisette, the little girl of whom I have before spoken, sprang into the room, dripping with rain, and wild with terror.

"Ah, Madame," she began, but seeing Ernest, "Ah Dr. Wilbur, ma pauvre mamma," then instantly the habit which he had insisted she should observe of only speaking English to him, came upon her, and she told her story as well as she was able, sometimes in one tongue, sometimes in the other.