

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.

The old woman with whom she lived, and whom we all thought to be her grandmother, was dying, alone with only this child near her, and feeling her end approaching had sent the poor young thing for me. Hastily as he could, Ernest went with her, forbidding me to go out in the drenching rain, promising to send if I was needed—but I was not, they arrived too late, for when they reached the cottage only the work of the death angel greeted them, the old woman was dead.

Ernest brought the child back with him: the next day instituting strict enquiry, he learned there was no one to own or protect her; with frantic grief she clung to him, and in a childish pleading way besought him,

"To take poor Lilly with you dear master," and so he has decided.

"I will adopt her, she shall be the old bachelor's comfort, she shall be my pupil," he said, laughing.

And so I am to have her, and bring her home with me, when I come. Lela and Adèle are very glad of this, for they have conceived the strongest attachment for the pretty child.

In a visit to the cottage, some days after the funeral, Ernest discovered among the effects of the old gate-keeper which now of course belong to the child, the following paper written in a rude hand.

"Out at sea in a gale we came upon the wreck of the ship Wescott, bound to China, all on board dead but two, the captain and a child which he told us he had picked up somewhere, but he was too far gone to tell us where, in the afternoon he died, and we cast him overboard, but the child soon grew hearty, and as I was first mate and the captain of our boat did not want her, I took her. She called herself something which we could not understand, but some of her clothes were marked Lillian, and so we called her Lissette. We were sailing for the "Indies," and she lived on ship-board nigh two years, and was a great pet with all hands."

This seemed to be a part of a log-book, or journal kept by a sailor, and on enquiring Ernest discovered from some of the neighbors, that a number of years ago, a son of the gate-keeper, who was a sailor brought her home, and that she had lived there ever since,—but that her protector had been lost a few years ago, on a cruise to India.

Oh it seems so strange, we should find a Lillian away here, so nearly the age of our lost darling, and the children all think so strangely like what she would have grown, however this may be, we are going to take her in the place of our little angel, although Ernest is to be her owner in particular, she is a bright-eyed child of almost twelve summers I should imagine.

SEPTEMBER.

Ernest and Rolf have gone, two others who are very dear to us because of many things, have bidden us farewell—and to-night are rocked to rest, by the lullaby the ocean sings, God's peace be with them.

We are a widely separated family this year, the winds of fate have scattered us, like leaves in Autumn time, into a variety of places.

Three, nay four (for it would be high treason to forget my precious grandson Audley,) are in Germany, Gracie with Ada and her friends have gone south, and are now staying for a while upon the banks of the Arno, "so as to be with Willie Lawrence, whose vessel is cruising here for a week," they write us.

My two boys where are they? perhaps beneath the burning sun of Africa, or else searching for records of the past in Palestine, or—perhaps homeward bound, oh I cannot help it that day and night, thinking it may be so I watch for them, they have been gone eighteen long months.

But about those two who have just gone, I have wandered from what I was saying of them, Rolf's going was a sad disappointment to me, it makes my heart ache to remember how long it must needs be now, before he and my poor Cora will meet, and exchange forgiveness. He left a tender earnest blessing for her, but that was all, even that cost him exquisite pain.

Ernest and his little protégé had what he with a rueful countenance termed, "a pathetic time at parting," so fond has she grown of him, in the months in which they have known each other, that it has been as much as we could do to comfort her for his departure, and only the promise we have given her that she shall go to live always with "her

dear master," as she calls him, reconciles her at all to his absence.

She has come with me to Paris, oh gay, noisy Paris, I do not like you at all, it was more peaceful, more home-like in that old country house but I could not stay alone, and so Mr. Audley has brought us here once more.

In a little note which I found here upon my arrival, Rolf says, among other things.

"I go to prepare a home for *her* near your own. Her's whether I share it or not."

OCTOBER.

Last night I sat alone in the drawing-room reading, when Lela came in dressed in her beautiful ball dress.

"Why Lela," I said in surprise, "I thought you had gone hours ago."

"And so I did ma mère, but I am so stupid to-night, that I begged off from the ball, and drove directly home from the opera, with the avowed determination of having one more sensible evening with you."

She sat down at my feet, and rattled on merrily for a while, I listening and thinking how very beautiful she was, but how little good all her charms had done for her, the summing up of all her life experience—a weary broken heart, which even her proud firm will could not conceal, the sad look in her eyes, the quivering of the proud lips so often, and the touching pathos of her voice, told too plainly of a lost hope, a past joy. Suddenly she sprang up, saying,

"I mean to go up and see Lilly awhile, I know she is not asleep, little goose that she is, I imagine she is lying with her eyes wide open, talking to the stars, or else holding divers conversations with the fays, with which her old life seems to have been surrounded, I will be back soon as I have told her a tale and sung her a song," and she left the room.

A little while after she was gone, the door opened, and a servant announced Mr. Marstone. I had not seen him since I had learned to appreciate all the nobility of character which belonged to him, he had been away since that day he came for Gracie and carried her off.

"My dear Mrs. Percy," he said, "I fear my visit is late, excuse me."

"I am glad to see you, when did you return?" I asked hardly knowing what I did say, such a rush of thought came over me,—of the injustice we had done him, of how good he was, and of the probable reason of his coming, for a certain embarrassment in his manner, made me think he had come to speak for Gracie.

"When did you see the Lawrences? I think Ada or Gracie wrote to me that you had gone south with them."

"Yes I just came from them, they are quite well, indeed Miss Gracie sent me to you," he said with a smile.

Oh Leanore my poor darling, how my heart ached when I thought of you. Oh Gracie, cruel little Gracie, how could you win him to love you, when your glorious sister loved him so, these thoughts swept over me so grievously that for an instant I was speechless.

"I trust you will not be unkind to poor Gracie, indeed I know you will not, not alone because you are so kind to all, but because naughty little Gracie herself has assured me, 'mamma will not be angry, that is not what I fear, but it will grieve and hurt her to have me do as I have done,—'" and as he spoke he handed me a letter, adding as he turned away, "but Gracie will plead her own cause better than I can, I doubt not."

While he sought a distant table and took up a book, I opened a letter from Gracie. Oh foolish Gracie!

"MAMMA, DEAR MAMMA, I have done a foolish thing, such a sinful thing! One day Willie Lawrence came and told us he was ordered on shipboard, the next day, to sail a long cruise which would last for perhaps two or three years. In the afternoon he asked me to take one last walk with him, and while we were together he told me he loved me so much, better than all the world beside, and wanted me to marry him, because he said:

"I shall be so happy when I am away, to remember you are my own true wife, and will have to be faithful and love me all the while."

"But the idea frightened me, and I said no quite fiercely, but then he was almost frantic, and vowed since I did not

love him well enough to make this sacrifice, he would throw himself into the sea as soon as they got so far out that no one could rescue him, and he looked so pale and determined that I knew he would.

"And then when I was so sorry to hurt him just when he was going away—he told me you would not be angry, and that if there was only time he would go for you, and then—then even while we stood talking they came to tell him he must be aboard in two hours, and I was sorry for his distress, and pitied and loved him so, that when he stopped the man, and bade him send the chaplain of their vessel to him, I had not the heart to refuse to let him come.

"And oh mamma before I hardly knew it, we were married, and I stood upon the pier bidding adieu not to Willie Lawrence only, but my own husband. Oh mamma, mamma! was I not wicked!

"And ere I had been his wife ten minutes, they hurried him into a boat, and I stood alone watching him wave good-bye to me. Oh then as he faded from my sight, the sinfulness of what we had done, thus taking vows upon ourselves, in such unseemly haste came over me, and I crouched upon the pier and wept bitterly, until Mr. Marstone found me.

"Ada is very angry with me, and Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence are much hurt, that 'Willie should have led me,' as they say, 'into such an ill-judged deed,' but I am sure it was quite as much my fault as his.

"Oh mamma, it was very wrong, and I would not have done it for the world if it had not come so suddenly upon me, and if I had not been so terrified about Willie's saying he would kill himself; but you will pardon me, dearest, I know you will, you always forgive and love us better when we do wrong. I do not fear your anger my precious mother, only that my evil deeds may add more sorrow to your gentle heart. I am a bad, unwise child, but hereafter I will try so hard to be a good, faithful, truthful,

GRACIE."

This was of all things which have occurred, the most unlooked-for; foolish child, what a different future I have pictured for her, how much safer and more guarded her life was to be, guided and shielded by a brave, true heart, but suddenly I thought of that heart, and turned to him pityingly, thinking sadly:

"Again one of mine has wounded him." I went quickly up to him:

"Oh Mr. Marstone what am I to do? what am I to think of this?"

"You must forgive poor little Gracie, she is in sad trouble, the poor forsaken bride, you will be kind to her?" he said.

"Is that all you feel sir? are you not——?" and I paused in embarrassment.

"All save that I am sorry you should have such a thing to trouble you, my dear lady, but you know although Gracie will feel the responsibility of the matter very deeply, the marriage is entirely informal, they are both minors, and the young man who performed the ceremony, I have since discovered, is a young Englishman who has not yet taken orders, although he is intended for chaplain of one of the fleet ships, and you know it takes much more in this land of forms and ceremonies, to constitute a legal marriage," then he said smiling, "you will have to keep the little lady safe, and have them married right when you get them both safely home."

"Then you are not grieved by it—I thought——" and I paused.

"What did you think?" he said looking at me curiously.

"That—that you loved Gracie yourself, sir," I said blushing like a girl. He turned white, as though some pain hard to endure afflicted him, then he said:

"I loved once—years ago—with my whole soul, and was disappointed—I shall never love again. Your little girl has been a very pleasant friend to me, who have few to love, indeed to tell the truth not one," and his tone was unutterably sad, "I like her very much, but—my heart knows only its own longings, only its own longings," then he paused abruptly, in what seemed to be wrung from his very heart, and added, "pardon me, I do not mean to array my woes before you."

I could not answer him—I could only look up towards him for a moment, and through the dazzling rays which my tears and the lamplight shed around him, watch him walking moodily with folded hands and bent head up and down, and think but the one thought, which rang through every fibre of my being: 'he loves her yet! he loves her yet!'

All Gracie's misdeeds were forgotten, and I only remembered these two faithful hearts of all the lovers upon earth.

"Wait for me here one moment, Mr. Marstone," I said, and ere he could reply was gone,—with the lightest heart and step, I had known for years.

"My darling I want you," I said thinking the while as I shaded my face from her view, how glad I was, it was not Adèle, who would have *heard* the glad notes in my voice.

"Oh please mamma," she cried, "I am just in the middle of the most charming story, which I assure you, is almost equal to May's wonderful productions. Well, then, Lilly-bell, if I must go, I must, so *bon-soir, mignonne.*"

When we reached the drawing-room door, I clasped her hand in mine; he stood with a grave look upon his pale face, leaning against the mantel; when they saw each other they started back, and the proud look was upon both.

"Nay this is no time for pride," I said quickly, drawing her into the room, "put it away this once. Mr. Marstone, I give her to you, she is yours, only yours."

"Mine, oh Mrs. Percy! you should not trifle with me, I have borne so much!" then as he looked towards her, something in her face gave him the hope, he would not take from me, and stretching out his arms to her, he cried tenderly, "Mine! Leanore, my Leanore!"

With all her pride gone, forgetful of all save her great love for him, she sprang towards him and laying her head upon his breast, said in a low sweet voice:

"Yours, only yours, Paul Marstone!"

Then as he wound his arms about her, and poured out the love which had been stayed within his breast, like a mountain torrent frozen in its course, and now after years, through which it had gathered a tenfold strength, burst the bands which held it, and with the depth and fullness of which few natures are capable, encompassed her. I thought of another heart which had been true—of another life which had been blessed in its truth,—of a joy, a light, and then—a sorrow, a shadow, a grave, and with a heart full of sad memories—but gratitude for the present joy, I closed the door upon them, and went to write to my naughty Gracie—but I could not scold the poor child, if only because of the good her naughtiness had brought this other child.

When I had left them so long, that I knew it was nearly

time for Estelle, and Adèle, to come back from their evening's entertainment. I went softly to where they sat, so engrossed in happy talk they never heard me.

"It is hard to part those who have been parted such a weary while," I said, "but I must take care of my queen's roses while they are mine to guard."

"And you will give her to me, Mrs. Percy? you will trust her to me?"

"With my dearest love, dear Paul, without one doubt or fear," I said, laying my hand upon his. He did not thank me in words but gently lifted my hand to his lips and left a kiss upon it, afterwards he said as we parted,

"You were jealous of my poor Katie,—but not poor now, happy Katie, for her end was perfect peace, the last year of her life was calm, and full of light. She died in my arms, and I buried her where you saw us. I have told you this dear Mrs. Percy, because I know after what Rolf Livingstone has told you of her, you will be glad to know how gently she went home.——"

"Since then I have been very lonely, for the aunt of whom Rolf told you, died a few months after poor Katie. Oh I have been a sad weary man since then, but now—" and his eyes shone down into Leanore's face as he clasped her to him, "now I am no more lonely."

After he was gone, and we stood where he had left us, I said.

"Is my daughter happy, is her heart at rest to-night?"

"Oh my mother, my mother, thank God for me, who am so unworthy of this goodness."

This morning Mr. Marstone has asked Mr. Audley, for his consent to their engagement, the "God bless you my child I had hoped for this" with which her guardian greeted her after the interview was over, was another weight of love and happiness, for Lela's happy heart.

And now as a joy past speaking, we tell one another, Lela, our proud Lela, is betrothed, and as Estelle declares,

"To the only man I ever thought really worthy of our queen."

"There is only you and poor me, left of the many who loved each other, mamma," said Adèle half sadly, "all the others, even Gracie, love some one else first, better than they do us, but we are faithful to our first love mamma."

A letter from May to-day, tells us, 'Coralie's health is quite restored, but her merry laugh, her bright free girlish heart, her dancing step, and sunny smile, who shall restore? She is a quiet grave woman, young and very fair.' Oh my darling I could weep bitter tears for your vanished brightness, had I not the assurance that a better light shines on your heart ever more, my little one, my much tried child, God comfort thee!

Oh Rolf Livingstone, you may well weep bitter tears for your sins, an exile from her presence, you have need to expiate the wrongs you did my child, in grievous solitude. But you shall have her at last, dear Rolf only be true to the end.

Stuart will be through his course of study in a short time, and then please God we will return home, as soon as our boys come, home to Walter's home, never to leave it more, until—until I seek that other and better home.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

NOVEMBER.

GRACIE more frightened and blushing than ever has come back, but we need not scold her very much for I think the fault was innocently committed: I have great faith in Gracie's upright truthfulness. Indeed such a sturdy little champion has she ever been for the right, and for duty, that it would have been a difficult thing, under ordinary circumstances to have made her go so far astray. Then the very act bears its own punishment, the weary waiting for years, for that bright face, which because it loved her, tempted her.

Adèle was very cross at first, because of the comments it was but natural we should make upon Gracie's misdoings, and made a great baby of her pet sister, on her arrival, evidently feeling some degree of pleasure in shielding her from our *terrible persecution*. But though she abjured all society to fondle and guard "her Gracie," who had so suddenly become a heroine, it would not do, for Gracie was

entirely too matter of fact, to play the love lorn, and persecuted damsel, as Adèle would have had her. And like a good little woman, set herself assiduously to work, helping everybody more than ever, "because she had been so very bad."

And because Adèle will go into so much gas light at night; she makes her keep her eyes shut half the day, while she reads to, or sews for her.

This is quite right, and I confess I always feel glad when I see those delicately constructed eyes closed, and covered with her hands as they often are.

"Not because Gracie says I must, so much as because Uncle Ernest, said it was best," she declares.

I have had one letter from America since our gentlemen arrived, Rolf writes, "I have purchased the next property to that of the estate of Percies' Cliffe," the house upon it is very fine, although plain in comparison to your own. It is nearer town. And here please God, I will strive to do some good, and live a worthier man."

DECEMBER.

Stuart and his little family have come. May is the same, as fair and gentle as of old, but it could not be otherwise, no sorrows come near my darling, save those which she feels for others, and for the worst of these she has a prayer and a hope in store.

Now the time of our going home is likely to be in a few months. Estelle and I have been very busy purchasing furniture for May's house, and I have written secretly to Ernest for him to put all things in order for her coming to it very soon. She has been a wife two whole years this very day.

On the "Percies' Cliffe" property still stands, about an half mile from the present mansion-house, the old homestead, a dear, old, quiet place, half buried in the woods, a secluded modest home just suited to my gentle child. I have written Ernest to modernize it a little, and make it as beautiful as as he can without altering its present fashion, and when the furniture comes, let Dora put it in its proper place, and then when my May goes back she will find her home awaiting her, the very one her father in lang syne used gaily to