

GLENWOOD IDA

LILY PEARL AND THE
MISTRESS OF ROSEDALE

Ida Glenwood

**Lily Pearl and The
Mistress of Rosedale**

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Glenwood I.

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PREFACE

It matters but little to the average reader whether a book be wholly historical or purely imaginary if it be of sufficient interest to hold the attention in a pleasurable excitement to its close.

There are those however, who will be glad to know that the following work was wrought out of historical facts gleaned from a large parcel of letters written by a son while a soldier in the army of the rebellion, to his widowed mother, then in Springfield, Mass.

Graphic were his descriptions of scenes and incidents coming to his personal knowledge during that memorable march from "Atlanta to the sea."

These I have woven into a web of fiction mingling their lights and shadows, blending them as best I could amid denser shades, hoping that peradventure their coming to you, gentle reader, may prove as great a pleasure in the perusing as the author has enjoyed in the weaving.

Ida Glenwood.

Fenton, Mich.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

My editing of this most interesting story has been little more than proof-correction. On reading the manuscript in advance of the type-setting I soon found it safer to leave the author's style to take care of itself, sure that it will strike the public, as it struck me, with renewed respect and admiration for one who, sightless, can excel so many of us having all the senses.

It is touching to observe how the blind narrator dwells on outward things, – color, light and shade, sunset skies, human features and expressions, – which must come to her only in imagination. She seems to dwell with peculiar intensity on a world of beauty which we others, sated by abundance, pass by unrecorded if not unnoticed.

Sightless she is not, for in her the mind's eye is of a brilliancy that seems to make our mere physical vision useless by comparison. Better the soul's sight without eyes, than the eyesight without soul.

Joseph Kirkland.

PUBLISHERS' ANNOUNCEMENT

We would be pleased to have the reading public patronize "Lily Pearl and The Mistress of Rosedale," because of the benefit to the author, "The Blind Bard of Michigan," and for the pleasure it will give the following gentlemen and firms, who have freely and generously given their time to the production of the work: Major Joseph Kirkland, editor; G. M. D. Libby, printer; L. Braunhold, artist; A. Zeese & Co., electrotypers, and Donohue & Henneberry, binders. But the best reason for buying will be found in the charming story itself.

CHAPTER I. MIDNIGHT AT "CLIFF HOUSE."

It was a dismal night out upon the ocean where the huge billows tossed high their foaming crests, or dashed with maddening fury upon the rocky shore as if unwilling longer to submit to the powers that shut them in; while ever and anon the deep-mouthed thunder answered back through the darkness "thus far shalt thou go, and no farther."

Then ran the echoes along the shore and up the ragged cliff on whose summit one feeble ray of light struggled through the narrow crevice of a curtained window out into the midnight gloom. The howling winds made sad music through the long corridors and curious wrought lattice work that partially enclosed it; slamming the heavy iron gate that had broken loose from its fastenings and kept swaying to and fro upon its rusty hinges, wakening by its unusual noise the huge watch dog in his kennel, who growled menacingly at being disturbed at such a late hour. The rain beat furiously against the windows and ran in rapid cascades down the steep declivity into the sea, falling on the sandy shore that extended along the beach at the foot of the cliff.

It was October, and the cottage on the summit was usually deserted before this time, for the invalid who had resided there during five successive seasons could not well endure the autumn breezes when the frost-king had chilled them.

To-night, however, a tall, richly-dressed lady sat alone in the spacious parlor, her black gown lying in heavy folds on the white matting that covered the floor, her head drooping wearily upon her hand as her elbow rested on the table where the wasting candle flickered low in the socket; but she heeded it not. Now and then she would raise her head with a sudden start and look intently at the door opposite and then sink back again into the same posture as before.

There was sadness upon her face, such as awakens the deepest sympathy of a human heart; but in the keen, glistening eye there was a deeper, sterner look that would send a sister's tenderest love back to its secret chamber, chilled and trembling!

There are hours made so big with actions and resolves that *years* full of circumstances and results are made to hang their heavy weights upon them. Such an one was now passing, bearing away on its dark wings the fearful impress made by a silent finger, yet in characters that in after years will reflect back upon the soul, filling it with horror and dismay! A loud peal of thunder echoed through the apartment and then rolled away in the distance, leaving behind the mingled voices of the winds and waves, with the fast falling rain on the roof above.

The door suddenly opened and a servant girl stealthily entered with a newly lighted candle, placed it on the table exchanging it for the one almost spent, and then as stealthily retired.

The lady did not seem to notice the intruder, as she did not enter the door where her expectant eyes had so often turned with a wild, weird look, and she remained as motionless as before.

Two o'clock. The little silvery bell on the mantel proclaimed the hour, and the tall bent figure at the table gave a sudden start, as though a new pang had penetrated her sensitive brain.

A few moments after, the door toward which her eyes had so often wandered slowly opened and a little girl scarcely ten years of age, timidly entered and approached the lady.

"Mother would like to come in," she said, with a faltering voice, while her pale blue eyes were fixed on the matting at her feet.

"Tell her to come," was the laconic reply, and the child hurried away with a much quicker step than that with which she had entered.

Immediately a small, nervous little woman appeared, with a cold, rigid, sallow face, small gray eyes and sandy hair, bearing in her arms a bundle of soft white flannel, which she pressed

mechanically to her well-rounded bust, and without any salutation seated herself upon a wicker chair, and with the utmost *sang froid* commenced unrolling the white flannel she had laid upon her lap.

"It's a wee darling," she said, after a lengthy pause, during which time she had exposed a little red face and a pair of diminutive fists all ready to begin the fierce battles of life, and towards which the lady did not deign to look.

"But it's a pretty thing," she continued. "Look at it, ma'am; it's as fat and plump as a baby three weeks old, and sleeps as quietly as though it had not been born in such a terrible storm. The pretty dear!"

"How is she?" coolly interrupted the stately lady. "Your patient above stairs, I mean; is she comfortable?"

"Of course she is – they always are, ma'am." And she chuckled a low, unmusical laugh which accorded well with the mingled murmurings of the expiring storm without.

"Tell me more of her," demanded the lady imperiously. "Will she recover soon?"

"I think so ma'am; but she will need a long rest. She is sleeping now as gentle as a kitten. But she was pert enough, I can tell you, when she knew she had a little girl. She actually laughed and said she was 'so glad,' and was going to call it Lily Pearl. 'That will be *our* pet names joined; he called me Lily and I called him Pearl. Lily-Pearl, *that* shall be her name.' And I thought I would name her as she wished, it will do no harm. It will be a queer thing to fix into Blunt; but we shall get used to it."

The lady frowned, but there might have been seen a moisture in her large dark eyes, as though the heart had sent up a little maternal love from its hidden depths, yet her stern cold words checked them, and they did not reveal it.

"You remember our contract?" she interrogated.

"O yes, ma'am; I am to have two hundred dollars upon the spot, and a hundred and fifty every year until the child is five years old; and then we are to have a new bargain, and if I keep the girl I shall expect you to do something handsome, for you know she will be of no earthly use to *me* before that time, nor after for that matter, if she is no better than my Maria." Here the woman paused, for the infant on her lap threw up its tiny fists and uttered a feeble cry.

"Poor thing. It's cold, and will want something to eat pretty soon," she continued as she folded the soft flannel again around it.

"I see you have not forgotten the *reward*; your duties, I hope, are equally clear to your memory."

"O yes, ma'am."

"Well then, I do not want *her* to see the child again! It will be so much easier for her to forget that she ever had one. It is no doubt a lawful child as she asserts, as far as her age can make it so – but as I told you she is only fifteen and a few years will cover up this night forever! As soon as it is light, take it to your home and care for it as you will; that is, be a mother to it and *I* will take care of the rest. But remember one thing! I demand you to forget that she *ever* mentioned the silly name of 'Lily Pearl!' Call her anything else you please; let me see, – Phebe, yes – that will do! *Phebe Blunt!* Now leave her with me for a few moments and return to the chamber, she may need you by this time. But stay a moment;" and the lady reached out her hands to receive the little bundle.

"Can you not keep her dozy —*sleepy*, I mean for a short time until she gains a little strength? She will need it you know in order to bear the news, she will be obliged to hear! Are you sufficiently skilled in your profession to do this without injury?"

"To be sure I am ma'am! It's what she needs, and if we don't there will be no pacifying her about her baby."

"You can tell her;" replied the lady, "If she is troublesome, that she is not able to see it at present; she must wait awhile! Now go!"

The woman obeyed and with a cat-like tread left the room a very significant smile lighting her hard features; and the little babe who had just entered upon a life of storms and tempests lay still and motionless upon the rich dress of the beautiful lady who should have wound her jeweled arms

about the tiny form and vowed to protect the helpless one in whose veins her own blood was coursing; from the terrors of the threatening blasts. But pride and an unnatural ambition had taken the place of the love that had once ruled her heart and better nature, and the good God had give her knelt in humble subjugation at their feet.

She uncovered the little features before her and gazed long and fixedly upon them, while her thoughts ran back over the short path which had wound so pleasantly along through the last fifteen years since her own beautiful Lillian lay upon her lap, the idol of him who had fallen by the flowery way over which her memory was wandering; and for a time it stopped by a grassy mound at which she often knelt in the twilight hour under the shadows of the fir tree, and a tear fell upon the innocent upturned face; and a low wail penetrated her ear. For a moment she pressed the tiny form to her heaving bosom and her heart whispered, "She shall not want — *I* will care for her – my Lillian's babe!" She took the little hand in hers and pressed it to her lips, and then with an impulse unpremeditated she unfastened its dress and exposed the pretty pink shoulders to view. She started, and a faint cry broke from her lips which awoke the slumbering echoes in the room. Upon either shoulder a little purple spot was plainly visible, the same over which her maternal pride had lamented sixteen years before! There they were – the very same! With a tremor of deep regret she hastily covered them again and wrapped the soft warm blankets about it tenderly as she laid it down once more upon her lap. A few moments later the timid Maria entered to take the babe to the kitchen, and with an assumed hauteur the lady yielded up her charge and it was carried from the room. The fury of the storm had passed, though there were clouds still lurking in the sky and the dismal Atlantic kept up its fitful roar; but the winds had ceased and the rain drops fell leisurely from the eaves down upon the gravel walks, and the old house-dog slept quietly in his kennel by the gate. But greater than the storm without had been, was the tumult of emotion that was still raging in the bosom of her who now walked with unsteady step up and down the spacious parlor with folded hands and care-worn expression on her handsome face, which many long years with all their changes and bereavements could not have placed there. "It must be!" she exclaimed at last, and slowly leaving the room she ascended to a distant chamber where her daughter, – her beautiful Lillian, lay pale and restless on her bed in an unnatural sleep.

The mother drew aside the thick folds of the curtains which shut her in and gazed fixedly upon her waxen features. How wan they looked! The rose tints were all faded from her cheeks and lips; and face seemed as cold and white as though just chiseled from the unfeeling marble by the cunning hand of art. By and by the white lips moved and a few audible words escaped them.

"She is dreaming" the mother thought, and bent her stately head to listen. "It is ours – my Pearl – our sweet Lily — *ours*, I am dying – dying – Pearl – Lily!" The curtains fell again around the uneasy sleeper and with a wildly throbbing heart the wretched mother sank down upon a chair and buried her face in her hands, while the angel of maternal pity came and rolled away the stone from the sealed fountain of her tears, and she wept!

Three days with their gloomy nights dragged laggardly and wearily by, and the tall lady in black bent tenderly over the pale languid form on the bed, bathing the white brow and striving to arouse her from the long stupor by endearing words and soft caresses.

"Mother," she said at last; "bring my babe to me will you? I want to see her sweet face before I die! Love her Mother, and call her your own precious Lillian, – give her *my* room and tell her when old enough to understand that there the life began which withered and died when its beautiful blossom budded into life! Will you Mother?"

"You are not going to die my daughter! You are very weak now, it is true, but you will soon be stronger. Wait until then, for it would be disastrous for you to see her now. The excitement might overcome you. Wait dear – your mother knows best. Close your eyes and rest. Just as soon as it is proper you shall see your babe." And she kissed the pale brow with hot quivering lips, and turned away to gain new strength from the vile spirit within for the conflict through which it was to lead her.

A week more and the cry of the mother's heart for its first born would not be hushed.

"My daughter," whispered the weeping mother, "believe me, my poor, *poor* child! *This* is the bitterest hour of my life, for the words your entreaties compel me to utter will fall sadly on your heart my poor Lillian! But it must be done! Bear them my daughter with all the fortitude of which you are capable!" The lips that were already polluted with the falsehoods they were about to utter pressed the white ashy ones of her child as the demon of remorse was introduced into the chamber of her soul which was to poison ever after the fountain of her existence, and people her midnight vigils with spectral fears.

"It is all for the best! Think so my darling and do not grieve that God has transplanted your beautiful Lily to a more genial clime before its purity was soiled by the contaminations of this tainted life. It is safe now; and by and by it shall be given back to you, and with this assurance do not murmur!" Her words fell unheeded upon ears that were sealed from all earthly sounds; but *they were heard!* The dark, *dark* falsehood was registered in letters of fire where no mortal hand could ever blot them out. How true that "upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, and this shall be the portion of their cup."

"I have killed her! I have killed her!" almost shrieked the miserable mother, and with a trembling hand she frantically rang the bell. Little Maria immediately appeared, and with as much composure as she could command the lady asked if Mother was still in the house.

"No ma'am, she's just gone," was the reply.

"Then *run* for her! Hasten, O hasten!" pleaded the miserable woman, and the child obeyed. Rapidly did she chafe the cold hands of the insensible Lillian, but no "comforter" came to the sin-stained heart to drive away its despair. Many moments passed and she was alone with the motionless form of her for whom she would sixteen years before have laid down her life. What agonizing thoughts burned themselves into her brain as she watched the feebly returning breath and saw with a bound of joy the soft tint steal again into the closed lips. At last the eyes were slowly opened and fixed themselves on the blanched face bending over her. Then came a whisper so feeble that the stately head bent low to listen. "I am better now. Kiss me Mother. Let me lay my head on your bosom, and sing to me as you used to do! Hark! how the ocean roars! Listen – it is calling – calling – my Lily, my noble Pearl. O my husband, when may he come to me? We are not children! Am I not a mother? Is he not the father of my child?"

"Do *not*, Lillian, you are very ill! Have you forgotten what your father told you? He is where your babe has gone you know; but his last words were: 'My daughter; trust your mother always, and be guided by her superior wisdom.' I am older than you and know what is best for one in your present position; and if you will wait and be quiet all things will come out right at last."

"Yes, Mother. Let us go home where the odor of the orange-blossoms will bring me back to life, and Old Auntie can tell me all about it! *Her* little ones were all taken, and I never knew how her poor heart ached. I think I dreamed Mother, for I saw my pretty Lily carried away from me and I could not reach it although I stretched out my arms to possess her! O Mother! Mother! *Is my child dead?*" and the large eyes looked with a steady gaze into the blanched face of her only parent, who was chafing with a caressing motion the little white hand that was lying so lifelessly in her own. In vain did the pallid lips strive to answer but no word came to them.

"*Is my child dead?*" she asked again without removing her eyes.

"*Dead*, my daughter," at last fell from her icy lips, and another sin-stain was stamped on her already polluted soul that an ocean of tears could never wash away.

"*Dead*" she murmured, and the beautiful eyes again closed while the wretched mother sat by and trembled.

In the darkness that enveloped her how gladly would the soul have looked up for one little ray of light and comfort, but the pall of sin, the thick darkness of an abiding 'remorse' had settled down over every glimmering hope and not a gladsome beam of light could penetrate its dense folds. Poor soul! More terrible than the storm that had swept over the sea, when the words of the dark falsehood were

registered where no mortal hand could blot them out, were the commotions of the tempest tossed soul as the mother watched on and the moments went wearily by!

"Dead!" again whispered the pale lips. "My Lily, my Pearl! Gone – all, all are gone! Take me home Mother – the ocean roars – the dark waves are rolling over your poor Lillian; – let us go home," and the beautiful head turned wearily upon its pillow and the wretched watcher moaned in her anguish; for she was *alone*!

CHAPTER II.

THE LITTLE MARINER ALONE UPON THE OCEAN

Six years! How short each succeeding round appears when one has almost reached the mountain's top-most peak of life's upward course and knows that soon his feet must be going rapidly down upon the other side, where his journey ends! But almost interminable their length to the weary little foot-sore traveler who wanders alone at its base ever looking upward to the green spots on the hillside with restless longings. Poor little Phebe! The first words that fell upon her unappreciative ear were mingled with the requiem notes over departed summer, and it had come for the sixth time since that eventful night with its soft breezes and sweet melodies – with its beautiful flowers and singing birds, and filled the heart of the lonely child full of the glorious sunshine. Now she could sit upon the beach and watch the white sails that floated away over the waters where the golden beams kept dancing and skipping about upon the waves, and listen to the deep, low murmurings of the sea that seemed to sing to her mysterious songs, until the angry passions within would grow calm and fairy forms would lead her away to that far-off land where in dreams she often wandered. Poor little Phebe! She *was* an unfortunate child "always in the way, never good for anything, doing nothing she ought but always the very thing she should *not*." Never in favor, at least with her foster-mother, who almost daily declared "that the paltry hundred and fifty dollars didn't begin to pay for the trouble and expense of the disagreeable child," and yet it would have been no very easy task to compute the cost of the scanty meal which twice each day fell to the little outcast child to whom the thriving, ambitious Mrs. Blunt gave a shelter. Sure it was that a goodly sum was stored away in the old oak chest which would never have been there had the "troublesome child" not found her way into the fisherman's cottage.

True, there was nothing that was winning about the diminutive figure with the sunburnt face. An unusual growth of thick dark-brown hair was kept conveniently "cropped," in defiance of science or taste, close to her well-rounded head, and a pair of large hazel eyes seemed to be always penetrating the secret depths of hearts where no welcome greeted them. Her dress too did not set off her little dumpy figure to the best advantage, although it was often of the finest material, being generally the cast-off garments of the "misses" of the Cliff House, which were duly sent every season by a servant who was commanded to "inquire after the little girl" and always returned with a favorable report. These the child wore regardless of size or fitness, and as she wandered alone upon the beach with her sad face and thoughtful eyes turned upward gazing into the deep blue sky or away in the dreamy distance one might have been pardoned for calling the queer little figure gnome, or witch, as the fancy struck him.

"Where under the sun has that little imp gone to now!" exclaimed Mrs. Blunt entering the room one day where her daughter Maria, a pale, sickly girl of sixteen, was sitting, as she deposited her basket of vegetables upon the bare floor in no very amiable mood.

"I do declare! She's the most provoking creature I ever saw! I told her to have all the knives scoured before I came in from the garden and positively there has only *two* of them been touched and *they* are lying out there in the sun growing blacker than ever and she is nowhere to be seen! I don't know *what* to do with her! It don't do a bit of good to whip her – not a bit – and I don't know as anything but *killing* would effect her at all!" She smiled feebly as this last observation fell from her lips, while the daughter laughed outright.

"No it don't!" said the girl, quickly seeing that the fury of the storm had for the time passed and the mother was about to lift the basket and pass into the kitchen; "it don't do a bit of good to whip her! It only makes her mad and more willful! Suppose we try coaxing for a time just to see how it will work. I think there is good in her but cross words will never bring it out!"

"There is one thing about it! If we don't hear from that woman before a great while she may go and find some one to coax her besides *me*; I don't like her well enough to begin!"

"I presume she has not come back from Europe yet," said the daughter musingly; then she spoke more audibly. "I wouldn't send her off yet, Mother; remember we have almost enough for Father to buy a fishing smack of his own, then we shall be quite rich," and the blue eyes of the pale face lighted up with the anticipation.

"*Humph!* Well she has got to do better than she has if she wants to stay here!" and with this satisfactory conclusion she disappeared with her basket through the narrow door into the kitchen. Maria quietly laid aside her knitting and went out where upon a wooden bench standing on one side of the humble cottage lay the neglected knives which she in a very short time polished and put away in the narrow wicker basket on the dresser, then taking her neatly starched sun bonnet from its nail in the entry and placing it on her head passed out through the garden down a narrow footpath across the common to the sea shore. She was in quest of the truant Phebe, and well did she know where to find her. Walking along a few rods by the sandy beach she came suddenly to the foot of a steep ascent whose side facing the sea was almost entirely composed of precipitous rocks unevenly thrown together, while here and there a stunted pine or a yellow clump of moss struggled for existence. Here too, half way down the rugged descent Phebe lay concealed in her cozy retreat, sheltered from the summer sun by the rocks above her, with an uninterrupted view of the boundless ocean spread out to her delighted gaze. In a few moments Maria was sitting by her side. She did not seem at all surprised at the presence of her visitor, but raising herself remarked quietly: "Maria how *can* those birds stand on the water out there? *I* can't do it. I wish *I* could lie down on that wave that keeps rocking – rocking and singing – why can't I Maria? Hark! Do they talk to you – the waves? Did they ever say 'come here? come here?' They do to *me*."

"You *are* a queer child!" replied Maria impatiently, forgetting for the time the grand purpose of her visit. "But why don't you try to be a good girl and do as Mother wants to have you? This morning she told you to scour the knives which you know is your work every day, and *why* didn't you stay and do it and not make her so cross with you?"

"Cause – " interrupted the child; "I don't like to scour knives and I ain't a-going to!"

"You don't like to be *whipped* either," answered Maria; "but you know Mother will do it if you don't mind her!"

"*I* don't much care," said the child, shrugging her shoulders, as she settled herself down with calm composure.

"*I* don't care *much*. I'll be big some day, and then she won't *dare!* O Maria, see that wave dash up on the rock, and break all to pieces. Somehow – "

"Never mind the waves; I want to talk to you. Do you love me, Phebe?"

"Love you? What is *that?* I don't love nothing," and then starting up and rubbing both her dirty hands across her brown forehead, an act she always performed when some new thought flashed up from within, she exclaimed: "O, Maria! last night, when Father and Mother thought I was asleep in my trundle-bed, I heard her say that somebody had paid lots of money for me or something; and then she laughed and said I didn't look much like a 'lily,' and guessed that if my mother could see me now, she'd be glad 'cause my name wasn't 'Lily-Pearl.' O Maria! *What* did she mean? '*Lily-Pearl!*' I keep saying it all the time. That's my name; and O it's such a pretty one. Lily-Pearl! Pearls come up out of the ocean. The teacher said so the other day, and I guess *that's* what makes *me* love the sea so much. *Who* is my mother, Maria? And what makes you call me Phebe Blunt, when it's Lily-Pearl? I don't like it, and I won't have such an ugly name. Tell me, who *is* my mother?" Maria was a long time silent, while a deeper pallor overspread her face. But the large, wondering eyes of her interrogator were fixed intently upon it. How *could* she answer? It was a secret that never was to be mentioned; yet well did she know that Phebe would never rest with this sly peep into the exciting mystery, and it would be as well to satisfy her now as any time, and so she said mildly:

"I don't know, Phebe, who your mother is; but she was beautiful, and without doubt rich, and, I think, would have been very glad to have kept you, had it not been for her proud, wicked mother, who did not think it best, and so you came to live with us. Now, wasn't Mother kind to take care of you when a little baby, and shouldn't *you* try to be good, and do as she tells you, to pay her for her trouble?"

Phebe was silent for a moment, while her thoughtful eyes were penetrating the deep blue far away. "No," she said at last. "She might have thrown me back into the sea, where the pearls grow. But I *knew she wasn't my* mother," she continued musingly, as she pointed her finger in the direction of the cottage.

"What made you think so?" asked Maria.

"Because, if she was, she would kiss me like Lutie Grant's mother does. She always says, 'good morning, daughter,' and kisses her when she goes to school. I wonder what good it does, though," she continued, musingly. "I was never kissed in my life."

"That is *one* way to love," answered Maria with a smile. "Now will you be a good little girl if I kiss you and love you?"

"Maybe so," was the laconic reply.

Maria put her arms around the child's neck and drew her towards her, imprinting upon her lips a hearty kiss.

"Pshaw! *That's* nothing!" she replied, disdainfully. "Is that love, Maria?"

"No; it was a kiss. If you loved me, you wouldn't say *psaw!* but kiss me as I did you. Now come, let us go to the house. Remember, I have told you a secret about your mother and this will make us friends. You must not tell any one, or even speak about the beautiful lady for Mother would be very angry because I talked about it; and don't forget that you promised to be just as good as you can be, which I am sure will be all right, and by and by we shall all love you. Come!"

"I shan't go! She will want me to wash potatoes, or something, and I *won't* do it."

"But you promised that you would be a good girl if I would love you, and this is not keeping your promise."

"O *you* don't love me; you only want me to go home and scour knives, and I don't like to scour knives, and I *won't*, either."

"But Mother will whip you when you do come home, and I don't like to see you whipped; why won't you come now?"

Phebe looked at her companion with surprise. She had never heard her talk so gently and feelingly before. For a moment she was almost tempted to yield. Maria saw her advantage and once more urged the willful child to accompany her. Phebe's eyes turned again towards the sea.

"O Maria, Maria! see that big wave chase the other clear up on the sand!"

And the little dumpy form swayed to and fro while her large eyes glistened. Maria turned hopelessly away. Her experiment had failed. "The child is past redemption," she thought, as she walked moodily home. Phebe sat a long time gazing out from her rocky "eyrie" by the sea, thinking over and over again the little story to which she had just listened, and wondering how the beautiful lady looked; and if she really was her mother, and if, instead of being brought by an angel, as Lutie Grant said her little sister was, she had been picked up from off the ocean by somebody she had never seen, and so they called her "Lily-Pearl!" By and by a sudden impulse took possession of her.

"I *must* go and see where that sail boat was going that had just rounded the point yonder!" It had disappeared from sight, but *where* had it gone? With rapid steps she ascended the rocks, and ran up the hill with her utmost speed and then descended into a broad, thick woodland, where for a time she forgot her haste, listening to the music of the birds and gathering wild flowers that were growing all about her. Still she wandered on. It was past noonday when she emerged from the woods and espied just before her, on a slight elevation, a beautiful house – the house where she was born! There was nothing here, however, to reveal the interesting fact to the little wanderer, and so she traveled on, stopping only for a moment to peep through the heavy iron gate at two pretty children who were

playing in the yard, skipping and jumping along the gravel walk; and then, as if fearful of being discovered, started off as fast as possible, leaping down the edge of the cliff until she reached the sandy beach far below. Here she stopped. The pretty sail boat that had allured her hither was nowhere to be seen, and weary and heated, she threw herself upon the ground and watched the rising tide as it came dashing upon the beach. It had risen rapidly, when suddenly she became aware that a dark object was floating near her on the water. It was a small row boat often used by the inmates of Cliff House, but which the tide had washed from its moorings, and was now with its bow still clinging to the sandy beach, swaying impatiently at her feet, restless as her own adventurous spirit. With a scream of delight she sprang into the frail bark, and soon found herself floating steadily and rapidly away from the shore. Now, for the first time, she was out upon the waves where she had so longed to be, amid the sparkling gems which the sunbeams were scattering all around her, while the huge billows just beyond beckoned her to follow. A small oar lay by her feet, and with this she caressed the ripples and drew, now and then from the unknown depths, the dark-green seaweed that floated by.

Thus she was borne away, unmindful of the danger into which her wild spirit was leading her, and heeding not the sun descending into the dark, gloomy clouds that hung about his ocean bed, for she was happy now; alone upon the boundless sea, her life had become the fairy dream in which she had so often revelled while closeted in her rocky retreat, from which she was floating forever.

She was no more a child, but a wave – a billow – one of those which had sung to her so often while she sat and watched them, and her low, sweet voice joined in the anthem of the sea as if it said —

"Rock me, Mother, gently rock me,
Sing the songs I love so well."

CHAPTER III.

THE WAIF AFTER THE STORM

Phebe listened to the rolling music with an ecstasy never before experienced in her wildest dreams, and as the winds moaned on the distant shore and the sea-birds shrieked their sad accompaniment to the chorus of her song, she fell asleep hungry and weary.

Little slumberer, who shall guide thy frail bark, unseen by mortal eye, over the trackless waves? Who shall check the rising storm and temper the fury of the winds to the poor lone lamb? An eye is upon thee and thou canst not perish! A sure hand is at the helm, and the frail bark shall ride gloriously over the angry deep, and a sweet voice near thee shall whisper "peace, be still!"

It was quite dark when the rolling thunder awoke the sleeper, and with a scream of horror she sprang to her feet to find her alluring dreams, her fancied bliss, all dispelled as the realities of danger burst upon her. She called loudly, but the sea gave only a dismal echo to her ears; she shouted but the deep-toned thunders alone sent back a reply. Where now was the brightness that had so dazzled her? The sunbeams had gathered up all their sparkling gems and with them had disappeared! The music of the waves had died away, the little song which a few hours before had bubbled up in her joyous heart was hushed, and all was darkness and gloom. Ah, little mariner, life is full of just such changes! Sunshine and tempest – noonday and darkness; all intermingling their lights and shades! Thy first great lesson is a sad one, but it will never leave thee. Better so than that it should be only half learned.

Phebe lay in the bottom of the boat famished with hunger, wet with the drenching rain, pale and sick, when the captain of a gallant yacht which had "laid to" during the storm, espied from its deck a little speck far away to leeward, apparently lying still upon the waters.

"I say, Thornton," he remarked to a shipmate near him; "isn't that a boat off yonder? Here – take the glass! I can hardly make it out. But it's something, whether there's any life about it or not."

"Yes, it's a boat clear enough," replied his companion eyeing it intently; "but I imagine it's one that has been washed from some ship during the storm for there is nothing alive about it as I can see."

"I think you are right so we'll leave it to its fate."

In a few moments the beautiful craft had disappeared and the little boat with its helpless occupant was left unheeded except by Him who permits not a sparrow to fall to the ground without his notice. Ah – thy fate was near thee, little one but the unseen hand has removed it and it is well! Through the waves the yacht ploughed its way, for the breakers were rushing back from the shore and all on board save one returned to their berths for the rest that had been deprived them by the howling winds and the tossing of the staunch hull which the day before had seemed so sure and safe in its strength, but which the billows bore high on their foaming crests, then dashed as a helpless thing into the dark furrows the storm-king had ploughed out from the angry deep as he marched onward! O the horrors of a night spent amid a "storm at sea!"

Seated in one of the state rooms was a tall, queenly woman, robed in a rich *deshabille* of gray silk, with her elbow resting on the window sill, her hand supporting the head that bent wearily upon it, while her dark eyes gazed through the heavy plate glass out upon the black waters that kept dashing and surging against the victorious yacht proudly crushing the intruding waves that presumed to cross its pathway.

"Mother," said a winning voice near, "why will you not lie down awhile before breakfast? The danger is all over, and listen! Hear how calmly the seamen walk the deck! I presume everyone has concluded to make up for the fearful lying awake and will not be astir for two hours at least. Come Mother!"

"No – I can rest here! We shall be out another night, and it may be *two*," was the desponding reply.

"You used to sing 'life on the ocean wave' Mother, and I remember your saying once that you had no sympathy with Headley who declared that 'to sing that song by a good warm fire and being in it were two very different experiences,' for *you* rather enjoyed the one you passed through during your first voyage."

"Yes, child, I remember! I was not as old then as now;" and she might have added "and not as *guilty* then as now;" but they passed on.

It was nearly noon before a coasting vessel came in sight, and spying the little boat that was floating amid the waves the kind-hearted captain ordered three sturdy tars to go and capture it.

"Not so great a job as we've had sometimes," remarked one playfully.

"Pull away boys, see – there is something in the bottom! Steady, –" and as they came alongside the speaker sprang into the boat.

"Och – but she's dead!" exclaimed Mike, as he raised the insensible child in his arms. "She is! Look at her, shipmates," he continued bringing her forward as he would a coil of rope.

"There isn't a bit of color in her face under the dirt; poor wee thing!" and he passed her over to a man with a very brown, weather-beaten face, who laid her tenderly on some blankets and began chafing her hands.

"She is *alive*, boys," he said a few minutes after; "here Mike – pass me that little bottle I saw you put in your pocket this morning, it looked to me like very good brandy," he continued with a laugh, at the same time reaching out for it.

"Sorra a bit of *brandy*!"

"Never mind, pass it over, whatever it is. For once I'll not expose you for the good it may do now." The small bottle was passed and the kind man placed it to the lips of the insensible girl.

"Drink it, child," he said in tones as low and soft as a woman's; "it will make you well."

She did not hear him; yet she did swallow the few drops that were turned into her mouth, and the good man's predictions proved correct, for in a few moments she opened her eyes, but turned her head, hid her face in the blankets on which she was lying.

"She is afraid of our hard old faces," remarked the sailor who was bending over her; "but we will soon be where there will be more agreeable ones. Give way, boys, they are waiting for us," and rising, he left the "wee" stranger to herself.

"I should think she would have got used to ugly faces if she has been where there's a glass," remarked the third of the party, rather cruelly, but laughing and good-natured. They reached the schooner, and the wearied child was handed on board, amid many exclamations and intermingling remarks of sympathy and astonishment.

There were two women down in the small cabin; one the wife of Mike, who, in accordance with the kindness natural to her people, took the little outcast mariner under her especial care, and, with feminine instincts, provided for her wants.

The next few days the diminutive figure of Phebe Blunt sat upon the dark, dingy chest beneath the small narrow window in the cabin, looking out upon the blue, blue sea her beating heart so much loved, as it gathered up the jewels of emerald, and gold, and crystal pearls which the sunbeams scattered upon the wavelets' snowy crests, and with them her fancy built a palace of its own, to which in after years memory would often return and bear away some precious stones to adorn her sober real life.

"Ye're a strange child," said Cathreen, one day, after watching her for a long time, as she sat coiled up on the heavy chest, her large eyes peering from the window at the dark waters over which they were sailing. "What makes ye look so much at the sea? I'd rather see the land any time; and I wouldn't care a farthing if I never put my eyes on a bit of water again as long as I live." The child turned her beaming face towards the speaker with an expression of wonder and incredulity playing over it.

"How *can* it?" she asked at last, as her little brown hands brushed back the mass of dark hair from her broad forehead.

"Can what?" and the two women laughed heartily.

"Walk on the water. I couldn't, and I don't believe *He* could," and the bewildered gaze was turned again out of the narrow window.

"*Who*, child? Are you beside yourself?"

"*He!* Lutie Grant's mother said He walked on the great sea, but *I* don't believe it. How could He? *I* can't."

"Ye don't know what ye're talking about."

"Yes she does," interrupted the other. "It's Christ, the Bible tells about."

"And he used to love little girls, and took 'em up and kissed 'em; she said so; but, pshaw! that's nothing! Maria kissed *me* once, but 'twasn't much. I'd like to walk on the water, though," and again the eyes sought the far-off, and dropping her head upon her arms sat motionless as before.

"She's a puzzle," remarked Cathreen as she went about her work.

"I'd just like to know who she is and where she came from," remarked her companion, musingly. "I can almost believe that she *did* come up out of the sea, as she says, and that her name *is* 'Lily-Pearl'," and she laughed.

There was a third one who had been listening to the conversation from the narrow stairway that led to the deck, and entering at this moment, said, gently:

"I think I know some one who would enjoy working out this 'puzzle'," and he laid his hand tenderly on the bushy head of the little girl.

"Would you like to go home with me and live?" he asked. "You will find one there who can tell you all about *Him* who walked on the sea and loved little children, and I imagine he would love *you*, too, for there is more in this little heart and brain than is generally given to one so young and ignorant," he continued, as he turned to the wondering women who were listening.

"Ye're not going to take her home with ye *sure*, Mr. Evans? Mike said that *he* guessed we'd take her; she's no trouble and likes the water."

Phebe shrugged her shoulders and looked toward her friend who said, pleasantly:

"I think I will take her home with me; and perhaps we will hear from her mother or somebody who will want her, some day," and patting the rounded cheek, left the cabin and ascended to the deck while Phebe went on with her musings, and the two women commented on her future and the "strange conduct of the mate." Yet, all unseen a hand was tenderly leading the little stray lamb back to its fold through "pastures green" and "by the still waters," where the thorns and the briars were scattered along its banks, and where the poor feet would many times get torn, and the heart grow faint; but her way is onward, for the Father leadeth her. Somebody has said that "God will make the blind bird's nest," and Faber once declared that "there is hardly *ever* a complete silence in our souls. God is whispering to us well nigh continually. Whenever the sounds of the world die out, then we hear these whisperings of God." Was He not doing this to our little mariner? "They talk to me," she would say, and in her innocence it was the waves that talked – it was the billows that called, but the Father's tender voice was whispering, and his loving care was continually over her.

"The wind is coming up again pretty brisk, Mate, and I guess we shall have another rough night," said the captain, as he met the other on his rounds just as the darkness began to settle down about the vessel.

"If it will keep in the northeast, all right; we will reach the harbor by to-morrow," and he walked thoughtfully on.

This prediction was true. In less than a half hour the gale was tossing the billows high about the ship, and the sky was dark and lead-colored. Phebe would not leave the little window, although the white foam dashed against the small panes and the gloom without was impenetrable.

"Come away, child," commanded one of the women, sharply, "what makes you keep sitting there, when you can't see the nose on your face?"

"I don't want to see it," was the quick reply; "I want to see them roll and tumble over each other. *He* couldn't walk on it now?" she queried, turning to the mate who had entered.

"But *He* could do something more wonderful than that," he said, coming to her and laying his hand on her head.

The wondering eyes that were looking into the face of the speaker grew larger and brighter and she said —

"I don't believe it!"

"The Bible says so, Phebe, and Willie believes it. Hark – how the wind blows and the waves roar! but *He* could say to them all, 'Peace, be *still!*' and they would mind him."

"Stop blowing?"

"Yes, and the sea stop rolling."

She looked at the smiling face for a moment and then with a shrug of the shoulders turned her eyes again out of the window. The ship was plunging madly in the darkness, and the occupants in the little cabin were obliged to hold tightly on to the railing around it to prevent being dashed together, but Phebe kept her seat on the old weather-beaten chest, clinging to the window for power to hold her position, yet her face did not lose its quiet expression for a moment.

"Well, little girl, I see you are not afraid," remarked the mate, pleasantly, as he turned to go above. "I didn't know but the storm would make you think of your ride all alone, and would want some of my help again."

"It don't rain and thunder now," she remarked quietly. "It was awful; the waves talked, and something said, 'Poor little Phebe! the pearls are looking at you, and will take you down in their beautiful home, where you belong, if the storm don't stop' – but it did, and I went to sleep. Where are the pearls? It's cold down there, and what made them throw me on the waves?" Thus Phebe mused while the winds died away and the waves were calmed, and as the ship settled down into quiet on the dark sea, she turned to the frightened inmates of the cabin with the expression: "Guess *He did,*" and getting off her seat crept softly to her bed.

In the elegant yacht seen in the morning, another pair of dark eyes was gazing through the window of the stateroom into the rapidly gathering storm. Evidently it had changed its course, and instead of making its way southward along the coast, it was now laboring to gain the open sea. The eyes were wild in their burning excitement, as the blackness became more intense and the billows roared as they dashed against the brave craft. There was no gathering of the "precious gems" into the soul of the stately lady, for her memory was full of a sad record, from which she could not shut her thoughts. She turned almost fiercely towards the calm figure reclining on the sofa opposite, exclaiming: "Lillian, you anger me. What are you lying there for, when such a terrible storm is out upon the sea? Do you not know that we are not going towards Mobile at all, but are sailing as rapidly as the winds can drive us out into – nobody knows where?"

"Eternity, perhaps," was the quiet response.

"Are you trying to torture me, child?"

"This should not do it, Mother, for your pallid, pinched face tells me that I have given you no new thought. We are in danger, as you know, and many have come where we are never to a shore again."

Mrs. Belmont was silent. Her wild gaze turned once more out of the window, and the daughter mused on.

At last. "If Pearl only knew, I could lie down under a friendly billow peacefully – yes, gladly."

"Will you persist, Lillian?"

"He is my husband and the father of my child."

A moment's silence.

"How terrible! That peal was directly over us!"

The stately head dropped upon the white arm extended across the heavy bar of iron to which she was clinging, while the shouts and heavy hurried feet made a dismal accompaniment to the confusion all about her.

Lillian spoke.

"Mother, with death in the air and on the sea, tell me, *where* is my child?"

"In heaven, I hope," and for once she spoke truly.

"If not there, do you know where she is?"

"She is there. I will not endure your suspicions, Lillian! Never ask me concerning your child again."

The stately lady attempted to rise, but fell back insensible upon the chair. When consciousness was restored the fury of the storm was passed, and Mrs. Belmont, weak and dispirited, moaned upon her bed until the sea-sick passengers landed safely at their destination.

CHAPTER IV. RECEPTION NIGHT AT THE NEW HOME

Not many miles from Boston there stands a small, white cottage a few rods back from the main road, with a cool, shady lane leading to the lawn by which it is surrounded. Around this stands many wide-spreading maples, which cast their shadows over roses and honeysuckles when the sun is hottest, while the summer breezes linger among the branches to fan the noonday loungers, who, weary with their morning's toil in the field, seek rest beneath their shades. In the rear a garden stretches its way down to a little brook, which winds itself hither and thither through the tall meadow grass, singing softly to the gay lilies which hang their heads over its banks. The brook passes on through the narrow strip of pines that had carpeted the path on its margin with soft matting until it reaches a fair and picturesque lake, lying snugly nestled in the bright green basin the surrounding hills have made for it. Trees stand upon the water's edge and dip their long, pendant branches playfully into the blue beneath them, and white waxen lilies with their pure petals deck the bosom of the sleeping beauty, and rise and fall mechanically as the breezes pass over the surface.

It was to this home, surrounded by green fields and nature's beauties that George Evans, the kind-hearted sailor, brought the unpromising prize whom he found floating upon the waters.

It was a beautiful, calm summer evening when the two stepped from the cars at the small village of Kirkham and began their pleasant walk of some two miles to their journey's end. The road lay over a varied country of hills and dales, on which the setting sun was throwing an additional charm of golden hues, lighting up the tree tops and gilding the quiet lake and brooklet with tints of changing glories, crowning the distant mountain with a chaplet of beauty, as the retiring king sank lower and lower in his chamber of purple and crimson behind a western cloud. The sailor was walking slowly with bowed head, holding the little brown hand of his *protegee* tightly in his own, unheeding the departing splendors of the dying day, for his thoughts were busy and his face denoted a "mind ill at ease."

"Look – look!" exclaimed his little companion, pulling away her small hand from the weather-beaten one that was so gently leading her.

"*That* is 'most as pretty as the sea: But it don't talk to me," she continued, after a moment's pause. He *did* look as she requested, but not where her finger pointed, for his attention suddenly became riveted upon the little upturned face beside him.

"If they could only see her *now*," he thought; "what eyes! But it will be all gone when we get there, and nothing but the old look of impishness will remain." A smile passed over his bronzed features as he continued to gaze at her who was hurrying on before to gather some flowers that grew by the road-side, and well might he be pardoned for any remark he might be tempted to make, for a more unlovely little image could not well be imagined. Her dress, which had originally been of very fine material, had lost the most of its beauty before coming to her, and what little might have been left disappeared during the night she lay asleep in the bottom of the dirty fishing boat with the rain beating upon her. To be sure it had been washed and mended by the kind-hearted Cathreen on board the "Bay State," but even this process had failed to add new charms to it, for there were many more colors (added by the several patches) than were at first intended to be there. This outer article of apparel, with an apology for one other garment, was the sole covering of the little dumpy figure; and her hair, which was very thick and much longer than it was generally permitted to grow, hung in confusion about her sunburnt face.

They had now ascended a slight eminence which overlooked the valley, and before them was distinctly visible the blue lake with its green border, and a long line of struggling sunbeams lingering upon its bosom, while to the right, in the midst of the evening shadows, stood the neat white cottage

with its numerous adornings; still nearer and plainly discernable in the broad light was a smooth white marble slab cold and chilling as the form which had for many years rested beneath it. This stone so motionless and still told the passer-by that "Henry Wood," the former owner and proprietor of the pleasant home and those extensive fields had long ago ceased from his labors, and the soil which his hands had so productively tilled was now another's, yet they were not his who was now so thoughtfully looking over them. When *he*, twelve years ago, stood in the place of the buried husband, by the side of the widowed wife, the reservation had been made. The farm with all its accompaniments should belong to his future companion and *her* heirs, of whom her only daughter stood first in the rank of all succeeding claimants.

One child had been born to them, a poor crippled boy of ten years, towards whom the father's heart always turned with all its fullness of paternal love.

"Come here, Phebe," said the sailor kindly to the busy little girl, who had her hands full of gay flowers and leaves, as he seated himself on a stone by the roadside. "Come here and see that house yonder! Don't you think you would like to live there? See that lake, it isn't quite as large as the one I found you on, but there is a boat much prettier, very much, than the one you took your lonely ride in. Tell me, don't you think you would like such a home as that?" he continued, seeing she was gazing thoughtfully on the scene.

"I'd like to go *there*," she answered at last, pointing to the green hills that surrounded the lake.

"But who would feed and take care of you? Besides, why would you not like to live in that pretty house? There are flowers all around it, and smooth paths through the garden down to the meadow brook, and beside it you can walk to the lake where the bright little row-boat is fastened to the oak tree. Willie thinks it is very nice! We always go there together when I am at home, and while we are sailing I tell him all about my voyage, what I saw and heard, and what I hope he will see and hear some day."

"Won't they make me scour knives and wash potatoes?" asked the child, eagerly. "I don't like to do it, and I *won't*!" she exclaimed emphatically. "Mother used to whip me because I wouldn't do it; but I would run away down to the shore and talk to the waves. Do the waves talk over there?" she said, pointing to the lake, around which the nightly shadows were densely gathering.

"If they do, they will tell you it is *very* naughty not to do what those who are so kind ask you to do. Mothers have to do many things that are not pleasant, and every mother's girl ought to try to please her. Don't you think so?" Phebe shrugged her shoulders, and drawing her hand across her forehead, replied quickly —

"Well, I don't like to scour knives, and I hain't got no mother."

"But I want Willie's mother to be yours, and I think she will be very kind to you, if you are good and try to please her."

A shadow passed over his face, and he was silent for a long time. When he once more aroused himself to actual life it had grown quite dark and the child was nowhere to be seen. He called, but she did not answer. Hurrying down the hill he called again; but the echoes were his only reply. For a moment a sense of relief came over him. He had pondered much how he should introduce his little charge to the family circle in her most attractive light, in order to avoid opposition as much as possible. But she was gone, and he could now go to his home with the expectation of a joyful greeting from all, unless it be save one. Then his great heart spoke.

No, he could not leave her to wander off alone to perish; he *must* find her. Besides, Willie needed a companion. Poor lonely boy, he was denied the sports of other children, and was left alone with his thoughts and books so much that he was growing morbid and silent. This was pitiful in one so young, and it may be that he needed just such a play-fellow as this to draw him away from himself; and he would find her.

Hurrying on he did not stop until he had reached his own door, and to his great surprise he beheld Phebe in the little sitting room surrounded by the family circle, who seemed to be enjoying

their strange guest to the utmost. He stepped quickly back into the deeper shadows and listened. They were evidently trying to find out something of her history, for Willie asked:

"But where did you come from? You can tell us *that*."

"I came from way down in the ocean, where the pearls grow, that is what my beautiful mother called me Lily-Pearl for."

A hearty laugh succeeded this answer, while Fanny remarked, ironically:

"I should imagine she had sprung out of *some* dark cavern; but there is not much of the appearance of the pearl family about her."

"What made you come *here*?" inquired Mrs. Evans, kindly; "did any one send you?"

"I thought I'd just come and see if you'd make me scour knives and wash potatoes; 'cause, if you would, I don't want to live here. I don't like to do it and I *won't!*"

"What a strange child," remarked Willie. "I wish I could keep her; I should like her *so* much."

"Like me? Does *that* mean *love*? Would you kiss me and say, 'Good-bye, dear,' as Lutie Grant's mother does? Maria kissed me once, but *that* was nothing," and she shrugged her shoulders with an impatient gesture of contempt.

"Kiss her," exclaimed Fanny; "I would as soon kiss one of our pigs."

Mr. Evans from the shadow saw the flash in the large dark eyes, as they turned upon the speaker, and thought it time to make his appearance known. As he entered the door Phebe ran to him with outstretched arms, and exclamations of pleasure, while the eager hands of the little lame boy were reached out towards him, and soon clasped in the strong, loving embrace of the happy father. The wife came forward for her share of joyful greetings, but the daughter kept her seat by the table where she was sewing, extending her hand only as the father approached, but he bowed his head and kissed her brow with a fondness that was not returned.

"Well, Phebe, what made you run away from me?" he asked, turning to the little girl who was still clinging to him, and laying his hand tenderly on her bushy head. "You wanted to introduce yourself, did you? Didn't you know I was very much frightened? I thought, perhaps you had run away to the woods where you seemed so anxious to go and live."

"And where you picked her up, I should imagine," remarked Fanny, without raising her eyes from her work.

"Not quite so bad as that, is it, Phebe? But we will talk about that by and by," and unfolding a large bundle which he had brought with him he handed Willie some books which made his blue eyes sparkle; then a parcel to his wife and another to the daughter, while a third he held in his hand.

"Here are some dresses for Phebe, which I think will serve to win for herself a trifle more affection than she can expect to get in her present outfit," he said with a smile.

Unfolding some bright calicoes, he called the little girl to him.

"Won't you look pretty when you have these new dresses on?" he asked kindly.

"Lutie Grant never wore prettier clothes than these will be!"

This had the desired effect. How her eyes sparkled and danced with the anticipation.

"Why, isn't she handsome, Father? Where *did* you find her?"

He gave a communicating look to his son and said;

"Tell Willie where I found you, will you?"

"Way out on the ocean," she said, evasively.

"What were you doing there?" Willie again asked.

"I wanted to go out on the waves and hear what they said. I couldn't tell what they said when I was on the rocks."

"You said you came from way down in the sea where the pearls grew."

"And so I *did*, but not now. A beautiful lady picked me up. Will *you* call me Lily-Pearl?" she asked, coming close to Willie and taking his soft, white hand in hers. "I'll be good, then."

"And do what Willie's mother asks you to do?" interrupted Mr. Evans; but there was no answer.

"Let me call you Lily *Evans*; that's my name, you know, and if you are to be my sister, we must love each other, and I shall want to have you like my name, too. Shall I?" Phebe shrugged her shoulders, and the old unpleasant look came back to her face.

"Then you don't want me for your brother? I thought you were going to love me, and we would be happy together."

Phebe stole more closely to his side, and looking up into the pale face whispered, timidly, "Will you kiss me, Willie?"

"To be sure I will, and *love* you, too – I know I shall!" and the boy kissed heartily the little upturned face just as Fanny's sneering laugh reached her. The flash of indignation darted to her dark eyes, which her kind protector had seen there more than once, and well did he understand the foe that was lurking beneath.

"I think little Phebe must be tired; can you find a place for her to sleep, Mother?" he asked soothingly, at the same time drawing her towards him. "Good night, my little girl; I hope you will have pleasant dreams, and to-morrow we will talk about the new dresses." He kissed her fondly as he spoke, and the face beamed with joy as she left the room.

There was a long family consultation that night after the child had been shown to her bed, and for the first time in her whole life made to repeat the simple prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep," which she did reluctantly, and with many shrugs. But the quiet, earnest voice of Mrs. Evans subdued her, and she at last submitted with a very good grace. It was finally decided before the family separated for the night, that the new-comer should for a time, at least, become an inmate of the home circle, and through Willie's solicitations she should be considered his exclusive property. He would be her teacher, guiding all her studies, filling her little untutored mind with the knowledge he had gained, as well as endeavoring to correct her faults; while she in return would be his companion, drawing him in his carriage and amusing him generally. It was with a light heart that the poor lame boy lay down to sleep that night. Bright visions of coming happiness flitted through his mind, and succeeded in driving away his usually quiet slumbers.

The next morning he arose early and soon after "Lily," as he persisted at the time in calling her, notwithstanding Fanny's sarcastic protestations, appeared in a neat chintz frock and pink apron which had not been taken out from their hiding place since the baby boy had grown too large for their use. Her hair was smoothly parted back from the forehead and her face was beaming and animated. She bounded quickly to Willie's side as she entered the room where breakfast was waiting, and inquired eagerly: "Do I look pretty?" "To be sure you do; just as pretty as any other girl!"

"I want to tell you something," she leaned over to whisper as she was being lifted to her seat by the side of her future companion; "I love *you*, but I *hate* Fanny!" "You must not hate any one," replied Willie. "Fanny is my sister and you are going to be, so we must *all* love each other." "I can't," and the little dumpy figure raised itself to its fullest dimensions as she looked into the face of Fanny, who was coming into the room with the coffee. "I *won't* love *her*, but I love *you*," and she clasped the little white hand fervently in her own.

CHAPTER V. DEATH IN THE LITTLE COTTAGE

Phebe was not mistaken in her heart's emotions, as the years proved. She *did* love Willie with all of the ardor of her young affections. His wish was her law; his reproofs her severest chastisements. But the stern, cold Fanny found no place in her love. She trembled under her frowns and anger only to hasten from them that she might hide the bitterness which her secret tears could alone soothe. There was no need of all this. Fanny did not *hate* the child; no, not even dislike her; but there was no summer within her soul – no glad sunshine in her obdurate heart. Yet beneath the icy covering the world saw, which chilled and frosted the tendrils of love her woman's nature possessed, there was a clear silvery fountain of emotion, which would have driven away many a dark hour, with the merry music of its gushing waters, had not a thick cloud of selfishness shut it in, and the frosts of discontent sealed it from human vision. But God saw it all, and looked pityingly into the perverted heart where its rich treasures lay hidden. "The child is very well," she would say, "as good as children usually are, I suppose, but of no use. She does not pay for the salt she eats."

"I do not agree with you," replied the mother. "See how much happier your brother is since he has a companion to talk to and confide in. *I* was too old to understand his little wants, or even to sympathize with his poor heart's sorrows. I feel it all now. This is the lesson I have learned since Phebe has been with us. We were too selfish, Fanny – your mother and yourself. It may be I was at fault in not tilling and uprooting the evils in your young heart when it was in my power to do so, my daughter, and I am willing to confess it to you now. There should be more flowers growing in the garden of our souls, and less hardy, sturdy shrubs that yield no fragrance and woo no summer birds to come and make music for us. Life has changed its aspects for me within a few short months. It seems all spread out where I can look back upon it; *not* sparkling and glowing with good works and love and gentleness, as it should be; but there are dark places – cold, chill damps that creep over me at times when I scan the crooked paths over which I have led you, while one so smooth and flowery, so full of pleasant places and radiant with beauty, is plainly discernable close beside it, into which our feet should have turned. God forgive me!" she murmured, while a tear glistened for one moment in her clear blue eyes. "I did not mean to do you a wrong; I was worldly and ambitious for your *temporal* good, but blinded to your spiritual prosperity. God forgive me!"

"I cannot see where you have committed any such a great sin," replied the daughter with much feeling. "I have no doubt but that you intended to do your duty, and must say my opinion is that you succeeded well. We had to toil hard to gain our present ease and comfort, but no one can accuse us of either crime or dishonesty, Mother. I did not speak of the child because I did not want her here. I only think she might make herself more useful. I am willing she should read when Willie wants her to, but she would never do anything else if she could help it."

The door was suddenly opened and Phebe came rushing in, with a light buoyant step, her cheeks glowing with exercise and her dark eyes sparkling with joy and animation.

"O Mother! Father is in Boston, but will not be home for two or three days. You can *never* guess what he has for Willie," and the happy child danced about the floor in the exuberance of her glee.

"What business have you to open our letters?" inquired Fanny, beneath the dark cloud that had gathered during the short recital.

The mirth of the little girl suddenly ceased as she looked at her interrogator for a moment, but made no reply. Willie, however, appeared in the door and answered for her.

"The letter was written to *us*, wasn't it, Phebe?"

"It was written to *you*; and Father is going to bring him a large dog all trained to draw him. O Willie, was there ever anything so nice!" Her quick anger was gone, and the brightness of the joyous

anticipations of the *something* that was to bring so much to one she so dearly loved daguerreotyped itself on her expressive features. Willie saw it all, and when he had seated himself by the side of his mother on the lounge he beckoned Phebe to him.

"You are sorry about something, my little sister," he said; "tell me what it is."

"No, no; I am not sorry. I was only thinking. You will not want little Phebe when Rover comes. And – and I *do* like to draw you so much!" and her lips quivered as she strove to keep back the tears.

"Why, my pretty sister, your eyes were so bright when I first told you, and I thought that my new possessions were going to make *you* as happy as myself; and only a moment ago you exclaimed, 'was there ever anything so *nice*!' Can you not think so now? It is true I shall not need you for my horse," he continued, laughing. "But just think how dreary it will be to ride alone, with no one to speak to or enjoy the sunshine and cool breezes with me, or gather the pretty flowers along the road, or the lilies from off the lake! No, no, Phebe; I *cannot* go alone, and Father may take the dog back, if you will not go with me. Or perhaps you imagine that Rover can talk, as well as do many other remarkable things. Besides you must have forgotten that Father wrote that the wagon is large enough for two such 'chicks' as we are. So do not feel badly; you are to go with me, and Rover is to draw us both."

Mrs. Evans clasped them in her arms and drew them tenderly to her.

"My dear children, will you always love each other as you do now? Will you always be his sister Phebe, and never take away the affection that makes him so happy? I shall not always be with with you, my children; but before I leave you, promise me, Phebe, that you will *never* forsake him, and I will trust you, young as you are. The time will come when both of you will pass beyond these years of childhood, and great changes may come to you; there will be separations, and other homes where it may be you will live apart. But, Phebe, he is your brother; remember *I* have given him to you. It is a sacred trust, but you understand it. Will it be kept safe and firm when he has no mother to lean upon, and no hand but yours to attend to his wants? Phebe, I love you, and thank God every day that he sent the lonely 'mariner' to our home, and for the sake of that love will you be true to my dear boy?"

"I could never live without Willie," and she threw her arms passionately around the neck of the crippled boy. "I will never leave him Mother; he couldn't do without *me*, could you Willie?" The boy drew her more closely to him but could not speak, for his heart was full of his mother's sad words. He had noticed that her cheek had paled with the fading of the summer flowers; that her step had grown more feeble and her kiss more tender as she smoothed his pillow at night and whispered "God will take care of you my dear, dear boy." And now as he looked into the pale face and saw the tear-drops glisten on her drooping lashes a fearful foreboding stole over him, and placing an arm about her neck he sobbed:

"Mother, do *not* talk of leaving me! What could your helpless boy do without you? I must always creep about in the dust for the thoughtless and cruel to point at, and there is nothing in the future to hope for or look forward to. O Mother! It is dreadful to be a *cripple* with no prospect of being any body or doing any good to others; only a poor, helpless boy for every passer-by to *pity*!"

"Please do not Willie; it breaks my heart! Remember what God has said, 'the Lord thy God is a merciful God, He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them.' I have many times laid you, all helpless as you are, as a cheerful testimony of my poor trembling faith at His feet, and somehow, Willie, I have felt that he has accepted my precious gift, and that my boy will be ever under his especial care and love. Look up, there is sunshine on the other side of the clouds, and its bright beams will gild your darkness if you will permit them to do so." The slumbering fountain of the daughter's love was stirred at the sight before her and bowing her head she wept!

"Mother," she said at last with much emotion; "have you forgotten that *I* am his sister? Can you not leave him to *my* care? I will never forsake him, and all that I can do to make his life pleasanter *I* will gladly do! Did you forget *me* Mother?"

"Forget you Fanny? You were my first born – my *all* for many years! Together we have worked and talked, but, my daughter, you are older and sterner by nature than my poor helpless one. He wants companionship, sympathy in his little trials that must ever be peculiar to himself, and no one can do this as well as one who has suffered and been lonely as he will always be. No Fanny, *you* will of course be kind to him and your reward will be sure."

Phebe had been an inmate of the new home for more than three years. Happy years they had been, notwithstanding the many trials she had been obliged to encounter. Her foster-parents were always kind, and it was there her heart had first learned the luxury of loving and being loved. How true had been the promise to her "when thy father and thy mother forsake thee then the Lord will take thee up!" He had taken her and she was being fitted by his providences for the life that was before her. A dark shadow was creeping over her path with its sombre forebodings, and young as she was her soul was chilled by it. She had not noticed it before, and it was hard to realize even now that it was so distinctly brought before her. Of one thing, however, she was sure. Willie was suffering and her little heart poured itself out in words of tenderness and sympathy.

It was a happy day when Mr. Evans returned from his long voyage and introduced Rover to his new master. The shadows which had been lingering over the home circle for two long days suddenly vanished. Then came the long rides, for as the father had said, "the wagon was ample for the two," and Rover was able and willing.

But in the pleasant sitting-room that looked out upon the fading lawn where the leaves were falling from the crimson maples there were sad talks about a coming separation, and faint, wistful looks into the far-off future. There were smiles and caresses that fell into "life's eventide" like sunbeams darting through the western clouds as night approaches. The wife and mother knew that her days were numbered, and when the winter storms came and mantled the hillside and spread a pall over the lonely grave beyond the garden where the cold marble stood, and the winds mingled their sighs with the sobs and moans of bereaved ones, the chamber of the slumbering one was entered and the loving mother slept in a dreamless sleep.

A pall of gloom settled down on the inmates of this once cheerful home! The cord that had so long bound them all together was broken. What would the future present to each? Where the wisdom to choose; the firmness and strength to battle and maintain?

The winds moaned and the snow came and went; the "frost-king" fettered and unloosed; then the spring appeared and with it changes not only in the outward world but into the little circle of murmuring ones. The father must go to sea; a summer voyage was before him. It was harder now than ever to leave his almost helpless boy without a mother's love to comfort and cheer him; but it must be done!

"I will take as good care of him as I *can*," Fanny remarked one evening as the father's solicitude broke out into words.

"To be sure I shall have a great deal more to attend to now, but I suppose Phebe can help me more than she has done. She is a great stout girl and might make herself useful if she had a mind to do so. She ought to be made to understand that she is dependent and should do something to earn her own living! I cannot afford to keep her for nothing!"

"This home is yours, I am fully aware, Fanny," replied Mr. Evans with some warmth; "and if you wish it I will take my children out of it and find them another." Fanny burst into tears and arose to leave the room.

"I will endeavor to be a sister to *both* of them," she stopped to say in a subdued tone, and the father was alone.

"I must believe her," he thought at last; "she cannot be *cruel* to her poor brother at least!" So in a few days, before the early flowers decked the garden walks, the father and protector was away upon the waves, and the home was once more desolate!

Ah, there are sad times in life when even hope seems arrayed in the sombre habiliments of mourning. The future grows darker and darker as we gaze upon it; there is no light because we are powerless to penetrate the clouds that are hanging over us. Who shall lead us out? Timid and shrinking we stretch our trembling hands out into the gloom when to the surprise of the fainting heart we feel the gentle grasp of love, while the way brightens and the faltering feet gain a firmer tread as they step forward where the shadows are broken and the rugged road appears in full view.

If Phebe had been a *strange* child when she entered the cottage, the intimate companionship of the thoughtful studious cripple had not made her less so. The events of each passing day had imparted their impress upon her susceptible nature. Her mind had been an open chalice into which her foster-brother had poured the hoarded wealth of his own; and she was learned beyond her years. The little "dumpy figure" was now tall and well-proportioned for her age, and Willie looked upon her with pride and admiration. More than this, her heart with its far-reaching mysteries had been guided close to the cross and around it the tendrils of its unsolved longings twined themselves. Her dreams of the unreal were no less, but her realizations of the sterner demands of life were more. Willie had early learned to tell the pitying Redeemer his tales of sorrow and deprivations, and where he found comfort and sympathy the restless Phebe had been led. How kind in the potter to prepare the clay for his grand purposes of use, although sometimes with a rough as well as masterly hand! And how can its powers be manifested without the "fashioning process" or its durability secured in the absence of the "mouldings" and the fire? The master understood his work and Phebe lay passively in his hands.

Down by the lake where the wild honeysuckle yielded up its luscious fruits to the children when the blossoms had disappeared, was a little arbor where tender fingers had woven the slender branches of the whispering pines together, and in this sweet bower Willie and his companion sat every day when the snow and frosts were gone and talked of the absent mother, wishing that the gentle spirit might be ever near to check the turbulent winds and smooth down the angry waves.

CHAPTER VI.

"CRAZY DIMIS" AND THE TWILIGHT SCENE

"What are you thinking about, Phebe? I have watched you ever since we turned the corner down by the big pine tree, and not a muscle of your face has moved, as far as I can discover. Tell Willie, won't you?"

Phebe, thus addressed, drew herself up with a long sigh, and passing her hand mechanically across her forehead, replied, while her eyes remained seemingly fixed on some far-off object:

"I do not know. See how the sunshine falls in golden patches on the pond yonder, like what you read about this morning. Willie, I *don't* want to be *Phebe*— nothing but little Phebe. I – I want to *fly*! See that bird going up, up. He will get away beyond the clouds – far above the top of the mountain yonder. I want to be like him, or something, I do not know what; don't you, Willie?"

"Yes; though ambitions are not for one like me; but you will be something besides 'little Phebe,' by and by. I see it in your beaming face and deep dark eyes; while I must always be 'poor little Willie,' nothing else. I have for a long time been watching you, and reading my destiny of loneliness and utter dreariness in your strange, mysterious words, and knew that they all came from a heart that would never be satisfied with the plodding life where *I* must remain. Two paths are open to us, and I can even now see that they must branch off from each other. O Phebe, hard as it is to be as I am, I would not hold you, little bird, from your upward flight; but just think what a terrible night my future will be without my little Phebe! Then I shall have no sweet sister to comfort and cheer me when out of patience with myself and cross because of my infirmity. And I shall not be your own Willie as now. It is wrong, I know, to feel so, but I cannot help it! It is bitter enough to know that I must lose you, but your love, little sister, how can I live without that?"

Phebe was taking a seat beside him, where he had made room for her while speaking. And, without answering his moan of anguish, she clasped her arms about his neck and kissed his pale face over and over again.

"Love you?" she exclaimed. "I shall always love you. I do not believe at all in those paths you have been telling about. What would I want to go off in another for if you could not follow me? No, no, Willie, I would not fly away up into the clouds without you; or be something that I so long to be, for I always want to be your little Phebe – nothing else. I was only thinking while I sat here and saw Rover draw you out of sight, how *I* wanted to go off somewhere! and then I thought of the *waves*— how they used to talk to me – and just then, Willie, the patches fell down on the water, and a strange feeling came over me; but it is gone now, and I want to stay with you. Did not Mother give you to me and say that I must never leave you? You are my own Willie, just as you always will be." And with one more kiss she took the reins from his hand and gave the order for Rover to proceed.

"Ha! ha! ha!" came to them from the thicket near where they had been sitting, and at the same time two large, wild eyes peered through the opening a pair of thin bony hands had made in the thick foliage.

"It is Crazy Dimis; don't be afraid," said Willie, as his companion gave a startled look; "she has been at our house many times when I was a little boy, and she will not hurt any one. She has escaped from her imprisonment as she used often to do, but they know she is harmless."

The figure of a woman, tall and straight, but very plainly clad, now stood before them.

"It is wonderful sweet to love, isn't it silly children? Kisses are like honey – good on the lips; but they kill sometimes. Ha! ha! Waste them! throw them away, silly children. They'll be bitter by and by. It's coming – coming! Don't I know it? Kisses are like candy, mustn't eat too much, little fools! Beware! the roses will fade and the thorns are sharp! They'll prick you! Don't I know? Flowers are not for everybody – plant cabbage! Ha! ha! Crazy, am I? *He* said so, too. But it was the adder's

tongue that poisoned *my* life. *His* love —*his* kiss. Beware! Remember I tell you, *beware!*" and with a bound she darted again into the thicket and was lost from sight.

Willie had taken the reins from his companion as this unwelcome apparition appeared, but as she vanished Phebe exclaimed:

"What a horrid creature! What makes her talk so strangely? *Who* is the one she spoke of? Do you know her?"

"Mother said she was once the brightest, prettiest girl anywhere around; but her husband disappointed her, and was unkind. It was this, I believe, that made her what she is. There used to be much good sense in what she said — shrewd, cunning, and not wholly gibberish. But let us hurry home; Fanny may want you."

"Flowers are not for everybody. Did she mean me, Willie? Her words make me shiver!"

While yet speaking they came round to the kitchen door, where Fanny met them. Something had evidently gone wrong, for she was flushed, and her step was quick and prophetic. She had many cares, and her temper had not grown sweeter by their constant pressure.

"You might as well have staid out the rest of the morning, and let me do everything," was her first exclamation. She was hurrying past, and did not, therefore, wait for a reply.

"Never mind," said Willie, in a low voice, as he saw the flash of anger dart up in his companion's eyes. "Take off Rover's harness and hasten around to help her about the dinner, will you? I will go and read, and perhaps think over what poor old Dimis said until you have got through. But promise me," he continued, playfully; "don't you think of her or a word she said, for it is not true."

"Perhaps we may better do as Fanny suggested, and go out for the rest of the morning. I wish we could." Willie smiled and wheeled himself into the house.

There were busy hands in the kitchen until after the dinner hour that day, but no cheerful word or kindly act were thrown in to lessen its tediousness or lighten the irksome burdens of the unwilling Phebe. The face upon which she looked was cold and hard, and a sort of oppressive bustle seemed to fill the very atmosphere. The knives were to be scoured and the potatoes washed for the noon meal, and her old dislike of this work had in no degree left her since she was the "good-for-nothing child" away in the fisherman's cot by the sea. The departed mother had often laughed at her aversion, and shielded her from its performance, but not so with the thrifty Fanny. Indeed, Phebe imagined that these were reserved for her for the reason that she "hated" to do them, and this morning they seemed more distasteful than ever before. It was with no very good grace, therefore, that she went about her task, and as she stood by the window with the unpolished knives beside her, she thought of her who was sleeping below the garden wall, and wondered if "she knew what she was doing, of her impatience and anger." And then the crazy woman's gibberings came back, "Flowers are not for everybody;" and "the thorns are sharp, little fools."

"I hope you will get them done in time to set the table," were the quick, sharp words that broke in upon her reverie, and brought in her gaze from the far-off to the labor before her. The door was open into the sitting room, where Willie was amusing himself with a book, and Phebe called out, "I don't like to scour knives and wash potatoes, and I *won't*, either. Do you remember it, Willie?" she laughed.

"Well, I guess you *will*," retorted Fanny. "I'd just like to know how you expect to get a living if you are going to do nothing except what you want to do. You are no better than I am, and I want you to do this every day; so keep to work at it, and not be looking out of the window."

Phebe turned, but caught sight of Willie's uplifted hand of warning just as a bitter retort darted to her lips, and for his sake she smothered her rage and resumed her hated labor. She did not enjoy any kind of work, and never hesitated to express her dislike for it. Perhaps, had circumstances altogether different from those that had surrounded her brightened up each compulsory service; or a word of love or praise been dropped now and then over the little burdens, it would have been otherwise. But she was a dreamer, a child with inborn fancies, possessing a soul where poetry and beauty reigned as

twin sisters, growing and thriving upon each other's life, but she knew it not. She was only sure that her heart bounded in the sunshine of genial associations, and sank with equal velocity beneath the clouds of depressing influences. A cold word, a frown, would fill her soul with gloomy shadows for many hours, unless a warm sunbeam from some loving heart came to drive it away. Kind and cheerful as our little heroine usually was, there lay coiled up in her nature a demon of anger which sprang forth at every provocation with the fury of ungoverned passion. Poor child! It had goaded her long for one so young, and many times she had struggled to resist its power, but it proved stronger than her will. Love alone can subdue such natures, while opposition only feeds and nourishes their faults.

"Get out of my way!" exclaimed Fanny, as Rover was leisurely crossing her path, while a sudden movement of her substantial shoe gave a new impetus to his velocity. Phebe saw it, and her heart bounded with indignation. Dropping her work she darted forward, and throwing her arms around the neck of the noble dog exclaimed vehemently: "Why didn't you bite her, Rover? she shall not kick you!" A blow from the enraged Fanny, and a command to return to her work silenced her for a moment, then with the fierceness of a tiger she sprang upon her antagonist and dealt blow after blow upon the astonished Fanny before she had time to recover from her surprise, or to use her powers of defence. In a moment more, pale with anger and fright, the child was torn from her position by superior strength, and forced into her own little chamber with the command "not to leave it until she received permission." Here was a new feature in home affairs.

"This child, this *pauper*, shall go where she belongs! The poor-house is good enough for such as she! At any rate I shall not have such a wild-cat beneath *my* roof a great while!"

Willie listened to the ravings of his sister, while his heart throbbed with unconcealed emotion.

"Yes, and *you* uphold her no doubt! You pity her and think she has been greatly wronged – but it makes no difference!"

"I *do* think, Sister, that had you sought for love you would have found it, and love worketh no ill to his neighbor."

"Love! I *don't* want her love or *her* either! To confess the truth I am worn out with her and she must leave – that is all!"

"I know very well that you do not like to have me advocate Phebe's cause, but did you ever notice that her exhibitions of anger only seemed to be the echo of your own? I have watched her, Sister, with the most intense interest when laboring under personal difficulties and perplexities, and I have seldom seen her lose her patience under any trial. In all the years we have spent together she has never grieved me by an ill-tempered word or gesture, because *I* never gave her one."

"So it is all *me*, of course! I must of necessity stand sponsor for my own sins and her's too!"

"No Fanny, but I would be plain. You *are* too stern and cold, and at times unjust! You forget that she is a child."

"I have heard *enough*– she must leave the house!" So saying the enraged Fanny left the room, the door closing behind her with a prophetic firmness which Willie well understood.

Phebe sat alone in her chamber until the golden twilight settled down upon the waters of the little lake and tinted the tree tops that cast their long shadows out over its bosom, and watched the "lights and shades" which chased each other down the hillside and over the meadow until they rested on *two* graves just beyond the garden wall.

"My mother! O, my mother!" gushed up from the overflowing heart. "Would that I were beside you! You did not hate me – you did not make me so wicked!" Tears choked her utterance and blinded her vision. Hours passed and then a gentle tap was heard on her door, but she did not move. There had been no steps on the stairs and well did she know who was pleading outside to share her sorrows.

"Phebe, may *I* come in? It is your own Willie – come and open the door if I may enter!" *That* voice never pleaded in vain. Now it sank down into the wildly throbbing heart as a soft lullaby, soothing every angry passion and illuminating the dark chambers of her soul with the sweet promises of peace.

The door was opened and Phebe returned to her low seat by the window without a word. Willie was soon beside her, sitting, on account of his infirmity, at her feet; his calm blue eyes swimming with tears were fixed intently upon her face, but she apparently did not heed him.

"Will you not speak to me, Phebe? Let me look into your eyes – there is no anger there for *me*! Nothing but love, I am sure of it! I have read it there so many times, but let me read it there once more – may I not?" The arms of the child were thrown about the suppliant's neck and her tears fell fast as she kissed his pale cheek.

"I am so wicked, Willie! I wish I were good like you and loved everybody. *You* never make me angry, but Fanny always does. I can't help it!"

"Phebe, I love you. What would my life be if you were away? Think how long the days would be with no one to talk to and no one to say 'I am so sorry' when sad. In a few years at most Willie will be out there by the side of Mother, and until then I must creep about just as I always have done; but I can bear it if I have you to cheer me," and clasping her to his heart he was not ashamed that his tears mingled with hers.

"I am so sorry, Willie!" she sobbed at length. "I heard Fanny say that 'I should not stay here.' I did not care then, but O, I cannot leave you. O – I will be very good! If Mother was only here I think I could do anything – but I am so wicked!"

Darkness had settled down upon the occupants of that little chamber when Fanny called: "Willie, *your* supper is ready! Come down immediately and let Phebe stay where she is!" The child darted to her feet and hastened to open the door.

"Fanny," she said, with a slight hesitation; "I want to stay here, but won't you let me ask you to forgive me? I know I am very wicked but I will try to do better!" The stern, cold Fanny hesitated only a moment, and then without a smile of encouragement or a cheering caress *agreed* to the proposition and promised to let her remain for a while until she had tried her once more. "Now come down to supper," she continued, "for I am in a hurry to get my work done!" Was *this* forgiveness? A balm to heal the wounds of injury? Poor, sin-sick soul! Did thy heavenly friend ever look so coldly upon thy penitence? When did He ever pour the "gall of bitterness" into the wounds of a humiliated heart? Small would be the reward of "human justice" if the intercessor did not continually stand between us and our petition, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."

"You are a noble girl!" exclaimed Willie as Phebe returned to her seat by the window. "I will leave you now; you may come or stay as you choose – all will yet be right."

CHAPTER VII. CHANGES IN THE COTTAGE HOME

Be kind to the child! Build with great care and skill the foundations upon which is to be reared a life whose influences are to reach into the ages that have no end. There is no living by one's self, and the great net-work of human existence may be warped and misshapen by *one* chilling neglect or a palpable wrong! Even so does the individual life often become marred beyond remedy when it is tender and susceptible to the guiding hand. There are natures so finely and sensitively constituted that every rude blast twists and bends the silver wires of the organization until the music is dead, and the case, although polished and beautiful to the eye, stands a wreck of what it should have been. Such were the surroundings of our little heroine. For fourteen years she had been the child of "circumstances," her days filled up with tears and laughter and her nights with idle dreams. No mother's love had ever twined itself about her young heart to nourish and foster the tender plants of sweetness and purity which was to make her life beautiful with their variegated blossoms, or root up the entangling weeds with which she must ever after contend. Mrs. Evans had indeed been kind to her as the "companion of her afflicted boy," as she would also have been to a pet kitten or anything that would have added to the happiness or comfort of her child. Yet she did not fail to perceive when her vision began to grow dim to the world that the "casket" which had been thus opportunely cast at her feet contained jewels which were worth securing. The last few days and weeks of the only one whom her heart ever claimed as *Mother* left their impress on her soul which never faded away. It was a taste at least of that love for which she had so often longed – such as a child must have or be miserable! But even that was all over now. True, Willie had been her dear brother ever since, her comfort when sorrows overshadowed her, her help through scenes of trouble. But a cloud darker and denser than any of its predecessors was spreading itself over them both. Sad news had come to them from over the sea – the far off dark, dark sea. Alone they sat together in the doorway one evening where the last rays of the setting sun came and played about their bowed forms, caressing their damp cheeks; but for once they were not heeded.

"We are orphans now, Phebe – poor, lone *orphans*! Never did I feel the miseries of my decrepitude as now! I am helpless, and *who* will take care of you? The thought doubles my sorrow! I ought to be a man and comfort rather than to add to your depression; but I am a weak, helpless child, even more so, my sister, than you to-night." Phebe raised her head from her hand where it had been resting and fixed her large eyes upon the pale face before her.

"Willie, do *I* look like a child?" she asked. "It has not been twenty-four hours since we received the sad news that our father had been swallowed up by the great sea I love so well; still he is not dead to me, but has only gone where *I* in my childish fancy so longed to go, therefore I cannot 'make him dead;' he's only resting while he calls upon me to act! Willie, I am no longer a child, for every hour has seemed to add a year to my life since that letter came! I am strong, and thanks to you and the dear ones who have so long sheltered me from the storms, I have a little stock of knowledge to begin my future with; I shall act." Her gaze had wandered off to the golden clouds that were hanging over the little lake as she spoke, and a look of firm resolve stole over her features.

"I see my fate written upon your face!" replied Willie mournfully. "How can I endure the lonely hours, the lengthening days? But I am ashamed of myself. Somehow the fates have turned against me, Phebe, and have taken away my years to add them to yours. I will not be so childishly selfish. But Sister, you will need a friend. How can you go out into the world alone?"

"I *have* a friend! Do not, I beg of you, think me so destitute Willie. Have you forgotten Crazy Dimis?" A low subdued laugh escaped the lips of both at the suggestion and mingled itself with the soft evening breeze. Suddenly they started for a voice harsh and cold as a winter's wind was near

them which chilled the soft melody and sent it back to their wounded hearts in a low sad wail. It was Fanny who spoke.

"Your grief must have been terrible to have been forgotten so soon!" she exclaimed. "You can go in, Phebe, and take care of the supper table if you have got through crying," she continued bitterly.

Phebe arose without a word. For once her anger did not rise to goad her. Could it be that her power over this her greatest enemy had gained strength also with her seemingly multiplied years?

Fanny took the seat that was just vacated by the side of her brother.

"What is Phebe going to do?" was the abrupt question.

"What would you like her to do? I suppose she will be willing to be guided by your counsel."

"Humph! Willing! It would be the first time that she was ever willing to do anything I wanted her to do, and I have not the least doubt that she would be more unwilling to accede to my wishes at this time than ever before, for I want her to leave the house! *You* do not need her now for you are old enough to amuse yourself I should think, and *I* certainly do not! There is to be a new master here before the fall work begins, as I suppose you know." The last remark was made in a lower tone of voice and Willie readily understood that she referred to her approaching marriage with Mr. Hopkins, a young farmer living a few miles away; but as he made no reply she continued. "I do not suppose he would be pleased to have *too* many incumbrances, and Phebe is old enough and able to take care of herself."

"Perhaps he would like to have me also vacate his prospective premises," responded the brother with an unnatural bitterness in his voice.

"O, no! He is well aware that *you* can do nothing for yourself and has made no objections to *your* remaining."

There were sleepless eyes wet with weeping that night beneath the homestead roof as the midnight hour spread over it her dark wings, but it bore away on its upward pinions the trusting faith – the childlike submission of *one* heart at least to Him who is ever a "father to the fatherless ones."

"Now for a long ride down by the pond and along the sandy beach, where we can see the lilies on the water, and if the boat is not fastened I will gather a few for you once more," prattled Phebe, as on the ensuing forenoon she walked by the little wagon (which was now too small for both), as was her usual custom when the morning's work was done.

How could Willie ever forego these pleasures? He would continue his rides, drawn by the faithful Rover, who had seemed to enjoy these excursions equally with his young master and mistress. But Phebe always walked by his side, now patting his soft coat, or gathering flowers for him who could not skip about so blithely and easily as did she, or now and then helping the faithful Rover over the rough places, praising and caressing him for his valor and strength in overcoming difficulties. Happy trio! And was it possible that all this must end?

"Have you forgotten, Willie, what my true name is? You have not called me Lily-Pearl for a *long* time," she remarked, as they came in sight of the pure white blossoms that dotted the surface of the lake. "I shall never forget it. See, Willie, that beautiful lily yonder by that large leaf. How the ripples that come sweeping around the sandbar keep tossing it up and down, never allowing it to be quiet a moment. O, it really makes me tired to look at it. Yet that is *me*, Willie! That is 'Lily-Pearl!' I am going to get it for you to keep. When I am gone, and you look at it, think that I am no more 'little Phebe,' but your own 'Lily,' who will never forget or forsake you, my brother." Saying this she bounded into the little open boat, and with accustomed dexterity soon made her way to the point designated. It was no unusual labor for her willing hands, it being one of her greatest amusements when the little pond was decked with these fragrant blossoms to gather them.

Willie watched her for a moment, as she glided away from him, and then his coming desolation swept over his soul like a flood, and her form was hidden from his sight.

"See, Willie, I have it!" she exclaimed, as she held up the coveted treasure, exposing the long, smooth stem, by which, as she said, the mother pearl held it fast. "It came near pulling me in. Did you see me, Willie?"

But he did not. See her? How could he through all those blinding tears that came bubbling up rapidly from his bursting heart? He had crept from his seat in the wagon and made his way to a grassy knoll close by, and there beneath the shade of the old oak tree where they had often sat together he gave free vent to his emotions. The sky was calm and blue above him, and here and there a soft, fleecy cloud floated through the clear sunbeams of the July morning; the lake, beautiful in its gorgeous frame-work of hills and woods, lay spread out like a mirror, upon which the rays danced and sported close to the water's edge, penetrating the shadows, and lulling the murmur of the leaves, throwing over the prostrate figure of the weeping boy a net-work of lights and shades from the branches above him. Phebe had seen him from the boat, and in a moment more was standing beside him, her heart throbbing with sympathy and grief. She had thought to keep away this dark shadow for awhile by her merry words, but it was over now; and throwing her arms about his neck, she exclaimed:

"Willie, my dear brother, do not feel so badly. It is true, I must go and leave you for a time, but you are mine – all I have to love and work for. What do I care for any but you? Yes, I must go. I heard what Fanny said last night, but it was no more than I have heard before, or than I expected. Yet it makes me strong. I can leave you now, but only for a little while. We will not be separated long. *I* will come to you. Our mother gave you to me, and I promised to cling to you. O Willie, you shall see how I can work, how much I can accomplish! I will do more than was ever done before me by a 'cast-away.' Do you not believe me?"

Putting her hand under his head, she turned his pale wet face up to her view. He did not try to prevent her, but lay quietly as she placed him.

"Look into my eyes, Willie. *I* am not weeping. It seems to me I can never shed another tear. I feel so strong! The future, Brother! O the future! What a great huge painting it seems! But it is not full yet. *I* shall do something there; *my* hands will help to color it. Yes, *I*, little Phebe."

"I do not doubt it. There is a destiny for such as you. A mission awaits you. I will be more brave, more manly. You could not remain with me. A higher position than the partnership with a cripple or hostler to a big mastiff is meted out to you."

A smile for an instant broke over his clouded face, and Phebe laughed outright.

"Give me the lily," he said, at last, reaching out his hand for the coveted treasure. "We will divide it. You shall have the long smooth stalk while *I* will keep the flower. Henceforth you are my lily, sweet and precious to me; while *I—I—* well, I am nothing but the withered, crooked tendril seeking to wind itself about your loving heart."

She darted from his side before the last sentence was finished, and her companion following with his eyes her light, buoyant figure, saw standing on an elevation of ground not far off, the well known form of Crazy Dimis.

"I have found a double blackberry," she called, holding up something between her long, bony thumb and finger, "come and see it."

Phebe went to her.

"Those are not double, Aunt Dimis," she exclaimed.

"Don't two make a double? Put them together and then they do – there! It's a good omen for you, silly child. Make them double, help the time. We must help. Ha! ha! And help Fate! Don't *I* know, child? Fate is waiting for you! Go and help her make omens. But make them good! Ha! ha! *I* didn't but *I* will. Silly fools. Cry and love; by and by it will be love and cry. Don't *I* now? Go back to *him!* *I* don't want you." And with a bound she sprang over the fence and was lost in the thick underbrush of the honeysuckle swamp.

Phebe called loudly after her but she was not heeded. She wanted to ask her about a certain good lady, Mrs. Ernest, for this same half-crazed gibbering woman had awakened an interest for

Phebe in the heart of Mrs. Ernest, and it was no idle jest when she told Willie that "Crazy Dimis" was her friend. She now returned slowly to her companion, who was watching her.

"What did that crazy creature say to you?" he asked, somewhat impatiently. "Nothing good, I know."

"Yes it was. She told me to go and help Fate. I suppose she meant to have me fill up that picture I was telling you about, and I must go. To-morrow I shall start. Do not look at me so! you shall know all – everything I do or hope to do; and I shall come to see you often. Mrs. Ernest has promised to help me all she can, and I think I can make her my friend. It will be only a short run for Rover, and you must ride over there often – as often as you would like to hear from me, will you?"

She kissed his white forehead, then giving a low shrill whistle, which the faithful dog well understood, she said: "We must go home, for it is time to help get dinner."

In a moment more Rover with his wagon came up in good style, and they started down the path which wound around by the meadow brook through the clump of pine trees which stood as sentinels over the two graves beyond the garden wall.

"How I wish Father were sleeping there instead of beneath the waves," cried Willie; and no other word was spoken. What wonder? How soon the paths were to branch off from each other! Already the lonely cripple felt the shadows creeping over him that were surely to cover his dreary pathway as he wandered on alone. His heart was full of these sad forebodings, and he pressed the memento of his helplessness more closely in his hand as the spirit of rebellion for a moment arose to goad him. Then "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" came as a soft and gentle whisper to his soul, and looking up as Rover halted by the kitchen door he said mildly: "We shall all come together again, Phebe."

CHAPTER VIII. OUT INTO THE WORLD

"There! That is the *third* time I have called that girl this morning! She can lie in bed now until she gets tired of it! It is so provoking! And after telling her last night that I should want her early. I am out of all patience!"

Willie could not suppress a smile as this volley of indignation greeted him upon entering the breakfast room on the morning following the scenes related in our last chapter, although his heart was sad, but he made no reply and Fanny continued: "I *had* made up my mind to let her stay a while longer; perhaps through the winter, for after all it is hard to be sent out into the world to earn one's own living! Besides, *she* would never get along! No one would have patience with her, for work she will not! And how can a poor girl get her living if she will not work? But it is all up now! I can't and won't support her for nothing!" Fanny's rapid step and the brisk rattling of the breakfast dishes kept up all the time an active accompaniment to her words as she continued talking while preparing their early morning meal.

Willie listened to it all as he sat by the window and looked out upon the dewy grass and took in the soft beauties of the variegated landscape that lay stretched out before him, over which the first rays of the summer sun came gently stealing, driving back the dark shadows into the thick woodland upon the hillside. He then opened the window. There was music in the maple trees near where the robins had built their nests – there was fragrance in the cool fresh breeze that came and fanned his troubled brow. Just outside the yard the hay-makers stood with laughter and jest while they whetted their glittering scythes preparatory to their daily labor, while all the time their brown faces wore the pleasant smile of health and contentment. Poor Willie! He could only sit and look at them and pray for patience and resignation.

A remark from Fanny recalled him, and he replied: "I would go and call her but it would be useless for she is not here!"

"Not here? What do you mean? Has she gone?"

"Yes, she has gone, and it is my opinion Sister that you will miss her nearly if not quite as much as *I*."

"Gone! The heartless creature! This is all the thanks one ever gets for taking care of a good-for-nothing nobody for years! It is pretty pay now to clear out just as she *might* have been of some use, and without a word too!"

"You must have forgotten all you have been saying to her ever since we received the sad news of Father's death," replied Willie with some bitterness. "Still you are mistaken; she did not leave without a word. She has told me several times that she was going, although I could not believe it, and when I came out of my room I found this letter under my door. You can read it if you wish when you have time."

Without a word she took it from his hand and read as follows: "I cannot *say* good-bye Willie, and so as soon as the gray dawn creeps over the mountain top I shall steal from this house and go – God only knows where! I came here eight years ago a little strange child, leaving the first real friend in all my life far behind on the road to grieve at my absence, and now I *go* leaving only you my brother to be sad because I am not here. *You* will miss me; and when I think how lonely you will be without your 'little Phebe' to talk to I shall shed many tears. O, Willie! It is dreadful to leave the only one who loves us to go off alone, but I shall find friends, I know I shall! Do not be unhappy. Tell Fanny sometime, if she *ever* inquires as to my welfare, that I should have been happier to-night if she had loved me, or at least had exercised more patience with my many faults. I know I have tried her. Somehow I am not like the other girls about here; they are satisfied, but *I* – yes, Willie, I want to

fly – go up among the clouds or down among the pearls – I don't know which, but some spirit goads me on – God only knows where. I am looking out to-night upon the world where I am going for my new life with more fear and trembling than when in a little open boat I drifted away over a stormy ocean all alone. But it is better so. A hundred times I have shivered and shrunk before the storm of Fanny's indignation, and as I remember it, a peace steals over me even now with the great unknown future before me. I did desire to do all she asked of me, but I could not and so I must go! Perhaps she may yet think kindly of me, who knows? I am strong to-night dear Willie, notwithstanding this paper has so many tear-stains upon it! How a few days have changed me – no longer a child but a woman going forth, as Crazy Dimis commanded me, 'to make my fate, make omens.' So good-bye; remember what I told you of Mrs. Ernest. Phebe."

It was finished and Fanny handed it back to her brother without speaking. O how long that day seemed! The sun came out hot and sultry, drinking up the dew from the grass and withering the soft petals of the flowers; the locust sang his monotonous song in the shade and the mowers went busily on with their work, and the hours crept slowly by. Fanny was unusually silent; her busy hands seemed never to tire, but her face all day wore a weary, anxious look such as betokened thought.

It was late in the afternoon, just before the time for milking, that she came and seated herself on the lounge by her brother. Perhaps the memory of that mother who once sat there on just such a bright summer evening four years before came back to her, for it was then when she told Phebe never to leave her poor lame boy, always to love and comfort him. Who was to blame that the child was now an outcast, or that the poor motherless cripple sat there in that very spot lonely and sad? She did not speak for a moment as if ashamed of the womanly emotion that swelled her bosom. At last she said hurriedly: "What did Phebe mean about Mrs. Ernest?"

"She has told me that I could hear about her by going there occasionally."

"Why did you not go to-day?"

"I thought I would wait until to-morrow, then perhaps I might hear more," was the low reply. "She can have no definite plans as yet, but I will go in the morning."

"I will harness Rover any time for you," continued Fanny as she moved away to attend to her evening duties.

Willie dropped his head upon the pillow beside him and lay there motionless and still until the twilight shadows came creeping in at the window, covering him with a thick black pall. He could have wished that night that they might have buried him forever with their sombre folds, so harshly did life's greatest joys contrast with his overwhelming griefs!

Early the next morning Willie was on his way to the village drawn by the faithful Rover. It was a long time since he had been over that road alone, and at first he felt like shrinking from the task.

A carriage came and swept over the brow of the hill, drew nearer, then passed him. A lady occupied the back seat alone. She was a stranger but their eyes met. Hers so full of tenderness and pity – his bright with apprehension and suspense. He was sure that a tear glistened in her blue eye, but when he turned to look again she was gone. The driver he knew. The carriage belonged to the village hotel, and "Frank" always drove that span of grays. Once more Willie turned to look, and as he did so saw that the lady had bent forward as if to speak to him. "She knows how to sympathize with such as *I*," he thought, "for her expression was so kindly and gentle. Those eyes – they were so like my mother's. A deep, heavenly look as if wishing for something she had not yet received, which found its way into hers before they closed forever!" and a tear dimmed his own vision for a moment only; then his thoughts returned to the beauties around him and to *her* he was going perhaps to see again. The roads were fine and Rover was in excellent spirits, so that in a short time the village church loomed up in sight. Close by it was the parsonage – beyond the long row of neatly-painted dwellings surrounded with bright green shrubbery and a pleasant lawn reaching to the road, finally the hotel with its balconies and lofty cupola, which overtopped the principal business portion of the unassuming little town. To the farther store on the main street Willie was to go on an errand for his

sister, but first of all he would call at the parsonage. How his heart bounded with the prospect of coming joy, then sank again as the uncertainty rolled over him. Where was Phebe?

And where was Phebe? That morning, with her eyes full of tears she had stood in the little chamber where she had spent so many pleasant hours and dreamed so many pleasant dreams; the room she must now leave, with all of its hallowed associations, its garnered memories, to prove the Father's unfailing promises of care and protection!

"You could not have foreseen all this dear, dear Mother!" she mused as she turned to the window where the white marble stood so chill and comfortless in the morning shadows, "or you would never have placed your helpless boy in my care. But I must go. This pleasant cottage is my home no more! The flowers I have planted in the garden yonder – the bed of lilies these hands have tended so long for *your* sake must bloom on without me."

The first rays of the morning sun crept up from behind the eastern hills and rested as a sweet prophetic peace on the tree-tops that reared their stately heads above the lingering night shades, and taking the letter she had written the night previously stole softly from the room and thrust it under the door where Willie was sleeping all unconscious of the wretchedness that was wringing such bitter tears from her loving heart as she thought how he would miss her, and how lonely would be his morning ride down by the little pond without her. "Farewell!" she whispered, and then descended the stairs, stopping a moment to kiss the noble Rover and quickly passed on out in the world! The short past with its changes, its reachings and its longings were to be left behind, while the broad future with its hopes, allurements and ambitions lay before her. With a shrinking heart but firm tread she stepped into the untried path and walked steadily forward. Someone has said that "the secret of true blessedness is *character*, not condition; that happiness consists in not *where* we are but *what* we are. Our lives resemble much the Alpine countries, where winter is found at the side of summer, and where it is but a step from a garden to a glacier." Our little heroine found this to be so. It had been summer in the little cottage, not all sunshine nor all storms, for the days were as ever changeful and the years scattered over her life their shadows and their peaceful calms. "Go help fate make omens" Crazy Dimis had said, and with many a firm resolve she had said to Willie, "I will do it!" There was a world of mysteries before her out of which the "omens" were to be created, and little did she understand the way in which she was to be led. The perjured woman whose daughter had given birth to "Lily-Pearl" had listened to the whisperings of the serpent, and the great problem of justice was to be worked out in the ever changing adventures of "poor little Phebe," and now with a satchel in her hand she had left *all* she had known of love, and was alone upon the road where the cool morning zephyrs petted and caressed her. "My life!" she thought as she walked on towards the parsonage. "If we are God's children we need not fear the developments of His changing providences," Mr. Ernest had said to her one day while speaking to him of her future, and now these words came to her as bright and cheering as the rays of the morning sun, for both had driven away the darkness from her faith. Years after did memory return to this early morn to tread again the sandy road and listen to the chorus of the birdling's song, or watch with palpitating heart the silvery glories as they spread themselves over the eastern sky; and then return to the noonday scenes of an eventful life through which she had been guided.

CHAPTER IX.

AN UPPER ROOM IN THE HOTEL

Mrs. Ernest while bustling about in her kitchen saw her visitor approaching, and with broom in hand came out to welcome him. He was no stranger here, and few ever came who received a warmer greeting.

"How bright and fresh you look from your early morning ride," was the good lady's salutation, and throwing down a piece of carpet on the damp ground stood patting Rover and chatting merrily all the while as Willie crept into the house.

"I suppose *I* am not to feel at all flattered by this early call, for already something tells me that Phebe is the object of your visit," she laughingly said, while following him into the house; "so I will turn you over to Mr. Ernest with all the indignation I can muster," and patting him on the shoulder she cheerily invited him to the study.

The occupant of the quiet room was stretched in an attitude of languid repose upon the sofa as they entered, but probably in deep meditation. When, however, he discovered who had intruded into his season of reveries, he arose with a face all beaming with smiles, and took the little extended hand in his own and placing an arm about his visitor lifted him with ease into a chair close by.

"Now, Ella, you may go and give Rover that plate of chicken bones you saved for 'some hungry dog,' for he above all others deserves it."

Here was a happy home.

"There was always sunshine at the parsonage," Willie would say. If clouds ever came they were so effectually concealed that they never fell upon another. The brightest spot on earth – the place more to be coveted than palaces or posts of honor – is the peaceful, happy home, the nucleus around which fond hearts are gathered, where the compact of love remains unbroken only as death comes and steals away a link of the golden chain that binds fond hearts together.

"Is not Phebe here?" Willie asked after a few moments conversation.

"O no; she did not remain with us many hours; but she is not far away," replied Mr. Ernest, pleasantly. "I will tell you about her. There is a lady boarding at the hotel, an invalid, I believe, who has come to our village, as gossip tells us, after health, – happiness, rather, as I believe, for she seems very sad at times. I have called on her often, and at one visit she expressed an earnest wish for some one to read to her. I thought of Phebe at once, and when she came to us yesterday morning and told her story, of which, we were not wholly ignorant, I thought nothing could have been more *apropos*, and so I went over there with her. The lady seemed much pleased, and I have no doubt Phebe will be very happy there."

"I think I must have seen her when I was coming," interrupted Willie. "A lady passed me in the hotel carriage who had a sad, pensive look; I am sure it was she."

"I have no doubt you are right, for she rides out every day. I wonder, however, that Phebe does not take the opportunity to run over here for a moment."

But she did not.

Willie stayed longer than he first intended, hoping to see her again, but finally started for the store on his errand, passing the place where *she* had found her new home without even catching a glimpse of her, although he sought diligently to do so. Had he known that she was then engaged in penning a long sisterly letter to him he would not have been so thoroughly wretched all that day and the next.

It was some consolation, however, that Fanny seemed so much interested in her now that she was away. She was minute in her inquiries on his return, yet did not appear *quite* pleased when told that Phebe was *only* to read to her new mistress.

"Worse and worse," was her exclamation, "she was good for nothing before, what will she be now?"

"We shall see," was Willie's quick reply.

But he was thinking how much he would enjoy being there to listen as she read. He was not mistaken in regard to his conclusions about the lady in the carriage. It was Mrs. Gaylord, in whom Phebe had found a friend and protector. She had taken rooms at the hotel only a short time before, having no other company than a young mulatto girl about Phebe's age, who seemed devoted to her mistress, and mild and affable to all, yet she answered very few of the questions that were put to her by the inquisitive.

"They had come from Virginny, and would go back dare when Missus had got nuff of dis 'ere norf," was about the extent of the knowledge obtained from "Tiny" on any occasion.

Three weeks passed away and Phebe had not once seen "dear Willie." Mr. Ernest had told her of his frequent visits to the parsonage, and of the pleasure that would beam in his blue eyes as he received her letters from him; but no amount of persuasion could prevail upon him to make a visit to the hotel, which was much to Phebe's disappointment. She was always busy now. When she was tired of reading or the lady of listening, she was engaged with her needle.

"Young people are inclined to home-sickness if not employed," Mrs. Gaylord would say, pleasantly, and so Phebe was seldom idle.

During these seasons of occupation they had talked much. Phebe had told her all she knew about her early history, and her listener had many times laughed heartily at the recital, but not a word had she ever spoken of her own life. There was a dark cloud resting upon her, it was evident, for her companion had often looked up suddenly from her book to see the tears falling silently from the calm eyes, who would brush them hurriedly away as she said "go on;" and Phebe obeyed. At one time she smiled when detected, and drying her eyes she said, mildly —

"What is jealousy, little one? You have just been reading about it. What is *your* definition of the word?"

"Willie would say 'an unjust suspicion; a sense of imaginary wrong without proof,'" answered Phebe, hesitatingly.

She laughed now.

"O you little novice! How far you are behind the times. That definition might have done for your grandmother, but it will never do for these modern days. I will tell you, child, what it is, or what it means now. It is a wail of despair which the heart gives over the loss of its dearest treasure. The anguish of its desolation when the fire of love burns low; the cry of woe when it sees the vacant chair in its most secret chamber, and desolation looks with hungry eyes out from among the shadows of its former trysting place! Does the poor heart murmur? Does it put on the sackcloth and the sprinkling of ashes? Love is not dead, but straying, *straying*! This is jealousy. The vacation of one heart for — for — well, child, *you* know nothing about it, and may you long remain in ignorance."

She bowed her head and wept long and bitterly.

Phebe moved the ottoman on which she was sitting close by the side of the agitated lady and laid her head upon her knee. A bond of sympathy drew them together. A chord had been touched to which the heart of each vibrated in unison. Desolation was creeping among the shadows in the secret chamber of both hearts, and the feeble wail of woe which came from the lonely hearth-stones mingled in low, solemn cadence, and they two were united by these bonds of sympathy. A soft, white hand nestled lovingly among the braids of the young girl's hair as the bowed head still rested its heavy weight on the lady's rich dress, and from that moment a sweet confidence took possession of them both.

Ah! there is nothing so invigorating and comforting in this ever changing life as the sweet assurance of reciprocal affection in the hour of despondency and gloom. A mother's kiss, a father's

fond caress, soon dries the tear and soothes the pain of childhood, and can it be that their power grows less towards the children of accumulated years?

"Did I speak bitterly just now; my child?" the lady asked, after a long silence. "I hope I did not frighten you."

Phebe looked up into the sad face that was beaming now with a full glory of consolation as she answered:

"O no; I was not frightened. Even in my short life I have seen sorrow, and know well what it means. Ever since we have been together I have believed that something troubled you, and it has made me – "

"Made you what, my child?"

"Made me love you, O may I do this? Will you let little Phebe creep into your heart and find a resting place there? O Mrs. Gaylord, I am so lonely! Nobody but Willie – and he is lost to me now."

The large eyes were gazing with their far-off, mysterious look, which Willie had so often watched with a tremor of apprehension in his heart; but there were no tears in them. The wail was from the secret chamber, and the lady recognized it.

"Yes, dear," was her answering refrain. "You shall nestle cosily in this poor quivering heart if you desire it. I was once a lonely orphan like yourself, and I pined for a love I could not find. It is dreadful – this chilling desolation of life. At twenty I married, and was alone no longer. My yearning heart was satisfied, not because of the luxury that surrounded me, or the honors with which I was crowned as the bride of the rich young southerner. No, no. Sweeter by far than all of this was the assurance that I was loved. That was many years ago, when my face was fair and my cheeks covered with bloom. It is over now, and with my youth and beauty went the love which was more precious than all. *His* hair has lost its glossy hue and his step its elastic bound; but for these my heart has suffered no reaction, yet it bears to-day the scars of *many* wounds. Some are not yet healed, and memory often rends them anew until the tears *will* come trickling through the torn fissures. But I must not grieve you, my child. The world calls me happy, for it penetrates not the covering that my proud spirit has thrown over all, and I am willing it should be deceived. I came to this quiet village to gain strength to endure; when I have accomplished my object I shall return to my Virginia home. It is a bright spot to the looker on, full of plenty and repose for one whose soul has power to take them in; and to this home, my sweet comforter, I would take you."

Phebe started.

"Smother that refusal in those bewitching eyes, for I shall take none of it," she laughed. "You have just pleaded for my love. What good under the sun will it do you when hundreds of miles are piled up between us? No, no. We need each other. The days we have been together have made you a necessity to me. Do not answer me now," she continued, gently placing her white hand over the lips of her companion, as she saw them move for utterance. "Take a few more days to think of it. We have plenty of time. Talk to me now about this Willie, of whom you have spoken. You did not tell me that you loved him, but is it not so, my child?"

"Yes, I love him more and better than any one else. He is a poor cripple, four years older than I, and we have been together every day since his father brought me to him. His mother loved us both, and when she was about to die, she gave him to me, and told me never to forget or forsake him. How can I leave him to go with you? He has been such a dear brother to me for so many years; *you* would love him, too, I am sure, if you knew him as well as I."

"How your cheeks glow, little enthusiast! Now let me ask, is your hero drawn by a dog usually?"

"Yes. I was sure you must have seen him during some of your rides for he has come to the village often since I have been here."

"I have met him only twice, but even these faint glimpses into his peaceful face takes away my wonder at your heart's bestowal. It was pity that caused me to notice him and long for another beam from the liquid eyes, and now that I know who he is I can but feel hurt that you have not invited

him to our rooms. It would do me good I know to study that character and learn resignation from its teachings."

"May I? O – you do not know how much I thank you! I will go this very day to the parsonage, with your permission, to tell him. He may be there, when it is cooler, to hear from me; and *if* I could meet him!"

"Did I not say that it was *my* wish to study him for sake of the good it might do me?" and she kissed the glowing cheek of the young girl with a passion unusual to her. "Then go at once if you hope to see him, but hasten back for I am too selfish to permit you to remain long away. It is lonely, darling, and I cannot understand how I ever lived without you."

"You are so good!" and Phebe pressed the soft caressing hand to her trembling lips.

Nothing is more sweet than to be guided into this realm of thought by the precious foretaste of the love that awaited her when the end should be reached. She had gone out into the darkness expecting nothing but chilliness and gloom, but instead she was walking "by the side of still waters" and there was freshness and beauty all along the way. Still a portentous cloud was floating in the clear blue of her gilded sky, for how could she ever leave Willie to go with Mrs. Gaylord to her southern home? The weeks were rapidly passing, and when the hot summer days had all flitted away there would come a change, and her life had received so many already! "Where would the next one take her?" As she stepped in front of the mirror for a moment a smile of satisfaction stole over her young face. The new hat Mrs. Gaylord had purchased for her was very becoming, as that lady had asserted, and she thought how it would please Willie to see her looking so well. He had often lamented during the last two years that it was not in his power to procure these little luxuries, and she went on her way with a happy heart.

CHAPTER X. THE OPENING OF A NEW LIFE

"And whether we be afflicted, it is for our consolation and salvation, which is effectual for the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted it is for our consolation; for as all hearts suffer, all have the power of consolation."

"Mrs. Gaylord had suffered, and out of the sad experience of her eventful life had come the power to administer to others." Such was Phebe's thought when on her way to the parsonage, which stood in the suburbs of the village surrounded by its fresh green lawn that had always appeared so winning to the lovers of beauty, and peaceful to the seeker after "consolation."

Mr. Ernest also knew how to bestow this gift on the weary heart. His early days had not been filled with the bright things that rightfully belong to childhood, and his after years were those of toil and strugglings. He understood well how to apply the sympathies so consoling to those whose feet are torn with the thorns by the way.

Our little pedestrian was walking away from one minister of comfort to another who was equally skilled, and it was with the greatest difficulty that she could keep her airy feet down upon the well-beaten track which ran along by the side of the broad highway to the pleasant home of the village pastor, where she hoped to find Willie and extend to him Mrs. Gaylord's pressing invitation. Mr. Ernest had told her that he usually came in the early morning or in the cool of the evening, and now the sun was fast sinking down behind the western clouds. There might be a storm approaching, for the breezes were fresh and cool, and she could but think how the ripples were sweeping around the "sand-bar" and lifting the broad lily-pads among the rushes not far out from where the pleasant row-boat was fastened to the old oak tree. Should she ever glide in the little boat over the lovely blue waters again? And then, when the stern old winter had thrown his coverlet of ice across its throbbless bosom, when the lilies were all asleep in their cozy beds, what delightful rides she and Willie had enjoyed on its smooth surface as Lloyd Hunter drew them on his large comfortable sled. Was all this gone forever? She reached the door, and as no one was in sight, stopped a moment while her thoughts went on.

Willie was not there, for his visit had been made in the morning.

"I am going by there to-morrow."

Phebe's eyes brightened.

"May *I* go with you? Mrs. Gaylord will not let me walk so far, it not being 'lady-like,'" she smiled. "She has invited him to our rooms, and I am so anxious."

"Certainly, my dear; but be all ready, for I have an engagement at nine, eight miles away."

There had been no need for this last suggestion, for Phebe felt quite sure that with such a prospect before her she could not sleep at all. Still, after talking the matter over with Mrs. Gaylord, and getting her consent for the proposed visit, her heart felt a reaction at the thought of again meeting Fanny. It seemed long since she had been there, and the partition wall which had divided them while still together, had not been lowered by a single act, and now really appeared more formidable than ever when viewed at such a distance. How could she ever meet her?

When the morning sun sent his bright beams into her window she sprang from her bed with the question still unanswered.

"Good morning," said Mrs. Gaylord, putting her head in at the door at that very moment.

Phebe was surprised. Seldom did the lady leave her room before all of the rest had breakfasted.

"O, you needn't look so wonderingly at me," she continued, laughing. "I only thought I would tell you to put on your new white dress, as it is such a lovely morning, and then I want you to appear your best, for I know *he* will appreciate it," and she was gone.

"Well does she know how to be a comforter," thought Phebe.

How well she remembered at that moment the last walk she had with Willie down by the little pond, and his mournful wail of desolation as they talked of his lonely future without her!

The bell sounded along the hall telling all who desired an early breakfast that it was now ready, so hastening with her toilet, she opened the door leading to Mrs. Gaylord's room, and to her surprise found her also ready to go with her.

"I have had a new thought," she said gaily, "and have ordered the carriage. We will go together and take him out for a little airing. Rover, I have no doubt, will be much obliged to be excused for one day. Two miles and a half is a pretty long road for such a brute to draw so heavy a load."

Phebe made no answer, for she was a little disappointed. She had anticipated the walk back and the uninterrupted talk more than she had herself been aware of.

"Do you not like my arrangement?" queried the lady, artlessly.

Phebe expressed much pleasure at the prospect, and, come to think of it, "the new plan was preferable, as it would take away all embarrassment in the meeting with Fanny."

The carriage was at the door when the two were ready, and in a few minutes they halted before the parsonage to report the change. Then away they rolled on their delicate errand of pleasure and comfort.

Never had Phebe looked so fresh and pretty as now. Her plain hat of white straw sat jauntily on her heavy braids of jetty hair, from beneath which her dark eyes shone with a new brilliancy, her dress, about which Mrs. Gaylord had been so particular, set off her well rounded form to the best advantage, and as she sat by the richly attired lady no one would have imagined that the two were mistress and menial. Some such thoughts must have passed through the mind of the young girl, for her cheeks glowed, and an air of worth if not superiority, sat with easy dignity upon her every movement.

"There he is," she exclaimed, as they came in sight of the white cottage among the maples. "He is waiting for us."

"Hurry Frank," said the lady, "he does not yet recognize you Phebe."

"Willie, dear brother Willie!" she called out as the carriage drew up before the gate, and in a moment she had darted down by his side, and throwing her arms around his neck said cheerily: "Come, Willie, Mrs. Gaylord wants to take you out for a ride! It is lovely, and Rover can have a rest!" His face crimsoned as he realized that strangers were witnessing their joyful meeting. Unperceived Mrs. Gaylord had approached, and holding out her hand said pleasantly: "Phebe was so selfish that she was going to have you all to herself but I concluded to defeat her plans. Will you be so kind as to go with us and spend the day at our rooms? We will try to make it very pleasant for you." All this was said with so much tenderness that it would have been impossible for the poor boy to refuse.

"Let me get your hat, for I see that you are all ready as usual," and Phebe forgetting her dread of the "frigid Fanny" rushed into the house, meeting that important personage on the very threshold.

"Good morning" was her cheerful salutation; "we are going to take Willie away from you for a few hours, and I have come for his hat."

"He has not been to breakfast yet," was the chilling reply. "I think you had better wait and give him time to eat."

"Perhaps it would be better," ejaculated Phebe as she passed her, hat in hand.

"In the meantime would you not like to go with me down our pleasant walk to the pond?" asked Phebe, as she came back where Mrs. Gaylord and Willie were conversing familiarly. The lady cheerfully consented and they were soon out of sight among the trees that skirted the meadow brook. When they returned, Willie was sitting by the side of Frank and his usually pale face was flushed with excitement.

"If you like we will go around by the old town road," said the driver as the rest of his company became seated. "It will be two miles farther back but it is cool and shady." "All right!" and the happy trio were rapidly borne away. Phebe had told her friend how her "dear brother" became so helpless

and his sensitiveness in regard to it, and had more than once seen the tears of sympathy glisten in the fine eyes of the listener at the narration.

"His feet and limbs below the knees have not grown since he was a baby," she had said; "and of course they cannot bear the body, which is well developed. He can creep about very well, but is unwilling that any one outside of his own home should see him. When a mere child he has told me his manner of locomotion was to sit and *hitch* himself about, which gave him the appellation among the boys of 'hitch Evans' which so mortified his pride that he would not appear among them."

"Poor boy!" was the low response. Now, however, Mrs. Gaylord chatted pleasantly with him about the beauties of the landscape – the fading glories of the passing summer and of her own home in the sunny south, until as he said after, "I forgot that I was a mere cypher amid it all." At last they arrived at the hotel, and as Frank with his strong arms set him on the broad winding stairway he scrambled up to the top on his hands and knees, laughing as he did so because Phebe would wait for his slow movements rather than trip forward with Mrs. Gaylord, who wanted to see if Tiny had all things in readiness.

It was a delightful day to them all. Dinner was served in the upper room, and Phebe thought as she watched the glowing face of her brother that it was never before half so beautiful as now. Was it because Phebe was again near him? Or had the kind words and suggestions of his new friend aroused energies of which before he was not conscious? It was true that every moment had been filled with reading and conversation and it was all so new to Willie! "It is a fact," continued Mrs. Gaylord after Tiny had taken off the last dish from the table; "that many with far less brains and more inefficient than yourself have filled important places in the world's history. With exercise I do not see why your body should not become sturdy and robust. I have a friend in Boston who has a large clothing store and manufactures his own goods, and the great object of insisting upon your company to-day was to tell you that I will, if you desire it, bring your case to his notice, and if he favors my suggestions will let you know all about it."

"O – if I could!" came from his overflowing heart. "If I could only do something! I have always been told that it was no use for me to exert myself for I was helpless, and I had settled down as far as it was possible on that supposition."

"But you are not! Your present skill with the needle has its advantages and in a very short time you would be independent at least. Labor brings contentment and with it the years would not pass so laggardly." Phebe had come up behind him and was smoothing his brown curls with her gentle hand, and reaching up his trembling one he clasped hers tightly as he asked:

"Phebe, more than sister, can I do this? Will the time ever come when I shall cease to eat the bread of dependence? Tell me Phebe, for your words have ever given me strength; am I truly only the long withered stalk you hold as the emblem of myself?"

"No, Willie! Believe what Mrs. Gaylord has said and grow firm! You can – you will! I feel it in my heart you 'will go up the stairs' and leave some at the foot who do not now expect to stay there! I thought of it to-day and determined not to let you go ahead of me, and so kept close by your side." She laughed while he warmly pressed the hand he had been holding.

"You see," interposed Mrs. Gaylord, "Phebe and I have talked a little about this but I did not mention, even to her, the plans which for more than two weeks I have been maturing. To-morrow we will go to the city, Phebe and I, and see what can be done, and if you will come to us on the following day all can be decided."

It was decided! Mr. Bancroft of Boston would do well by him; take him into his own home and see that his wants were attended to until he had become efficient in the business, and then give him a place in his establishment if he proved himself worthy.

"Worthy?" exclaimed Phebe; "he is noble – he will be all you can desire!"

"The hearts of young ladies are not always reliable in *business* relations," replied the gentleman with a mischievous twinkle in his bright eye. "However, Mrs. Gaylord, upon your maturer judgment

I will try him, for really you have excited in me an interest for the young man; and I see no reason why he cannot be a master workman. *I* began life by coiling my feet under me on the bench, and I could have done it just as well had they not been incased in No. 9's." He laughed. "His Rover will be just the thing; he can soon be taught to bring his master to his work and return to his kennel for protection. And by the way, I shall be obliged to see that *his* animal has an 'ordinance' of its own. They kill dogs here so promiscuously."

"*I* had thought of that and concluded to set Pompy at work training another for his use as soon as I return home. You know he is famous at such work."

Willie received the report of their successful mission in the city with almost ecstatic joy. "Can it be true?" he thought. There would be difficulties; any amount of pride must be overcome – shrinking sensitiveness subdued – but he would try! To have aspirations – anticipations of success – what more could he desire?

In three days Mrs. Gaylord would go with Willie to his new home and Phebe was to accompany them.

CHAPTER XI. "ROSEDALE."

Come with me, gentle reader, to the sunny south, to the land of orange groves, where the air is sweetest and the sky is bluest; where nature's lyre does not of necessity get unstrung or lose her summer melodies as winter breaks in with harsh, discordant notes to jar the ear and chill the rich, warm blood. Come to the land of flowers, of poetry, of dreams. Hard seems the fate which thrusts a "serpent into every paradise," in whose trail death follows, withering up its freshness and throwing a net-work of decay over its richest beauties. Yet such is the intruder blighting many homes in the cold regions of the bustling north, as well as in the clime where the sweet singers of the faded woods delight to pour out their winter's songs. Alas! that it should be so.

"Why, my Lily-Bell, how faded you look this morning! Worse than the rose you wore in your hair last night. Now let me wager something. What shall it be? Ah! my yesterday's letter against your's of yesterday, also, that I can divine the cause. Shall it be? Ah! that smile! It was like the morning zephyrs sporting with the withered petals of my 'Lily-Bell.' Let me kiss back its beauty, or breath some of my exuberance into it, which seems so worthless in its prodigality," and the lively little lady bent over the invalid's chair and kissed over and over again the brow of her companion.

"There! there! Look quickly! Two little rose leaves of unquestionably pinkish hue are fluttering in close proximity to those lovely dimples. But they have flitted away again. What a pity that beauty is so fleeting."

"I should think you would despair, dear Grace, of charming one into life who has been so long dead. The task would be more congenial to your taste, I imagine, to roll me up and lay me away in your casket of precious relics for memory to grow sentimental over in future years. Why do you not do it, *la Petite*

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