

# FIFTY YEARS AGO.

A STORY OF

NEW ENGLAND LIFE.

BY

CLARA A. WILLARD,

Author of "May Chester," "Nellie Grayson,"  
Etc., Etc.

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*"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant."*

# FIFTY YEARS AGO.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE PROPOSITION.

"MOTHER, has Ernest come?" said Grace Winthrop, as she came into the cool milk-room, where, with housewifely pride, a quiet matron stood counting the bright rows of tin pans which adorned the shelves.

"Ernest!" said her mother, as if only a sound fell on her occupied thoughts. "Twenty-four pans of milk; the weather is getting so warm that I must make cheese instead of butter this week."

"Why, mother! you seem to care more for the butter and cheese than you do for me. I have been waiting for Ernest a long time. I thought it was such a lovely evening he would take me to Julia Thorn's."

"I have n't seen him, child, since he came in to supper. I suppose he is very tired, and perhaps gone to bed. You are rather late. Was n't grandma as well as usual?"

"Yes, ma'am, but I thought father told Ernest he must go to mill after supper. I waited to ride home with him. Uncle Henry came with me to



the foot of the hill. I'm sorry Ernest has gone to bed, I wanted to see Julia a little while to-night."

"Perhaps he has not. I've been too busy to miss him. You can surely find him if you set about it."

On went Grace through the great, old kitchen, through the sitting-room beyond, and out into the porch.

This porch was a cool, inviting place, with benches on each side of it. Its cover was a quaint, gable roof, shielding it from the broad sunlight, and from the storm. Lilac bushes grown to trees, threw their fragrance into it in May, and big, double roses budded, blossomed, and scattered their fading leaves on its benches and floor in June. Just outside the gate, stood an old elm tree, so broad-spreading that its shadows fell over the whole front of the house and covered the little yard; to-night it let the moonbeams through, revealing Ernest, sitting without his coat, on the stone steps of the porch, his elbows resting on his knees, and his face covered with his hands.

"Here you are, naughty brother!" said Grace, coming close up to him. "Why didn't you go to mill, I waited a great while for you. I saw Julia Thorn this morning, and told her I thought we would come there this evening."

"You must not make any promises for me, Grace, until harvest is over. You know I'm too hard at work all day to care to go out evenings. And, oh! I do get so tired of this perpetual round of sowing and reaping; it's plant, and hoe, and sow, and mow, until I sometimes wish I was in the mid-

dle of the ocean, clear out of sight of land. I wanted to study this summer, and get ready to teach school next winter, but if I get up ever so early in the morning to have an hour to myself, I always find father is ahead of me, and he says so pleasantly, 'Now, Ernest, our work will get a good start, the birds have been singing this long time, we'll make it up as they do, by going to bed early.' I can't tell him I want an hour to myself, when he really needs my help so much. I think I will make it up at noon, but then mother looks so tired, and has so many little errands to do, that I cannot help stopping to see if she wants me. And at night my eyes are so heavy that they will shut up in spite of my resolutions to the contrary. Don't talk about my going out evenings with young folks; I am as old as father now."

Down perched Grace close by her brother's side, and for a moment her blue eyes were veiled in sadness, but the light within broke through them, and looking him fully in the face, she said: "I never saw such a family! Father and mother are always busy, Annie has a great many cares, and now you are talking the same way. I am never idle, though mother and Annie say I waste a great deal of time. I am sure the children are like a hive of bees. I wonder if it is so in every family."

"I suppose so, father says that people who have good health, and mean to accomplish anything, must work. I wish I could see something of the world outside of a farm. I used to think when I was a little boy, that if I could climb to the top of Eagle Mountain, I could look over and find out

what they were doing on the other side of the world, but, alas! I've climbed Eagle Mountain, and find it only has farms beyond it. *Now*, I have another wish, don't you tell anybody, Grace, if I will tell you something."

"No!" said Grace, in a half whisper, as if suddenly impressed with the importance of her brother's thoughts.

"Well, then, I've got a plan in my head. I did not mean to tell you quite yet, but you are so good to see a way out of difficulties, that I might as well engage your services."

"Not to go away from home, Ernest."

"Hush, Grace! don't you speak so loud. I have n't formed any plans yet. I was only going to tell you what I keep thinking about. You know father sometimes speaks of his brother Edward, who lives in Boston. I heard him tell mother last night that he had not been at home in twenty years; they were wondering why he never comes back to the old place. Father said he supposed his devotion to business first took all of his time, and now his habits were different from the old ways at home, and all his interests were different. Mother said she should like to see him once more, but she supposed she never should. 'No,' said father, 'you and I shall never look him up, but some of our boys may.' That thought was just the thing I needed. Father little dreamed what he was doing for me when he said it. I have been fully determined to go somewhere this fall, but *where* was the point I could not reach. Now, I know, I'm going to Boston to find Uncle Edward, and you must help

me off. If Uncle Edward is anything like father, he'll be glad to see me, and give me an idea or two besides."

"Ernest!" said Grace, laying her hand suddenly on his shoulder, "I'll go with you, I want to see Boston and Uncle Edward, too!"

"You go with me!" said Ernest, in his turn, quite surprised at Grace's adopting his plan so heartily. "You know mother would not let you. I doubt if she thinks me old enough to go alone; and you, who are always worrying her by your thoughtlessness, she will keep in her sight for some years to come, I imagine."

"I don't know that mother does me justice. Sometimes I think she does not. I do not love to make butter and cheese, or wash dishes, and I am not as careful as Annie, but you know I am never idle. I do a great many things about the house. I can't help loving birds and flowers, and running after the brooks now and then, and I should love to go to school more, and learn a great deal."

"How would you like teaching school?"

"I don't believe I should like it. I want more variety. I'm going to Boston with you. Just see if I do not!"

"Why, Grace," said her brother, "you don't know what you are talking about."

"Yes, I do, I think it is the wisest plan you ever made, only I should not have thought you would have left me out of it. You know we always go together; come," said she, drawing very close to him. "Having decided to go, let's plan *how* and *when* we will set away,' as Aunt Nannie says."

"We! Grace, you astonish me! I thought you would favor my going, and do more than anybody else to help me off, but I never thought of your going with me. You know you cannot."

"Why not? I want to travel just as much as you do." I would not be afraid to go anywhere in the world with you."

"Suppose I should go on horseback?"

"You won't go on horseback. If you do, I'll borrow grandmother's pillion and ride behind you. Don't you know," added she, coaxingly, "that you will have a great deal better times if I am with you? Uncle has a daughter, too. She must be older than I am, but no matter for that. I'm sixteen, and you are eighteen. I think we are old enough to see something of the world."

"A pretty couple! mother will say. Now, Grace, you will spoil it all, if you persist in going."

"I *am* going, and I won't spoil it either. Come, let's plan how we will go; let me tell mother."

"Just for the sake of hearing her say 'No, no, children! home is the place for young folks. You won't take such a journey as that till you are a good deal older than you are now.' If you will talk to her, and get her willing to have me go, it may be a good plan to let her into the secret. You will let me tell her when I have a good chance; say yes, quick, for here she comes now."

Before Ernest had time to discuss the matter any farther, Mrs. Winthrop came into the porch, and sat down in an oaken chair, which was nearly as old as the family mansion. She was weary with the toils of the day, and had come out to get the

cool evening breeze before retiring for the night. "Grace," said she, "I've been thinking of a piece of work for you to do."

"What is it, mother?" Then, without waiting for an answer, she added, "I hope it isn't to learn to make cheese!"

"No," said Mrs. Winthrop, smiling, "I'll take care of the cheese for the present. Do you remember that bundle of flax yet unspun in the garret? It belonged to the winter work, but the time to do it did not seem to come."

"Mother! sit still and spin these warm days! Oh, I never can: wait until next winter!"

"No, the winter will bring plenty of work for whoever lives to see it. I think you can find the time, if you have a will to do it, this summer."

"Well, mother," said Grace, turning suddenly around and laying her head caressingly upon her mother's lap, "let's you and I make a little business arrangement. I'll promise to spin every bit of that flax beautifully, if you will promise to let me go somewhere."

Ernest looked up with a start. He had great faith in a certain tact which his sister possessed, but now he thought her enthusiasm had bewildered her judgment, and all of his plans were spoilt by this premature disclosure. But Grace was clear-seeing; she knew that her mother, soothed by the quiet of the household, and cheered by the presence of her children, was in a good mood to listen to a little "foolish talk," as she sometimes called Grace's playful sallies. Ernest was a noble boy; and as Mrs. Winthrop's fond eye rested on him,

she saw he looked troubled and careworn, and an added touch of tenderness came over her face.

"Mother is going to listen," said Grace, and mother smiled in spite of herself. "Now, if you will promise to let me go somewhere with Ernest in—this is July—well, then, in October; won't that suit us, Ernest?" said she, raising her head and looking at her astonished brother.

"I've nothing to say, Grace; you have taken the business so suddenly and so thoroughly into your own hands, that I am waiting to hear, almost as much as mother is."

"In October, then," said Grace, laying her hand back in its resting-place. "I will spin all the flax, and make rows of cheeses, if you will only say 'yes' to our going."

"Do you expect me to hire you to be dutiful?"

"No, mother; I know you too well to ask that, but I want you to promise me this great favor. I want you to promise right here, to-night."

"I never make a promise without knowing how it can be kept. You may tell me what you want, and I will promise to think about it. Is it something you really care for, Ernest?"

"Yes, mother, it is something I have been thinking about, but Grace has shaped it out so suddenly that I hardly know whether it is her plan or mine."

"Ernest, you are the best brother in the world! but you know you think about a thing so long; I don't know what you would do without me to finish up your plans."

"What you would do without him to hold you back, you mean," said Mrs. Winthrop.

"Well, mother, Ernest thought this all out himself; only he did not put me in, which made it very incomplete. I know you will think so when you hear it."

"If you tell me, you will have to get to it pretty soon, for it is bed-time now," said Mrs. Winthrop.

With another look at her brother, from which she gathered neither encouragement nor discouragement Grace said: "Ernest and I want to go to Boston, to visit Uncle Edward."

"Boston! child, do you know where that is, or what you are talking about?" and good Mrs. Winthrop fairly raised her hands in astonishment at the wild proposition.

"I do, mother, and I really mean what I say. I don't think it would be such a very wonderful thing for Ernest and I to go to Boston. You always say you think I am safe if he is with me. I heard you tell father that we balanced each other very nicely. Of course, I wouldn't think of your trusting him alone," added she, looking archly at her silent brother, "but we, Ernest and Grace Winthrop, could find our way to Boston and back again, and tell you all wonderful stories of our adventures. Come, say 'yes,' please, mother."

"Why, don't you know, my child, that if I should say 'yes,' it would not help you? You have neither money nor clothes. You do not even know the way, and, if you did, you have no means of conveyance; and, if you had, do you suppose I would consent to two such children going off to find the way alone to a strange city, to find a strange uncle who might not be glad to see them, after all. Come, come,

Grace, it's time you were in bed, with the prospect of waking up with something more rational in your young head;" and Mrs. Winthrop made a move to rise, which somewhat disturbed that same young head, and brought a face so shapely and full of character directly to her view, that she insensibly patted the fair cheek.

"Wait a minute, mother. Promise me, before you go, that you will *think* of this. I expected you would say 'no,' at first, but if you will only *think* of it, I shall have great hopes."

"You must talk to your father about it, and see what he says," and Mrs. Winthrop rose, feeling that she had quite settled the matter by thus referring it to "father."

"If I should ask him to-morrow, he would say, 'What does your mother say?' You know, if you really liked it, he would by and by think it was an excellent plan."

"What has Grace got into her head now," said her sister Annie, as she came into the porch and sat down upon the steps. "I thought every body was tired and sleepy, and gone to bed."

"I wonder how you could remember such words as 'tired' and 'sleepy,' when you were riding in the moonlight with Sanford Ross. I don't believe he feels as old as father, do you, Ernest? But come, Annie, I don't care what nice rides you have, *if* you will only help me get mother's consent to our going to Boston."

"Boston! Why, Grace, what are you talking about?"

"Don't say 'Boston!' Annie, just as if I had said

going to the moon. I don't think it is quite out of the world, and I am sure we can find it, *if* mother only says 'yes' to it. I'll help you sew for the boys all winter, and, when you go to housekeeping, I'll outdo Mother Ross in her plans for your comfort. Come, Annie."

"Come where? I'm sure I don't know what new idea has got into your head since you went to grandmother's this morning. Have grandfather and grandmother taken it into their heads to go traveling, and want you to go with them?"

"No, Annie! Ernest and I are going," and then, as quickly as possible, she told the delightful plan which by this time seemed to belong to her as much as it did to her brother.

Mrs. Winthrop and Annie exchanged glances; they were accustomed to Grace's rapid conclusions, and, strange to say, were often obliged to admit their correctness; but this one did seem rather wild and made no deep impression on mother or daughter.

Mrs. Winthrop ended the evening's consultation by saying, "It is too late to talk any longer, we *must* all go to bed; this sitting up late in harvest time will never answer."

"Good night, Ernest," said Grace, and leaning over to him she whispered, "are you sorry I'm going with you?"

"Going with me! Judging from your success to-night, I think I see us both going."

"Don't give up so. I believe we shall go. I wish mother would not call us children. I know she only means me when she says it. She thinks

you and Annie are grown up. I'm going to convince her that I can be grave and more like Annie. You are not vexed with me for telling, are you?"

"No; I don't think it will make much difference in the end; but I thought you told me good night. As mother says, 'it's time to go to bed.'"

"Good night, then." And as Ernest heard her light footsteps on the stairs, he could not help thinking she was a sister of whom any brother might be proud.

"She is provoking sometimes; but she does carry her points even with our good mother; and I should not wonder if in the end I found myself with her on the way to Uncle Edward's."

Two hours later the tall old clock, which had already measured off the years of one generation, strikes twelve. The moon shines quietly through the many-leaved elm, and throws shadows all over the ancient roof. Quiet and refreshing sleep has fallen over every inmate of the household; it touches us, too, dear reader, and we must wait for another chapter to tell all we know of the Winthrop family, into whose home we have come with so little ceremony.

## CHAPTER II.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE FAMILY.

WE must first seek an introduction to the head of the household, good Deacon Winthrop. The evening our story commenced he was too tired to find any rest in the old porch; but to-day he is taking his "nooning" in the oaken chair, and while he dozes we can tell you that he is the youngest of a family of six brothers, all born in this same old mansion. By the common routine of human events, he has come to be his father's successor at the homestead. The other brothers, except one who died in early life, have wandered away and found homes and employment in new places—all enterprising men. By careful industry Henry, now Deacon Winthrop, has added his brothers' portions to his own until nearly all the paternal acres are in his possession. He is not a man of many words, but he is known to possess a clear, consistent Christian character.

The Bible is to him the foundation of all knowledge. No season is so hurried that he does not find time to open its pages and gather at least one precious morsel to sweeten his daily toil. Elevated



by its purity, strengthened by its wisdom, made gentle and forbearing by its lessons of love, what wonder is it that good Deacon Winthrop is a *power* in the church and town. Simply to meet this quiet, unassuming man, you would not understand why his words are so often quoted, why his opinion carries such weight; but we, who know where his strength lies, cannot wonder at its manifestations. Around these same old door-stones he played—a loving, trusting boy. At the old fire-side he listened to stories of his father's childhood, passed under this very roof. Here he had heard from his mother's lips the story of Joseph and his brethren, of David and Goliath, of Solomon's wisdom and Samson's strength. She told him of the children of Israel and their strange wanderings from Egypt to Canaan. She told him how disobedience and sin came into this beautiful world, and she taught him that "the blood of Jesus Christ" could free him from its dreadful bondage. Here God blessed that mother's teachings; and when the father was called to his rest, the son rose up to fill his place; continuing the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise at the family altar, and in turn rearing his children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Mrs. Winthrop was born and educated among these same New England hills. She was a woman of excellent common sense, quiet and dignified in her manners, and in every respect a "help-meet" for her husband, whose judgment she respected, and whose views imperceptibly influenced her whole life. She was a mother who never wearied

in caring for her children; they were "the joy of her heart," and "the light of her dwelling." Still she was so oppressed with care and the many demands on her time, that she did not often unbend in playfulness, except with mirth-provoking Grace!

Annie, the eldest child, was now twenty. She possessed all her mother's housewifely attributes. She was a perfect home treasure, caring for her brothers and sisters with almost maternal tenderness. "And yet," she would sometimes say to Ernest, "I don't know how it is, father and mother seem to have great confidence in me, but Grace can accomplish more with them than I can."

Ernest was a fine specimen of a New England youth fifty years ago—a son in whom his parents found rest. During the summer months he worked on the farm, and in the winter he attended school. His face was noble and manly, and his form finely developed; his words were much more abundant than his father's. A stranger would have thought him more accessible. As we have learned from his conversation with Grace, he was not fully content in his present mode of life, and was far from being a fixture in it. He had made up his mind to teach school the coming winter, and before that time to get a sight of the world beyond Eagle Mountain.

Grace! I hardly know how to present her, she was so like and so unlike the rest of the household. Her face was very fair, and her violet eyes paled and darkened with her different emotions. She was full of vivacity, kindling and sparkling in the life about her; ever respectful to her father and mother, but encountering their opinions with a



playfulness which Annie never attempted. She seemed to have no liking for the daily routine of farm life, and sometimes called forth her mother's disapprobation at her seemingly wasted time, but then she was so full of expedients—so ready for an emergency—coming in at just the right time to stay the weary hands of her mother and sister! Her presence was felt throughout the house in little tasteful decorations. Seldom a day passed when flowers grew, but they bloomed in fragrant bunches on the high mantle-shelf in the sitting-room, or on the cherry table between the windows. The big double roses, the pinks and sweet Williams grew in great profusion under her fostering hand. And she knew all the wild flowers within ordinary walking or climbing distance. She made the wee old-fashioned mirrors shine, and the few articles of choicer furniture were polished to their utmost capacity by her willing fingers. She made her mother's and grandmother's caps, and trimmed her own and Annie's Sunday bonnets. Everything she touched seemed to show its brightest side.

The four younger children, Charles, Henry, Arthur and Mary, loved Annie very much. She was only one step removed from their mother; but Grace charmed them. She went with them for berries, and told them stories, and went sliding down hill with them winter evenings, and helped them out of many a difficulty.

The same feeling which encircled her at home, met her among her young friends. She was welcome everywhere. With her brother Ernest she was particularly intimate; their characters har-

monized finely and balanced well. His advice often modified her schemes, and her disregard for petty annoyances helped him cheerfully over many difficulties. Life at Deacon Winthrop's involved great economy and care. The sheep contributed their share of food and raiment, the cows yielded stores of milk, butter and cheese.

It was, as Grace had said, a busy household; but it was the abode of cheerfulness and refinement—a refinement which being inborn, a native element of the soul, developed itself as clearly as if its revelation were made through the medium of more costly surroundings.

Now the ever watchful old clock strikes the early morning hour, and all through the east rosy tintings outskirt the dawning of another glorious summer day, and rouse the different members of the refreshed household to their allotted tasks. Grace's first thought was of that wonderful journey in October, and how it was to be accomplished. "I'll begin on the flax," thought she. "Mother expects to tell me about it, and wonder why I do not keep at it just as Annie would. She will be surprised if I get it done before bleaching-time next spring. Now, I *will* try and let her see how well I can do a thing if I really set about it. I'll make my fingers fly and the wheel, too."

Annie, who was an early riser, had not yet gone down; so Grace bounded out of bed, and, quickly dressing herself, went up to the garret to reconnoitre.

Close by the chimney stood the wheel, with its empty distaff; there lay the bundle of flax, and

here stood the magician who was to bring nice smooth threads out of its fibres. A thought of the dewy morning outside tempted her to waver; but no, she would not. Her first thought was to bring the wheel close to the little garret window and there accomplish her task; but the air, even in the early morning, felt confined and stifling. She wanted deep, full breaths. She could not stay up here. Next she thought of the window in Aunt Nannie's "out-room," where the smell of new-mown hay came in so refreshingly, and where she would be as welcome as the birds who stopped there to pick up a nice breakfast of crumbs on the sill. But what would mother think to see her coming from Aunt Nannie's every morning. She would have to tell her why she went, and that would spoil the secret pleasure she was going to have in doing her work.

She thought of another plan—beyond the room where the boys slept, was a small store-room. There was a pleasant window in it opening into the very branches of an old apple-tree. She always had a special fancy for the view from this window, and here she would bring her wheel and spin, at least, an hour every morning before anybody needed her down-stairs, and sometimes during the day. She could get an hour unnoticed. Her resolution thus taken was soon carried out. The wheel stood in its place, close by the open window, nicely dusted and ready to work, and the bundle of flax was stored away on an old chest in the corner of the room. She had nearly completed her arrangements, when she heard the call

to breakfast. She had fully intended to be ready for her share of the morning work down-stairs, but the time had gone faster than she thought, and here she was late at breakfast.

"I did not know but you had gone to Boston," said Ernest, in a quiet undertone, as she took her seat beside him at the table.

An appreciating smile was all the return she had time to make when her mother said: "I doubt if it is a good plan for you to sit up so late at night planning to go off visiting. I wondered why you did not come to set the table and help about breakfast."

"She got up before I did," said Annie. "I'm sure I don't know what she could have been doing."

Grace wanted to excuse herself very much, but that would be spoiling it all; so she said, with her usual vivacity, "I'll make it all up to-day, mother; and to-morrow morning I'll get breakfast before the cock crows if you want me to."

"Take care," said Deacon Winthrop, smilingly. "Mother believes in more moderation than that. An early breakfast now and then would never suit her. She likes things in an even way."

"That is Annie," thought Grace. "I wonder if I shall ever get on the 'even way.'"

Breakfast and prayers were over, and the busy household went to their daily tasks. Only Arthur and Mary went to school during these harvest days; the others were large enough to be very serviceable to their father and brother. Arthur and Mary had their tasks, too, for they fed the

chickens and the ducks, the turkeys and the goslings; they gathered the eggs, and saved many a step for the weary feet of their mother. Grace superintended their simple toilette, filled their lunch-basket for school, and then went hither and thither doing nameless necessary things. Mrs. Winthrop proceeded with her cheese-making, which was, indeed, a wonderful process. She managed it so nicely that it did not really seem a great deal of trouble. She had a way of doing things quietly, and as the snow-white curd was separated from the watery portions of the milk, she packed it into a strong cloth, inclosed it in a hoop to give it shape, and put it under a heavy weight to press, and was glad so much of the day's work was done.

Annie, meantime, was busy preparing the substantial ginger-bread for the field lunch. In harvest days extra food was necessary. Cake and cheese, and a most excellent root-beer, which Mrs. Winthrop knew just how to compound, formed a substantial repast between the early breakfast and the dinner. Charles came for the basket, which was always in readiness to be sent into the field by half-past ten, and then came the preparations for dinner, followed by that peculiar stillness which foretells the coming noon in the country.

"What is Grace doing up-stairs?" said Mrs. Winthrop. "I want her to go over to Aunt Nannie's for some sassafras root for the beer. I see the last I made is almost gone."

The doors were all open, and Grace, who had gone up to put the flax on the distaff, heard the

inquiry, and ran quickly down before anybody had time to call her.

"Here I am, mother," said she, "ready to go to Aunt Nannie's." And putting on her sun-bonnet, she was soon over at the little brown house, and back again with the sassafras root.

While she goes back to her duties, we may linger at the little brown house long enough to understand who its inmates are. It stands on the other side of the road, opposite Deacon Winthrop's garden. Its inmates are two maiden sisters, familiarly known as "Aunt Nannie" and "Aunt Lois." Their father and mother had been dead many years. If "the even tenor of their way" had ever been disturbed, the world never knew it. The outer seeming was placid, and the judgment rendered in their case was, "born, lived a good many years, and growing old, without any thing very eventful to mark the journey." Perhaps the story told by them would have sounded very differently, but it was long past, and they were happy in their quiet ways. When Mrs. Winthrop came a bride to her husband's house, they gave her a cordial welcome, and had exercised a motherly care over her ever since. If the children were sick, Aunt Nannie knew just what to give them. She had herbs of every kind, neatly tied up in bunches and hanging on the low beams of her little attic. If Mrs. Winthrop wanted to go visiting in the earlier years of her married life, Aunt Lois could always come over and "look after things," and see that the children were kept out of mischief. From their loom came the rolls of strong brown linen which supplied

the Winthrop household. They knew how to bleach it too. Aunt Nannie kept a good look-out for "bleaching time." She knew just when the sun would do such work most effectually. The busy hum of their wheel might be heard many hours of the winter's day, as they drew out and twisted into threads the wool and the flax. Then, in summer, how Aunt Lois worked in the garden! Charles and Henry made it, but she kept it in order. She had "alley beds," where the pinks and sweet Williams, the poppies and red and white hollyhocks grew in profusion. There were daffodils and ladies'-slippers, and such a wealth of roses! Aunt Lois loved flowers as she did the sunshine, and they always seemed to grow wherever she put them. Aunt Lois and flowers were always associated in Grace's mind, and from her she had learned many things about them. From her earliest childhood she never went in summer time, even on a hasty errand, that Aunt Lois did not find time to give her a "posy just to smell of," and then to go with her after wild flowers! It was astonishing what treasures she found hidden under dry leaves in early spring, so delicate that the wind would almost blow them away. Grace always accompanied her on these occasions. They were perpetual sources of pleasure to her. Sometimes, in autumn days, she would come home wreathed in clematis, and wearing necklace and bracelets of spice-wood berries. Aunt Lois never thought these devices were foolish; she had an eye for the beautiful, and sometimes she would tell Nannie that "it beat all how that child would rig up in flowers, and look as handsome as a picture."

"There come Aunt Lois and Grace," sometimes Mrs. Winthrop would say. "Look, Annie, they've got green things enough to fill the door-yard."

Occasionally Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois would go visiting. They always gave notice a day or two beforehand that they expected to "set away" about two o'clock, and be home by "milking time"—not that they kept a cow; they used to when they were younger—and the importance of being home at this hour had so fixed itself in their minds that it had come to be a definite point of time. Then the "setting away!" They always wanted Grace to "run over a minute," to see if their caps were on right, and looked clean enough to go visiting: then Nannie went out, and Lois buttoned the door after her and got out at the little window close by the side of it. They each had immense fans, which, in summer, they used for parasols, on church and visiting occasions. Grace watched them off with real affection, and in earlier days thought their fans the very patterns she should buy when she was old enough to go visiting on her own account.

Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois kept chickens, and their garden yielded them nice vegetables, but their more substantial living came from Deacon Winthrop's farm, in exchange for their really valuable services. Indeed, as they grew older, he felt them to be under his special care, and taught his boys to regard their wants as something which belonged to them to meet. So the inmates of the little brown house were only an extension of the home circle; doing their share in helping on its outspreading wants. Having learned so much

about them, we will go back to the great old kitchen where the family are already gathered at dinner.

Just look at the vegetables!—the peas, potatoes and cucumbers would roll away in amazement at their withered, sun-dried descendants exposed for sale in some of our modern markets. And such bread and butter, puddings and pies! Beyond all, there was a vigor of body and mind which gave to *food* its true position.

Then came the hour of rest, on the old porch, or under the big elm-tree; after which Deacon Winthrop again gathered his forces and the work went on. Mrs. Winthrop and the girls usually had more leisure in the afternoon. From the time the dinner-dishes were washed until five o'clock, was a comparative calm. In this time Grace expected to spin, without being observed. This, added to the morning hour, would, if she could only bear the confinement, accomplish her task. She resolved not to speak of the visit to Boston to her mother again until that was done, and then mother must consent, and use her influence with father!

### CHAPTER III.

IT IS REALLY ACCOMPLISHED.

OUT from July, and its harvest-time, come we now into early September. It had been one of those hot days which properly belong to mid-summer. Dinner, with its rattle of knives, forks and plates, was over. The windows and doors were open, and the light breeze wandered through the kitchen into the sitting-room and out into the porch. Beyond the sitting-room came the "spare-room." This, being a sort of household sanctuary, was a step removed from every-day life; consequently its door was closed. Here, a neat striped carpet of red and green bore witness to the industry of Mrs. Winthrop and Annie, aided by Aunt Lois (who prided herself on its brightness; indeed she had compounded the colors, and, by a succession of dipping and redipping, made them what they were). A cherry table, with legs enough to carry it through all the vicissitudes of table life, stood between the windows; its only ornament the old Family Bible, in which were recorded the births and deaths of the Winthrops as far back as their existence was known.

Over the table hung an old-fashioned mirror,

with quaint carved frame and highly-polished surface. Another smaller table held Scott's Family Bible, with notes. A few high-backed chairs were ranged round the room, and before the front window was an armed-chair. The chief ornament was the open fireplace, in which stood a jar always filled in summer-time with sprays of feathery asparagus, enlivened by the different flowers, in their season. It was Grace's especial delight to make this fireplace very blooming every Saturday afternoon, for after the early Sunday supper the windows were opened, and all the family gathered here to read from the sacred pages of that holy book which was so surely preparing them for life's conflicts, and giving them power to triumph over them.

The hymn and prayer that followed were like invisible cords drawing these young hearts up to their covenant God. The "spare-room" witnessed the family meetings on Thanksgiving-days, and was used when invited friends came to partake of their hospitalities. The children remembered when one of their number, a dear little sister, had lain with closed eyes and folded hands under the mirror between the windows, and been borne from thence to rest under the green sod by the valley church! We will not enter this quiet, darkened room to-day, but come into the porch, where Mrs. Winthrop is sitting. Her simple afternoon toilette is made, and her mending-basket is beside her. Annie is here, too, with busy fingers remodeling a garment for one of the boys. Grace's chair and work-basket are here, but not the young lady herself.

"Grace must help me mend, this afternoon," said Mrs. Winthrop. "What do you suppose she is doing, Annie?"

"Coming to help you, mother," said Grace, entering that moment and holding out her finished task for her mother's inspection.

"Really!" said Mrs. Winthrop, as she passed her fingers over the smooth brown threads, "this is very neatly done, and I am pleased with your perseverance. I knew you were able to accomplish any thing that could be done in a hurry, but I did not believe you would get up an hour earlier than usual for six weeks, and actually finish the flax."

"Annie, you are too bad! Did you tell mother about my getting up?"

"No; Annie has never said a word to me about it; but do you suppose I have no thought for what is going on up-stairs? I know when my children try to do well."

Mrs. Winthrop laid the skeins on the bench beside her, and Grace began looking over the basket for such articles as needed her fingers most. There was a quiet smile on Annie's face, for she knew that Grace had come to the point where the never-forgotten subject of the journey was to be agitated.

They sat quietly sewing, when Grace said, "Mother, have you ever talked with father about our going to Uncle Edward's in October?"

"Hav'n't you forgotten that wild notion?" And Mrs. Winthrop glanced at her daughter, whose face had assumed that look of kindling earnestness which it always wore when her heart was enlisted.

"Oh, no indeed, mother! Ernest and I have



had long talks about it, but we resolved to keep it all to ourselves until I finished this work; we have planned and planned until we know the way; just where we are going to stop at night; what we are going to do when we get there; and all about uncle and aunt and Cousin Laura." And Grace fairly caught her breath in her eagerness to show how every difficulty was removed.

"I am afraid you have forgotten the money to pay the way, and the clothes to wear when you get there; but how did you make so sure of the way?"

"Ernest has inquired of Edward Nelson's uncle; he has been there two or three times. If we only had a carriage, we should be almost ready to start. Ernest says 'Fearnaught' is handsome enough to drive anywhere; but the wagon would not be comfortable for such a journey, besides it might not look very nicely driving up to Uncle Edward's door."

Grace paused, feeling that she had gained an important point; her mother actually listened; and she had at least an opportunity to disclose plans which she and Ernest had come to think very complete. She knew where it was possible to obtain the very carriage they wanted. A friend of her mother's, a widow lady, owned a neat two-wheeled gig—a great rarity in those days, as there were only three in the whole town. She thought if her father should ask for this for a couple of weeks, it was possible he might get it. Ernest was not quite so sanguine; he called it a good suggestion—just the thing. Grace had drawn such glowing pic-

tures of their ride, and the delightful, wonderful visit they were going to have, that he had come to regard her as quite a necessary part of it.

"I should like to hear of the road you would take and where you stop over-night," said Mrs. Winthrop, quietly.

Now was Grace's opportunity. Down went her work, and her violet eyes grew intense in their expression.

"Ernest says we must be about three days and a half going. We can have an early dinner and go as far as Dover the first day. I know Cousin George and his wife will be glad to see us, for when they used to come here and we were only little children, they asked us to make them a visit whenever you would let us come. I remember Cousin Sarah was very pleasant; don't you, Annie?"

"Yes," said Annie. "I went there once with father and mother when I was quite small. But what would you do after you had stayed there one night?"

"About fifty miles from Dover," continued Grace, with the air of one who had learned her lesson perfectly, "father's Uncle Josiah lives."

Here Mrs. Winthrop smiled, and Annie remarked, "Relations are very convenient when they live on the way. Uncle Josiah would not know you, and perhaps after your long ride, he would not take you in."

"Yes he would; we could soon convince him that we came from the old homestead. Wasn't he born here, mother?"



"Yes; but it is many years since he has been here. Still I should not have any fears of his sending you away without a welcome, if you once got to his house."

"We can stay there all night and go fifty miles the next day. Edward Nelson's uncle says there is a very nice public-house at Hancock, I believe he called it. Ernest knows, for he put it down on paper. There we can stay another night, and before dark the next day he thinks he can get to Boston. If we cannot, we shall be so near there that we can go in quite early Friday morning. Ernest wants daylight to find his way in a city."

"What then?" said Annie. "You must be more fond of introducing yourself than I am, if you expect much pleasure on such a visit."

"Why! isn't Uncle Edward father's brother, just as much as you are my sister? I don't think he will call us strangers."

"You seem very sure you are going," said Mrs. Winthrop. "Have you asked your father about it?"

"I want you to talk with him first, mother, and make him see how reasonable it is. I am sure if I should lose Annie twenty years, I should be delighted if somebody would look her up for me. Please say you will, mother, and then I know we shall go. We will be as grave and as proper as you and father could be. I'll keep all my fun until I come back. I'll behave just like dear, good Annie."

If the whole matter had been revealed to Grace, she would have known that her father and mother

had discussed it pretty freely. Mrs. Winthrop had heard the low murmurs of the wheel every morning. She had noticed the many confidential interviews between her son and daughter as they sat on the porch in the twilight; and understanding them so well, she expected to hear more about their intended visit. To her astonishment, Deacon Winthrop had listened with a good deal of interest to her statement of Grace's sudden announcement. He did not see how the journey could be performed, but recollections of his boyhood clustered thickly about him. He thought of himself and Edward as boys on this same farm, doing the many errands that came into their daily life, enjoying many pleasures and sharing many privations. Then the long years of their separation, unintentional on either side, might be bridged by consenting to this visit; perhaps he should behold his brother's face once more at the old homestead. The more he thought of it the more he inclined not only to give his consent, but to aid their going.

Mrs. Winthrop raised many objections. She had never been much of a traveler, and she did not see how "these children" could go so far from home alone. Her husband's judgment was a very safe starting point, and from it she gradually came to think that if Grace could make the way reasonably plain, she would not oppose their going. This is why she listened with so much real interest to the plan of the proposed journey. She had talked it over with Annie, who thought it a great undertaking, but if they were disposed to go, and father did not object, it was best to help them off. To

Grace's delight, her mother made no great objections. She only said, "I can't promise, but you may ask your father, and if he thinks that Ernest can take good care of you and find the way there, perhaps I shall give my consent;—take care! take care! there goes the mending basket."

Sure enough, it had gone over, and all its contents were on the floor. Grace could not sit still and hear so much of an assent from her mother, and the basket did not know enough to hold fast to the bench on which it stood, when in her joyful uprising she bounded against it. So down it came, and our young lady had to restore order, but she made such slow progress that Mrs. Winthrop sent her to get supper, which her father wanted earlier than usual.

It came about soon after supper Deacon Winthrop had gone out into the porch to rest in the oaken chair. Grace had waited for this opportunity; so she sat down on the bench beside him and told him how much she and Ernest wanted to go to Boston, and how they had planned to go, if he would only give his consent. He heard her through, and then came the usual question, "What does your mother say?"

"She told me to ask you."

"Well, if she is willing and you will promise to do me credit with Uncle Edward, I will let you go."

Deacon Winthrop smiled at the bright face which for a moment was turned in its unspeakable pleasure towards him. He fully believed she would do him credit anywhere, and then he heard the clear ringing voice saying,—

"Mother! mother! father says we may go. Where is Annie?"

"What ails Grace?" said Arthur. "She nearly pushed me into this pail of milk;" but Grace had gone, and her light step might have been heard around the corner of the barn, where Ernest was unharnessing the horse.

"Ernest! Ernest!" said she, "we are going to Boston!—father and mother both say so!"

"Really, Grace!—does mother say so?"

"I had a talk with her this afternoon and she told me to ask father. I asked him just now and he gave his consent, and we are really going," said she, dancing along and clasping his neck in the outgoings of her joy.

"Wait until I put Fearnought into pasture, and then come and sit in the wagon and tell me how you brought it all about."

The wagon was rolled under its customary cover, and then, away from all the family, Grace related to her equally interested brother, the story of her triumph. "Now, I am sure, you are glad I invited myself to go with you," said she, as they walked slowly into the house.

"Of course I am," said Ernest, "but who would have thought father and mother would consent! You are a clever sort of girl, and I don't know but your way of going right at a thing will accomplish the most in the end."

After a due amount of talking, it was settled that our young friends should leave home the first day of October. Mrs. Winthrop had many misgivings, but her husband was so cheerful about it, that she

tried hard to overcome them, and believe that everything would come out right.

Grace had a great many things to do, her taste and tact were put to their utmost extremity. Her straw bonnet had been plaited by her own deft fingers, and shaped after one made at the milliner's. She looked at it carefully, and concluded it must be remodeled. The little market town, six miles below, boasted of a milliner's shop. To ride this distance on horseback was no task to our Grace. She could manage her horse with perfect ease, and often went over the hills with Ernest with a speed fully equal to his own.

To-day "Cæsar," Fearnaught's mate, took her rapidly over the ground. She selected the prettiest ribbon she could find at the village store, and carried it, with her bonnet, to the milliner's, leaving directions to have it made as pretty as possible. She made a few very plain purchases and then rode home again, rich in the sense of a great, coming joy. Annie had inherited from her mother's sister a handsome black silk dress, this, of course, was a choice article in her simple wardrobe, but, with her accustomed thoughtfulness, she offered it to her sister to put in her trunk, and "wear it if she needed it." Mrs. Winthrop had a shawl which she only wore on great occasions. It was old-fashioned, but being of good material, she thought it very presentable, and laid it along with the dress to help on the outfit. Her own best dress was of plain material, but it was neat, fitted her well, and gave her little anxiety. Indeed, her sweet, young face, so sparkling, and full of intelligence, her na-

tive ease and self-possession would distinguish her anywhere, even if her dress was plain. She had such a natural love for the beautiful, that she could not help adapting herself to it whenever she found it. She had been trained in a household where the texture and shape of the outer garment did not comprise the highest aspirations of the soul. So she had a joy independent of them.

Leave we now the preparations, and hasten on with the days until they usher in the first day of October.

It is plain the glorious morning heralds some unusual event at the Winthrop mansion. Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois are there washing up the breakfast dishes, both looking rather downcast, and occasionally strengthening each other by wondering how "Mis' Winthrop" could give her consent to such children going off, nobody knew where. Mrs. Winthrop is busy with various things at the kitchen-table. Annie is packing a small trunk upstairs, and Grace is dressing in her very "Sunday best." The children are everywhere, full of excitement, they run up and down stairs, from the kitchen to Grace's room, hindering every body.

With a sudden shout, Henry and Arthur go leaping down stairs, and out the door. Ernest has just driven up with Mrs. Wheeler's shining gig, and handsome Fearnaught harnessed before it. How the daring request for the use of that gig was ever granted, nobody seemed to know. Ernest undertook the negotiation, and its presence on this eventful morning, was sufficient proof of his success. Fearnaught sniffed the air, and then looked behind

to see if he could make out what was going on, he turned his ears backwards, and then brought them forward. He was so used to the ways of the family, that he seemed to know that something more than usual was going to happen. The children patted his velvet nose, hugged his shining neck, and looked into his great, trusting eyes, but whether this meant they were going, or he was going, he could not make out. He had not noticed the shining gig, to him it was the same as the big family wagon.

On the table in the kitchen stood two baskets, which Mrs. Winthrop's motherly hands had packed. She called Grace to come and look into them. "In this basket are two chickens, nicely roasted, with plenty of bread and butter filled in; and in that one, you will find cake and cheese. Aunt Lois brought over a pan of crullers. I have put in as many as I could."

"Thank you, mother! I knew you would never send us away empty. Ernest will like this, I am sure."

"Yes, indeed," said Ernest, coming in at that moment, "mother knows how to help travelers off."

It was soon time for the early dinner, and all of the family sat down to share it. Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois stayed too, for sad as it was, they would not miss seeing "the children" off. Deacon Winthrop's petition for blessing on the food, was lengthened into a dedication of his son and daughter to any service in which their Heavenly Father might accept them, and that in all their goings they might be kept from temptation and sin.

It required all of Grace's fortitude to keep back her tears, home seemed so inexpressibly dear to her just then, but the cheerful voices of the children, and their wondering speculations as to what she would see, helped her to be glad that she was going. Nobody seemed very hungry, so there was not a long sitting over the early meal.

And now came a bustle equal to the occasion. The baskets were carried out, and stowed away in the box of the carriage. The trunk was strapped on behind, each boy giving the strap a pull to assure himself he had been useful in helping them off. Bundles were bestowed in corners, and lastly, a clean bag, full with oats, was laid on the bottom of the gig, and covered with a blanket.

"You can use the bag for a footstool until the oats are gone," said Deacon Winthrop, "and then if it rains, or is chilly, you will have the blanket to draw over you."

Now came the adieus, and Grace and Ernest were seated in the gig all ready to go. Deacon Winthrop must take one more survey of the horse and harness, and repeated his admonition to "drive slow, not to ride at evening, and be careful where they stopped over-night."

Mrs. Winthrop once more impressed on Grace the importance of thoughtfulness in everything, and to be sure not to go out alone in Boston. Aunt Nannie added, "Don't get a cold, but if you should, be sure and ask your aunt to make you some strong herb tea, and drink it hot when you go to bed."

Ernest touched Fearnaught with the whip and

away they drove, followed by every blessing which such a household could bestow. The first ten miles were familiar, then came new hills, and new towns beyond them.

"Can you believe, Ernest," said Grace, as she rode along in quiet satisfaction, "that father and mother have really consented to let us go. I almost think we ran away."

"They all saw us start, if we did," said Ernest. "So if they send out to find us, they will know which way to come. Grandfather and grandmother looked very sober when I ran in there this morning on my way from Mrs. Wheeler's. And Uncle Henry said he didn't see how mother ever gave her consent to our going off like this."

"When I went to tell them good-bye," said Grace, "grandmother said she hoped nothing would happen to us, but it was a great ways for such children to go alone. I told her I was nearly seventeen, and you are almost nineteen, and I asked her if she did not think we could behave pretty well when we tried. She smiled a little, and said we were good children, but she wished we were coming home instead of going away, though she knew the Lord would take care of us wherever we were. Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois have looked as solemn ever since I told them, as if we were going to England, and never coming back. I don't think they have quite forgiven mother for letting us go. I thought we should have the most trouble with father and mother and they have been as good as they could be."

"I rather think if father had not been in favor of

it, we should not have been riding here to-day," said Ernest. "I really think he wanted us to go, and after awhile mother thinks as he does. Nobody but father could have got her consent to let you go. I thought that night when you first told her, that you had spoiled everything."

"Well, you see, I did n't, and it was not too soon to tell her, she wants to think of a new thing a good while before she makes up her mind, and the first of October was coming so fast."

Ernest laughed at Grace's sudden appreciation of time, and so they chatted on, sometimes driving quite fast, and then allowing Fearnought to walk up the long hills. The face of the country was so like that to which they had been accustomed, that they felt quite at home. An occasional inquiry, aided Ernest's powers of observation, and enabled them to reach Dover a little before sunset.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur had not seen our young friends since they were children, and were obliged to be told their names before they could recognise them. Then their welcome was most cordial.

"Dear children!" said motherly Mrs. Wilbur, "I'm so glad to see you. I always set a great deal by your father and mother, and I never thought, in our young days, that so many years would go by and we never see each other at all."

"This girl looks just as her mother did the first time I ever see her," said Mr. Wilbur, as he took a good look at Grace, and gave her hand a most cordial grasp. "I was visiting down to your grandfather's, and coming out of meeting the

first Sunday I was there, Henry nudged my elbow and told me to look at that girl! I should think that was the very one."

"People say I look like father's mother," said Grace, not knowing what else to say.

"Is your name Annie?"

"No, sir; my sister has mother's name. I am named Grace, after father's mother."

"A good name, and a worthy person who had it. But come, mother," said he, addressing Mrs. Wilbur, "you see that they have a good supper while I look after the horse."

By the time the horse was well disposed of, the supper-table was spread with its tempting old-fashioned cheer, not forgetting a delicious pumpkin-pie which Mrs. Wilbur had baked that very afternoon, the first of the season. Their early dinner and long ride made our travelers hungry guests, but they were obliged to declare themselves more than satisfied long before the variety gave out. Then they were taken into the "spare room," where Mr. Wilbur had kindled a little fire, "just to take off the chill," he said.

Grace wondered where he found "the chill," for the day had been warm, and her unusual excitement made it seem like midsummer; but the blaze was cheerful, and she was disposed to enjoy everything.

"I must begin to ask you questions to-night," said Mr. Wilbur, "or I shall not get through in the whole of your visit."

"We shall have to talk fast," said Ernest; "for we must be on our way again to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning!" said Mrs. Wilbur, "We cannot allow that. I don't think we will keep you over-night, if you do not pay us better than that!"

"No, indeed!" said Mr. Wilbur. "You cannot go from here to-morrow morning. Besides, I thought you came to make us a visit. What sent you up here to stay only one night?"

Ernest told them where they were going, how long they had been contemplating it, and how limited their time was.

"Well, well," said Mr. Wilbur, "you are quite an energetic couple; if you are going so far to find your Uncle Edward. I remember him almost as well as I do your father. I am glad you are going to look him up. We shall have to let them off in the morning, mother! but you must promise to stop a few days on your return."

"Only for our gig," said Grace, laughing. "We are something like Cinderella with her coach. She must get home at twelve or her coach would turn into a pumpkin. If we are not at home in two weeks, we shall never ride in Mrs. Wheeler's gig again."

"Right, child!" said Mr. Wilbur. "Young folks must be particular how they keep their promises, if they mean to be trusted. Well, it's done me good to see you even for one night. It makes me feel young, and mother and I shall have it to talk over for a great while after you are gone. You young folks don't know anything about the past; it's all future with you. You cannot understand how you and your brother's visit takes us back to the times when we were young."



So the evening passed in pleasant converse, until it was time to say good-night.

The morning dawned fair and beautiful. Ernest was up early to look after Fearnaught, but Mr. Wilbur was before him, and Fearnaught had only time to stop a moment over his ample measure of oats to whinney his good-morning to his master. A bountiful breakfast was waiting for them, and Mrs. Wilbur had put them up such a lunch that it was hard to refuse; but, as Grace told her, "Mother had filled every spare corner."

"You shall, at least, take this pumpkin-pie," said she.

Grace saw Ernest give it a wistful look, so she determined to find room for it somewhere, which she accordingly did, quite to Mrs. Wilbur's satisfaction; and again, to use Aunt Nannie's peculiar phrase, they "set away" on their all day ride, carrying many cordial wishes for a successful journey, and giving, in return, a promise to call for a night with these kind friends on their return.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ON THE WAY.

GRACE'S spirits rose with the sun. She saw everything that was beautiful in the landscape mellowed by the soft October light. Ernest inquired the way just often enough to keep the right direction.

About twelve, they came to a shady spot where a little brook ran along with a cool, refreshing sound.

"This looks like a good place to rest and eat dinner," said Ernest. "I've been thinking very much about mother's basket of chicken for the last hour; so, while I give Fearnaught his oats, you can set the table."

Grace laughingly proceeded to draw out a little board which her mother had stowed away somewhere, and, covering it with a towel, she placed a plate, with all the chicken it would hold, in the centre, and then ranged the bread and butter round it.

"The best dinner I ever ate," said Ernest, as he finished with Mrs. Wilbur's pumpkin-pie.

"Excellent!" said Grace. "But would n't mother and Annie laugh to see us draw up by the



fence eating on a board. Aunt Lois would call us 'tramps,' and wonder somebody did not look after us."

"Poor Aunt Lois!" said Ernest. "She told me the night before we came away that 'children took a good deal on themselves now-a-days.' When she was young, things were very different. I suppose we have been on her mind most of the time since yesterday noon; but where is the cup, I must have a drink of water."

"Not out of this brook!" said Grace. "Fearnought may drink, and I'll wash my hands in it, but we must wait until we come to a well."

"I do not believe a dinner is often more thoroughly enjoyed than this of our young friends under the maple-trees, with now and then a golden-tinted leaf dropping at their feet, or a wandering squirrel pausing to see who could have invaded his retreat. Behind them lay home, father, mother, brothers and sisters, an unbroken band, no feelings of uncertainty as to what might happen while they were gone, saddened their bright anticipations. Before them was the long-talked-of visit, with its half-formed visions of something different from, and beyond anything they had ever seen. Few such rests will come again in their life-journey; but they do not know it now, and we will not dim their clear sunshine with the dark clouds of coming experience."

Fearnought had enjoyed it too. Ernest took off his harness and let him have a good roll, and then, leading him to the brook, left him to drink at his leisure. "Now, then, old fellow, you must do your

best," said he, "for you have got to go at least twenty-five miles before you have any more to eat."

Fearnought put his nose down for an encouraging pat, and, looking about him, seemed to say, "I'm ready for you."

"Not much work to clear away the dinner-table, to-day," said Grace, as she threw away the bones of one whole chicken, shook out the towel, and stowed away the board. "Just think, Ernest, we've eaten a whole chicken! What would mother think!"

"Glad we had it to eat," said her brother.

"And so am I."

"Here we go—just one o'clock!" and Ernest took out the big silver watch which his Uncle Henry had lent him for the occasion, and surveyed it with all the satisfaction possible in such a possession.

"I wonder how Uncle Henry came to lend you his watch, when he did not approve of our going?" said Grace.

"Just as Aunt Lois brought us the crullers—if we would go, they would help us. I don't think we ever knew how much they all cared for us before. I shall try and help father all I can this winter, out of school-time. I want him to know that I thank him for letting us go."

"I mean to help mother, too," said Grace. "I can spin flax nearly as well as Annie; but I do hate mending and sewing on the boys' clothes."

They did not dwell long on these good resolutions, for, on inquiry, they found they had taken a wrong turn in the road, and were obliged to go back a half mile to get right again.

The afternoons are not very long when October

days come; the sun had set, and still they were some miles from Uncle Josiah's.

"I have inquired for the town so long," said Ernest, "that I almost expect to see Uncle Josiah's house the first thing when we get to it. Who knows how many miles we shall have to ride before we come to it?"

At last the town was reached, and then came inquiries for Mr. Josiah Munson. Every body seemed to know him, but that did not hinder his house from being at the extreme end of the town, stretching the twenty-five miles to nearly thirty, and causing Ernest some anxiety lest Fearnaught should be overtaxed.

At last the moon shone on a long brown house which a passer-by said belonged to Mr. Josiah Munson. Here, then, our travelers were to stop; so, fastening Fearnaught at the post, they went up the path and knocked at the front door. No answer came. Only the moonbeams touching up the sombre-looking dwelling gave any light to objects within or without.

"Knock again," said Grace, after waiting for some minutes; and knock, knock, went Ernest's knuckles, as if he meant somebody should hear.

"Oh, dear!" said Grace, "it looks lonesome here. I believe I am homesick."

Ernest smiled; for his brave-hearted sister had never faltered a moment before since he first told her his wish to make the journey. "Hark! somebody's coming."

Just then an inner door opened, and there was a pause, as if a listener waited to hear a sound.

Ernest gave another rap. "Go round to the other door," said a tremulous old voice. By this time the family dog had taken the idea that things were not all as they should be; so, while his master went to listen one way, he ran round the corner and began to bark furiously at the strangers.

"I know he isn't any thing like Cousin George," said Grace; "and I'm afraid of his cross dog, too. I wish I was going to stay somewhere else. I think this is what Annie calls 'looking up relations.'"

"Barking dogs never bite," said Ernest. "So come on 'round to the other door,' if that is the way to get in."

The dog having discharged his duty quite to his satisfaction, ran ahead and led the way to the kitchen entrance of the house. The door was wide open, and an old man with white hair, and leaning on a staff, stood in it. The moonbeams had come round too, and covered the old man with their soft, silent light. He looked weird and story-like to Grace, but his voice was very kind, when he said, "Come in, young people. I cannot unlock that door; my hand is so weak with rheumatism. My grandson lets folks in there, and he has gone away. So come right into the kitchen." He looked at them very closely as they came in, and extended his hand to welcome them.

Ernest answered his glance of inquiry, by saying, "You do not know us, but you will remember our father, Henry Winthrop, of Beechford. This is my sister Grace, and I am Ernest Winthrop."

"Henry Winthrop's children!" said Mr. Munson,

with a bewildered look at his young guests. "Where *did* you come from? Is Henry with you? Come in, come in. Mother, bring a light. Do you hear what he says? They are Henry Winthrop's children!"

Mrs. Munson was not far away. Her surprise was quite equal to her husband's. With a candle in one hand, and the other extended in cordial welcome, she advanced to meet them. "Why, children! how did you come?" said she. "How did you ever find the way out here? When did you come from home?"

"Our horse and gig are at the gate," said Ernest, "and we left home day before yesterday."

"Come right in and sit down by the fire," said Mr. Munson; "the nights are coolish this time of the year," and the old gentleman bustled round with uncommon activity, and placed two high-backed chairs in front of the fire. "I'm sorry enough that Jared isn't to home. Joseph," said he, addressing a young boy who had come in from out doors, "you can show this young man where to put his horse, and feed it for him. Put the carriage on the barn-floor."

"Yes, sir," said Joseph, glad enough to have something to do with the new-comers.

While Ernest had gone out, Mrs. Munson took Grace into the spare-room to take off her bonnet and shawl, and then seeing her comfortably seated in one of the high-backed chairs, proceeded to get supper. Mr. Munson went to the door every few minutes, as if his anxiety must make up for his inability to go out and attend to feeding the horse

himself. "It beats all Jared should be away just when we want him so," said he. "I am sorry to have any body come so far and then have to take care of a horse. Once I could have done it myself, but I ain't spry as I used to be."

"Never mind, Uncle Josiah," said Grace, "Ernest is used to taking care of Fearnought; he thinks nobody else can do it."

"Well, well, I'm glad if he is. There's plenty of oats, and Joseph knows all about the barn."

When Ernest came in, the supper was ready, and in the cheerful welcome diffused over every thing, Grace forgot her first impressions.

When the tea-things were removed, Mrs. Munson drew up the little round stand, and placing two tallow candles upon it, took out her knitting-work, while Uncle Josiah seated himself in his arm-chair, in the corner, where he could poke the fire now and then.

"I'm so sorry Jared went to that quilting party to-night," said the old lady; "he will have to stay so late that he won't have any chance to see his cousins to-night."

"He must make it up to-morrow," said Uncle Josiah. "We want them all to ourselves to-night."

It was like lifting a veil from the past, the questions these aged people asked about a place where once their names had been familiar. Through her grandmother Grace knew many of the friends of her uncle's manhood; and as she was accustomed to listen full of respect and attention to her stories of life when she was young, she made a most companionable guest for Mr. and Mrs. Munson.

"What made you think of coming to see us?" said the good old lady; "young folks don't usually care about looking up old ones."

Then Ernest told his story of going to visit his Uncle Edward.

"That's right!" said Mr. Munson; "but you expect to stay and make us a little visit too, don't you?"

"Not now. When we come back, we hope to stop another night, and tell you about our visit."

"When we went to Beechford the last time," said Mrs. Munson, musingly, "I left a house full of children—pretty much as your mother would now—and they have all gone. How time does change every thing!"

"Well, mother! the clock says it is time for these young folks to go to bed. If they must go in the morning, we must help them off."

"I'm so sorry about Jared's being away, but they can't wait for him." Then the old man knelt by his armed-chair, and thanked God for bringing these young friends from his early home to gladden his way with good tidings of those he loved to remember. He prayed that they might be kept in safety by the way, and return with rejoicing to their home. Rising from his knees, he extended a hand to each of them, bidding them sleep soundly, for they would need to be wide awake early tomorrow.

"Another beautiful morning," said Grace, as she pushed away the curtain and looked out towards the rising sun. "I wish I could see mother a minute this morning. I should have so many things to tell her. It seems to me as if it was a

month since we started. I shall have a long letter to write her when we get to Boston." Here her soliloquy ended, and she hastened to be in readiness for the early breakfast which Mrs. Munson had promised to have in waiting for them.

It was all ready when Grace came into the neat kitchen, and Jared was there too. He met his cousins with shy cordiality; said he was sorry he was away the evening before; he had heard his grandmother speak so often of their relations at Beechford, that he wanted to get acquainted with them.

This was a remarkably long opening speech for Jared, and made his grandmother more than ever regret that he had not been at home. After breakfast, Uncle Josiah again commended them to the watchful care of their Heavenly Father, and then he was ready to speed their going. He went out to the barn to see if Fearnought had been well taken care of. Then he looked into the gig, and seeing the nearly-empty bag lying there, he drew it out, and told Jared to fill it as full as it would hold. He bustled back into the house to see if "mother" had remembered to give them something to eat by the way.

"I haven't seen 'father' so spry in ten years," said Mrs. Munson to Grace. "He couldn't sleep last night, talking over and thinking about the old place. Your visit has done him a deal of good. I only wish it could be longer."

Mrs. Munson brought a pie and some cake so compactly done up, that she was sure Grace could carry it on her lap until they got hungry. Grace

thanked her, and told her that they had still a whole chicken, and cake and cheese, which their mother had put up. But this did not satisfy Uncle Josiah; he knew they would want it before they got to Edward's; they must take it; young folks always got hungry before they expected to. His anxiety decided the matter, and then, with many charges to take "this road," and "that right-hand corner," they were permitted to depart.

"How glad they were to see us," said Grace. "If our great-uncle received us so kindly, I am sure Uncle Edward will."

"If we only had another uncle or cousin living about fifty miles from here," said Ernest, "we might call our journey quite a triumphal march. I begin to feel a little important, living over the events of father's and grandfather's times. I should not wonder if we get to be somebody more than 'children' when we get home."

"Wait until to-night," said Grace. "Our importance will all disappear when out of the reach of father and mother's friends, we get into some strange public-house. I don't like that part of the journey very much."

"I rather expect to enjoy it. In the mean time I must keep my eyes open, or I shall not find that 'right-hand corner' Uncle Josiah told me about."

Grace did not mistake when she said, "How glad they were to see us." They had come like memories of pleasant things into the two households where they had passed in each a night.

In those days, when letters were events, travel-

ing slow, indirect and tedious, dear friends were ignorant of each other's welfare for months, and sometimes for years. It required more relaxation from care than usually fell to the heads of families in New England, to accomplish a visit. To-day, when we have every facility to keep up with our absent friends, we can hardly appreciate the importance which attached itself fifty years ago to the arrival of a guest who brought tidings of absent loved ones. It was equal to volumes of letters, and files of newspapers; it freshened and strengthened old ties, and filled up a vacancy which we never know. We must not stop to moralize, or we may lose sight of Fearnaught, who trots off at good speed as if his night's rest had made him equal to the toils of the day. They were many miles from Uncle Josiah's when the silver watch told the hour of twelve, and their prompt dinner answered to the summons. The other chicken tasted as good as its fellow of yesterday. Aunt Martha's pie was an addition to its relish, and Uncle Josiah's oats were an unexpected gift to Fearnaught. Ernest had intended to fill up the bag at some farmer's by the way.

They rested again, as on the day before, and then rode on until the afternoon shadows reminded them that no more uncles or cousins were waiting to welcome them, and they must begin to look out for the "tavern" about which Edward Nelson's uncle had told them. Fearnaught tried to make the most of the waning daylight, but evidently he was tired; and after going on without seeing any house which looked as if it were waiting for trav-

elers, Ernest asked a man whom they met how far it was to the "tavern."

"'Bout four miles from here."

"None nearer than that?"

"Wall, yes, come to think,—no, not a tavern exactly neither; but Mr. Lester sometimes keeps travelers when they git belated."

"Where does he live?"

"'Bout a mile from here straight ahead. Come from far?" as if some knowledge of their belongings would be a proper compensation for the information he had given them.

"Some ways back," said Ernest, with a polite "thank you" for the intelligence that Mr. Lester sometimes kept travelers when they were belated. A few inquiries enabled them to stop before the door. It was scarcely dark, but the house was so lighted up that Grace concluded either a good many travelers had been belated, or something unusual was going on.

Ernest went to make inquiries, while his sister sat anxiously waiting the result. Of course they must stop somewhere, and it might as well be this house as the tavern; but it was her first real meeting with utter strangers, and she shrank from it instinctively. She could not hear the conversation between her brother and the person who opened the door; evidently the person disappeared, and Ernest was waiting for an answer. Presently a lady came, and after speaking a few moments with her, Ernest turned and came to her.

"This is Mr. Lester's, and they do sometimes keep travelers; but to-night they have a tea-drink-

ing, or something of that sort, and are quite full. Still they say if we can put up with such accommodations as they can give us, we may come in. What do you say?"

"I'm sure I do not know."

Fearnaught decided the case by a beseeching whinney. He seemed to think he ought to be consulted, and his decision would be, "No more exploring to-night."

"That expresses your feelings, old fellow," said Ernest, giving him a kindly pat. "You are tired, and have gone far enough for one day. We will take your advice. Come, Grace; Fearnaught was brought up at Beechford, and he knows what it is best to do in this case," and helping his sister out from the gig, he went with her into the house.

Mrs. Lester had disappeared, and a young lady, evidently her daughter, came to meet them, and took them into a little side-room, already well filled with hoods and shawls.

"We have a good many friends with us this evening," said the young lady. "My brother is twenty-one years old to-day, and father wanted to notice it in some way. A few of our friends will stay all night, so we shall have to give you a very small room."

"That is much better than riding in a strange place so far in the dark," said Grace. "Can I be near my brother?"

"Close by. Will you go up and take off your things."

She did not feel much like going until she saw Ernest come in, but thinking she might be detain-



ing Miss Lester, she went up-stairs with her into a small, but very neat room. Here, Miss Lester left her, telling her that she would probably find her brother in the side room where they came in.

Grace laid off her bonnet, shook the dust from her dress, washed her face, and smoothed her shining curls, and then her toilet was finished. She could hear merry voices down stairs, and the sound of many feet, as if life and activity were all about her, while she felt very strange and lonesome. She was sure Ernest must have come in by this time. So she ventured to find her way to him in the side room, where the hoods and shawls were. Mrs. Lester had just been in to apologise for putting them in that room, but it was least occupied of any this evening, and could they wait a little while for tea.

"We do not care for tea," said Grace. "We are not hungry."

Mrs. Winthrop's basket of cake could bear witness to this; it was only shelter and rest for the night which they needed.

"Now," said Grace, when they were alone, "this seems to me very much like a dream, when did we come from home?"

"This is only Wednesday night, and we left home Monday," said Ernest.

"It seems to me a month, at least," said Grace. "I wish it was morning now, and we were just going instead of just coming."

"I don't know as I care to stay shut up in this room all the evening. I had rather go, and make acquaintance with some of the owners of these

hoods and shawls; there, for instance, is a hood lined with pink, I think I should like a little chat with its owner," and Ernest pointed to an unusually coquettish little head-covering which lay amid a heap of grave ones.

"For my part, I like the hoods best. I would not go in the other room for anything," said his sister.

Grace had hardly finished her sentence before the young lady who had met them at the door appeared, to say that her mother would be very happy to have Mr. and Miss Winthrop come into the other room and spend the evening.

Miss Winthrop was on the point of declining the invitation very decidedly, when Ernest accepted it. He was out on an expedition, and had left all the cares which made him "as old as father" at home with that same father, and the novelty of going with entire strangers rather pleased him. Without appearing to notice his sister's reluctance, he drew her hand in his arm, and followed Miss Lester into the other room. Mrs. Lester came to meet them, and conducted them to a seat, then, with motherly pride, she brought along her son, who was the hero of the evening, and introduced him.

Their entrance was rather an interruption to the games which were going briskly on. "Who are they?" "Where did they come from?" went in sly whispers around the circle, until it was fairly understood that Mr. and Miss Winthrop were brother and sister, stopping over night on their way to Boston.



Strangers in those days were such rarities that they belonged to the events of small towns, and produced more or less sensation. Mr. Lester's house did not really belong to the public; it was large, and well filled with food from his ample farm, if an occasional traveler came for rest and shelter, he was ready to receive him.

After the first embarrassment of their entrance had worn away, Grace found herself quite an object of attention. Ernest, meantime, determined to repay the politeness of his hostess, by making himself as agreeable as possible. And he succeeded well. He even thought he discovered the owner of the pink-lined hood, he certainly found a face it would well become. Grace did not enter into the diversions quite so heartily. She felt lonely, and but for Ernest would have withdrawn at an early hour. She had an appointed part in nearly every game, and some forfeits came for her to redeem, but she managed to evade the latter, and in some way she gave her share of the games into some other hands. It seemed to her as if her mother would think it so strange to see her playing familiarly with people whom she had never seen until this evening. Her unconscious dignity rather distanced the admiration which her sweet face and pleasing manners excited.

In due time supper was announced, and though Grace cast a beseeching look at her brother, she was obliged to see him lead out the supposed owner of the pink hood, while she accepted the first honor of the evening, and was escorted to the table by the son and heir, and tried to seem interested in

what he was saying. A long table graced the New England kitchen, and temptingly spread with everything good which an ample farm and skillful housewife could produce. The doughnuts and cheese which Ernest had eaten before dark, seemed to belong to a period long passed away, so he was well prepared to do justice to the birth-night supper. Grace had very little appetite, so she amused herself in a quiet observation of the mirthful company, participating only as far as absolute politeness demanded.

It was some time after their return to the "front-room," before Grace got an opportunity to tell her brother how tired she was, and how necessary it was that they should get rested for their next day's ride. Out of compassion for her, he excused both her and himself to Mrs. Lester and her daughter, and bidding them good-night, escorted Grace to her little room close by his own. Many inquiries were made after them, and many regrets expressed at their early departure, but the festivity went on while they slept, and were refreshed for their next day's journey.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE ARRIVAL.

"WELL, Grace!" said Ernest, during their ride the next day, "you came out in a new character last night. I could hardly credit my senses, that Miss Dignity was no other than my laughing sister, the first to carry out all sorts of fun at home. I think mother would have called you her proper representative."

"Fun at home, Ernest, is a very different thing. I never thought of being dignified, as you call it; but I felt strange and out of place. At home, with all the girls I know so well, of course I never think about any thing but a good time. But now I am thinking of Uncle Edward, do you believe we can get there to-night?"

"We can, but it will be late, and if the streets are as crooked as Mr. Lester told me this morning, I shall prefer daylight to find my way. We do not even know where the house is."

Another night spent in a very quiet inn about ten miles from Boston, refreshed our travelers, and gave them a long morning to finish their explorations. It would be useless to tell of the inquiries

Ernest made, or of the winding ways he drove; it is sufficient to say, that about twelve o'clock Fear-naught was drawn up in front of an imposing, three-story brick house, the like of which, neither Ernest nor his sister had ever seen.

Grace followed her brother up the broad stone steps, feeling strangely forlorn, and wishing, with all her heart, that she was standing at the old porch at home. The huge, brass knocker shone like gold, even the lion's mouth which held it looked formidable, but Ernest had not come all this way to be daunted in the end, so he knocked bravely. The summons was answered by a shining black man, neatly dressed. He held the door open with a look of perplexed curiosity.

"Does Colonel Winthrop live here?" said Ernest.

"Yes, sar," said Ralph.

"Is he at home?"

"Yes, sar."

"I wish to see him."

The door was opened wider, and with a wondering look, as if he did not fully comprehend his visitors, Ralph showed them into the parlor.

This was so different from the picture Grace had drawn! She thought her cousin Laura would come to the door, and she should tell her who they were, and then her uncle and aunt would come right in, and they would be taken into the spare room, a great deal handsomer than theirs at home, of course, but not in the least like this!

"What name shall I tell master?" asked Ralph.

"I will tell him when he comes," said Ernest, hardly knowing what reply he gave.

Ralph gave them another look, and went out, leaving them alone in these wonderful parlors.

Colonel Edward Winthrop, the owner of this stately mansion, and indeed the whole block in which it stood, left his father's farm at Beechford, a youth of seventeen, to serve his country in its mighty struggles against oppression. Entering the army as a private, he had, by his coolness, courage and marked ability to carry out plans, been raised to the rank of Colonel. He suffered with the army in its winter at Valley Forge, and shared in its victory at Yorktown. When peace was declared, and the army disbanded, Colonel Winthrop had acquired a spirit of independent adventure which the quiet of his native hills would never satisfy. Through some army acquaintances, he sought and obtained an advantageous mercantile situation in an importing house in Boston. Here his correctness of deportment, his unbending integrity, and his financial ability so thoroughly won the confidence of his employers, that in time they received him as sharer, and at last into equal partnership with themselves in the firm. Wealth had come into his possession with astonishing rapidity, and now at sixty-two he is tall, erect, and very dignified in his bearing, with ceremonious habits, and fixed ways. The dinner hour must not vary, the carriage must be at the door for his daily drive at as near eleven o'clock as possible. His wife he always expected to accompany him at this hour, and his daughter, too, unless she chose to do something else. It was so manifestly his pleasure, that she counted it among her daily duties. He always rode on horseback

before breakfast, but was sure to be back in time, not to keep it waiting a moment. His friends called him cold, and unapproachable, still they enjoyed his genial moods. His hospitality was unbounded, his kindness reaching into many a poor dwelling, where the donor was unknown.

Mrs. Winthrop was some ten years his junior. She was born, and had lived in England, until her eighteenth year, so that her tastes and habits partook strongly of her early education. Loving Colonel Winthrop devotedly she accepted his country, and sympathized with him as far as she could, but their early training had been so different, that she could never understand that part of his life which had stamped the man so indelibly.

She had never visited the old homestead and knew little of his brothers or the scenes of his boyhood. He could not tell why he never spoke to her of them; only such was his nature that he kept them as hidden treasures. He had met and won her in scenes so widely apart from them that they never blended in his mind. His father and mother died before his marriage; and without the bonds of letters and occasional visits, he seemed almost a stranger to his early home. Of late his thoughts had often gone back to the dear old starting-place, and sometimes there would come a longing to drink from the clear water of the well, or sit in the old oaken chair on the porch. At times he could almost hear the murmur of the little stream which ran through the middle of the farm, where he had so often stopped to let the cows drink when he was driving them home at night. Then he would think

of the dinner in the old kitchen prepared by his mother's hands, and which even now in the dim distance seemed more delicious than any he ever ate. He wondered how his brother Henry, grown twenty years older, looked filling his father's place; and the children! how many were there, and how did they compare with his father's children?

Sometimes during the last summer these remembrances had been so vivid that he had spoken to Mrs. Winthrop about going to Beechford to see his brother and the old place. If it pleased him to go, she expected he would, without any encouragement on her part. She only said, "Are Laura and me to go too?" and here the subject ended.

Laura was nineteen; she had inherited a certain stateliness from her father which made her seem older. Her hair and eyes were very black, and her complexion clear and dark. She had enjoyed all the advantages of education which money could supply; and having left school and entered society, she was receiving the usual amount of attention which attractive young ladies with plenty of money find waiting for them. She was a sprightly, interesting girl, with a heart full of affection, only it was repressed by the stately atmosphere of her home. She loved her father, but she could never be familiar with him. She pleased him by her punctual observance of his "time and place," her propriety of manner and dress, and her flattering reception in society.

Such were the relations whom, as Annie said, Ernest and Grace were "looking up," and now if we go back to the parlors where we left them and

follow their wondering eyes, we shall see that the rooms are very spacious and connected by folding-doors, that the ceilings are high, the carpets so unlike that model of stripes in the spare room at home that it can hardly bear the same name. No loom in America had ever produced such a marvel of beauty; it was a study in itself to their unsophisticated eyes. Then the mirrors! it would surely take three or four of those at home to make one of these; and the tables were so beautifully carved, and the chairs were so handsome!

"Ernest," whispered Grace, "what is that long narrow table on the other side of the room, with so many twisted legs, it looks as if it opened with a lid."

"I don't know," said Ernest. "I'm getting pretty near the end of my knowledge, and if Uncle Edward does not come before long, I shall find my way back to Beechford. I had rather cut hay all day than sit here perched up in this strange place."

"It is so different from anything I expected," said Grace, "it seems almost like fairy land. Hark! I hear somebody coming!" Just then the door opened, and the stately man advanced to see who waited for him.

With a native dignity, as much a part of himself as it was of his uncle, Ernest rose to meet him. "It is Colonel Winthrop, I believe?" said he.

"Yes;" and a pair of keen eyes rested on the young man's face with sudden intensity.

"I am Ernest Winthrop, your brother Henry's son, and this is my sister Grace."

Grace had risen and stood by her brother's side,

both of them directly in front of their uncle. For a moment he seemed like one in a dream. He gave them a searching glance, and then his features relaxed their sternness. "Ernest and Grace Winthrop!" said he, slowly. "My brother Henry's children! Where did you come from?"

"We left home on Monday and got to Boston this morning. Our horse is at your door."

"Sit down, sit down," said he, giving a hand to each; "tell me more about this, I cannot understand it yet. Did your father know you were coming here?"

"Yes, sir; he helped us off, or we could never have got mother's consent to undertake such a journey."

Colonel Winthrop was greatly moved; this sudden calling up of his brother's name, these young faces bearing strong traces of their parentage, had come upon him so suddenly, touching a hidden spring in such an unexpected moment, that he was forced to yield to its influences. He brushed away the unbidden and unwonted tears as if he disdained them. Recovering himself speedily, he turned, and looking steadily for a moment, said, "Grace! my mother's name, and almost my mother's face!" again he extended his hand and Grace came quickly to him; this time he folded her to his heart as if she embodied all the sweet memories of his childhood and youth; releasing her, he again pressed Ernest's hand, and then asked many questions of their home and parents.

"You are very welcome here," at length he said. "You come to me bringing buried treasures, and I

shall have a great many questions to ask you, but now I must tell your aunt and cousin of your arrival."

"Laura," said he, going to the door and speaking to some one who had just come in, "I want you here."

Laura came; the expression on her father's face was unusual. She saw the strangers sitting near the window; she hardly comprehended when he led her towards them and said, "Your cousins, Grace and Ernest Winthrop, from Beechford."

She had heard of her Uncle Henry, but of his children she knew nothing. Sometimes in her yearnings for brother or sister, she had wondered if she had no cousins who could in any degree fill the place, but she seldom spoke to her father about such things. One glance revealed that her cousin's dress was provincial; but that sweet face! and that irresistible charm of a refined nature which spoke in the simple act of salutation, opened Laura's heart at once. She felt that there had come to her the very love she had so long desired. Ernest pleased her too; he did not seem out of place in his new surroundings. There was such a quiet independent manner in his greeting, that she felt an involuntary respect for him.

"Come, daughter," said Colonel Winthrop, "take your cousin up to your mother's room."

"I suppose I must look after my horse, Uncle," said Ernest, going to the window.

"Give yourself no trouble about him. I will see that he is taken care of."

The little trunk was carried up-stairs, and then,

having seen Fearnaught driven away by his uncle's coachman, Ernest went up to his room where Colonel Winthrop told him he would have plenty of time to dress for dinner.

"Dress for dinner!" said Ernest, when he was alone, "in my case it will be pulling off my coat and putting it on again; my boots shine now so that I am almost afraid of them, and my collars are some of Annie's very best making. My coat does look a little shabby by the side of uncle's, but mother told me it would before I started."

Ernest had expected to have a new coat, as one of the indispensables of this visit, but, plan as best he could, the means for getting one could not be obtained. The winter, with its demands, was before the family, and the idea of getting in debt without some knowledge of how the debt could be met was never entertained in the Winthrop family. His mother had expressed her sorrow, and suggested it as one reason why the visit should be delayed for another year.

Grace remonstrated at this. She declared, if they waited for a new coat, they should never go; besides, said she, "Ernest looks better in his half-worn coat than anybody I know in a new one."

She had brushed it, and rubbed off every spot. Annie had put on new buttons and worked over the button-holes; it was so renovated that, if he had been going to stay at home, he would hardly have thought of a new one. He had scarcely thought of it since he left home—its contrast to his uncle's made him think of it now; but, as he took it off and brushed it carefully, he resolved that it

should not spoil his visit or hinder him from getting all the ideas he could while he staid in Boston. He gave his glossy, chestnut hair an extra brush. His well-shaped mouth and fine, dark eyes expressed more power than, wanting these, all the tailors in the land could have given him.

Mrs. Winthrop met her niece with kindness. She was never demonstrative. She was glad she was so pretty, and if her husband and daughter were pleased at her coming, she was glad she had come.

She came down to the parlor just before dinner to be introduced to Ernest. She was very cordial, and even fancied he bore some resemblance to his uncle.

The announcement of dinner came very soon, and our travelers who, for the last three days, had dined by the road-side, found themselves seated at an elegant table in a richly-furnished dining-room. The goblets were of silver, the dishes all perfectly matched, and Ralph, the shining black man, who met them at the door, took his place behind his master's chair. Grace instinctively felt that here was a new place, and that awkwardness or mistake would annoy her uncle especially. It was a mutual mystery to herself and Ernest how they ever got through with that ceremonious dinner. They thought of home, and the table set with blue-and-white dishes, and dishes that were not white-and-blue. Several varieties they could have mentioned—it was not the dishes, it was the freedom they were thinking of, and they wished Ralph would have some errand that would take him out of the



room entirely. It seemed to them that they could not eat while he stood there watching them. Then they thought of their last three dinners, how free and easy they had been with only the squirrels to watch them. They felt greatly relieved when, at last, they rose from the table without having made any positive mistake. "Going to Boston" was a more wonderful undertaking than they had imagined.

"I shall go to drive this afternoon, and take Ernest with me," said Colonel Winthrop.

Grace went to her room to unpack her trunk, and to begin a letter to her mother.

Laura went to her mother's room. "Isn't she lovely, mother?"

"Yes, she is; but you must put a few touches to her dress. You can attend to that better than I can. She might think I was finding fault."

About an hour after, Laura tapped lightly at her cousin's door, and found her busily writing to her mother.

"I was going to ask you to let me come in and sit with you, but I shall interrupt you."

"Never mind that. I did not intend to finish my letter until I had seen Ernest again. Do come in."

It was astonishing how rapidly their acquaintance progressed. Laura was asking about "mother and Annie and father and the boys and little Mary," and Grace felt as if talking about them to an interested listener was next to seeing them.

After awhile Laura unrolled a beautiful piece of ribbon which was lying in her work-basket. "Isn't

that pretty?" said she, handing it to Grace. "I bought it this morning to trim my bonnet."

Grace had never seen anything so beautiful in the way of ribbons, so she expressed her admiration of it.

"I am going to treat you just as if you were my sister," said Laura; "and as I never had one, maybe I shall be tyrannical. But you must not rebel. You must not say a word if I put this ribbon on your bonnet and get some more for myself." She took Grace's bonnet in her hand as she spoke, and laid the rich ribbon over it. "There!" said she. "Your straw is very white and neat-looking, but I know you cannot get such ribbon in Beechford."

Grace did not tell her she went six miles on horseback to get a brand-new ribbon for this very visit, and paid more for it than for any she or Annie had ever owned before; how Aunt Lois had admired it, and thought there could be none in Boston to vie with it. She only thanked her cousin in her own sweet way, and begged her to do just as she pleased with her bonnet.

## CHAPTER VI.

### INCIDENTS OF THE VISIT.

WE will leave Laura and Grace to their pleasant chat, and follow Colonel Winthrop and his nephew in their afternoon drive. Colonel Winthrop had not been long in discovering that his nephew's coat did not do him full justice. If there had been no way to remedy it, he would have thought it a very secondary consideration; but there was, and, with a feeling of relief that he could express his joy at seeing him in some tangible way, he ordered John to drive to his tailor's.

Leaving Ernest in the carriage, he went in to inquire how soon it was possible to make a new suit for a young gentleman.

"We will attend to it immediately," said the proprietor. "Wait a moment, sir, if you please," said he, as if a sudden thought had struck him. "We have just made a suit for a young gentleman, a very handsome one. Unfortunately there was a mistake in the size, and he has brought them back. They are a size too large, anyway. Perhaps, as you are in a hurry, you would like to look at them."

Colonel Winthrop examined the garments which

the tailor produced, and pronounced them just what he wanted, provided they would fit. Telling the man he would return soon, he went out to Ernest. Speaking so that John need not hear, he said, "I want you to go in here with me, and accept what I do, just the same as if you were with your father. If he thought you ought to have a new coat, you would not refuse it. If I can afford to buy it better than he can, then it is my right to, I think, so you must come in with me here for a few minutes and do just as I think best."

It was Ernest's turn to be amazed now. He began to say something, but his uncle stopped him by saying, "No time for words now; this is action."

There was something so decided and prompt in his manner that Ernest started as if he must be out of the carriage and following him quickly. Once before they reached the door he managed to ejaculate "Uncle!" but the rest of it was never heard, for he was hurried on and into the back room to try on the new suit.

It was pronounced a perfect fit; and if he could have fully understood the light in his uncle's face, he would have known that this outlet was relieving the pent-up emotions of his heart. It was the first active expression he had given to the memory of his home in Beechford for many years, and he wondered if it could be true that such an opportunity had really come to him to-day!

He enjoyed Ernest's looks of surprise, remonstrance, appreciation and gratitude; and as they continued their ride, and he attempted to thank

him, he stopped him by saying, "I know you are pleased, and so am I; now we are on equal terms. Remember, I was once a little boy in the same house where you have grown up—that the same parents loved your father and myself; and now, when it is so many years since I have heard from that home, I want you to understand how glad I am that you came to tell me about it."

By this time they had reached home.

"You can, at least, dress for tea," said his uncle, smiling.

Fortunately Ernest met no one as he carried his bundle to his own room.

Grace, at Laura's suggestion, had arrayed herself in Annie's silk. It seemed to her like trespassing, for Annie never wore it except on very pleasant Sundays, or on some great occasion. She smoothed its folds very tenderly, and assured herself that she would treat it with great care; but, of course, she must wear it if Laura wanted her to.

"I like the way you arrange your hair," said Laura. "Now, you must wear this collar and ribbon, and here is a ribbon for your hair to match the one for your neck."

It seemed to Grace a long time since she had seen Ernest, and as Laura was not quite ready, she thought she would go down to the parlor, hoping to find him alone. She drew back as she was entering, for a strange gentleman was there, standing with his back to her as he looked out of the window. She turned to go away, supposing herself to be unseen. The gentleman turned around and

said, in a voice she could not mistake, "Come here, Grace, I want to speak to you."

What did it mean! That was Ernest's voice, and it was surely Ernest's face, but where was Ernest? Her look of bewilderment was too much for her brother, and he laughed quietly, but most heartily.

"This is more than I expected," said he, advancing towards her. "I did not think my own sister would put on airs and pretend not to know me the very first night after she got to Boston!"

"Why, Ernest Winthrop!" said Grace, still looking very doubtfully towards him. "I should like to know what you have put on. What a splendid looking fellow you are; I did not know you could look so handsome! Where did you get your clothes, and what would mother and Annie say?" Grace's face was lit up with admiration as she followed him to the window, and listened with absorbing interest to the story he told her of his after-dinner adventures.

It so happened that Colonel Winthrop came into the back parlor about the time Grace came into the front. He saw the expression of her speaking face when she first recognized her brother in his new attire; he heard her spontaneous admiration, and now in the low murmur at the window he felt that he had an investment that sent a glow all over his heart, and richly repaid the principal and interest of the sum deposited.

Mrs. Winthrop and Laura soon came in. They were too polite to notice the change in Ernest's dress, but they would have echoed Grace's words if they had felt at liberty to do so.

Tea was less elaborate than dinner had been. Grace did not pay so much attention to the beautiful silver service as she would have done if her eyes had not wandered continually over to the finely dressed gentleman who sat opposite her. There was a merry twinkle in her eye which could scarce be held in check by her strange surroundings. The evening brought some friends of Colonel and Mrs. Winthrop to call. Colonel Winthrop introduced his nephew and neice with evident pleasure, and they quietly enjoyed their new surroundings.

"Come, daughter," said Colonel Winthrop, "give us some music. Your cousins would like to hear some, too, I suspect."

The gentleman with whom Laura was conversing rose immediately, and went with her across the room to the "long table with twisted legs," which had attracted Grace's attention when they sat waiting for their uncle. He raised the lid, and Laura drew out a curious chair from under "the table," placed some music in front of her, and with her fingers on the ivory keys, made such a delightful combination of sweet sounds, that her cousins were silently enraptured. They exchanged most expressive glances; no other manifestation showed that they had never heard or seen a piano before.

When Grace laid her head on her pillow that night, she tried to realize all that had befallen her since she left home, but it seemed weeks and weeks ago. Even this first day in Boston had been longer than three ordinary ones. She felt a little afraid of her uncle and aunt, and yet she liked them both. She was delighted with Laura. She wondered

how Ernest liked them. She had so much to say to him, but she did not see as there would be much opportunity until they were on their way home. She woke the next morning to wonder where she was—a wonder which her waking senses quickly dissipated. Laura came for her soon after she was dressed, and they went down-stairs together. Colonel Winthrop had returned from his morning ride, and Ernest from a short walk. Mrs. Winthrop soon joined them, and then breakfast was ready. Ernest spent the morning with his uncle, who took him to places of interest in the city. Grace went with her cousin on a shopping expedition. All her life long she had only known the buying which necessity prompts. It seemed strange to see Laura selecting from so many beautiful things just what her taste dictated; such marvels of silk and ribbons almost confused her. She had never even thought of such stores where ladies chose shades and fabrics as their fancy dictated. Occasionally she expressed her admiration, but her wondering thoughts were not often suffered to escape. As Laura afterwards told her mother, "She took to pretty things so naturally."

The dinner did not seem quite so tedious to her the second day. She enjoyed the long, delightful drive afterwards, and listened with great interest as her uncle pointed out places of revolutionary interest. Then the grand harbor, with its white sails and many islands stretched away in the distance, gave a wondrous variety to the views from the hills. Colonel Winthrop was in his element pointing out his favorite views to his appreciating

young guests, and only turned homeward when the declining sun gave speedy warning that daylight was going out. With the evening came some friends of Laura's. Ernest was ready to ask for music on his own account; he even ventured to open the piano and turn the leaves of a song which his cousin sang. Sunday morning Grace found a pretty shawl, a new pair of gloves, and a fine pocket-handkerchief on the table in her room. At first she thought they must be Laura's, left there by mistake; but a bit of paper bearing a pencil mark, "For Grace," revealed their destination.

"I never thought of such kindness," said she, "and they do everything as if they had rather we would not thank them. How can I wait to tell mother and Annie about it."

Annie's silk was doing wonderful service, but it was never worn without a twinge of conscience; it seemed as if she would certainly wear it all out, and then how could it ever be replaced? Laura gave an approving smile, as she saw the new shawl and gloves fitly adorning her cousin; the bonnet, too, was so much improved by its handsome ribbon, that she felt amply repaid for her share in the change. The brother and sister exchange significant glances, as they took their seat in the handsome carriage with their uncle and Laura. Quick smiles responded to their unspoken thoughts; they were at least sure of each other's identity. The change from the last Sabbath to this was not lessened when they found themselves in the strange city church. The old church at Beechford, with its rows of familiar faces, their own beloved pastor

whose voice was associated with their sanctuary devotions, the choir where they were both so essential, came in loving contrast to their present surroundings, and made home seem dearer than it had since they left it.

The Sabbath day passed on. Ernest and Grace remembered the gathering in the "spare-room" at home; they knew that they were missed and remembered there. With Monday came new plans for riding and sight-seeing. Colonel Winthrop, with his usual precision, had arranged to have their whole visit comprise as much of Boston and its belongings as would be possible to get into the time allotted for it. At first he objected to its shortness, but at last compromised the matter by insisting on Ernest's writing to his father that, instead of leaving on Thursday as they intended, they should wait until the following Monday. The only real objection was the gig, and that they thought Mrs. Wheeler would excuse when they explained it to her. Ernest's school did not commence until the first of November, so he had the time on that account. Colonel Winthrop proposed that Ernest should join him in his morning rides on horseback. Fearnaught always had the appearance on these occasions of being occupied with some mysterious subject, which he vainly tried to solve. It was plainly evident that there was something wrong in his surroundings. He neighed at Ernest in a demanding sort of way, as if he alone could tell him what all this meant, and where his barn and pasture lot could be found. Grace watched him from the window, and longed to go out and

pat him on his glossy neck, but she knew instinctively that her uncle would not like to have her; he did not understand what a familiar, home-friend this favorite horse was. Laura and Grace were becoming excellent friends. Laura made so many improvements in her toilette, in such a delicate way, that she never felt hurt by seeming to be deficient in the many luxurious articles which were so indispensable to her cousin.

It was Thursday evening, and they had been nearly a week in Boston. Colonel Winthrop, with his hands folded behind him, was taking his customary walk back and forth through the parlors. Mrs. Winthrop, leaning back in her easy-chair, silently contemplated the group at the piano. Ernest was finding a song which he wished Laura to sing. Laura was softly playing a prelude whilst she waited for the song. Grace's attitude was one of unconscious repose. She was thinking of how Annie would enjoy the music, and of how many things she would have to tell her when she got home.

Thus communing with herself, her face reflected the quiet happiness within. "My mother!" said Colonel Winthrop, to himself, "how she comes back to me in that face; I cannot spare it yet."

"Grace!" said he, pausing in his walk directly in front of her, "I think we must keep you here all winter, and let Ernest go back without you."

"Father!" said Laura, turning suddenly around, "that is just what I have been thinking about to-day. I should be delighted to have her stay all

winter. Do you hear it, mother? wouldn't you be glad too?"

"Certainly, daughter. I think it is quite singular that we should each have thought of it without speaking to any one about it."

Grace did not say a word; the proposition was so unexpected, and so impossible, that she only looked her astonishment at Ernest. Then there came such a vision of home, and the dear ones gathered there, that her heart nestled back as if it would rest in it forever.

"Oh, thank you, uncle!" said she, recalling herself enough to know that they were all waiting for her answer. "I could not let Ernest go back alone; besides, mother and Annie need me very much this winter."

"Suppose I should write to them, and tell them how much we need you here? I think they would consent."

"Oh, yes!" said Laura, "we will all write; I must have you for a sister. I was thinking to-day, that it was you I had been wanting for a long time. You will let her stay, cousin Ernest, won't you?"

"I hardly know what to say. I think mother would be very much disappointed to see me coming home without her."

"I know she would," said Grace. "I have had a delightful visit, and shall want to come again very much; but I do not believe, uncle, I could let Ernest go home without me." Her tones were almost tremulous, for the thought of that dear home fading out of sight for the whole winter was full of undefined sorrow.



"Let it go for to-night," said Colonel Winthrop. "Perhaps, when you think of it to-morrow, you will feel differently. But, remember, it would give us great pleasure to call you our daughter for the winter, at least."

Grace thanked him just like herself, with a sincerity he could not fail to appreciate, whatever her decision might be. "No, I cannot stay," said she to herself, when she was alone that night. "I like every thing here very much; it is almost like a story; but I could not let Ernest go and leave me. Think of not seeing father and mother, and Annie, and the children, for a whole winter! I wish uncle had not thought of it. He is very, very kind, but it seems to me he expects every body to do as he says, and I am afraid I shall offend him by going home; but I must go; I shall tell him so to-morrow. I will tell Laura how much they really need me, and I am sure she will not urge me." Soon forgetting her troubles, she fell asleep, and dreamed of home. When she awoke, her mind was quite made up to brave even her uncle's displeasure, if it lay between her and Beechford. She did not see Ernest alone all day, though she watched for an opportunity. Laura was very affectionate, and several times spoke of doing this or that, if she would stay all winter.

Ernest accompanied them on horseback when they went to ride. Sometimes her uncle went on horseback too, keeping in speaking distance of the carriage, occasionally riding up to converse and point out something of interest. To-day he was with them in the carriage, and as Grace expressed

herself with great vivacity over the new things she had seen during her visit, her uncle remarked, "If you have seen so much in one week, think how much more you could see in a whole winter. You must remember such advantages do not come to every body."

"I know it; and you are very kind, uncle, to ask me to stay and enjoy them, but I must go back with Ernest. I had to urge mother very hard to let me come for only a week, and I know she will not like it if I do not." This speech cost Grace a great effort, and she waited to see how it was received.

"Well then! I have thought of a new plan. Suppose next September I should go to Beechford, will you promise to get your father and mother's consent to come back with me?"

"Do you really mean you will come to Beechford, uncle?"

"It is looking into an uncertainty. I do not know what may happen to prevent, but you and Ernest have made me feel so like a boy again, that I am very anxious to see the old place once more. I should like to have your aunt and cousin see the spot where I was once young like you."

"I should be delighted with that plan, father," said Laura; "only I had rather keep Grace now, and take her home for a visit then. It is a long time to wait—a whole year."

"Oh! it will come quickly, Laura," said Grace, with one of her pleased smiles. "I should like that very much, uncle. Father and mother would be so glad to see you, and then they might think it best to let me come back with you."

"Will you come?" said Laura, rather sadly.

"If they will let me. I should be very happy here, if I had come from home expecting to stay away so long, and they were really willing to let me."

Ernest rode up to the carriage just then, and Grace leaned out to tell him of their uncle's proposition. He smiled his approval of the settlement so heartily, that his sister felt that he was as much relieved by it as she was herself.

"Ernest rides splendidly," said Laura.

"Yes, yes," said her father, "we had a fine gallop this morning; it almost made a young man of me. Even your mother told me this morning that I had grown fifteen years younger in the last week."

Mrs. Winthrop smiled quietly. She was accustomed to seeing her husband polite, but unapproachable even to his most familiar friends, and it did seem to her strange that these two young people, with whom he had no particular association, should so move him. She had never thought of him as related to anybody but herself and Laura. She enjoyed the new phase in his character, and congratulated herself that his nephew and niece were presentable; "for," said she to Laura, "if they had been awkward and disagreeable, your father would have insisted on having his brother's children made conspicuous when they came so far to look him up."

"But she is lovely, mother! Henry Marshall told me last night that she had one of the sweetest faces he ever saw."

"Your father says she has so much character. He thinks there is something about her so much

like your grandmother. He says she could surmount almost any difficulty, and always made things look bright and cheerful about her. He has told me more about her since Grace came, than I ever heard him say before. Did you notice last night how he drew Grace on to tell him how she and Ernest ever got their mother's consent to making this journey. He told me afterwards that I could not understand the difficulties that lay in the way as he did. But he was convinced that Grace had his mother's way of accomplishing what she set about doing."

"Well, I like her as much as father does. I think they have enough at Beechford without her, and I wish she would be content to stay with us."

"There is not much use in wishing at present. We would not want a captive: and I am sure she would be one, if she staid now. Your father thinks he shall surely go to Beechford next year. Then she may like to come home with us."

It was a great relief to Grace, when she found the idea of going to Beechford was making things smooth. It grieved her, after receiving so much kindness, to seem so unwilling to stay longer with her friends, and perhaps, by another year, her father and mother might think it best, and she might want to come back very much.

## CHAPTER VII.

### "HOMEWARD BOUND."

MONDAY morning came. Fearnaught, looking fresh and sleek from the hand of his city groom, stood harnessed before Mrs. Wheeler's gig ready to carry our adventurers home. He pawed the stones with an impatient hoof, as if some new idea had taken possession of him. Home must be somewhere in the wide world, and he was determined to find it. Grace's trunk was packed to overflowing. It was astonishing how much it could be made to hold. Besides, there was a carpet-bag filled with remembrances for those at home. Not one of them had been forgotten. The box of the gig was packed full. Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois had each a white neckerchief. Laura had been so interested in Grace's description of them that she wanted to send them something, and Grace had suggested these. Even Fearnaught's bag for oats was filled with packages which were never designed for him to eat up.

At last, everything being ready, our travelers took leave of the friends who had welcomed them so cordially, and done so much to make their visit

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both agreeable and profitable, and turned their faces homeward. Colonel Winthrop and Laura watched them out of sight, and then the stately man walked up and down his long parlors and thought what a blessed vision he had had of a life which he had thought all sealed up. It had softened his heart and awakened all the longings he had ever had to visit his old home again.

"We must have Grace," said he to Laura, as he met her in the hall. "We want her here."

"So we do, father; and I think if we go for her she will come back with us."

As our story goes with the "homeward bound," we must follow them on their "winding way" out of Boston and on into the open country beyond.

They had so much to talk about, that, as Grace said, it would need the whole winter to get through with the incidents of their visit.

"Suppose uncle had insisted upon my staying, would you have kept still and gone home without me?"

"No; not if it had come to that. I did not expect you would stay. Mother would have mourned for you as Jacob did for Benjamin; but I think uncle is really in earnest about coming for you next year, and then, perhaps, they will let you go."

"That is so far off I shall have time to get used to it. Perhaps I shall want to go then."

The tide of conversation went on rapidly until a feeling strongly akin to hunger reminded them that it was time to look about for dinner.

"What are we going to do without mother's baskets of good things?" said Grace.

Ernest gave a meaning rap on his pocket. "Uncle was equal to mother, only in another way. He gave me money enough to take us home. We can have a good dinner if we can find it."

"How kind he was. At first it seemed strange; but I kept thinking he was father's brother, and then I did not wonder so much."

"Yes," said Ernest; "if a stranger had taken me to a tailor's and dressed me up, I should have thanked him, and put on my old clothes again. I did feel rather uncomfortable at first, as it was; but I thought father would have been just as generous if he had had Uncle Edward's purse; and I know, by the way he did it, he meant it."

Ernest left his uncle's house in these same new clothes, but the second morning of their journey he folded them carefully up and attired himself in the garments he had worn away from home.

Their ride was marked by no especial incident. They spent one night at their Uncle Josiah's whose welcome was like one who had known them for years. The shortness of their stay was all that troubled him. He wished to hear all about "Edward" and Boston, and sent so many messages to "Henry" and "Annie," and "Nannie" and "Lois," and "your grandfather and grandmother," that Grace was afraid she should forget them amid the multitude of things she should have to say.

"Tell them that I shall go home before long, and I shall expect to see them coming, when their work on earth is done. And I want to see you there, too, my dear children; don't forget that. You may have a great many friends, but the bless-

ed Jesus must be the first, the dearest of all. Remember this always—'Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life.' " The old man's voice grew tremulous as he pressed the youthful hands he held in his.

As they drove away, they turned to look at him once more. He stood leaning over the gate, wistfully gazing after them. His long, white hair shone in the bright morning sunlight—his whole attitude was striking, and formed a picture which Grace never forgot.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur had been expecting them for several days. Here they passed another night, and had much to tell in a short time. They had come back faster than they went.

Thursday morning, about ten o'clock, they were ready to leave Dover for Beechford.

They had enjoyed the whole ride very much. Fearnought was in fine spirits, and traveled well. The air was clear and bracing—they had realized all their anticipations, and were going home laden with new and pleasant experiences, and many substantial proofs of remembrance from those they had left to those they were going to meet.

Ernest told Grace of his uncle's inquiries about his business expectations.

"What did you tell him?"

"What has long been in my mind. I am the oldest, and it seems to me, with so many younger brothers, I ought to find something to do outside of the farm."

"You are going to teach."

"I know I am, this winter; and I may work on

the farm next summer. Father needs me at present, but the boys are getting older, and I must make up my mind to do something, you know. I cannot stay at home always."

"What did uncle say?"

"He told me he had no active connection with the firm in which he used to do business, but he had influence, and he would remember me if a desirable vacancy should occur. In the meantime, he advised me to read and study all I can, keep on teaching, and working with father for, at least, a year longer. He encouraged me very much by saying that young men who are educated in such a home as ours make the firm, reliable men of the country. He said I would never be a loser by staying with father, at least, another year, unless a very desirable opportunity should offer."

"Home would be very lonely without you. I don't like to talk about it."

"No, we will not. I do not mean to say anything to mother about it at present; besides, I think there is more probability of your going than of mine. Fearnaught and me will be quite overlooked when you go off in uncle's fine carriage next year."

"His carriage is very fine, and I like them all; but home, and father, and mother, and Annie, and the children, and every body and every thing. Oh, Ernest! drive faster." And Grace grew more and more like a glad child as they drew nearer home.

About four o'clock they came up the hill which brought the dear, old mansion in sight. The first object they espied was Arthur, walking leisurely

along, with a basket of nuts he had been gathering. Hearing wheels, he turned, and recognized Fearnaught. With a look of bewildered joy, he dropped his basket, gazing first at the house and then at the travelers, as if he were balancing which were the greatest pleasure, to be the first to tell that they had come, or the first to greet them.

Deciding in favor of the latter, he ran with a wild shout and was in the gig before Ernest could fairly stop the horse. His shout had attracted Mary's attention. She was only a little distance ahead of him, and she ran the other way to tell her mother and Annie and every body. Charles and Henry were gathering something in the garden; away went their wheelbarrow of winter stores, and they came bounding over the fence by the time Fearnaught stood at the gate. Mother and Annie were there too; all but father, who had gone to the little market-town and would not be at home for an hour. Aunt Lois, who had just come out to the well to get some water for the tea-kettle, heard the commotion, and seeing who had come, put her head into the door to tell Nannie, and then, as quickly as possible, was over with the rest rejoicing that the "dear children" were home again "safe and sound."

Grace's new ribbon was in great danger of being crushed in her reception. Fearnaught pawed and neighed, and acted very much as if he was going to speak too; he was patted and caressed until he seemed quite satisfied that he had had his share of the welcome.

The unloading of the carriage was quite an exploit. Curious fingers pulled away at the corners

of bundles, and curious eyes tried to look through mysterious wrappings.

"Children!" said Mrs. Winthrop, in a tone of authority, "don't you touch one of the bundles until Grace gets ready to open them. I shall send you away unless you are more quiet."

Ernest's first care was to take the carriage back in the same good condition in which it went away.

"Don't unpack your things until after supper, Grace," said Mrs. Winthrop, "the children are so excited now that they are beside themselves. Supper will be ready as soon as your father comes."

Ernest had just returned from Mrs. Wheeler's, when Deacon Winthrop drove in sight. Fear-naught and Cæsar recognized each other in a moment, and neighed wonderful welcomes. Father and son clasped hands most warmly. Grace was not far away, and quickly ran out to greet her father.

By the time the family were once more together, the supper was ready. In daily expectation of their coming, the chickens were ready to frickassee at the shortest notice; the first pumpkin pies of the season were temptingly waiting; and such light, warm biscuits and delicious butter, and stewed quinces, and fresh doughnuts, and creamy cheese! and above all, the welcoming love which crowned the home-table that night, made a picture refreshing to remember; for remember it they will out in the coming years. Father, mother, brothers and sisters, not a vacant seat! each making glad the other's life.

After the supper things were cleared away,

Grace opened her treasures. There was a nice warm dress for Mrs. Winthrop, one for Annie and Grace of equal softness, but of brighter hues; there were collars and ribbons, and two or three dresses of Laura's, slightly worn, which would make up very nicely for somebody. Little Mary danced round in unspeakable joy over her crimson dress. She wrapped it about her and was soon discovered walking across the room with most of it dragging behind her—an impromptu train, quite as gratifying to her as more studied ones are to fine ladies. The boys had each been remembered.

"Here, father, is uncle's message to you," said Ernest, handing him a letter.

At this juncture of affairs Ernest disappeared, and presently a loud rap was heard at the front door. Annie hastened to open it; for a moment she did not recognize her guest, only the face belonged to Ernest, and wondering she drew back and opened the door wider. The gentleman bowed himself in very politely, and going directly up to Mrs. Winthrop, greeted her so warmly that she looked up in amazement; for a moment silence fell upon the whole group, but the smile which came into Mrs. Winthrop's face, and the ill-concealed mirth of Grace, seconded the thoughts of the children. Gathering round their big brother, with eyes brimful of admiration, they shouted, "Oh, Ernest!" and "why, Ernest! we did not know you,—where did you get such clothes?—you look very handsome." He was obliged to say, "Hands off, gentlemen," and kept them at a distance, or their investigating fingers might have handled his unwonted broadcloth too roughly.



"Come, children," said Mrs. Winthrop, "that will do; you must be more quiet or I shall send you to bed." This was a quietus. Children have a natural aversion to going to bed, especially if anything unusual is going on. Arthur and Mary subsided at once; being the youngest they knew they were in the greatest danger of banishment.

The old porch was neglected now, for the evenings had grown so chilly. A cheerful fire blazed on the hearth in the sitting-room, and sent a ruddy glow over the white walls and simple furniture. A little round stand was in the middle of the room, on which burned two tallow candles. Mrs. Winthrop and Annie had honored the occasion by "only knitting to-night." There was so much to say they wanted to give their whole attention. Deacon Winthrop sat in his armed-chair in the corner revealing, even by the "fitful fire-light," a face on which was written, in well defined expression, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." Ernest sat opposite him with little Mary on his lap. Grace's face was glowing with animation as she repeated incident after incident of her visit. Arthur sat on a low bench at her side. Henry leaned over the back of her chair and played with her curls, expressing thus his caressing gladness at her return; while Charles, a step higher in the scale of boyhood, sat demurely in his chair quietly dividing his attention between Grace's story and Ernest's new clothes. It was a beautiful picture, over and around which the light of home love was playing.

Into just such settings as this God often puts His

finest jewels, polishing them by a discipline all unknown to the outward world, until they so reflect His image that He takes them where they "shine as the stars forever and ever."

The clock in the corner tolled out the hour of nine—a limit almost unknown to the younger members of the family. "Ernest, you may read the one hundred and third Psalm," said Deacon Winthrop.

Ernest took Annie's chair by the stand and read, in a clear, reverent voice the inspired words, so fitted to convey the grateful emotions of the soul for continued mercies. Especially did Deacon Winthrop dwell on the words, "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

Even little Mary never forgot her father's prayer that night; it seemed to fold them all so tenderly within the Saviour's arms, and though she did not fully comprehend, she did not wonder that her mother's face was tear-wet when she kissed her good-night.

And now the group, grown smaller, gathered nearer the fire, and grew so interested talking and listening that two hours more passed without their knowing it.

"Eleven o'clock!" said Deacon Winthrop, rising, "this may do for Boston, but it will not do for Beechford, we have too many hungry mouths at the barn waiting for their breakfast to allow us to make up for the lost time in the morning."

"Only wait long enough, father, to hear mother say she is glad she let us go, and that she thinks we have behaved quite like grown-up folks."

"She must say it in a few minutes," said Deacon Winthrop, smiling. He had missed the bright face which beamed upon him so joyfully to-night. "I'm glad you knew enough to come back; so if mother is glad you went, all will be right."

"Yes, I'm glad I let you go," said Mrs. Winthrop; "it did seem a great undertaking; but you have been and got safely back, and I'm sure we shall have reason to be glad all winter. I should not have liked it if your uncle had kept you all winter. I'm not sure but I should have sent Ernest right back after you."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DOCTOR ALLERTON.

AMONG the first items of news which Annie communicated, was the arrival of a new doctor at Beechford. Old Doctor Stanhope had ministered long and faithfully. He was regarded as one of the institutions of the place; but of late years his strength had declined, and the fact that he must sooner or later give his duties into younger hands, was growing more and more apparent. Nobody felt compelled to take the responsibility of inviting a new one into the place. As long as Doctor Stanhope could ride out, he seemed a reliance. Suddenly Doctor Allerton appeared in their midst, bringing very reliable credentials from very respectable sources. He called on some of the leading people of the town, and received from them sufficient encouragement to decide him to take up his abode with them for the present. He had procured a boarding place in a good location, near the centre of the town, and, by the middle of November, expected to establish himself in Beechford.

"How old is he?" asked Ernest.

"Twenty-eight, I believe."

"Is he good looking?"

"He is fine looking, and very social and gentlemanly, you would never think of calling him handsome; but there is something about him which attracts your attention and commands your respect. Father and mother liked him very much. By the way, Ernest, he proposed to father to take a class of young ladies and gentlemen for the winter. He said he should probably have to wait for practice; and if Mrs. Lee would let him have an extra room, he could devote a couple of hours three evenings in each week to recitations, with the privilege of being professionally absent, if it should be necessary. Ordinary practice he could regulate so as not to interfere with these hours."

"Capital!" said Ernest; "just the thing we want. I will call on Doctor Allerton this very evening."

"But he will not be here in two weeks; so moderate your joy, young man," said Annie, with mock gravity.

"Well, then, I'll do what I can to get up a class when he gets here. I shall have time enough to study, these long winter evenings. I have been wishing, of all things, for just this opportunity; and it has come almost as unexpectedly as my new suit did. Hurrah for Doctor Allerton, say I! Behold me, his attached friend!"

"Really!" said Annie, "you begin your rejoicings in good season. You had better wait and see where the scholars are coming from."

"No, I sha'n't wait. I'm going to do all I can to help him find scholars, and if nobody else cares to study, I think I shall offer myself as a private pupil. I can't get sick, to induce him to stay; but I'm

glad he has come; we want somebody new to stir us up a little."

"Suppose you should be disappointed in him?"

"From your account, I do not expect to be."

"Annie," said Grace, "do you believe mother will let me go? I want to go to school this winter, and I am sure this will be an excellent opportunity. I believe Julia Thorn, and Mary Ross, and all the girls will go."

"Yes," said Ernest, "I'll answer for her. Mother always approves of schools. So I'll put you down scholar number two, and leave you to make the arrangements for getting there. Come, I'll go with you to Julia Thorn's this evening, and get her name and Charlie's."

"The very thing I wanted you to do. I have scarcely seen Julia since I came back, and I've got a great deal to tell her."

"But, remember, you go in my interests tonight—first the school, and your talk afterwards."

Ernest's efforts for the next few evenings were wonderfully successful. He had twenty names; enough to form a fine class of really determined spirits. Charlie and Julia Thorn, Edward Nelson, and Mary Ross, were among the members.

Grace had obtained her mother's permission to join the class. Mrs. Winthrop did not exactly like an evening school, but as the necessities of her son could be met in no other way, she made as few objections as possible. There were other good mothers who objected to so much going out evenings, but the spirit of learning was abroad, and how could they withstand it!

For convenience, it was arranged that each young man, in his turn, should carry all the pupils in his neighborhood. They had yet to submit their plans to Doctor Allerton, and now his coming had grown to be very important.

Doctor Allerton came at the appointed time, and was quite surprised to find himself so anxiously expected and so warmly welcomed by Ernest Winthrop, Charles Thorn, and Edward Nelson, as a committee from the class to make arrangements for hearing their recitations. He met them very cordially, and after talking the subject over in its various aspects, he invited them to call with the whole number of proposed pupils the next evening. The evenings they mentioned would suit his convenience. At present they interfered with none of his arrangements. It must be understood that he should be at liberty to attend to any unexpected call. The young men left, highly pleased with their interview, and quite enthusiastic over their plans for study.

And now, a word about Doctor Allerton. He was, as Annie said, about twenty-eight years old, with a strong, well-developed physical frame. His eyes were deep hazel, and full of expression. There was something in them which made you involuntarily feel that their owner looked beneath the surface and was forming an opinion of his own. His firm, well-set mouth expressed fixedness of purpose. He had fine natural talents, was gifted with a rare memory, which placed his knowledge of men and books at a ready and practical command. His manners were courteous, and his powers of conver-

sation unusually fine. He had studied faithfully, had a natural love for his profession, and a hopeful disposition to inspire his efforts. All ready to work! but "where should he go?" had been a difficult question to solve. Cities and larger places were filled with toilers in his profession, and he had no means to support him in years of waiting. The youngest of a large family, he had been tenderly reared by a widowed mother, and received from her such lessons of wisdom, that his heart was filled with high purposes and earnest desires for usefulness. "Do not be ambitious about *place*, my son," she had said to him, when he was filled with anxiety about his field for labor. "Find something to do, and do it well. Then leave the results with God. Honor him, and he will honor you enough for your earthly needs." His uncle, whom he had consulted, and who was himself a physician of high standing, had recommended his present location. "Beechford is a quiet town," said he, "possessing great natural beauty. The people are staid and intelligent. I think you will find strong elements of growth among them. You will not want for material on which to exercise your knowledge and skill, for disease reveals itself as surely in the country as in the city. A well-stored mind, capable of bringing its power to bear upon the occasion, is at home, and in its place, be that place city or country." So, taking his letters of introduction, he had come to Beechford to meet with as cordial a reception as any stranger could expect. The plan of teaching had suggested itself as accomplishing a three-fold purpose: It would be a slight foothold

in the way of certain occupations. It would bring him into closer acquaintance with the young people, and it would open a way of usefulness in imparting instruction to others. Of course, it was cheering to find himself so pleasantly expected, when, with his few worldly effects, one chilly November day, he returned to take up his abode at Beechford.

The leaves of his diary that night reveal a portion of his thoughts, as he sits by his rather lonely fireside.

"BEECHFORD, November, 18—

"LAUNCHED AT LAST!—A choice row of books, with the promise of an addition to the stock from Uncle Benjamin, medicines arranged like an apothecary. This is my office, and I am Doctor Allerton! Once I should have thought the picture complete, but to-night I am looking at Dr. Allerton's *life work*, books and medicines fall back as auxiliaries, and the *man* with his power to use them comes forth. Am I equal to the task. I! Hugh Allerton! whom I have known as a fun-loving boy. An irresponsible youth, and of late years a hard, close student, have come to be Dr. Allerton! A seeker for high trust in a profession which calls out all the tenderest, noblest powers of man. Am I equal to this? 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel.' There, remembering that, Dr. Allerton may go forward. Oh! mother, mother! when you pointed out that text, did you know it would come to your boy in some dark hour like a steady sunbeam, and make him strong to labor? How strange I should have thought of it just at this moment, it

answers all my sudden fears. 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel!' I will write it in my day-book and ledger. I am glad it came to me to-night. I do not think I shall ever forget it.

"With such a guide and counsellor, Doctor Allerton, take up thy *life work* and go forward."

On the appointed evening, the young physician received the proposed members of his class in Mrs. Lee's pleasant sitting-room. His easy, happy manner did much towards overcoming the stiffness of the occasion. He made his inquiries of each one so quietly, and drew them out so unconsciously, that the reserve gradually wore away, and he was enabled to get some definite idea of the plan of study best adapted to their wants. He arranged for as few classes as possible, made suggestions as they occurred to him, and formed a general plan subject to such improvements as his better knowledge of their needs would enable him to adopt. As he knew better than they where, and how to buy books, it was proposed that he should furnish them. This would cause some delay, and as Thanksgiving was not far off, he suggested that they should wait until its festivities were passed before they entered upon their winter's work.

This met with a cordial response from them all. And thus their first meeting passed pleasantly away. They were pleased with Doctor Allerton, pleased with the new arrangements, and pleased with each other.

Annie Winthrop had a fondness for study, and would gladly have availed herself of this oppor-

tunity, but too many household cares devolved upon her to make such a thing practicable. She encouraged Grace's going, and waited anxiously to hear her first impressions of the undertaking. "Come, tell us all about it," said she, as soon as Grace drew her chair up to the fire.

"I was half frightened to death when Ernest said 'this is my sister Grace, Doctor Allerton,' and I remembered that 'sister Grace' had come to say her lesson to him. I don't think I could have told him my own name, but he did not seem to notice it, and after awhile I felt less strange, and by the time he was ready to ask me a few questions, I was quite composed. He is a gentleman, but I don't think I should ever dare look off of my book a minute in his school-room. The girls were all frightened, but now they think they shall enjoy it."

Annie laughed, and asked Ernest how long he thought Grace would remain so awe-struck as to keep her eyes in one place a whole evening.

"Not long," said Ernest, "but the girls all acted as if they were going through some wonderful ordeal. I think Doctor Allerton showed a great deal of what mother calls 'tact,' or we should have had a quaker meeting. I wondered what had come over them."

"Well, Ernest, you may laugh at us, but we felt dreadfully. When we get started, and know what we are about, we will give you a chance to keep up with us."

"No doubt of that, we have some faint idea of a certain lady's ability when she starts off."

"How about the singing-school," said Annie; "it will not do to give that up. Edward Nelson proposes we shall meet Saturday afternoons, then he and Ernest can attend."

"A wonderful age, truly!" said Mrs. Winthrop. "The days and nights together are not long enough to accomplish all the young folks have to do. I am not quite sure how I am going to like this evening-school."

"You should hear Ernest and Charlie Thorn talk, mother. They say such an opportunity may not occur for any of us again, and now they have arranged it so that Ernest will only have to drive once a week. There are six of us to go from this way, and we are always to go together. I believe all the mothers are satisfied about the way their children are to go, so many going together makes it less trouble for each one, and it will bring us all there about the same time."

"Why don't you add and give us so much fun going?" said Annie.

"Of course mother knows I don't care about that part of it," said Grace, demurely.

Mrs. Winthrop only said, "I'll wait and see how much you really learn before I pass my judgment."



## CHAPTER IX.

### THANKSGIVING.

AS Thanksgiving approached every body was occupied getting ready for it, and for the winter which its coming foretold.

Charles and Henry were helping their father, Ernest was busy doing up nameless necessary things, driving a nail here, and fastening up doors and loose places where the cold must not come in.

Deacon Winthrop was a tidy man, and loved to see everything about his farm in good order. His barn door never stood open when it should be shut, his gates were never swinging off their hinges, his horses and cows had warm stables and plenty to eat. "It is just as important to have good order at the barn, as it is in the house," he would say to his boys. "If your mother could never find her dishes we should have to wait a great while for something to eat; hungry folks are sometimes ill-natured, and so are hungry animals. If you want kind animals in your barn-yard, don't keep them waiting too long for their breakfast while you go about looking up lost things."

So "a place for everything, and everything in its place," was a lesson the Winthrop boys learned

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pretty thoroughly. It was a great relief to them to "wish father would n't be so particular about putting up bars, when they must go through them again to-morrow and pull them all down again." Then, especially if they were in a hurry, it seemed such a bother to have to stop and set the hoe, or the rake, or the shovel up where it could be found the next time they wanted it. It was so natural and easy to drop them, and run to the next thing. Insensibly, however, the oft-repeated, patiently insisted on, ways of their father grew upon them. Their mother strengthened them by her counsel and example, until notwithstanding their many failures, *habits of neatness* began to be evident belongings of the "Winthrop boys."

After Thanksgiving, Charles and Henry were to go to school to Ernest. Arthur and Mary commenced with the school. Annie, with Aunt Lois's help had completed three new suits for her young brothers. The wool had grown on their own farm. Aunt Lois had spun it, and it had been made into cloth at the clothier's, an establishment fitted up for the convenience of the farmers of Beechford, on the little stream not far from the church. Mary had a bright, new flannel dress obtained in the same way.

"It isn't a suit apiece for the boys," said Grace, as she carried it triumphantly to her mother when it was finished; "but then you know Mary needs clothes as much as they do, and I can make hers."

"Who will sew for the boys when Annie leaves us, unless you try to learn?"

"She told me last night she was not going in

two years; and, by that time, somebody will give them suits just as uncle did Ernest."

"Easy said. You have done very well, however, in making this dress. Mary will be nicely fixed for the winter, and I am pleased with the effort you have made to help me."

Doctor Allerton improved his time by calling on all of his proposed pupils, and becoming better acquainted with them. He was very much pleased with Ernest Winthrop. He found him thirsting for instruction, and anticipated pleasure in his companionship.

Ernest had spent two evenings at his office, and given him some insight into his silently-cherished future plans.

Doctor Allerton had also spent one evening at Deacon Winthrop's, where he made himself very agreeable by his intelligent conversation and pleasing address. Grace sewed assiduously the whole evening, only now and then stopping to answer a question he put directly to her. He seemed so old and stately, compared with Ernest, Charlie Thorn and Edward Nelson—her and Julia Thorn's particular friends. She thought he more properly belonged to her father and mother or her Uncle Henry. Doctors naturally were old in her estimation. Doctor Stanhope was, and always had been, for anything she had seen to the contrary; and, of course, Doctor Allerton ought to be; and she was sure he seemed so, he was so grave and dignified.

After he had gone, Deacon Winthrop said, "I think we had better ask Doctor Allerton to come

and take dinner with us Thanksgiving-day; he is a stranger, and will miss his home."

"Now, father!" said Grace, dropping her work and looking thoroughly interested, "please don't think of such a thing, it will spoil all my pleasure!"

"Why, Grace!" said Ernest, in astonishment, "I thought you liked Doctor Allerton."

"So I do, in his way. But he is so old and wise. I want to laugh and be happy over my Thanksgiving-dinner, and I shall feel as solemn as I used to at uncle's table if he comes."

"It would be a pity to make you melancholy on Thanksgiving-day," said Annie. "I shall not know the occasion if I see you sitting grave and silent, and I doubt if even 'wise old Doctor Allerton' can make you act such a part."

"I don't care. I don't want him to come. Do you, mother?"

"Let it go, daughter," said Deacon Winthrop. "Mother will not miss him, and you may laugh as much as you like. I suppose you do not object to your grandfather, grandmother and Uncle Henry on account of their age."

"Oh! no, indeed! They are part of my Thanksgiving. I should miss them very much. Or if Annie wants a certain Mr. Ross, I shall not mind him."

Annie blushing told her that she should be able to enjoy her Thanksgiving dinner with grandfather, grandmother and Uncle Henry for company just as well as she should; so she need not invite anybody on her account.

Thanksgiving morning dawned one of the brightest, cheeriest of the whole month. There was just keenness enough in the air to make it exhilarating and send the blood tingling through the veins, imparting a glowing life, which made itself felt like a blessed possession.

Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois were always guests of the Winthrop's on Thanksgiving-day. They usually rode to church with them and came back to dinner, but to-day Aunt Lois insisted upon staying at home to help "Mis' Winthrop."

"I reckon I can fix potatoes and turnips about equal to anybody. Let Annie and Grace both go to meeting, and I'll look after things while they are gone."

To "look after things" meant a great deal when Aunt Lois said it. Annie and Grace knew so well what an extensive ground it covered, that they felt that their places would be well supplied; so they were soon ready to go with the rest of the family to church. The boys wore their new butter-nut-colored suits and Mary her bright, flannel dress.

The sermon was sound and excellent, but it was scarcely appreciated by the younger members of the congregation, their thoughts were so occupied with sundry things at home. If Grace, for a moment, felt that she had been selfish in not wishing Doctor Allerton to share in their pleasant family dinner, she was relieved when Julia Thorn told her that he was invited to dine with their good pastor Mr. Wilson.

And now they are at home again.

Aunt Lois had lighted the wood which Ernest had laid in the fire-place in the "spare room." It glowed and sparkled, and sent up fantastic flames, and looked cheery enough to wake up a spirit of thankfulness in anybody's heart.

The old mirror opposite reflected its glow, and seemed to kindle and keep up just such a fire, on its side of the room; even the cherry tables tried to twinkle with little fires all over their polished surfaces. In the sitting-room, the bright blaze leaped out between the great sticks of walnut-wood, then suddenly disappeared, and soon revealed itself in a broad, enveloping sheet, sending out such waves of genial warmth that they pervaded every corner of the room. The door between the two rooms was open, and everything wore a festal look, which the fires seemed to vie with each other in keeping up. Modern furnaces warm as well, but they have no language, they are dull, gloomy, uninviting companions, only tolerated because they are so convenient. When the dear, old-fashioned fire-light went out, a charming household spirit went with it. That spirit was at the old mansion to-day working faithfully, and well did it succeed.

The dinner-table was always in the sitting-room on Thanksgiving-day. This was left for Grace to arrange—only Grace could produce such an effect with such limited means. Every choice dish the house afforded was pressed into service, and with the ground-pine, "Everlasting," and bitter-sweet berries, which she and Aunt Lois had collected, the table was prettily adorned. There were bunches of ground-pine, dotted with everlasting,

and ground pine sparkling with bright, red berries on the mantel-shelves in both rooms, adding their charm of simple beauty to the occasion.

After a while, grandfather, grandmother and Uncle Henry came, and they were welcomed as if they were great people, come to a great feast. Grandmother wore a black silk dress, with a black silk handkerchief folded over her shoulders. Her broad, white cap-strings, and neat cambric ruffle in her neck, made her look like just the dear, good grandmother she really was. Grace had made her cap very dainty and neat for the occasion. Grandfather was hale and hearty, though he had already passed his three-score-and-ten years. And as he took the arm-chair by the fire in the spare room, and held out his hands, and warmed them by the cheerful blaze, he was a beautiful illustration of the "hoary head," with "its crown of glory" found in the "way of righteousness."

Mrs. Winthrop only came to the door to welcome her parents and brother, her presence being just then necessary in the kitchen, where matters were coming to a climax. It was time to open the door of the big, brick oven; out from its cavernous depths came a huge turkey, roasted to just the right brown; a pair of ducks, a mammoth chicken pie, a piece of beef, and a tender young pig, looking as if he had been suddenly caught up and turned brown by some magical power. An Indian pudding, baked to just the right consistency, gave a farewell bubble as it followed its smoking companions out to the feast. On a side table were pumpkin, apple and mince pies. Aunt Lois' veget-

ables were prepared and waiting on the warm stone hearth by the kitchen fire. While Annie and Grace transferred these things to the table, Mrs. Winthrop disappeared to add a few touches to her holiday dress.

Then the family, fourteen in all, gathered round the table. Grandfather always asked the blessing on Thanksgiving-days. The family stood instead of sitting while he said grace in his own peculiar patriarchal way. The clatter of knives, forks and plates announced that the feast had begun. Everything was good, and enjoyed to its fullest extent. Love presided, giving to grandfather's laugh a merry ring, and to grandmother's faded face and silvery hair a quiet beauty; it touched father, mother and Uncle Henry with smooth "erasing fingers," making the care lines almost invisible. It revealed itself to Annie, Ernest and Grace in bows of golden promise, and into the children's hearts it poured floods of undefined happiness over which no shadow rested; it whispered gently to Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois that past trials were only seeds of quiet joy ripening in their autumn years, and enduring enough to afford them shelter as far into life's winter as they should need.

Oh! this beautiful home-love! sanctified by the love of God is a wonderful inheritance; how in after years it fills the soul with its blessed memories, helping us shake off the dust and toil of life. How in scenes of doubt and conflict, of weakness and failing, it comes like a strong, bracing power, leading us onward with renewed courage and hope. How we cherish, with an ever increasing

regard, the father and mother who, with God's blessing, made for us such a starting point in life, and whose influence over us can never end.

Mrs. Winthrop realized it as her eye rested fondly on the faces of her father and mother. She felt that in the home where she was mother, her mother's life work was carried on, and that her father's wisdom and counsel had made her stronger for the right.

Ernest in his new suit was the perfect admiration of his brothers, while Annie and Grace in their bright ribbons, looked more than beautiful to them. Mary expressed her views particularly to her confidant Arthur, and taking it altogether was one of the most satisfied little beings that day's Thanksgiving sun shone upon.

"Don't you feel sorry, Grace, that you would not let Doctor Allerton have a taste of this good dinner?" whispered Ernest, as he sat next his sister.

"No! why should I. Mr. Wilson took him home with him, besides, if we had any company, I should rather have Julia and Charlie Thorn."

Doctor Allerton's coming was fully discussed by the older members of the family, and was approved of by all. Doctor Stanhope had received him kindly, and expressed himself as feeling relieved from a heavy burden by his coming. He had received no professional calls as yet, but he had only been there two weeks, and it was a time of unusual health.

Grandmother did not know about the evening-school. Day-time seemed best to her for such

things, still she wanted Ernest to attend it, and that rather modified her views.

When dinner was over, Aunt Lois said, "Now, Mis' Winthrop, you go right in the other room, and see 'your folks, Nannie and I don't want you 'round. Annie and Grace may clear off the table and put things to rights in this room, and then we don't want any more of them."

Mrs. Winthrop hesitated, but Aunt Lois again assured her that she would "look after things," which in this case meant put all the broken pieces and right slices into the baskets waiting to receive them when their poor owners came for them before dark. Aunt Lois knew the list of Mrs. Winthrop's "poor folks," and Mrs. Winthrop knew her kindness and judgment were equal to the occasion, so she went in with her father, mother, and husband, to chat by the glowing fire in the spare room. The children were in and out, sometimes bringing wood to heap on the fire, then a pan of walnuts which they had cracked for evening, to see if there was enough, and then a basket of rosy-cheeked apples, to see if they were the right kind, until the daylight began to fade, and grandfather and grandmother must go home before it was gone.

Then evening came, the fires sent up fresh glows, and reddened the white walls, and looked as cheery as the children felt. Grace brought extra candles, and drew up the chairs for Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois where her grandfather and grandmother had sat. Aunt Nannie thought they had better go home before dark, but the children all wanted them

to stay, and Charles promised to go home with them when they got tired. Very soon Sandford and Mary Ross, Charlie and Julia Thorn, and Edward Nelson came. They had games in which all the children joined, even Uncle Henry, after being caught about ten times, consented to "play for and be blinded. Then how the children laugh for once he caught the top of Aunt Nannie's high crowned cap, as she sat quietly in the corner, and came near pulling it off. He kept his arms up so high that every body dodged under them, and once when he made a desperate dive and captured somebody, it proved to be only mother, going across the room to snuff the candles. Poor Uncle Henry! he thought he never would get off his blinds, until at last he stumbled against Annie who had stopped to reply to some question of Sandford Ross, and then there was a merry shout, and Uncle Henry declared he wouldn't be blindman again if they caught him twenty times. By and by the cake, and walnuts, and apples, and pumpkin pies appeared. The children helped every body, and were as merry as children could be. After this they had a few more games, and then they all sang some good old hymns which Mrs. Winthrop loved, and in which she could join. Deacon Winthrop never said much on such occasions, it was not his way, but his face smiled all over, and his very presence was a comfort. When the old clock in the corner struck nine, he said: "We will have prayers, children, and then you older ones can finish up the evening as you like."

Reverently they all knelt, family and guests, that

evening prayer was no intrusion, chilling the merry circle. It never throws a gloom over us when in the gladness of our hearts we thank our parents for their kindness to us. Why should it seem gloomy to thank the dearest, best of friends, for his breakable gifts, so far exceeding the tenderest, most far-reaching thoughts of our earthly parents?

And now, when two hours later, the sounds of voices have all died out, and only the smouldering embers warm the deserted hearth-stones, think you, dear reader, that the influence of the day is done? Oh, no, for a beautiful, golden link has been forged, which time will brighten until it reappears the centre of other golden links in the household of these children. And thus we leave them this glad Thanksgiving-night, with the blessed assurance that "a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked."

The rest of the week was a continued holiday. The contents of the big oven were expected to last over Sunday. Deacon and Mrs. Winthrop and the younger children went to grandfather's to dinner on Friday. Mrs. Ross claimed Annie. Ernest and Grace were invited to the Thorn's. And Aunt Nannie and Lois partook of a nice dinner at their own round table, and told each other stories of their own childhood and youth. Saturday was full of doing last things, to be ready for the important Monday, and so the week was gone.



## CHAPTER X.

## RECITATIONS.

MONDAY was an important day. Grace did not need a second call to remind her that nobody in that house could afford to wait for daylight. Breakfast was at seven. Ernest and the three younger children were off for school in good season. Grace assisted her mother and Annie in the duties of the day until her part was accomplished; then she found time to express the thoughts which had kept coming all the morning.

"It is really a great undertaking, Annie, to go and recite to Doctor Allerton. I am not sorry, or I mean I do not believe I shall be, but I wish it was next week and the beginning was over."

"You will get along well enough. I think you conquered greater difficulties in your visit to Boston than you will find in all the books Doctor Allerton will give you."

"There is one thing you will see. I am going to be very systematic—don't smile, Annie! With so much sewing and these lessons to learn, how can I accomplish anything unless I am? You know I will learn my lessons, or I will not attempt to recite them; and after succeeding so well in making Ma-

ry's flannel dress, I am going to make her new one and mine and yours and mother's too, if she will let me. I shall be seventeen next week, and it is quite time I should be doing something to show mother that I am growing more like you. Not by trying to outshine you and Aunt Lois in sewing for the boys—don't suspect me of that; but I can be useful in other ways. I know mother needs all our help, and that she is very kind to let me study this winter."

Annie smiled at Grace's earnestness; it seemed as if she had grown suddenly thoughtful. She had always been efficient, but had not yet learned to bring this efficiency to uniform action. Now she must have a definite time for study. If it was only summer-time, and she could sit in the window where she spun the flax, she could secure plenty of quiet. One thing she could do. Aunt Nannie always had a good fire and a quiet corner; here she could retreat at any time and be always welcome with only the buzz of the spinning-wheel to interrupt her. Aunt Nannie was rather doubtful about the wisdom of going to school evenings; but Ernest and Grace had got it into their heads to go, and she supposed there would be no stopping them. So it was settled that Grace's chair should always be ready in the corner for her whenever she chose to take it.

It was Ernest who was to take the neighborhood circle the first evening. Deacon Winthrop wished to aid him as much as possible, so he harnessed Fearnought and Cæsar before their big wagon. It was made to hold six and could accommodate

eight. The early tea was ready; and then with father to help them off, the three boys leaning over the fence to watch them, and mother, Annie and Mary looking out of the window, they drove off. Grace's heart beat faster than it did when they started for Boston. She actually felt more personal responsibility. They found the four belonging to their company waiting to come out, and punctually at seven o'clock they were seated in Mrs. Lee's pleasant sitting-room. The whole twenty were there. Doctor Allerton met them with an ease and cordiality which made them feel that he was glad to see them. He had purchased the books; and after these were talked over, he proceeded to arrange the classes, and in a familiar, conversational way give various suggestions about studying. Their work was so laid out that on Wednesday evening they could begin in earnest.

It was soon "next week," and the beginning over, and then the skillfully-conducted classes moved smoothly on with a steadily-growing interest in their work. Doctor Allerton was an excellent instructor, and was fast gaining their respect. He was beginning to be occupied professionally too. His first case was one of surgery, which he attended so successfully that it afforded him a pleasant introduction to others. He had a case or two of fever. The various pains and aches which come and go wherever man abides, claimed his attention enough to make quite an important entry on his day-book. Occasionally he was absent from his evening circle; then Ernest, at his and the pupils' request, presided.

It was a winter long remembered by the young people of Beechford. They had all varieties of wind and weather; but as no one had to be driver all of the time, they did not mind it in their turns. Sometimes when the sleighing was fine, and the moon brought out the glorious frost-work in forms of unspeakable beauty, we will not call them unscholarly if there was some changing of seats, and the ride home was a few miles longer than usual. Once, on such an evening, Doctor Allerton's sleigh was standing at the door when they all came out. He had some calls to make, and as he stood waiting to see them off, Ernest playfully said, "Your sleigh looks lonely, Doctor Allerton."

"I was just thinking so; perhaps you will lend me a little cheer from yours. Miss Grace, I think your brother will not accuse me of trespassing if I ask you to change your seat in his sleigh for one in mine."

The proposition was so unexpected that Grace hardly took it in before the doctor was extending his hand to assist her out from the comfortable seat where she was stowed away between Julia Thorn and Edward Nelson. She knew the girls were smiling at her discomfiture. A *tête-a-tête* ride with Doctor Allerton in exchange for the capital time she was going to have with her boon companions! He inspired her with respect. She always admired him when he conversed with others; but if he addressed her particularly, she usually answered him in monosyllables, without any attempt to prolong the conversation. Now here she was actually riding alone with him. She hoped Ernest would go

home the shortest way, but instead of that he turned the corner for a half hour's longer ride, and Doctor Allerton turned the corner too.

"Will not this detain you from your patient, Doctor Allerton?" asked Grace.

"Oh! no, I have plenty of time; besides, I must see your brother safe home."

Happily the doctor asked her some questions about her visit at Boston; this put her quite at her ease, and before she knew it she was talking and he was listening. They were just behind Ernest when he stopped to leave his first way passengers. Doctor Allerton passed him with a cheerful good-night, and reached Deacon Winthrop's just in advance of him.

"Will you go in?" said Grace, rather doubtfully, as he held open the gate for her.

"Not to-night, thank you;" and he drove away leaving her standing in the porch waiting for Ernest to come up.

After the horses were disposed of, Ernest joined his sisters by the warm fire in the sitting-room. Grace had been telling Annie of their evening lessons, but said nothing of her ride home. Ernest looked very smiling as he poked the fire and drew the brands closer together, and then he asked Grace how she liked the teacher out of school.

"Only think of it, Annie!" said he, "Grace actually rode home with so 'old and wise' a man as Doctor Allerton."

"Is it possible!" said Annie, "how did that happen?"

"Why, Ernest, of course, had something to do

with it; he expressed so much sympathy for Doctor Allerton's loneliness that he offered to take me home, to show him how much he appreciated it."

"Well, Grace, a man must have something besides books and medicine, scholars and sick folks. I don't know but Mrs. Allerton elect writes to him every day, but he did look lonely to-night; of course I did not think of his asking you to ride with him. You always look so demure when he is around, I should not think he would expect much cheer from you. Did you discourse on the benefit of pills and powders?"

"Ernest, you are too bad; we did not talk about medicine or books either. I always imagined he was bound up in both. Come to think of it, I believe I did most of the talking; but what did the girls say to my sudden leave-taking?"

"Julia laughed heartily, but I don't believe Ned Thorn liked it quite so well; it took a good deal of the fun out of him. On the front seat we got along very nicely without you; only I kept thinking what a scolding I should get when I got home for my innocent share in the matter; but if Doctor Allerton only got you to talking, you enjoyed it, I know."

"Is Doctor Allerton engaged?" asked Annie. "You spoke of Mrs. Allerton elect."

"I never heard a word about it. I only supposed he might be, sensible men usually are—Sandford Ross, for instance; but I am growing very sleepy, and if this fire will do to cover up, I think we had all better go to bed."

"I promised mother that I would look after the

fire," said Annie; "so you can go to bed as soon as you like."

There was little time for idleness that whole winter in the Winthrop household. Except to spend a day with her grandmother once a week, Grace rarely went out. Her books, her household duties, and her needle, kept her constantly busy. Meeting the young circle to which she belonged three evenings in a week, and in their rides to and from Mrs. Lee's, she found no lack of social pleasures. She could always secure a quiet hour at Aunt Nannie's fireside, when the busy sounds of home were likely to trespass too far on her attention. Sometimes Aunt Lois would forget that "the child" could not study and talk at the same time, but after awhile she held the study hour quite sacred, and kept all of her thoughts and questions to herself, until it was over.

One morning, in February, Grace had taken her books and her sewing and started to spend the day with her grandmother. The clear, bracing air, and the smooth, well-trodden snow made the walking very agreeable. She felt just like enjoying it. The hills, and the trees, and the white-robed earth never appeared to her more grandly beautiful than on this winter morning. Out from her full heart came the thought of what a beautiful world this is, and how much there is in it to make one very glad. She had been so absorbed in her own reflections that she had not even heard the sound of sleigh-bells. The pleasant voice of Doctor Allerton aroused her with a "Good morning, Miss Grace."

"Why, Doctor Allerton! I did not hear your bells."

"I thought not," said he: "or else you intended to make me upset in this bank, in turning out for you. I drove quite slowly before I knew who it was, hoping I should get my share of the road, at least. You must allow me to keep you out of danger the rest of the way," said he, stepping out of his sleigh and offering to help her in.

Grace thanked him. She did not care to ride. She was only going to grandmother's, and needed the exercise of walking.

"You can take that to-morrow," said he, still holding out his hand to assist her. Grace took it, and allowed him to seat her in his sleigh, wishing in her heart that she had walked faster and turned the corner, a little way beyond, before he overtook her.

Doctor Allerton had just come from the bedside of a poor suffering man, one whose "bed of languishing" had no divine support. He had been full of sad thoughts; and when that bright, glowing face looked upon him so suddenly, he felt that it was like carrying a sunbeam. To have it in his sleigh for a little time would brighten the whole day. He had quickly discovered that Grace Winthrop was no ordinary girl. Her recitations were excellent. She comprehended things easily, and was in her class, as everywhere else, a leading spirit, yet she never seemed to know it. She was so unselfish, too; the happiness of others was a part of her happiness. Her ready, appreciating sympathy seemed to come so naturally, and, in just the

right place. Her laugh was full of merriment. Nothing escaped her quick perceptive faculties.

Doctor Allerton had observed her easy flow of conversation with her companions, and had been highly entertained at her remarks, when he was not directly listening. To him she was always reserved. If he called at her father's house, she seemed to consider him as belonging to the elder members of the family. The evening she rode home with him from Mrs. Lee's was the first time she ever really talked with him. His skill in the selection of a subject had drawn her out very successfully. Since then her bow and smile had been more kindly, but it was always as if their pathways were in different directions. He had an instinctive idea that if Charlie Thorn or Edward Nelson had overtaken her this morning, she would have bounded into either of their sleighs, almost without an invitation, and chatted gayly the whole way. Why did she take his offered seat so reluctantly?

"You seem to be a combination of occupations," said he. "Books and work-baskets are both represented."

"Oh, yes," said she; "time is very precious now. I must work when I visit, or else not visit at all. Cousin Laura asked me if we did not get very dull in the country, especially in winter. I think if she could see how this winter is passing, she would ask how we got along with so little time."

"Do you find your studies irksome?"

"Not in the least. I enjoy them very much."

"I am glad to hear you say so. The evening

hours with my class are very pleasant to me. I am afraid I might get dull, as your Cousin Laura expresses it, if I did not meet so many cheerful faces."

"Don't you like the country?"

"Yes; but this beginning life among strangers, with all the anxieties attending my profession, is often depressing. I have been to see a patient this morning who ought to be better, but he is not; he needs a little of your cheerful spirit to tone up his system."

Grace looked up astonished. Here was Doctor Allerton talking to her just as Ernest would have done. He was not all books and medicine then! and he was lonesome and discouraged sometimes, just like other people. She had never thought of him in this light before, and a touch of something akin to sympathy filled her heart for him. It was not exactly like riding with Doctor Stanhope, after all, and her manner was more free and cordial than it had ever been before with him.

He left her at her grandfather's. The cheerful old man was standing at his gate as they drove up. He saluted the doctor very cordially, and expressed his satisfaction that he had so much to do. Doctor Allerton declined his invitation to go in, and drove away, cheered by the little interview he had had with Grace Winthrop.

"Riding out with Doctor Allerton, this fine morning, eh, Grace!" said her grandfather, as he poked the fire and sent the sparks flying up the wide chimney.

"He overtook me, grandfather, and asked me

to ride; so I could not very well help it, you see."

"Need n't help it, child! it is always better to ride than it is to walk, when you can just as well as not. Doctor Allerton is a young man of great promise, I think. Did you hear him say how Mr. Fleming is this morning?"

"Not any better, I believe."

"I'm afraid he won't be, poor man. It's my opinion that his mind is more in fault than his body. He's very fretful, they say. It's a dreadful thing to be old, without an interest in Jesus Christ. I remember talking with Fleming some years ago. He told me there was plenty of time to look after another world when sickness and old age gave a person nothing else to do, and now he is finding out his great mistake. His great mistake!" said the old man, musingly; "his 'want has come like an armed man,' and there is nothing to supply it. 'Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.'" He held his hands to the blaze, and seemed lost in his own thoughts. Old age had come upon him like a finishing touch, mellowing his heart, and making him ready for the harvest.

Grace looked at his time-worn face and thought there was something beautiful in its calm repose. Now she began telling her grandmother of the little home incidents she always loved to hear, until, warned by the clock, she gathered up her books. "I will study awhile," said she, "until it is time to help you get dinner, grandmother."

"No, child, I can get dinner without you as well

to-day as yesterday. Attend to your lessons, before anybody comes in to interrupt you."

So, in the quiet of her grandmother's kitchen, she got possession of the remainder of her lessons, and was ready for dinner and its after duties. While her grandmother slept "just fifteen minutes," and her grandfather dozed in his armed-chair, she sewed and thought over the lessons she had been learning.

These quiet days were feasts to Grace. From her earliest childhood she had been often at her grandmother's; sometimes staying weeks at a time. As she grew older, she loved to listen to the old lady's stories of her own childhood and youth. She almost fancied she was acquainted with the young people of her day. She knew all about her grandmother's two young sisters, who died of consumption, before they were twenty years old. She sympathized in her loneliness after they were gone, and was always glad that she found such a dear, good companion as grandfather to cheer and comfort her. Unconsciously this dear grandmother wove many an enduring truth into the woof of the young girl's life, which time brought out with astonishing vividness. The fifteen minutes nap extended into half an hour, and then, with her clean cap and apron, grandmother took her seat by the south window, and, with her knitting-sheath adjusted, was ready to give the bright needles a chance to work. "I'm getting behind with my knitting," said she; "the boys wear out their stockings so fast, that it will take us all to keep up with them. I don't know what your mother would



do, if she hadn't Nannie and Lois to help. It's wonderful to me how your mother does get along with all she has to do."

"She is an uncommon smart woman," said grandfather, roused from his pleasant nap by the sound of his wife's voice, and comprehending that she was speaking of "our Annie." "If you only make as good a woman as your mother and grandmother, Grace, I shall be satisfied."

The short afternoon soon wore away. Grace set the table, while grandmother made the tea, and, from a closet which was always mysteriously filled with good things, brought out some extra luxury to make the tea-table more tempting. Uncle Henry came in from a long business ride he had been taking, cold but cheery, and soon joined them at the table. After tea, Grace walked to Mrs. Lee's. As it was only a short distance, she was there in ample time. Doctor Allerton was very suggestive in his mode of instruction. He would propose questions which called out expression from his pupils. This evening, he and Ernest had quite a discussion, which prolonged the allotted time and made them rather late in starting for home. But the horses were fleet, and the bells rang out merrily as they glided over the smooth white path, and Annie and a warm fire awaited their coming home.

Grace had had a very pleasant day. She whispered its events to Annie in a low tone, so as not to disturb father and mother, and then they covered up the bright coals deep in the ashes, and the household were soon all fast asleep.

## CHAPTER XI.

### SUMMER DAYS.

TIME has a way of hastening on, carrying days, weeks and months along with it. Just as you think you are nicely settled for winter, the programme of spring is before you, and you must lay aside what for the moment seemed a permanent way of living and take up something new.

Before our friends were half ready for them, the blue birds came and told, in sweet warbling strains, that winter was over, and with it Doctor Allerton's school. It was a regretful parting for all of them; they had enjoyed it, and felt that it had done them all good. Doctor Allerton was regarded as a fixture now. He had treated his cases with skill, and had gained the confidence of all who had employed him. He took an active interest in church matters, and was regarded by Mr. Wilson as a great addition to the town. He had become well acquainted with the young people. His cultivated mind having been brought to bear so directly upon them, gave him an influence which he hoped to use right.

"I think mother was right," says the leaves of his private journal, into which we may now and

then look. "It is not *place* one should seek first. Noble, God-like occupation, with God-inspiring motives, dignifies any place. I try to keep this thought in sight. My student views were, a life in the city, but I see I can be happy and useful here. I might as well despise the springs from which the mightiest rivers rise, as to turn away contemptuously from this rare old country town. These good old New England country towns! they do, indeed, feed and sustain the moral and intellectual growth of cities, and occupy, in their own relative positions, equal rights. It seems to me one fits for life more nobly, who has the beautiful hills, the shadowy forest-trees, the bright rivers, and the broad, ever-changing skies for companions and teachers. If I have found so much in the winter, I am sure the summer and my growing interests in my new duties and friends, will sustain my opinion."

From that spring-time, with all the energy of his strong will, Doctor Allerton set himself to carry out his life work in the quiet town of Beechford.

No letters had come from Boston. But for the substantial proofs of their visit, Ernest and Grace might have set it aside as a wonderfully pleasant dream. They had only had time to talk it over at intervals, for the actual occupation of each day had crowded out everything else.

Ernest's school had closed, and he was again occupied with his father on the farm. Life and activity marked the opening season. As the summer time came on, Grace found more time for visiting with her young friends. She had been spend-

ing the day with Mary Ross, and came home to find the family quite frightened about little Mary, who had come from school with a violent headache, and was now so dull and sleepy that her mother's practiced eye discerned symptoms of illness which demanded immediate attention. Aunt Lois had been there all the afternoon, but her usual remedies had failed. She roused at hearing Grace's voice, but it was only momentary, she was too sleepy to respond to her inquiries.

"We must send for the doctor right away," said Mrs. Winthrop.

"I shall go for Doctor Allerton," said Ernest.

"No," said his mother, "Doctor Stanhope has been our faithful friend ever since I can remember. It would be very ungrateful to leave him now for a new one."

"He is very feeble. I saw him yesterday, and he looked as if he needed a doctor himself," said Ernest.

"Well, I shall not forsake old friends for new. If you were sick, you could have who you chose. You must go for Doctor Stanhope first, and if he is not able to come, of course you must go for Doctor Allerton."

Ernest was not long in finding Doctor Stanhope, too ill to attend to a patient, and Doctor Allerton at his office ready to accompany him. He was soon at the child's bedside, administering such remedies as her symptoms demanded.

For nearly a week little Mary was very ill, then her disease began to yield, leaving her feeble and very dependent on good nursing for her recovery.

Aunt Lois had been invaluable in her aid to Mrs. Winthrop and Annie during the doubtful days; but as the child grew better, she was left for Grace to nurse and amuse.

It was July now. Grace would bring her sister into the porch, and soothe and divert her in various ways. She grew stronger daily. Doctor Allerton no longer came professionally, but he often found it convenient to drop in when Mary was comfortably seated in the armed chair, which was brought into the porch for her use, with her doll and its wardrobe on one side, and Grace and the mending-basket on the other. He always had some entertaining story for the little invalid, making her quite forget her doll and her weariness, and causing Grace to wonder how a man who knew so much of books could tell a child's story so prettily. These visits seemed all for Mary, and she looked for his coming with great eagerness. She even knew the sound of his horse's footsteps before he came in sight.

Was it the shadowy coolness of the old elm; was it the deep interest he took in his fast convalescing patient; or was it the bright, fair face he was so sure to find at this hour attending the little girl, that made him call so often? No matter which, something made Doctor Allerton very attentive. Mary was such a pet in the household, that it was very easy to believe that anybody would take great pains to make her happy, but it came to an end.

Mary was well again, and ran merrily about entertaining herself. Grace went back to her share of domestic duties, and Doctor Allerton called oc-

casionally as a friend of the whole family, though Mary claimed him as her special property.

The harvest days came, and seemed very like the harvest days of the last year. The old porch was again the family meeting place at evening. And sometimes Ernest and Grace discussed the possibility of their uncle's coming in September.

"I shall be glad to see him if he comes," said Deacon Winthrop, "but I hardly expect him."

Grace wondered if they would want her to go back with them. She was very doubtful of her own desire to do so, even if her father and mother should be willing. It was to her a peculiarly pleasant summer, she was busy and happy at home. And after harvest, Ernest, Charlie Thorn and Edward Nelson, got up such delightful berry parties and horseback excursions and rides to the lake, that she could hardly tell where the days went, they glided along so full of work and play. She was at home on horseback. Cæsar was her favorite for riding, she could gallop over the hills with Ernest, Charlie Thorn, or Edward Nelson, and not tire any sooner than they. Her life was such a freedom from care, such a mingling of childhood and womanhood. Of course there were vexations and perplexities in her daily path, but they were such as ended with the passing event.

"Grace!" said her mother, one day, "how little you know what life really is."

"Seventeen years old and not realize what life is! Why, mother! how strangely you talk."

"I suppose I do to you, my child;" and Mrs. Winthrop was silent, feeling how impossible it

would be for her daughter to comprehend her thoughts, shadowed and shaped as they were by the realities, and responsibilities she had passed through since she was seventeen years old.

With the coming of September Grace was strongly impressed with the idea that her uncle would come. She took especial pains to put everything about the house in good order. The spare bed was made up with snowy linen sheets, and a jar of autumn flowers put in the fire-place. With Ernest's help she manufactured a toilet frame, this she draped with white, it was simple and tasteful, and the little mirror above it shone as brightly as mirror could. Another table, of Ernest's manufacture, held a bowl and pitcher. The window curtains were very white, and looked refreshing as they waved back and forth in the breeze, for she daily aired and dusted the room, keeping it ready "if they should come," a few chairs completed the furniture. A contrast truly to her aunt's beautiful surroundings in her own house, but its plainness was so relieved by its exquisite neatness, that it seemed inviting. Grace had a room by herself, for Mary always slept with Annie. Here Laura could sleep, and here she expended all her skill in arranging, and rearranging, until she thought with her available means she could do no more.

It was the second week in September. The afternoon was very warm, and the mother and daughters were sewing busily, when Arthur suddenly appeared, all out of breath from running. "Mother!" said he, "there is such a beautiful carriage coming up the hill, and a pair of black

horses with harnesses that shine as if they had silver on them, and there is a gentleman on horseback riding just ahead of it! Mother, here comes the gentleman up to our gate!" and Arthur's voice was fairly gone in his attempt to tell the marvelous story.

"It is Uncle Edward!" said Grace, dropping her work. "Mother! Annie! they have come. What shall we do?"

At this moment, Deacon Winthrop came up on horseback from an opposite direction. Steadily the two men looked at each other. "It must be Edward;" "it must be Henry," was the language of each heart. Had they encountered thus on a strange spot, they might have passed on unknowing and unknown. They had parted young men, they met changed by the storms and sunshine of more than twenty years, and as each dismounted they met, and stood with clasped hands, at the very gateway where their boyish feet had first gone out into life, with emotions too deep for words.

The space between then and now, faded out. The strong, natural ties of brotherhood drew their hearts together. "Henry!" "Edward!" were their first words, as they had been their first thoughts.

Colonel Winthrop had directed his coachman to wait a little distance, until he should get a glimpse of his old home, and speak a word to its inmates.

"You are not alone," said Deacon Winthrop, after a few expressions of gladness and welcome had found their way from his lips.

"No, my wife and daughter are in the carriage. They are coming in a moment."

By this time Grace had come out to welcome her uncle followed by her mother and Annie. The children meanwhile suddenly disappeared into their mother's bed-room, leaving a crack of the door open, so that they could get a clear idea of what was going on. The carriage now came up. On hearing it Charles and Henry jumped out of the window and ran into the garden to get a better view through the fence. It was truly a rare sight that carriage, and those horses. And when their uncle opened a door in the carriage, and let down some stairs, and gave his hand to two such finely dressed ladies to come out, they were ready to believe that Cinderella and her coach had really come.

Mrs. Winthrop and Laura met Grace as if they had known her always, and were very cordial to her mother and sister.

The windows of the spare room were quickly thrown open, and into it these guests of state were invited.

Mrs. Colonel Winthrop and Laura knew very little of country life. Colonel Winthrop had given them no idea of his early home; understanding him as they did, they knew his heart was both glad and sad; that he had come to what was to him a very dear spot, and they must respect and honor it, however plain and homely it might seem to them. Grace was a little embarrassed at first. She felt what must be passing through the minds of her aunt and cousin, but her uncle's manner quickly re-assured her it was his home too.

"I do not know what you will do with my horses,

brother. I knew I could not endure the long carriage ride, so I brought my saddle-horse, and have rested myself by a ride on his back when I felt like it."

"Plenty of room and plenty to eat, Edward. Your man knows how to take care of them."

Mrs. Winthrop and Laura were shown up-stairs, where the trunks had gone before them; there was a good deal of bustle and confusion everywhere necessarily attending the coming of so important guests. It was astonishing how quickly Grace arranged little Mary in her holiday dress, and gave her hair, which had such curling propensities, a smoothing touch. Charles, Henry and Arthur, after a due amount of coaxing, consented to come in and be dressed up; then Grace undertook the more difficult task of introducing them to their new relations. Arthur and Mary were quite willing, but Charles and Henry, after getting their courage up to the highest point, suddenly disappeared as she opened the door to bring them in. She only heard their suppressed laughter as they tumbled over each other in their haste to retreat. She plainly saw she must bide her time to bring these young gentlemen into notice, and left them to enjoy their outside posts.

After sitting a few moments, Grace said in a low tone to Annie, "I am going to meet Ernest, but I'll be back in time to set the table."

Ernest had gone away with the horse and wagon. Grace disappeared behind the garden and came out into the road beyond, walking quickly on until she met Ernest. She soon told him who had come,

and added: "I wish you would take me to grandmother's a few moments. I will tell you by the way what my errand is."

What Grace told her brother, or what her errand was at her grandmother's, we will not stay to hear. When tea was ready in the sitting-room, and Mrs. Winthrop began to fill the cups, she discovered her mother's china was on the tray before her, and an unusual number of silver spoons were at her service. She smiled to herself and remembered that Grace had been missing just when she wanted her, a little while before Ernest came home. She was sure she never would have thought of such a thing; but Grace had ways of her own, and if her grandmother sanctioned them, she should say nothing. Charles and Henry had by degrees got within speaking distance of their uncle. Their curiosity to see the horses led them into the front yard, where they came suddenly upon him as he was giving some directions to the coachman. Mrs. Winthrop and Laura were standing in the front door, and Colonel Winthrop called the boys to come and speak to them; finding a retreat impossible, they came forward, and now at the tea-table they were intensely interested in watching all that went on.

"You know our errand, sister," said Colonel Winthrop. "I did have some scruples about asking so great a favor, but as I see all these young folks gathered round your table, I feel more bold in my claims for Grace."

"I thought you would forget all about that, uncle!" said Grace.

"No, indeed!" said Laura. "You know you promised you would go home with us, if we came after you."

"Perhaps father and mother will question my right to make such a promise without their consent."

"I must take the responsibility of that," said Colonel Winthrop. "I think your father and mother will see the justice of my claim on one of their children, when they have so many."

"I do not know about that," said Mrs. Winthrop; "we haven't one to spare out of our little flock. Grace is very necessary in her place."

"I do not doubt it; but I am not going to present my claim to-night, only hint at it. I have so much to think of and talk about, that I shall not get to it in several days. I want to go all over the farm. I want Mrs. Winthrop and Laura to go with me, and see where I used to drive cows and feed sheep when I was a boy like one of these," turning to Charles and Henry.

The evening was passed in calling up old memories; and when Colonel Winthrop knelt that night at the family altar and listened to his brother's prayer, the tide of association swept him back into his boyhood, until he almost fancied his father and mother were in their old places, and the life between them and now was not his; but as he rose from his knees, the youthful Edward Winthrop faded into the dim past, and the man with a plentiful mingling of gray in his once black hair was in his place.

"Sleeping in my old room to-night, brother, why it makes me feel young again," said Colonel Win-



throp; "even this tallow-candle seems to flicker a sort of welcome."

After their guests had retired, Grace assisted her mother in some preparations for breakfast, and then had a little chat with Annie. She was anxious to know what impression her aunt and cousin had made. Annie never made up her mind hastily. She liked them very well, especially Laura. She wanted to see more of her aunt before she could tell what she thought of her. The next day was very beautiful. Colonel Winthrop spent the morning in wandering over familiar spots, and in the afternoon, accompanied by his wife and daughter, Ernest and Annie, he started for a ramble about the farm. Laura was delighted with the beautiful views. Mrs. Winthrop managed to get up all the interest she could, but she soon tired of walking and climbing stone fences. Ernest went back with her to a path which led to the house, and she came up to the porch and seated herself very gladly for a talk with little Mary, who was alone there playing with a pair of frolicksome kittens.

Mary was very much pleased with "the new lady," as she called her aunt. She grew very confiding and told her that she was going to have some of the "beautifullest" cake for tea that she ever saw. Grace was making it now, and she was "putting sugar all over the top;" then she thanked her for the pretty dress she sent her when Grace went to Boston, and told her items of household doings which greatly amused her.

"Have you ever seen Doctor Allerton?" said the child.

"No; who is he?"

"Why, he's my doctor. I was very sick and he cured me; he comes here now to see me. I guess he knows about Boston, 'cause I've heard him talk to Grace about it. I hope he will come while you are here. I want him to see your beautiful carriage. I don't believe he ever saw any like it. I never did in all my life. I wanted to get in it and play ride with my doll this morning, but Charles would not let me; he said I must ask you first. May I, to-morrow?"

"Yes, dear, and by to-morrow the horses will be so rested that your uncle will give you a ride too. Will you let me take Grace home with me in the nice carriage?"

"To stay all night?"

"Yes, to stay a good many nights; you have your mother and Annie and all your brothers."

"But we want Grace; you cannot have her to stay but one night. I know mother won't let you."

Mrs. Winthrop concluded she should not gain strength for her cause in this quarter, so she changed the subject by asking after the kittens. Grace soon came in looking as fresh as if she had not seen the kitchen all day long.

"You see I could not keep up with your uncle, so I came back again; but Laura has gone on delighted with everything."

The other Mrs. Winthrop now joined them, and the two ladies, so unlike in all their habits of life, were soon pleasantly chatting, finding a common interest in the tie of relationship which bound them to each other.

Mrs. Colonel Winthrop was taking a new view of life; it seemed to her so impossible that this large family could go on so quietly without the aid of servants. She did not even see that their presence caused extra labor. They helped each other, and everything seemed to go on so harmoniously. It was a new style of life, and its novelty pleased her.

Just before sunset Colonel Winthrop appeared: he had taken a different route from Ernest and the girls.

"I am more changed than the old farm," said he to his wife. "I have had a sad enjoyment all the afternoon. I wonder I could be content to stay away from the old place so long. Look at that sunset! it is just such as I used to watch from this very place. I can almost hear mother's voice calling me to do some forgotten thing. We boys liked play, and mother's hands were very busy at this hour." Again the boy stood in the man's place, and Mrs. Winthrop was silent.

Annie and Laura soon came. Ernest had left them at the gate and gone to attend to his evening tasks. Laura was glowing in her description of her ramble. Her mother called her attention to her torn dress as a testimony of some of the inconveniences attending the way.

"Never mind that, mother! the rock I climbed was worth more than my dress. It was the one where father used to call the sheep to give them salt. The top of it is broad and flat like a table. To-morrow, Ernest is going to take us to ride in the wagon. I shall enjoy that, I know."

Greatly to Mary's delight, Doctor Allerton rode up. He did not know of the arrival, but came in and was presented by Annie to her uncle, aunt and cousin. With his peculiarly happy manner, he addressed himself to Colonel Winthrop. He was familiar with Boston; so he was at home with Colonel Winthrop there. He was well acquainted with the politics of the day, and with the general interests of the country, at home and abroad. The ready flow of conversation went on with an ease and pleasure which made Deacon Winthrop, who had come in, very glad that the new doctor happened to call. When tea was ready, he rose to go, but was so cordially invited to stay, that he accepted the invitation and prolonged his visit an hour afterwards; then he excused himself, to see a patient.

"That is a very intelligent young man," said Colonel Winthrop to Ernest. "Do you expect to keep him in Beechford?"

"We hope to. He is getting quite an extensive practice, and seems interested in his work. There are a good many fine people in Beechford, uncle."

"I know there must be. It was always a good old town. Only I have grown so accustomed to the bustle and activity of a city, that I forget how much there is in the quiet of the country. I have grown to think of the country as a place for rest."

"You had better hire out to me next summer," said Deacon Winthrop, laughing heartily. "You would want to go back to the city to rest, before your first month was out."

"I suppose I would, if you drive business as

father used to; but my recollection of toil and hardship is so much more in the army than on the farm, that I never think of farm life with any feeling but rest and enjoyment."

"Not much rest," said Ernest; "for nothing stays as you leave it. The weeds and briars keep up a constant strife with the corn and potatoes, and in the garden the work is never done."

"I have not come to the resting-place yet," said Deacon Winthrop; "but I suppose the world is alike all over; it was intended to be a busy place, and, if we are good for any thing, we must all have our share in its labors."

By and by Col. Winthrop led the conversation to the subject of Grace's going home with them. "We shall not be content to go back without her," said he, "unless there are positive objections to her going."

"Don't you know, Brother Edward," said Mrs. Winthrop, "that she cannot dress as Laura does, and that it would be impossible for her father to increase his expenses?"

"I know it perfectly well; and, if I take her, it shall be at my own expense. Laura wants a companion. Her aunt is very anxious to have her, and to me she will be a link from the old place."

"How long do you mean to keep her?"

"I will not promise to bring her back under a year, unless some of you are sick and really need her. I do not mean to rob you of Grace, sister; though I would gladly adopt her. Only promise she may stay a year with us, and then be guided by circumstances afterward."

Colonel Winthrop found he had a good many obstacles to overcome from the whole family. The young lady herself did not help him much. She was too happy at home, to seek to leave it. If her father and mother decided she had better remain, she would be content. Laura was very earnest about it. She pictured in glowing colors the pleasures of the coming winter, and always spoke as if her going was a matter already decided.

"I shall not go directly home," said Colonel Winthrop. "I intend to journey until the first of November. I intend to spend a week in New York. Grace will have a fine opportunity of seeing new things and new places."

Deacon and Mrs. Winthrop were a good deal perplexed. They thought about, talked about, and prayed over the matter, and at length consented. Annie, with her accustomed generosity, made no objections; only saying, playfully, "My silk dress cannot go for a year."

Ernest was very silent; his sister's society was a well-spring in his heart, but his uncle had told him that by another spring he should be able to obtain for him a very desirable situation. So he left the decision with the others.

Grace wanted to go, and she wanted to stay. but as this frame of mind availed nothing, and it was very evident her uncle expected her to go, she concluded to think it was a very desirable plan, and assure herself that she should enjoy it much.

"Do not trouble yourself to get her ready," said Mrs. Colonel Winthrop to her mother. "I can get her all that she needs, in New York."

And thus, out of the journey to Boston, grew a plan which might change the whole course of Grace's life.

## CHAPTER XII.

### LEAVE-TAKINGS.

LITTLE Mary had a ride every day in that beautiful carriage, and so had Charles, Henry and Arthur. It was such a wonderful thing to go up and down the steps, to pull up the glass windows and look out so grandly on every body they passed. Laura preferred riding in the open wagon with her Cousin Ernest, and Colonel Winthrop explored the town on horseback. Grace tried to fill Annie's place as much as possible, and give her an opportunity to see Laura and ride out with them when only one could go. Doctor Allerton had called once or twice, and once invited Laura to ride with him to Eagle Mountain, to see the broad, beautiful view from its summit. There was a bridle-path which was in itself a curiosity, being partly natural and partly made by the wood-cutters, for their own convenience, in drawing wood. Laura had learned to ride on horseback, and sometimes accompanied her father. So she enjoyed the wild ride and the beautiful views, and came home quite in ecstasies with every thing, especially her companion. "He is very entertaining,"

said she. "I should think the young ladies here would enjoy his society."

"He does not seek ladies' society," said Ernest. "We have an idea that he has an interest outside of Beechford."

"I think the girls are a little afraid of him," said Grace. "He is always polite, but he seems so far off."

"That is your opinion," said Ernest. "The truth is, Cousin Laura, Grace likes to have a good time, and manages to find plenty to join her. Here are Charlie Thorn and Edward Nelson, always ready to do whatever she says, and the rest follow. Doctor Allerton strikes out his own path. She regards him as quite too 'old and wise' for her notice."

Grace laughed, and said, "Ernest Winthrop had a path of his own as well as Doctor Allerton; at least the girls thought so. She was sure they could never manage him, if she was gone; but, for all that, he is one of the best brothers in the world," and she laid her head caressingly on his shoulder, and was half a mind not to go away and leave him.

Sunday, Deacon and Mrs. Winthrop rode in the carriage with their brother and sister, little Mary accompanying them; while Laura rode in the wagon with the family. Such an establishment had never come up to the village-green before, and we must not think it strange that many eyes were directed to it. Its owner was thinking more of the faces that were gone, and enjoying the shake of the few friendly hands that were left to greet him, than of the sensation his carriage was making.

Mrs. Winthrop and Laura were watching the novel scene with much interest, and Grace was thinking how cold and formal her uncle's church at Boston was, compared with this dear home one. Mrs. Deacon Winthrop always shrunk from display of any kind. Her own seat in the wagon would have been much more to her taste, but she thought it hardly polite to say so. She accepted things as they were. Mr. Wilson's discourse was like himself, excellent. Grace felt really homesick, as she looked over the familiar scene from her seat in the choir. The girls were full of regrets at her going. They should miss her so much everywhere.

The remaining days of their stay, Grace was much occupied in gathering together the treasures of her wardrobe and making farewell calls. Aunt Lois was almost inconsolable, it was "such a poor plan for young girls to go away from home." She wondered "Mis' Winthrop" could consent to it.

"Yes," said Nannie, "but tain't no use for us to say a word, Lois. Edward Winthrop was always sot on having his own way when he was a boy; and he thinks it's a fine thing to take such a pretty, young creature as Grace to ride in his carriage and keep company with his daughter."

"That's it, Nannie. She is such a pretty creature, and every body takes to her so, that I expect nothing but she'll be getting married out there to Boston, and we shall never have her back again. Oh, dear! I wish she had staid to home. She never would have gone hunting up her relations if I could have helped it. Strange Mis' Winthrop

let her go!" And Aunt Lois wiped the tears from her poor old eyes, and tried to be resigned over what she could not help.

"I don't believe she'll be sot up with high notions," said Aunt Nannie. "She's got a deal of common sense, and that's worth more than her pretty face and wonderful taking ways. She had a good bringing up, and the Lord will take care of her wherever she goes. May be He'll bring her back to us."

So they comforted each other, and tried to be cheerful over the loss of their favorite.

Colonel Winthrop had called on them, and left a substantial proof of his early recollections.

Mrs. Winthrop had been entertained by their quaint ways and curious little cottage, and Laura had become quite familiar with the "alley-beds" and their blooming contents. She had enjoyed the big bunches of fennel which they gave her, and quite won Aunt Lois's good opinion by picking one of her sage beds as nicely as she could have done it herself.

If they had not been determined to carry Grace off, the old ladies would have considered them a wonderful nice family—not a bit "stuck up" by their fine things.

Laura took them to ride in her father's carriage, Annie accompanying her. This time the big fans were left at home, as Grace told them they would not need them at all. So, leaving out the ending, they enjoyed the visit.

It was the afternoon before Colonel Winthrop expected to start for New York.

After dinner Sandford Ross and Annie, Ernest, Julia Thorn and Laura went to the lake, which lay about four miles distant.

Charlie Thorn had invited Grace, but she was obliged to excuse herself, because she had so much to do, and she must go to bid her grandfather and grandmother good-bye. Her mother was going out to ride with her uncle and aunt; Arthur and Mary were to go with them to have their last ride in the carriage.

She went alone to her grandfather's and staid with the old people to an early tea.

"Remember, my child!" said her grandmother, at parting, "your Bible and your prayers. I may be gone when you come again, but I would have this thought abide with you always. *Unless you love the Lord Jesus Christ and serve Him above everything else, your life will be a failure.* May He 'keep you from temptation and deliver you from evil.'"

"Your grandmother's words are good, my child," said her grandfather; "and I will add to them, 'Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil,' and 'the Lord shall guide thee continually.'"

Grace was weeping now, and with one more farewell from these faithful sentinels of her childhood and youth, she went on her way. Once she turned back to look, and there they stood watching her out of sight.

There were two ways home—one by the usual road, and another more retired, where they walked or rode on horseback; it was once the highway, but



had been so little used since the shorter road was made that it had grown impassable for wheels. She chose this latter path, that she might have time to compose herself without much danger of meeting anybody. She had gone about half-way, and was trying to look at the bright side of things, determining that her last evening at home should be a cheerful one, when she was aroused by the sound of horse's feet coming in the path behind her. Who could it be? Her first impulse was to wait behind a tree until the rider passed, but before she had time to get out of sight the horse was beside her and its rider had dismounted.

Her eyes were so swollen and so red from the tears she had been shedding that she did not look up until a pleasant voice said, "Is it possible that I find you here, Miss Grace?"

"Doctor Allerton!" said she, in equal astonishment, "who would have thought of meeting you here? I did not know that you ever came this way."

"I have learned all the traveled paths of your town. I was going to your house, and, for convenience, came across here. Most fortunately, I think, since I have overtaken you in it. Is it really true, Miss Grace, that you are going to leave us?"

"I suppose so. I have just been to bid grandfather and grandmother good-bye. I did not think it would be so hard to leave them."

"And are they the only ones you regret to leave?"

"Oh, no! I have so many friends that I won-

der I can go at all." And she choked back the tears that were ready to start again.

"Did it ever occur to you," said her companion, gently detaining her, "that anybody outside of your immediate home circle might deeply regret your uncle's invitation?"

"Yes, the girls all do. It has been a great trial to part with them."

"Grace Winthrop!" said Doctor Allerton, taking her hand, "you must pardon my abruptness, and listen while I tell you something which, but for your going I should have kept longer to myself and revealed at a more fitting time. I hoped, as we saw more of each other, you would understand my feelings towards you, for I have learned to love you very much, and to hope that sometime in the future you will return my love, and consent to become my wife."

Had an earthquake suddenly rent the ground at the young girl's feet, she could not have been more utterly astonished. She had been so full of happiness, had had so many to love, and so much to interest and occupy her, that she had had little room to dream of what might be. When she got to it, possibly she might marry, but not for years and years. She was not quite eighteen, only a dear, home child, and Doctor Allerton, of all persons, to ask her to become his wife! He was so much older and so much wiser that she never thought herself a companion for him. What could have put such a thought into his head! Had she heard aright? Yes, she had, for it was very plainly said, and here stood Doctor Allerton still holding her

hand, and looking with such an intense expression in his speaking eyes.

Hastily withdrawing her hand, she covered her face and wept. The tears she had just put away all came again. It seemed to her that the world had grown strangely dark, and she was full of trouble. Her impulse was to run away, and never believe she had heard a word of what Doctor Allerton certainly said. But in the apparently composed man, who had turned away to let her recover herself, she felt that she had met a reality.

In a little time he came to her, and said, very quietly, "We must not wait here, Miss Grace, the dew is heavy, and however much I might like to detain you, I should not like to have you get sick."

Drawing his horse's bridle over one arm he placed her hand in the other and they walked slowly on.

"I must consider this meeting providential," said he, breaking the silence. "Ever since I heard you were going, I have been seeking an opportunity to speak to you on this subject. I almost despaired of obtaining it, when I found you so suddenly in my very pathway. I came this way because I wanted to think without being disturbed."

Once Grace would have said this was her reason for choosing it this afternoon, but she seemed suddenly bereft of the power of speech.

Finding her still silent, he said, "May I hope that the meeting is not a vain one, and that you will sometime return the love which I have expressed for you?"

"I do not love anybody, Doctor Allerton, but father, mother, Ernest, Annie and the children, and a great many others;" and a half smile came over her face at the extent of her love just as she was on the point of denying its existence.

"That is all right," said he, glad to see the reaction of a smile, "I do not ask to take the place of any of these. I only want you to love me, too. You need not say you will to-night, only promise me——"

"I cannot promise anything, Doctor Allerton. Please do not think any more about it. I cannot——"

"Wait a moment. Only promise, that if I write to you sometimes, you will answer my letters. That is not asking too much, is it?"

"I could not interest you. You would soon be very tired of my answers."

"Let me judge of that, and take the punishment I deserve for proposing such a thing, if I fail to enjoy them."

Grace was silent.

"We are almost through this pathway," said he, "will you not promise to answer my letters as a parting boon to a friend?"

"If you will call me nothing more than a friend," said she, looking up, as if she saw a glimmer of light through the darkness.

"Not until I have your full permission. I would not oblige anybody to love me. But here we are at the end of the road."

"Please do not go home with me," said Grace.

"I was going to call, but I can come later. I must see your uncle again."

Withdrawing her hand from his arm, she was soon out of sight, and going through the garden, she entered a back door and went up to her room. The others had not yet come, and the house was very still. It seemed to her as if a shadow had fallen over everything. She longed to shut her door and weep until it passed away. But, no, there was the cheerful voice of Charles, calling her from the foot of the stairs. He had a message from mother, and wondered what kept her so. It was her last night at home for a long time, and she had intended to have everything ready for tea as soon as they came from their ride. It was bad enough parting with her grandfather and grandmother, how could Doctor Allerton add to her trouble by such an unheard-of proposition! She, his wife! or anybody's wife! And a whole tide of regrets for her lost child-life again came rushing over her. Now she was glad she was going away to-morrow; she should forget it in the change of scene, and when she came back it would be as if it never happened. Charles' second call roused her, and washing away her tears, she hastened down to set the table. Charles and Henry were her assistants. They were so cheerful, and made such a comical arrangement of things, that she smiled in spite of herself, and by the time the carriage came she was tolerably composed. If her mother noticed traces of tears, she attributed it to her parting with her grandparents. Ernest and Laura, Sandford Ross and Annie, came very soon, and then tea was ready.

"I wanted to see your young doctor again," said Colonel Winthrop. "I thought he might happen in to tea."

"I did not know but he might be here when we got home," said Mrs. Winthrop, "has he been here this afternoon, Charles?"

Charles having been left in capacity of house-keeper, quickly responded. "No, ma'am," and Mrs. Winthrop surmised that he would probably call in the evening.

Grace felt the blood rush to her face at the very mention of his name. She turned to speak to her little sister, though she scarcely knew what she asked her. Mary was a good covert, for she was too full of the grandeur of her ride in "that beautiful carriage," to hear a word her sister said.

Doctor Allerton did call at evening, and was to all appearance quite absorbed in conversation with their guests. Several of Grace's most intimate friends came too. So she had enough to do to talk to them all. She did not once speak to Doctor Allerton, but she felt his presence everywhere. She was more grave than usual, but that was easily accounted for, in the fact that she was leaving so much that she loved. To have a something in her keeping which she could not even tell her life-long confidant Julia Thorn, was oppressive, something which she could not speak of even to Ernest, required new strength on her part to carry alone. She hoped to avoid speaking to Doctor Allerton when he left. Seeming to be absorbed with last words to her young friends, she tried not to notice his going. But he advanced to the corner where

she stood and extended his hand to her. His manner was so composed that no looker-on would have suspected how deeply he regretted the parting, but the pressure of his hand brought the color to her cheek, and told her how well he remembered their interview that afternoon.

Doctor Allerton's love for Grace Winthrop was no passing fancy. At first she pleased him well, meeting her as his pupil; he admired her clear, correct way of thinking, and her warm, sympathetic heart. Dignity and playfulness were so charmingly blended, that they gave her an unconscious power. He knew, for his close observation told him so, that she would be astonished at the declaration he made to her that afternoon. A declaration which under other circumstances, he would have delayed until he was more certain of his grounds. But she was going away, and if he lost her now, it might be forever. He resolved to tell her plainly, startle her as it might, and leave it for future development. She had promised to answer his letters, and this was the utmost he could expect. "Better to try and fail," thought he, "than never to try at all." He was in no condition to marry at present. So one year or two, if he attained his object, would not disarrange his plans. "Such a girl as Grace Winthrop is worth waiting for," were his hopeful thoughts, as he rode out in the clear, still night on his way home. And here we will leave him, with his doubts and perplexities, while we go back to the little room where Grace is vainly trying to forget everything, and go to sleep. Court-ing sleep was something quite new to her, and after

thinking over her perplexities, until she was too weary to think any longer, she forgot them all, and did not wake until the sun was shadowing the elm leaves all over her window curtain.

Things look to us so differently by daylight, especially when there is something to fill out every moment of our time, even her interview with Doctor Allerton involved less than her midnight view of it presented. She had only promised to answer his letters. After all he might not write. If he did he would soon tire of it, and she should not have to see him again until she had forgotten what he said. She went down stairs, determining to be very cheerful, and assist as usual in the breakfast duties, but Charles had entered the service before her.

"Mother says I must try and fill your place," said he; "but I should not wonder if I should be missing a good many times this winter just when she wants the table set, boys are so unreliable, you know," and he gave his sister a wise, comprehensive nod. "I suppose she will not expect me to sew, and do all the family things you do. I wonder what sort of a cap I should make for grandmother, or how Annie would like the way I should trim her winter bonnet." So the lively boy chatted on, until breakfast was ready, his mother deciding that in one thing at least, he could equal Grace, and that was talking.

They were to start in the morning, the carriage was at the gate, the horses in their silver-decked harnesses seemed impatient to be gone. Colonel Winthrop's saddle horse was fastened at the post.

Grace bore up bravely through the parting scene. Laura was in excellent spirits, and promised to come every year as long as she lived, if she could. Arthur and Mary wanted to ride as far as the church, and then come back on foot. Grace was delighted at this proposal, as she could keep them with her a few moments longer. And now in her heart she began to think that Doctor Allerton had made her more willing to go than she should have been, but for his startling proposal. The carriage door was shut, and Colonel Winthrop directed John to drive on. Leaning out of the window as the dear home faces were in sight, Grace took a farewell of the dearest spot earth held for her. Arthur and Mary were some comfort until they reached the church, and then they were gone, and only familiar houses, trees and hills were left. Colonel Winthrop soon overtook them, and rode cheerfully on by the side of the carriage, occasionally directing John to stop while he pointed out some familiar spot. Grace was sad, but her friends were kind, they did not wonder that she was sorrowful to leave her pleasant home. One expression in her father's prayer, was stamping itself on her inmost soul, as she silently watched the fading out of familiar things. "Except thy presence go with her, take her not hence."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE JOURNEY.

THE journey to New York had variety in scenery and in people. Sometimes when Laura and Grace were tired of riding, they walked for a mile, stopping to admire the fine views. Everything was different from the journey which Ernest and Grace took the year before, no wayside dinners or friendly cousins were in this.

Colonel Winthrop never went beyond a certain degree of familiarity, and his excessive punctuality made no allowances for any waiting on the part of his family. Mrs. Winthrop often said she had to live half an hour ahead to keep time with her husband, and Laura was fast learning this half hour principle. Grace did not anticipate much trouble from this point in her uncle's character, she had never been in the habit of keeping people waiting.

At length they reached New York. New York fifty years ago! Where are the hotels and places of note to-day, which were so conspicuous then? Where are the old forest trees that were then strong undisputed possessors of even the "down town" of to-day? Who could have foretold that the on-marching tide of life and activity would in fifty



years uproot them all, and plant in their places broad avenues and princely dwellings, with the ever-increasing demand for "more room, more room." Well! New York met all the necessities of the country then and it only does that now. Probably in another fifty years the wonder will be how we ever called it "a great city." Colonel Winthrop knew where to find the best accommodations the city afforded, and having established his family quite to his mind, he left them to enjoy themselves for the rest of the day in their own way.

Grace's perceptive faculties were on the alert now, for everything was strange and new. She felt more lonely than she had done since leaving home, and was glad when she and Laura could go to their room and be themselves again. Her trunk looked like an old friend. She opened and shut it with special satisfaction, and almost felt like patting its unpretending surface.

"Come, Grace," said Laura, "you have done all homage to that trunk. I wish you would leave it and sit in this window with me and look at the people and the fashions; that's the way when you come to New York."

Grace looked on and was soon entertaining Laura with her original remarks as the morning picture came under her eye.

"We are going on a shopping expedition tomorrow," said her cousin; "wait until you see yourself arrayed in some of mother's purchases, and then no more smiling at the fashions from my lady! Don't look sober, now; mother has good taste, not at all inclining to the ridiculous."

It was as Laura said; the next morning being fine, Mrs. Winthrop announced her intention of going out to shop. "Be ready at ten, girls, for I have so much to do that I want plenty of time." And at ten they went; driving first to a milliner's, where Grace, at her aunt's suggestion, proceeded to try on bonnets; they wore real bonnets then, made up scientifically, regardless of size or the quantity of material used. At length a white silk one pleased Mrs. Winthrop, and she directed Grace to try it on. Laura called it very becoming; it was for the fashion of the day very pretty, but it seemed to Grace more in keeping with the fine ladies she had seen in pictures than to her simple style.

"Isn't it too much dress for me, aunt?" said she, in a timorous aside.

"You must not think of that any more, child; your uncle wishes you to dress as Laura does; it will not please him if you object."

Grace was silenced and the bonnet was ordered. At their next stopping-place she saw a costly black silk measured off, and lace for trimming laid away with it; then they drove to the dress-maker's, and she was measured and fitted and the material left to be made up for her. There were other purchases made, but to Grace these seemed the most important.

"I could have made that dress," said she to Laura, when they were alone.

"Mother wants it for you to wear while we are here; you will find we shall have very little time for sewing."



A beautiful shawl was next added among the prominent things to Grace's outfit. If the express company had been in existence in those days, Mrs. Winthrop's shopping would have been extensive; but warned by her husband of their limited means of conveying baggage, she contented herself with gloves and laces, and a few such articles, which make a greater demand on the purse than on space in packing. After shopping, came sight-seeing. The Battery, with its shaded walks and smooth green grass, was as fashionable a promenade then as a drive through Central Park is now. The bay, whose wondrous beauty travelers tell us is only rivalled by the far-famed bay of Naples, revealed, as it does to-day, beautiful islands dotting its surface, washed up its gentle, golden-tinted waves, by sunlight, and changed them into silver when the moon looked down upon it. It cannot, like the old forest trees, retire from its stronghold; nor like the Battery, grow unfashionable and inadequate for the increasing demand of man upon its resources. Save for its *steaming population*, the bay of New York has the same out-look it had fifty years ago. Grace and Laura were charmed with the sunset views from the Battery, and loved to linger there as long as they could detain Colonel Winthrop.

The City Hall was a wonder then, and claimed the attention of strangers. The Academy of Fine Arts in Barclay street had many things in it to interest them. The casts and engravings presented by Napoleon to Mr. Livingston formed a nucleus for this institution. The American Museum was

in its infancy, but it already contained many curious specimens, and was included in the list of things to be enjoyed. Colonel Winthrop had the money, leisure and taste to improve those days of sight-seeing. Grace was almost bewildered. She enjoyed everything very much, and added greatly to Laura's amusement by her sprightly original view of things. Thoughts of home would come with the hour of sleeping. Sometimes it seemed to her that something had come between her and the past, or she was dreaming and would surely wake soon. One day when they came in, Mrs. Winthrop found a card and an invitation to dinner from Mrs. Oakley, a friend who formerly resided in Boston.

"How did she know that we were here," said Mrs. Winthrop to her husband.

"I met Mr. Oakley on the street this morning. I had forgotten to tell you. I thought he did not seem pleased that we had been here so many days without letting him know it; but I told him I had brought my family on an excursion, and we had all been so busy we had not yet reached the visiting point. When are we to dine with them?"

"To-morrow. I am sorry I was out when Mrs. Oakley called."

"Write an acceptance, and make it all up when you get there;" and Colonel Winthrop paced the floor and kept on with his thoughts. "I am glad your dress is done, Grace; it will be just the thing for you to wear."

"Am I to go, aunt?" asked Grace, in some dismay.

"Certainly. I suppose your uncle told Mr. Oak-

ley you were with us; for the young ladies are included in the invitation."

Grace ventured to ask Laura when they were in their own room, "if dinner parties were not very unpleasant?"

"Dreadfully stiff sometimes; but Mr. and Mrs. Oakley are easy and social themselves, that helps very much; don't be frightened, I am disposed to think you will enjoy it."

When Grace was dressed the next day, and came down with her aunt and Laura to meet Colonel Winthrop in the hall, she could not help wishing for some speedy means of transportation back to her home, where everything was natural. No such means being available, she meekly followed her aunt and cousin into the carriage, resolving to bide the time and place as best she could.

Arrived at Mr. Oakley's, they were conducted to the dressing-room. Grace was conscious that her aunt's eye rested on her approvingly; this gave her fresh courage, and taking Laura's offered arm, she went down-stairs and followed her uncle and aunt into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Oakley's cordial, easy reception put her quite at ease. She was introduced to the other guests along with her aunt and Laura, and in listening to the conversation going on around her, and observing her new surroundings, she quite forgot her unwonted silk dress with its rich trimmings. Laura was very mindful of her, and drew her attention to some beautiful engravings which Mr. Oakley had brought from Europe.

Mr. Oakley and his two sons came; and soon

after, dinner was announced. Robert Oakley, the eldest, escorted Laura, and his brother gave his arm to Grace. Conversation at the table was easy and general, but there was so much ceremony that Grace was glad she had taken some lessons at her uncle's table, or with all her powers of quick observation, she could hardly have failed to have felt herself in a trying position. She was glad when after sitting two full hours, the ladies rose and left the table. Then Laura and she wandered about the rooms looking at some old paintings, which Laura explained to her and made them tell a story of their own. Then came some music, to which Grace listened with great delight, and soon the gentlemen joined them. Robert Oakley came and stood by her, and very naturally fell into conversation with her. Grace was never at loss for language; she only needed somebody to draw her out. She had seen so many of the noted things of the city that they had plenty to talk about. And Boston, which he had left only a few years before, afforded an ample topic; by-and-by Laura came, and James Oakley and two or three others, and in the general conversation which followed, Grace was a silent, but appreciating listener. She had forgotten herself long ago. She did not know that the secret of her success wherever she went was her gift of *forgetting herself* and *enjoying other people*. She had scarcely thought how *she* appeared since she came; there was so much to entertain and interest her that she had no time for it.

Robert and James Oakley were old acquaintance of Laura's, and they had many associations to

revive—some of them very amusing and quite enjoyable to live over again. Mrs. Oakley was talking with Mrs. Winthrop, but her eye often wandered to the merry group where her sons were.

"I have a very happy thought, Mrs. Winthrop," said she. "I wish you would leave these two young ladies with me a couple of months. I think I could make it very pleasant for them."

"Thank you," replied Mrs. Winthrop. "I have no doubt of the pleasure they would have, but Colonel Winthrop would not consent to that; he is fond of having young people in the house. Laura has been away at school a great deal, and his niece is a prize too hard to obtain to part with so soon."

"I am afraid you are making Colonel Winthrop your shield," said Mrs. Oakley, laughing. "Will you consent to it if he does?"

"I am so sure that he will not, that it is quite safe to say yes."

"Here he comes!" said Mrs. Oakley. "I will see what his unbiassed opinion is. Do you know, colonel, that I am strongly disposed to keep these young ladies for a couple of months, and give them some idea of New York? You Bostonians are not half aware of our superior advantages."

"Don't forget that you are a Bostonian yourself, Mrs. Oakley!"

"I'll promise not to, if you will leave these girls with me; it is just the season for enjoyment, and I shall be most happy to *chaperone* them."

"You are certainly very kind, and if they could be in two places, I should be disposed to accept your invitation, but it will be impossible to leave

them now, our journey is not yet completed. I propose to start for Philadelphia to-morrow."

"Oh, you had not told us that!" said Mrs. Oakley; "then you can leave them on your return."

"Thank you; it will be impossible. I like young people in the house in the winter."

Mrs. Oakley understood Colonel Winthrop's "impossible" so well, that she did not press the subject any farther, and shortly after her guests took their leave.

On their way home Laura asked her father "if their going to Philadelphia was not sudden."

"No," said he; "I thought of it before we came from home. I did not tell your mother until we got to New York, for my mind was not fully made up. I did not like to drive my horses on so long a journey, and unless I could hire a pair that suited me, and leave mine in good care to rest, I did not expect to go. I have found a pair to-day, and a driver, so I shall leave John to take care of mine, and they will be fresh for starting when we come back. I suppose you and Grace will not object to seeing a little more of the world, even if the announcement was sudden."

"I shall enjoy it doubly for having Grace, and I have long been wanting to go to Philadelphia."

"New York and Philadelphia!" thought Grace, as she leaned back in the carriage and thought. "I suppose I am Grace Winthrop, but I almost doubt it." The poor girl had had a succession of doubts ever since she met Doctor Allerton on her way home from her grandfather's. The rapid succession of events since then had somewhat diverted

her thoughts from the scene, but now and then it came up very forcibly. On reaching the hotel the girls went directly to their room, and after laying aside their shawls, they sat down to talk.

"Were you not surprised to hear we were going to Philadelphia to-morrow?" asked Grace.

"Yes; but father likes to surprise us by some plan he thinks out and expects us to enjoy. It is very pleasant this time, surely. You don't know how much more I enjoy this journey for having you along; I am always so lonely in my room at a hotel. I even enjoyed the dinner at Mrs. Oakley's to-day better for having you there. I was thinking when you sat so quietly dignified at the table, how thoroughly you were taking in every thing around you. What a happy thought it was for you to come to Boston! It will be such a pleasure to me this winter to have some one to enjoy things with me. I know now how lonely I have been. I felt it more when I saw how much you all loved each other at your house, and how many ways you had of being happy without riches. But I am running on about myself, without asking you how you like New York dinner-parties."

"I got through this one a great deal better than I expected to. I was so entertained with the novelty that I forgot to be embarrassed. I never once thought about my new silk dress."

"I thought you did not," said Laura, smiling. "How did you like Mrs. Oakley's proposal?"

"I had better reply by asking how you liked it, for I am so bewildered with New York, Philadelphia and Boston, that I am sure I cannot tell."

"I knew father would not listen to it; in the first place, he would not leave us anywhere; and in the next place, he does not like Robert Oakley. It is one of his unaccountable dislikes. When they lived in Boston he fancied he was too attentive to his daughter. We were very young, and father seemed possessed with the idea that I should be snatched away from him before he was ready to let me go. He and mother are great friends of Mr. and Mrs. Oakley, and he never speaks of Robert now. I think he is convinced that there was nothing more than friendship between us; but you may be sure he will not leave us to visit with Mrs. Oakley. Mother told me to come to her room," said she, suddenly starting up. "Be sure you do not run away if I leave you alone a few moments."

Mrs. Winthrop was lying down after the fatigues of the day. She only wished to tell Laura to send everything to her room that she and Grace could do without on their trip to Philadelphia, as her father desired as little baggage as possible, and to tell her that she should not go down to the parlor again this evening; so, of course, she and Grace need not.

"Grace may send her black silk dress to my room, she will not need it while we are gone. And, by the way, Laura, I was more than satisfied with her to-day, she did not make a single blunder, and that dress is particularly becoming. Mrs. Oakley admired her very much, but I am so tired and sleepy you need not stay any longer, only be sure your things are ready to send to my room early in

the morning. Your father says we must leave by ten o'clock."

Punctually at ten o'clock Colonel Winthrop's carriage, with its new horses and driver, stood at the door of their hotel, and his family were soon in it driving towards Philadelphia.

It was now the second week in October, the weather was fine, and in due time, by easy stages, they reached Philadelphia.

"What a contrast to Boston!" said Laura, as they drove through its regular streets. "I am so used to going crooked at home, that I really believe I should lose myself in this good order."

Here, as in New York, Grace gathered up every thing of interest.

"How shall I ever keep so much to tell them at home," said she to Laura one day; "letters are so poor to carry the half I have to tell."

"You must see the old State House, where that glorious Declaration was read," said Colonel Winthrop the first morning after their arrival; and to the State House they went. They visited the library which Franklin's public spirit founded; the Athenæum, the Academy of Fine Arts, and the United States Mint.

Colonel Winthrop was intensely national; he looked upon these foundations of future improvement, as foretastes of the country's growth in peace and prosperity. In its days of darkness and peril he had fought for its welfare, and now its omens of future life and greatness filled him with rejoicing. He had not been so far south since weary, but triumphant, he returned with that part of the

American army which came north after Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown.

No wonder he was lost in thought! Life had unfolded such varied leaves for his perusal, that he had need to read them in wondering silence.

If railroads had been in existence, their return to Boston would have been longer delayed. As it was, a five days' sojourn answered all purposes, and they returned to New York to spend a few more days before starting for home. The Oakley's called on them soon after they arrived. Robert managed to arouse Colonel Winthrop's suspicions by his attentions to Laura. James was equally polite to Grace, but that only seemed as it should be, in her uncle's mind. Mrs. Oakley again ventured to urge Mrs. Winthrop to leave the young ladies for a couple of months, but she found it was quite useless.

"Between father and the Oakley's," said Laura to her cousin the night before they were going to leave New York, "I think we have examined the city pretty thoroughly. Father is getting vexed at my going out with Robert. I do not think he knows why it annoys him either. It is one of his unaccountable prejudices, and I am glad to go home to avoid any difficulty. Grace!" said she, suddenly, "do you ever wish you were about twelve years old, and could stay there a great while?"

"I have lately," said Grace, and a quick, painful shadow came over her bright face.

Both girls were silent for a few moments. Laura's exclamation recalled her cousin.



"What an expression, Grace! I have been watching your face; it has a look of sad intensity which I never saw you wear before. Do smile, or I shall think my sunny cousin has a shadow somewhere."

Grace did smile, and drop the thought which Laura's remark had brought to light.

Just then Mrs. Winthrop came in to tell Laura her father thought that she had made so many purchases, that it would be necessary to get an extra trunk for packing, and send it by the mail-coach to Boston.

"So you must send all that you and Grace can do without to my room as soon as possible."

While Laura was packing, Grace wrote to Annie. She had only sent one letter home since she left, and had not heard a word from them. She expected to find a letter waiting for her when she reached Boston. The horses were fresh and strong to undertake the journey, and John had them in readiness for their homeward trip the next morning at an early hour.

November is fitful, and if she beams softly through hazy vapors on her "opening days," she may sweep away every vestige of such moods in one of her gustful attacks. Colonel Winthrop made no unnecessary delays, driving as far each day as he could, with safety to the horses. Two or three days of rain were the only interruptions they had.

About the middle of the month, one windy day, Grace found herself in front of the same stately mansion which she so well remembered to have

seen before. "Ernest!" was her first thought, as she went up the steps.

The door was opened by the same sable Ralph, his face smiling all over to see his master and mistress at home again. Mrs. Clark, the housekeeper, who had been the presiding genius ever since Laura remembered any thing, met them in the hall. Colonel Winthrop had written, to say that they might be expected any day; so every thing wore an expectant look. The wood was laid in the fireplace, ready to be lighted. The brass andirons and fenders shone resplendently, and were soon reflecting the bright, glowing fires.

"Come right up to our room, Grace," said Laura.

Grace followed to the spacious third story front room, where every thing bore an inviting homelike air. The fire was quickly blazing on the hearth, and Grace sat down to take a survey of the apartment. It was furnished in excellent taste, with every regard to comfort, and looked as if one could be very happy in it; but just at this moment there came into Grace's head such a vision of the old homestead and the dear faces gathered there, that she could not keep the tears from coming. She looked resolutely into the fire, but in its dancing, flickering light she only saw the vision clearer. The journey was all done now, and she must consider this her home for at least a year. With all her nice sense of propriety, I think, if she could have caught sight of Ernest and Fearnought, with only the farm wagon, she would have been tempted to take a speedy passage back to Beechford. Even



Doctor Allerton looked less formidable than he had ever done before, and for the first time she thought of his letters as a source of unexpected pleasure. Her heart was aching to ask if there were any letters waiting for her; but there was so much bustle and inquiry after this and that, that she did not venture to mention it.

"I am tired and hungry," said Laura, coming in from a general survey of the house, and throwing herself on the bed. "After dinner I expect to sleep until to-morrow morning, if I can, and then we will begin housekeeping. Such a cleaning of drawers and closets as I expect to make! You shall have your share of 'all the conveniences,' as Mrs. Clark says.

"Do you keep a fire here all of the time?"

"Yes, always. Ralph fills that box twice every day, and Mrs. Clark looks after the fire when I am out. This fire has been my special companion. I shall not be on half as social terms with it, now that I have you to talk to. I'm so glad to see you sitting in that chair, Grace Winthrop, that I do not believe I shall ever let you go away. Come to this window," said she, rising up and going to it. "See what a beautiful view we have! I have watched all of these surroundings so long, that I feel as if they were my especial friends."

It was rather a chill November day, and people were hurrying along as if increased speed were necessary to keep up a brisk circulation. Grace tried to think how it would look under a sunny sky, and Laura was satisfied that she would admire it sufficiently by and by.

There was a knock at the door, and Mrs. Clark appeared, holding up a letter. "It came for you three days ago, Miss Grace. I forgot to give it to you as soon as you got here, though I kept it by itself on purpose."

"A letter!" and Grace's face lit up so beamingly that Laura called it very beautiful.

"Oh! thank you, Mrs. Clark. It is the very thing I wanted. Annie!" she exclaimed, and danced round the room in very joy.

"Good-bye," said Laura. "Don't fly out of the window and go to Beechford, while I am gone," and in a moment Grace was alone. She opened the dear letter and read, and read, and laughed, and cried. It was the first sound from home for six weeks. There were messages from every one of them, and little items of news. They had missed her so much! Mother had no idea of how many steps she saved her. Ernest said the house was lonely from top to bottom, and the children were always in trouble about something which would not be so if Grace were here. "Father and I make the best of it," wrote Annie. "If we did not, I think you would see the whole family, with Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois, in close pursuit of you. Aunt Lois says, 'It's a foolish piece of business to let young gals go off with their fine relations, but folks must do as they are a-mind to with their own.' Mother says, 'Remember your uncle's kindness, and repay him by your dutiful attention to his wishes.'"

"Can I stay away a whole year!" said she, half aloud. "Why did I come?" Then the thought

came, "I must not be a child. I shall have another letter by and by; and mother says I must repay my uncle's kindness, by attending to his wishes. He will not like it, to see me sad and homesick."

When Laura came into the room, she found her intently reading the letter the second time, with more composure. "Come Grace," said she, taking out her watch, "it is almost time for dinner. I want to hear all about Beechford, but I shall be obliged to content myself with what you know until dinner is over."

Grace sprang up quite gaily, and was ready as soon as Laura to go down stairs. The dining-room, and the table, and Ralph looked just as they did last year. It might be only yesterday since she left it, only Ernest was not there; but the dinner and the day went on, and at an early hour every body in the house was asleep.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE NEW HOME.

WHEN Grace opened her eyes the next morning, Mrs. Clark had been in and lighted the fire. She had thrown open the blinds and let the sun in through the curtains. The room had a very cheerful aspect, and there, in the corner, was her trunk, the most attractive thing on which her eye rested. She got up quietly, not intending to waken Laura, but in a few moments she sprang up, exclaiming, "Grace! where are you? I was just dreaming that I got up and could not find you anywhere. Father and mother were looking and calling, and finally somebody told us that Annie sent for you in that letter, and you had gone home. I was so grieved and indignant that it woke me, and when I saw your place empty, I did not know but you had gone."

"No, I am not quite so uncertain in my movements as that," said Grace; "I shall take daylight, when I run away."

"When did Mrs. Clark open these blinds? That is always my signal for rising. I do not suppose breakfast will be one minute later, for all the long ride we have taken. I have no doubt father has

been out on horseback a full hour this morning I don't believe he was ever tired in his life."

"I was wondering how you ever knew when it was time to get up. At home, the children are always awake so early that I depend on them."

"You will find Mrs. Clark equal to a host of children. She never gives me any peace when she thinks it really time for me to get up. She always lets in the sun as soon as the fire is kindled."

As soon as the girls had completed their morning toilette, Laura proposed they should go down stairs. "Father always comes into the back parlor, after his ride, and he considers it a great omission if I am not there."

Colonel Winthrop looked quite satisfied when he saw the two girls waiting to receive his good-morning. The keen, frosty air had given a glow of health and cheerfulness to his face, and his smile was most gracious as he remarked on the benefits of the morning air. "If you want to keep young and vigorous," said he, "never lie in bed in the morning."

Grace remembered that she had always been acquainted with this same morning air, and she thought of it at that moment reddening the cheeks of her young, healthy brothers as they were about their morning tasks.

When Mrs. Winthrop came down, breakfast was served, the coffee came steaming from a massive silver urn, and Grace was again reminded of her last year's admiration for the beautiful table service. She thought of it in contrast to their own at home, but affection so gilded that plain, unmatched set

in daily use there, that it did not lose one particle of its dignity in her estimation.

Colonel Winthrop never made haste over breakfast, dinner or tea; his time was so much at his disposal that he could arrange its expenditure to suit his own convenience. Grace was so much accustomed to dispatch, particularly in the morning, that she could hardly feel content to sit so long only for breakfast.

This ended, Laura sat down to hear how the piano sounded after its long silence. Grace was a very ready listener; but Laura, after playing a few times, said, "Come, Grace, we must proceed to business. Don't expect to see us again until dinner, mother," said she, as she went gaily up-stairs. "Unless I tell you that my trunk from New York has arrived, and you want some of the things that are in it."

"That, of course, might induce us out of our retreat. But has it come?"

"Yes, it was here before we were, but you must not come down at present. I am too tired to open it. I am going to get rested before I do anything."

Mrs. Clark had put the room in order while the young ladies were down-stairs. Two easy-chairs were drawn cozily up before the fire, and the whole room had a most inviting aspect.

"No use for easy-chairs this morning," said Laura. "We must get ready to live first."

It did, indeed, prove a very busy morning. Bureau drawers were emptied and re-arranged, and plenty of room made for Grace. Summer

apparel was packed away and winter things unpacked and brought out. Grace had no longer any use for her trunk, so she regretfully saw it put away in a store-room in the attic.

At last, everything had a place—the easy-chairs were one at each window, a table standing between them. Laura had produced a basket well supplied with sewing materials, which she placed on Grace's side of the table.

"You see I knew the habits of your busy fingers," said she, "and here is amusement for them."

The morning had gone so fast, that, before they knew it, dinner-time came.

Grace had read over her letter from home, but she had been so interested in her busy morning that she had not felt the dreadful homesick feeling which so troubled her the afternoon before.

At dinner, Colonel Winthrop said the horses were too tired to go out to-day, so they would dispense with their ride if Mrs. Winthrop felt so disposed.

"I am too tired myself," said she. "I feel as if I had had riding enough to last for a long time, and shall esteem it quite a privilege to stay in the house. The girls can walk if they need exercise."

"We are something like you, mother, too tired to need it. Besides, we have seen so much lately, we prefer quiet and rest for a day or two."

After dinner, the girls went with Mrs. Winthrop to her room to examine the contents of the trunk. Grace found that a beautiful blue cashmere dress

and sundry collars, handkerchiefs and ribbons had somehow got in there for her. Laura had a crimson cashmere to match the blue one.

"My brunette and my blonde," said Mrs. Winthrop, "are represented in these two dresses."

Grace admired her's very much; and, as she passed her hand over the soft material, she asked her aunt if she could not cut and make it herself.

"No, child, you want it at once; Laura's dress-maker will do it."

"I wish, aunt, you knew how nicely I can fit myself. I shall have so much time for sewing. I am sure I must have something to do."

"Time will get away faster than you imagine; but you need a pretty morning dress;" and Mrs. Winthrop went to her wardrobe, and, after searching for a few minutes, took down a handsome one of her own. "Here is a dress which I was unfortunate enough to upset ink on the front breadth; you may take it, and, leaving out that breadth, make it over for yourself, taking one of Laura's for a pattern. Here is plenty of new material for waist and sleeves."

Grace's "thank you," was very genuine, for she had begun to wonder what occupation she should have. She had been so used to a busy life that she easily imagined Boston, with nothing in it for her to do, would be very dull.

The twilight hour, again, brought visions of home. She strove to be cheerful, but she was not sorry when she could go to sleep and dream of the life she had left, and which seemed to her now must be always fresh and beautiful.

The next day was cold and wintry, but Grace did not heed it much, she was so busy with her needle. The morning dress was fast assuming shape; and, before her aunt thought such a thing possible, the young lady presented herself most becomingly arrayed in it.

Grace had been in Boston nearly two weeks, and was sitting at twilight in her room thinking of home, and wishing she could hear from them when Laura came smiling in.

"Suppose I were a fairy," said she, "what would you ask me to bring you."

"A letter from home," said Grace.

"Granted. Here is a letter from Ernest; he writes very well," said she, glancing at the address as she handed it to her cousin.

Grace took the letter eagerly, but the moment her eye rested on it her deep blush drew Laura's attention.

"All that over a letter from Ernest! I am afraid I must call you to an account for this; but you shall have a fair chance to enjoy it while I go and try a piece of music which came this afternoon."

Grace went to the window, and, with a beating heart broke the seal. It was, indeed, a letter from Doctor Allerton, written so full of pleasant things, that she smiled, involuntarily as she read. Not an allusion to any thing that occurred the afternoon before she left. He told her of home, and of his own doings, in a way that held her an attentive reader to the end, and made her turn the sheet to see if, in some corner, she could not find another morsel.

He spoke of her journey as he had heard of it from Annie, and threw out suggestions which gave her subject-matter for an answer. She had not supposed a letter from him could give her so much pleasure; but it came from home, and that was enough, she thought, to insure its welcome. She went back to the fire and sat down musingly. She must tell Laura of the letter, but she need not necessarily tell her what led to its being written. After awhile she went down-stairs with a sense of quiet pleasure filling her heart. Laura was at the piano, and gave her a very inquiring look as she came and stood beside her, but she did not ask any questions.

There were guests at evening, and the two girls were not alone again until they went up to their room. They sat awhile talking over the events of the evening, then Grace opened her drawer and said: "Here is my letter from Beechford, Laura, would you like to read it?"

"From Beechford! Oh, yes. Hugh Allerton!" said she, glancing at the signature. "Grace, you did not tell me this. Did you expect a letter from Doctor Allerton?"

"You can read it and judge for yourself."

"He writes as well as he talks," said Laura, after she had finished it, "but really, Grace, what put it into his head. Did he ask you to correspond with him?"

"Yes, but I am sure I can never interest him. If I answer that I do not believe he will ever care to write again."

"I thought Ernest said he was engaged. I do

not think he can be or he would not be sending letters after you. Well, he is a gentleman, Grace, and very intelligent, and if he lived in Boston, I would not mind his letters now and then. But I am too selfish to want you to have any special interest in Beechford."

"No special interest in Beechford! Why, Laura, it's all the world to me."

"Just now, you mean. But you must let Boston in by degrees, as I have no doubt you will when you get really interested in the pleasant people we know."

The girls grew very social and confiding over their warm hearth-stone, until Laura, looking at her watch, said: "This will never do, Grace, it is almost twelve, we must not speak another word to-night."

How well they adhered to that wise resolution I will leave those to judge who have been similarly tempted; only they were very silent when the old clock on the landing struck one.

So far there had been a good deal of confusion incident to their return from a long visit. Dress-making, receiving calls, and getting ready for winter, had filled up all of the time.

Then came Thanksgiving, a feast which Colonel Winthrop always sumptuously observed. It did not belong to any of the festal days which Grace had loved so well. She missed her grandfather and grandmother, her father and mother, and Ernest and Annie, and all the children. She went to church with her uncle, aunt and cousin, but *Thanksgiving* was not there. She came down into the

parlor with Laura and was presented to the half dozen guests assembled, and listened to their cheerful merry voices, but *Thanksgiving* was not there. She took her place at the sumptuous table and her share in its feast, but that was not *Thanksgiving*. She was very lovely in her blue cashmere, and tried to be polite and attentive to those about her; but her thoughts kept going back to her old seat at home. She thought of the long table, and the dear faces gathered round it just one year ago, and she knew how they wanted her to-day. She missed her grandfather's prayer, so full of tenderness and perfect trust in the Giver of every good. She had never thought before how much of her *Thanksgiving* that prayer had been, and she did not now realize that so much of the charm of her home-life lay in that wonderful, beautiful trust, which went up from the hearts of her parents, to their Father in heaven.

This was the first time in her life that she had ever been absent from home on such an occasion, and fast clinging to her heart, among its tenderest recollections, was the consciousness that the voice of prayer sweetened the feast, even more, was itself a part of the *Thanksgiving*. She wondered how her uncle, so kind and generous as he was, could forget to return thanks on such an occasion; but then she never heard him pray. He was not very much like her father after all.

"Grace," said Laura, touching her, "I did not know you were ever absent-minded. Mr. Sinclair has asked you twice, some question, to which you have paid not the slightest attention. Have you gone to Beechford?"



Graced roused very quickly at this, and turning to Mr. Sinclair made a truthful apology, that she was thinking very strongly of home, but she had come back now, and would promise to be very attentive in future. She enjoyed the music, and responded very heartily to her uncle's smile, when he told her how glad he was to have some representative from Beechford at his Thanksgiving table.

After Thanksgiving the old routine of the household seemed established. Colonel Winthrop's uniformity was unconsciously felt in all the family regulations. After breakfast Laura usually practiced, while Grace read, or sewed or wrote, just as she fancied. Then, if they had shopping, they went out, but were expected to be at home by twelve, the hour for driving in winter. They were usually at home again a little after one, in time to dress for dinner. Mrs. Winthrop remained in the parlor after that, and expected the young ladies to sit with her. They usually had some light sewing or embroidery. Then Grace often thought of her mother's mending-basket, and felt almost reproached when she remembered how much she must be needed to take stitches which were necessarily added to her mother's and Annie's already filled up time.

Mrs. Winthrop and Laura had a large circle of acquaintances, so that they usually had calls after dinner. Wednesday afternoon Mrs. Winthrop made calls. Of course Grace was soon included in their list of friends, and began to go out with them. After tea they had music. Colonel Winthrop al-

ways enjoyed this walking back and forth through the parlors with his hands folded behind his back. Grace enjoyed this too, for she loved music, and to have a piano for a constant companion was really delightful. Then there was quite a number of evening callers. Laura Winthrop was very attractive, and her pretty cousin did not diminish the inclination which certain of her friends had to call as often as seemed desirable.

It was a generally understood fact, that Colonel Winthrop would expect to be well pleased before he would consent to bestow his daughter's hand on any man. So far his wishes and hers had never come in collision in that respect. She enjoyed her pleasant circle of friends, but was in no haste to change her present mode of life. She had not reached twenty years without abundant opportunities for coquetry; but this was not an element in which she took any special pleasure. She was gay and bright, but she had a real, living heart, which craved strong, healthful nourishment. Now with Grace for a companion, she would have been quite content to make home-pleasures her chief joy for the winter; but she knew her father's ideas were different. She must accept invitations and return them. Here again Grace was going to be such a comfort, she could trust her any where, for her forgetfulness of self gave her a quiet, self-possession, and her tact and quick ability to adapt herself to any occasion, made her very reliable.

As the days went on Grace grew more accustomed to her new life, and enjoyed it very much. But the "well-spring" of home was ever fresh and

glowing in her heart, and when a letter came, her gladness was child-like in its expression. She had answered Doctor Allerton's letter finding it not such a difficult task as she had anticipated. Her journey furnished themes enough. His second letter had been even more acceptable than the first, it seemed less like a stranger. On the whole, thirsting for home news as she was, the arrangement might be a very good one, since it involved not the least obligation on either side.

Ernest had written, but he was very busy. He was teaching again, and reciting by himself to Doctor Allerton, of whom he spoke in terms of increasing respect and confidence. He missed Grace every where; it seemed to him that all Beechford was lonely without her. Annie, out of the multitude of her cares, wrote very seldom. She wrote cheerfully, but Grace always felt a little sad after reading her letters. She thought of her own leisure, and Annie's busy hours, and still she could not see how she could help it. Once she spoke of this to Laura.

A few days after Laura came up-stairs with a large roll of linen in her arms. "Here, Grace," said she, "is a present from mother to you, to make up for Annie, it will gladden your sisterly heart, I know, and give you an idea that you are doing somebody some good. I will help you sew, now our hands are full, and we do not care how often it storms."

Grace was delighted, now she could indeed help Annie. "You will have to be my scholar, Laura, for in plain sewing I know that I could teach you."

"Mrs. Clark will think you more wonderful than

ever, when she sees you presiding over this. She says you are one of the most sensible young ladies she ever saw. Common sense is her hobby. And she has at last found a young lady with common sense."

"Mother's teachings all have a tendency to develop that," said Grace, laughing. "I wonder what Mrs. Clark would say to dear, practical Annie. How kind in your mother, Laura, to give me the means of pleasing her so much, and really helping her, too." And the tears of affection and gratitude were filling Grace's eyes in a moment.

"Now, that is not common sense, as I define it, laughing and crying at the same time," said her cousin; "and all over a piece of linen."

But the laughing and crying was a relief, and expressed just what Grace felt. She wanted to begin to cut out her work at once, but Laura told her that it was time to get ready for their ride, and in a short time they were gliding away in the clear mid-day air, over the newly fallen snow, and Grace had only time that day to open her drawer once or twice to assure herself that her treasure was safe.

## CHAPTER XV.

## HOW THE DAYS WENT ON.

THE sewing was like a charm to Grace, and the days flew on rapidly, until the early part of January had come. She sat by the bright, cheerful fire sewing and thinking when Laura came up from practicing. "Here, Miss Grace," said she, "see what is expected of you. Mrs. Marshall has sent invitations for a party next week. So you will have to lay aside your practical work, and set about preparing for the occasion."

"Oh, Laura! I can't go; I have n't any thing to wear, besides ——"

"Not another word; Colonel Winthrop will not excuse you, unless you are sick in bed. The Marshall's are his special friends, and go you must. And by way of encouragement, let me tell you this is only the beginning of a series."

"Oh, Laura!"

Laura laughed. "Mother is going out this morning to get you a dress."

"Let me wear one of your old ones."

"No, Miss Grace, I shall not agree to that; you are to be new entirely. Mother says she shall shop

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this morning, and we can go or not, as we please."

"I'll stay at home, then. I had rather aunt would select what she pleases without asking me."

"And I will go; so you may sit in expectancy until our return."

Laura was soon ready, and accompanied her mother out, while Grace sewed on and wondered if going to parties would be half as pleasant as their social evenings at home.

When Laura returned, she placed in her cousin's hands a roll, with her mother's compliments. Grace opened it and discovered a dress-pattern, of rich, white silk. She surveyed it with a feeling akin to dismay. It was more elegant than she ever saw for a bride to wear, and now she was to be arrayed in it for an evening party!

"When you recover sufficiently, I should like to show you mine," said her cousin, highly amused at the expression of her speaking face. Opening her package, she displayed a dress of the same material, only it was pink.

"Are you relieved by seeing this?"

"Yes; that seems so beautiful and proper for you, but I think I should have a less costly material."

"Don't criticise your aunt's taste," said Laura. "She might not like it, you know; she has engaged the dress-maker to come to-morrow, so behold yourself arrayed! Will you take a pocket-handkerchief to hem, you queer, old-fashioned body, or will you spend the evening at Mrs. Marshall's, just as I have had to spend a great many. I'm so glad

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mother has somebody to fix besides me, and that that somebody is you, Grace Winthrop."

The dressmaking was accomplished and everything in readiness for the party. The evening was clear and cold, and the two girls were in their room dressing. Grace's beautiful hair had a way of its own, which Laura always insisted should be followed in dressing it. Her cheeks were rosy with health, and her violet eyes were full of expression. She was taller than Laura, the two formed a striking contrast. Laura's pink silk and flowers of the same hue in her jet black hair were very becoming.

"Here, Grace," said she, "you must wear my pearls to-night; they are all you need to complete your dress."

"Pearls, Laura! I think I have on borrowed plumage enough; please do not add your beautiful pearls. I shall surely lose them; besides, I've got into the mist of fairy land again. I expect all my fine things may vanish at any moment."

"Grace Winthrop, you are a queer girl; you will appear in Mrs. Marshall's drawing-room to-night as if you had worn white silk always; and my pearls will seem to be honored by your wearing them. I think father must have been thinking of you when he bought them. I admire them very much, but they are too fair for me. I must see them on you to-night. I am sure you will wear them to please me."

"Yes, to please you; but if I lose them?"

"I will take the blame, then." So Laura clasped the pearls about her cousin's neck and arms, and

smiled in quiet satisfaction to see how well they became her. The mirror reflected a lovely picture, as Grace stood before it to see the effect of Laura's pearls, and just at that moment she remembered a verse her mother gave her to learn once when she was a little girl and had shown strong symptoms of vanity: "Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart." It came like a gentle, friendly whisper, and seemed to give the outward adornment its real place. The principles of internal beauty, in which she had been so thoroughly trained, asserted their supremacy and quenched the uprisings of vanity. She knew that her dress was rich and becoming, and she admired it, but she knew that it was not *herself*.

Mrs. Marshall's drawing-room was brilliant with the guests assembled there, the very *élite* of the city. Colonel Winthrop was always one of the last to arrive on such occasions, for the sole reason that being obliged to stay until a proper hour for leaving, he shortened the time while he had it in his control. An hour later in his arrival, made an hour less to stay. He liked dinner parties; but he only endured evening parties because he wished his wife and daughter to observe the customs of society.

Mrs. Winthrop was conscious of chaperoning two very pretty girls; and enjoyed the attention they received. To Grace the scene was novel and interesting. She enjoyed it in perfect unconsciousness of the pleasing impressions she was making.

She forgot her white silk dress, and even Laura's pearls, in listening to and observing the people about her; nor was she deficient in her share of conversation. She had met Henry Marshall and several other of the gentlemen at her uncle's house. She had met all of Laura's particular lady friends, so she was not quite a stranger. She designed to keep as near Laura as possible, but they were often unavoidably separated; then her quick perceptive faculties proved very reliable friends. During the evening she was introduced to a Mr. Lenox, who like herself had lately come to Boston. He was a nephew of Mrs. Marshall and had just commenced practicing law. He attached himself particularly to her, quite to the annoyance, Laura thought, of some who called themselves older friends.

The evening had its variety of amusement and entertainment and quickly wore away. Colonel Winthrop was as sure to be the first to go as he had been the last to come. His friends laughed at what they termed his "military precision," but that never moved his purpose.

"It is time to go, Mrs. Winthrop," was the signal for that lady, without undue haste, to assemble her forces and be ready to leave. Henry Marshall and Mr. Lenox were waiting to escort the young ladies to the carriage.

"Well, Grace!" said Colonel Winthrop, on their way home, "how have you enjoyed your first party in Boston?"

"Very much, uncle; it seemed to me something like a moving picture and I was looking on."

"I think you more than looked on," said

Laura. "Ernest would say you made a figure in it."

"I do not quite understand who that Mr. Lenox was, Laura," said her father.

"He is a nephew of Mrs. Marshall's, a young lawyer lately come to Boston. Mrs. Marshall introduced him to us."

"Oh! very well." And Laura knew her father was satisfied so far. When they reached home the girls went directly to their room, where they found a cheerful fire, and Mrs. Clark asleep in an easy chair. She was a faithful old sentinel; and after duly admiring the young ladies, and putting up their wrappers, she left them to get warm before they went to bed.

"Here are your pearls, Laura," said Grace, as she carefully replaced them in the jewel case. "I am happy to return them safe and sound, and to say that they did not keep me in an anxious state all the evening. My attention was so occupied with the people about me that I forgot all about them."

"I knew you would; but I saw them now and then, and was so glad I made you wear them; if they were as becoming to me, I should not leave them shut up in their case at home. You must wear them again sometime; but tell me how do you like our Boston ladies in full dress. You had a very good specimen this evening. I was smiling at your thoughts half of the time. Now I want to hear them expressed."

"Oh, Laura! some things were so funny I felt like laughing outright; how I should have shocked

the people if I had! I saw some ladies there to-night who were all made up of fine clothes; it seemed to me that they laughed when there was nothing to laugh at, and talked when they had nothing to say. I saw a lady hanging on Mr. Rexford's arm, who reminded me so strongly of one of the pictures on Aunt Lois's fan that I was half a mind to shake hands with her for old acquaintance sake. I saw some very pretty ones too, and some beautiful dresses."

"Did you see much of Lizzie Marshall?"

"Yes, and I liked her very much."

"How did you like the gentlemen—Mr. Lenox, for instance?"

"Very well; I think he is very agreeable."

"Do you like Henry Marshall?"

"Yes, I do; better than any of your gentlemen acquaintances; he seems to me frank and sincere, like Ernest."

"How does he compare with Robert Oakley?"

"I like him better. You know I did not see much of Robert Oakley, but I think I should always like Henry Marshall best. I am so used to Ernest's manly ways that I do not fancy people who say so many things which I am sure they cannot mean."

"Do you call Robert Oakley a flatterer?"

"Perhaps that is not just what I should call him. I should believe Henry Marshall when I should not believe Robert Oakley; but, Laura, what are you looking so sober about, and what do you think of my coming out of white silk and putting on

something better suited to 'going right to bed,' as Auntie told us to when we came up-stairs?"

Laura roused herself and began to lay aside her dress.

"It is such a luxury to have somebody to go out with me and then come home and chat over a nice fire," said she, "that I shall forget to go to bed at all by-and-by."

It took Grace some time to get asleep after she and Laura had said good-night. She was thinking of the last winter evenings, where they all met in Mrs. Lee's sitting-room and recited to Dr. Allerton. She was very happy then, and as she went over the scenes and contrasted them with this evening, she fell asleep and knew no more of the joys and sorrows of life until Mrs. Clark opened the blinds and let in a full tide of morning light.

Henry Marshall and Mr. Lenox were guests at Colonel Winthrop's house the next evening after Mrs. Marshall's party; indeed, from that time they were often there. Mrs. Marshall's party was, as Laura had said, only the beginning of a series. More new dresses were purchased, until Grace found herself in possession of quite an extensive wardrobe. She had persuaded her aunt to dispense with the dress-maker beyond fitting. She proved herself so skillful and capable with her needle, that Mrs. Winthrop was quite satisfied with its results. Her time was now fully occupied; they rarely had an evening to themselves. If they were at home, Henry Marshall or Mr. Lenox or Mr. Rexford were there, sometimes all three at once. Colonel Winthrop enjoyed their music and conver-



sation, and Mrs. Winthrop, in her easy chair, was always an entertaining hostess. One evening in the early part of February, they were all at a party at Mrs. Sinclair's. Grace had been listening to an entertaining account of some of Mr. Lenox's travels when she bethought her of Laura and proposed to go and look her up. Mr. Lenox rallied her on her great devotion to her cousin, remarking at the same time that she was standing nearly opposite them in the next room apparently quite interested in conversation with a gentleman who was a stranger to him. Grace looked over that way and was quite surprised to see Robert Oakley. Laura caught her eye that moment and nodded.

"It is a friend of her's whom we met in New York," said Grace. "They are coming this way."

Mr. Oakley's greeting was very cordial. He had come to Boston for a few days to see his old friends. He met Mr. Sinclair soon after his arrival, and Mrs. Sinclair had sent him an invitation to come to her house that evening. He was very attentive to both of the young ladies. Grace did not quite understand it, but she thought Laura was not as lively as usual, and once or twice detained her near her, for some very trifling reason. Colonel Winthrop left earlier than usual. On their way home, he said, rather sternly, "Laura, did you expect to meet Robert Oakley at Mrs. Sinclair's?"

"No, sir; I did not know when he was coming to Boston."

"Well, it's a foolish thing this, for people to go traveling about in winter. Better stay at home."

Laura knew very well that "people," in this

case meant Robert Oakley; and the "foolishness," in her father's mind, was his probable errand. Until their visit in New York, she had never thought of any closer friendship between Robert Oakley and herself than had always existed. At times, since then, she had not felt quite so sure—perhaps not quite so sure of herself either—at least, until recently. She had seen so much of Henry Marshall, during the winter, that she had come to regard him as a very pleasant friend. Grace had unconsciously drawn them together. She had from the first liked him, because he was in some things, she fancied, after the manner of Ernest. To be "like Ernest," Laura knew meant as high a compliment as Grace could pay, and Grace had such an instinctive insight into character, that Laura found herself influenced by her more than she could have thought possible.

To-night, when they were seated by their own glowing fire, ready to talk over the events of the evening, Laura's face wore a troubled look, and she poked the fire in a restless sort of way, as if she hoped to rouse up something cheering from its embers.

"What a dreadfully unsatisfactory fire that is," said Grace, laughing.

"Well, don't you know the fire has been my companion. I've had to think to it, and talk to it, before I had you, and I forget sometimes. Grace, do you remember I told you, in New York, that I was glad we were going home, to avoid any difficulty about Robert Oakley?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am very sorry he has come to Boston now. Did you see how coldly father met him, and we used to be such pleasant friends?"

"Why does your father dislike him?"

"Do you remember the night we came from Mrs. Marshall's party, you told me you should believe Henry Marshall when you should not believe Robert Oakley?"

"I had forgotten it; but I should, Laura."

"I think that is what father means, though his manner of telling me was so different, that it made me think he did him great injustice."

"Do you like Robert Oakley?"

"Yes, and no. I did like him when I saw him in New York. I mean, I was pleased with him—"

"Until you liked somebody else better; and so do I. Don't blush, Laura. I know how very attentive our friend Henry is. I think uncle likes him, too, for he told me the other day that Henry Marshall was a man to be trusted."

"I have very pleasant remembrances of Robert Oakley," said Laura, "and I hope I am mistaken in the reason of his coming to Boston; but, from some things he said to-night, I suppose I am not. He asked me to ride with him to-morrow morning, and I declined; but I promised to see him at home. So you have got to ride with father without me, and excuse me to him in some satisfactory way—a task which I do not envy you."

"I don't know; Laura. Uncle is so stern, when things displease him. If Robert Oakley offers himself to you, do you expect to accept him?"

"No, Grace, I do not. I never gave him any

reason to suppose I did. When I met him in New York, I hardly knew what to think of myself or him either, but I am convinced now that we can never be any thing but friends. I think he was disappointed in my lack of pleasure at meeting him this evening. I did not mean to be unkind, but I was sorry he had come."

"I do not see any great difficulty in getting along with uncle, since you are going to do just what he wants you to."

"I had rather he would never know that his sure prophecy was fulfilled; but I will leave the management to you. I feel better, now that I have told you what troubles me, and a little sleep, if I can get it, will make me better still."

The next day, at the usual hour for riding, Grace came down stairs alone, and met her uncle just buttoning up his overcoat in the hall. "Where is Laura," said he.

"She wishes you would excuse her, uncle. She wants to stay at home to-day."

"Isn't she going out at all?"

"No, sir; not if you will excuse her."

"I am glad you are ready, and willing to take the fresh air. Your aunt has a head-ache, and must go to bed; and Laura, with some new notion, must stay at home. We Beechford people have some energy left to enjoy a clear winter breeze."

Laura was leaning over the baluster, listening, in dread, to what explanation Grace might be obliged to make. She knew her fearless, winning way was equal to an emergency, and that she would meet her father so frankly that he would

not be angry with her. Quite satisfied with what she had heard, she went in to see her mother, who was really suffering from the fatigues of the last evening, and needed rest. Here she waited until Mrs. Clark told her that Mr. Oakley was in the parlor. Leaving them to take care of themselves, we will enjoy the fresh air with Colonel Winthrop and his niece.

Finding her uncle in no talking mood, Grace amused herself thinking, now and then interrupted by the visible things about her. She was suddenly aroused by her uncle saying, rather sternly, "Grace, does Laura like Robert Oakley?"

Collecting her thoughts quickly, she said, "Only as a friend, I think."

"Are you sure of what you say?"

"Yes, sir, I think so."

"Do you believe she would accept him if he should offer himself?" and Colonel Winthrop looked so sternly at her, that she was almost frightened.

"I do not believe she would; I am quite certain she would not."

"I think you know better than I do, but I do not like Robert Oakley. I like his father and mother, but he says too many foolish things. Perhaps he does not know it; but he would care more for the money Laura might bring him than he would for Laura herself. It will do for old men to rest, but a young man with nothing to do is a contemptible thing. I have no respect for him, or patience with him. I thought when you first came here I would tell you that if Laura had any letters from Robert Oakley, you must tell me of it at

once; but your aunt knew better this time than I did, for she advised me to let you take your own way. She thought your companionship would be of service to Laura, and so I think it has. You are on very friendly terms with Henry Marshall I observe."

"Yes, sir, I like him, and I think Laura does, too. I liked him from the first, because I thought he had some ways like Ernest."

"He is to be relied on, and his business habits are excellent. You have had such a home education, Grace, that you know what real worth is, and I would trust your judgment sooner than I would some of our Boston girls."

Colonel Winthrop was by this time in good humor, evidently quite relieved by the truthful manner of his niece. When they reached home, he looked at his watch, and said, as they had nearly an hour before dinner, he would drive on and walk back. Grace went in, and as the parlor door was shut, she went on up to her aunt's door and knocked softly. There was no response, and thinking she might be sleeping, she went on to her room. Laura was not there, and after making herself ready for dinner, she sat down to sew for Annie, thinking what a satisfactory ride she had had, and what an unsatisfactory one she might have had if she and her uncle had been in opposite interests.

Just before the hour for dinner, Laura came upstairs, looking as if she lacked the vigor which a cheerful heart and the invigorating morning air had given her cousin.

"Has Mr. Oakley gone?" asked Grace, after waiting awhile for Laura to speak.

"Yes, gone, and our friendship ended, if I am to judge by what he says this morning. I am convinced we never could have been happy together. It really seemed to me that his pride was more wounded than his heart. Perhaps father was right after all. I am sorry he came. I should rather remember him as my present, early friend. Did father ask you why I staid at home?"

"No."

"I think he more than half suspected it. He comes to his conclusions by observation, more than by inquiry. Robert will not call here again while he stays, and that will convince him that there is nothing going on to call for his immediate interference."

There was no more time for conversation before Mrs. Clark came to tell them that dinner was waiting. Mrs. Winthrop came down quite refreshed. Colonel Winthrop had brought home a friend to dinner, so that no allusion was made to the manner in which any of the family had spent the morning.

Robert Oakley was in town several days, but as he did not call, Colonel Winthrop asked no questions. Whatever his suspicions were, he kept them to himself. He had confidence in his daughter, knowing that she would take no decided step without his knowledge. Grace, with her clear judgment, was on the right side, too; so he left things to take their course, while he waited results.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### DEVELOPMENTS.

ONE morning, a few weeks after the events mentioned in the last chapter, Grace had been out alone to buy some of the innumerable trimmings which her aunt deemed necessary for an evening dress. She had finished her errand, and was returning, when she met Mr. Lenox. He turned and joined her in her walk. The day was fine, and the sleighing excellent. He proposed calling for her after dinner to take a ride.

"If Laura has no engagements, I think we can go," said Grace.

"Your cousin is a very agreeable companion, Miss Winthrop; but for once I would like to see how you appear separately. If you have no objections, I will only extend my invitation to you this time."

Grace thanked him and accepted, feeling half afraid she had done wrong. She never went out without Laura, and if her uncle should happen to fancy that it was not desirable for her to do so, she had certainly got herself into trouble. Mr. Lenox, of late, had been very attentive. Doctor Allerton

had awakened her from her unsuspecting dreams. She could not be insensible to the fact that Mr. Lenox seemed to enjoy her society. Why was it she so often found herself contrasting the two gentlemen? and why was it that, once when she had particularly enjoyed Mr. Lenox's society, a letter from Doctor Allerton brought home and all its attractions so freshly to her mind? She did not really care to accept this invitation without it included Laura; but considering the intimacy between her uncle's family and the Marshall's, and her own acquaintance with Mr. Lenox, she thought it would be impolite to refuse. When she reached home, she ran quickly up-stairs to tell Laura.

"You did right to accept; father will like it, for he likes Mr. Lenox."

At the dinner-table Laura mentioned Grace's invitation. "You will go, of course," said her uncle, smiling approvingly, and she was at rest so far as that was concerned.

Mr. Lenox called for her after dinner, and warmly wrapped, they glided swiftly over the smooth snow, on their way to Charlestown. A great many people were out enjoying the clear air, the bright sunshine, and the fine sleighing. There was an exhilaration in the life and activity of the gay panorama through which they passed, and Grace felt more as she used too when she was at home. Her cheerfulness was always contagious, and her companion grew more and more convinced that the young lady who had so pleased him, when surrounded by a gay throng, was far more pleasing by herself.

"Shall we take a look at Bunker Hill? It seems to be the attractive spot just now."

"Any where you please," said Grace.

"I please to ride," said Mr. Lenox, laughing, "and just now Bunker Hill seems the most familiar spot I can remember."

"I forgot you are a new-comer," said Grace, "and perhaps do not know the drives about Boston as well as I do. Uncle considers riding part of our daily business; so we get very familiar with the beautiful views in the whole vicinity. He minds the cold very little, and fresh air is his remedy for every thing. Laura says she and auntie ought to be order-loving, for they have had good military training ever since she can remember."

I suppose your uncle owes his good health to his uniform exercise," said Mr. Lenox. "Uncle Marshall tells me he was a man of great energy and constant activity. The change from a business-life to one of comparative rest must be very trying to such a person."

Unconsciously, then, Grace spoke of her father and of home until she almost forgot that her attentive listener was so lately a stranger.

It was enough for Mr. Lenox to watch the kindling, glowing face of the young girl beside him as she spoke of Ernest, and the many rides she had had with him, coasting and sleighing and on horseback.

Before they knew it, they had reached Bunker Hill; and, from the heights, they saw the sun go down, throwing faint, wintery gleams over the

spires and roofs of Boston, and then they drove back, chatting gaily all the way.

"Our ride has been a wonderously short one, Miss Winthrop. I made an office engagement before I met you this morning, or I should feel patriotic enough to visit Bunker Hill again before leaving you at your home."

"Boston furnishes a greater variety than that," said Grace. "We need not feel obliged to take the same ride twice in the same afternoon; but I had rather be at home before tea."

"May I hope you have enjoyed the ride enough to repeat it?"

"Doubtless I shall again to-morrow," said Grace, laughing. "Uncle is very fond of driving to Charlestown—that old battle-ground is a charmed spot to him."

"I did not ask you to ride with your uncle unless you choose to associate that privileged title with my name. On the whole, I do not know but it would be a good idea; it would be quite a responsible office to fill, and involve your consent to ride with me whenever I choose to ask you. Shall I adopt it on these terms?"

Grace was amused at the turn he had given her evasive answer; but the truth was Doctor Allerton had opened her eyes, and she did not care to go out with Mr. Lenox unless he would ask Laura or Lizzie Marshall.

"Here we are at your uncle's door. May I come for you again sometime?"

"I cannot promise. I do not go out without Laura."

She saw that her answer did not please him. In her own sweet way, she quickly added, "I have had a very pleasant ride, Mr. Lenox, and shall hope to see you soon."

"Perhaps I ought not to have said that," thought she, as she stood waiting for Ralph to let her in.

She went directly to her room to lay aside her wrappings and get warm before going down to the parlor. She felt troubled. An undefined sense of something real, into which she must enter, was somewhere in the distance—a feeling akin to that which one might have in watching a net-work weaving about him without consenting to the process and yet seeming to have no power to escape.

She stood thinking so intently that she forgot how near the tea-hour was until she heard Mrs. Clark coming to look for her. Turning, to pick up her handkerchief, which she had laid on the table, she saw a letter directed to her lying there. She took it up and recognized Doctor Allerton's writing.

How strange it is! Doctor Allerton always comes in collision with Mr. Lenox. Here I find him waiting for me; and with a sense of gladness and relief she put it in her pocket and went downstairs.

"Why!" said Laura, "I did not know you had come in. Have you been at home long?"

"Not long; only time enough to get warm."

"You look as if the air had done you good," said her uncle. "You had a fine ride, I suppose."

After tea, Grace joined Laura at the piano.

"Go and read your letter if you want to," said



she, in a low voice. "I will excuse you, if it is necessary."

Grace thanked her silently, and went up to her room. She opened her letter with the feeling that something she valued was in store for her. As she read on her ride that afternoon all faded out. Doctor Allerton's peculiarly pleasing narrative of the passing events of home took her back there in all the freshness of a year ago.

"How much I enjoy these letters," thought she; "even Ernest fails me here. I almost wonder I used to be afraid of Doctor Allerton. It seems to me now that he must be very companionable. He suggests that I shall manage to read, at least, an hour every day. I can, while Laura practices; and, as he says, I may never have so much leisure again. But then he does not know what a busy life I lead. I am sure, by and by, we shall not go out so much, and then I can have more time at my command. I think I must waste time, only every thing here is so different from what it is at home. Mother and grandmother seem to live for Heaven as much as they do for Earth, and auntie, it seems to me, only thinks of earth. Perhaps I do not know, but I am sure there is something besides money which makes the difference between these two homes. Mother has a great deal to do, and auntie has a great many to wait on her, but she does not look so calm and peaceful as dear mother does." And Grace fell into such a reverie, suggested by Doctor Allerton's letter, as would have refreshed him had he known it.

She thought of him more in connection with

home and its associations than she had ever done before. He did not seem to be such a "wise, old man" as she had always thought him—not that his wisdom grew less in her estimation, but she was becoming more accustomed to the society of gentlemen of his age.

Charlie Thorn and Edward Nelson were more like brothers. They had been school-mates from childhood, playfellows with whom she had always felt such equality that she could laugh and enjoy their mutual sports without remembering that she was no longer a little girl. Now it was all different. She was brought in contact with people so much older than herself and was expected to rise to their level. Mr. Lenox was as old as Doctor Allerton; Henry Marshall and Mr. Rexford were older. As she grew better acquainted with these gentlemen, it had the effect of making her feel better acquainted with Doctor Allerton.

Her reverie could not last, for her uncle would notice her absence at this hour; and as she only mentioned Ernest's and Annie's letters, she preferred to give no occasion for questioning.

Laura knew, by her bright expression, that something had made her happy.

"Is it Mr. Lenox or Doctor Allerton?" whispered she, with a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

"Neither," said Grace. "It is home and Beechford."

Grace had learned many of her cousin's songs; their voices blended very sweetly. Colonel Winthrop was delighted with their execution. Mr.

Lenox played the flute and Mr. Marshall sang, so they often had musical entertainments.

Mr. Lenox was not here this evening, but Henry Marshall and Mr. Rexford were, and Laura thought her cousin's voice had caught the echo of the birds, it rang out so clear and sweet.

"I never told you much about my mother's singing," said Colonel Winthrop, as he paused in front of Mrs. Winthrop's chair. "Our Laura has a sweet voice, but Grace has tones so exactly like her grandmother that I hear her almost as distinctly as I used to when I was a little boy; and the world held no treasure like my mother."

He did not wait for Mrs. Winthrop's answer, but continued his walk, with his thoughts turned backward to old scenes which he had deemed all faded out. When the music ceased, he said, "Sing again. I love to listen to you," and they sang on until the evening was nearly passed, before their host remembered much of present things. "Home is the pleasantest place, girls," said he, after their guests were gone and he was securing the windows. "I shall be glad when our evening visits are through with."

"Grace and I enjoy our evenings at home," said Laura. "I think we have been out a great deal this winter."

They had, indeed, accepted more invitations than usual, but Colonel Winthrop's habit of going late, and coming away as soon as politeness would allow, had saved them from very late hours. Sometimes his friends rallied him on his early leaving, but he only shook his head, and said, "I

approve of sociability, but I do not approve of late hours. Besides, we go out so often, it is necessary to be in the habit of reaching home before morning."

Mr. Lenox was a pleasant friend, and always ready to attend Grace on these occasions, but she was careful not to give him too much opportunity. She could not define her feelings in respect to him. She certainly liked him. His pleasing address and cultivated mind made him acceptable everywhere. And what of Mr. Lenox? He certainly liked Grace Winthrop. He was attracted by her face the first evening he met her at Mrs. Marshall's. The whole company were strangers to him, and he had come more in the mood to criticise than to cultivate anybody's acquaintance. He had been introduced to several ladies before the Winthrop party arrived. He did not see them when they came in, but, in looking for Henry Marshall, he saw a beautiful girl standing near his aunt. Her attire was rich, but so simple and so in unison with the style of her face and figure, that he paused to admire her, and then sought an introduction. From that evening he had cultivated Grace Winthrop's acquaintance. He was charmed with her sprightly, intelligent conversation, so unlike the style of the young ladies he was accustomed to meet on such occasions. He was a favorite in society, and used to flattering attentions. But she puzzled him. She was always polite, but never manifested any especial pleasure at meeting him. He had been wishing for an informal opportunity to get her all to himself for a little while. Eve-

nings at her uncle's he had no chance, for Colonel and Mrs. Winthrop were always in the parlor, and the sociability was general. When he met her out, he could only take his turn with her other friends. He rejoiced over their accidental meeting, the morning he had asked her to ride. It came about so naturally, that he hoped it would be the beginning of something more definite. He was exceedingly vexed at her declining to accompany him again, and for a time was rather cool, but she appeared so provokingly indifferent, greeting him kindly when she met him, evidently not disturbed by his coming or going, that he changed his plan of action. He was a thorough man of the world, and believed it in his power to select a wife when and where he would. He did not care for money. With his own inheritance, and his fast-growing professional income, he felt himself rich enough to be indifferent to such an accession, provided every thing else suited him. Of religion he knew nothing, except its form, and that was to him of little account. Between himself and Grace Winthrop there was, on this point, a great gulf, but he did not know it. She was to him the perfection of womanly beauty, based on the very principles which he ignored. He felt that she would be to him "a crown," "her price far above rubies," and from this time he determined to win her. What could keep Grace Winthrop from loving him? He was unexceptional in most of the qualities which win the heart of a young girl. Her uncle and aunt saw his preference with evident pleasure. He could place her in a position equal to any they

could ask for her. His delicate attentions and his thoughtful kindness were such as her refined taste could fully appreciate. He could make her future home one of luxury and ease. Thrown so much into his society, she could not fail to know that her coming gave him pleasure, that his hand extended to greet her and draw her to himself, whenever an opportunity occurred. As the weeks went on, she grew more conscious that an interview she dreaded would meet her somewhere. Sometimes she thought she really loved Mr. Lenox, and if Doctor Allerton's image came thrusting itself between them, she would grow indignant and determine never to answer another of his letters. She usually ended in wishing for the days of her childhood, when her mother could decide doubtful question.

She did not know that that same mother was daily praying that she might be led in a way which would work out the most abundant honor to her Heavenly Father, and be for her own highest good. She did not realize how deeply interwoven with her very being were the prayers she had heard, and the principles she had been taught, all through that childhood for which she had longed. She did not know that she had come to one of life's turning points around which clustered so much of the great, shadowy future. The path she would take seemed all of her own choosing. "Except thy presence go with her, take her not hence" was uttered in faith, when she left her father's house; and that "Presence" was with the maiden, to guide and influence her in all the trying circumstances in which she might be placed.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## PERPLEXITIES.

MRS. WINTHROP gave the last party of the season; it was very brilliant, and her two young ladies were much admired. Grace wore a blue crape. Mr. Lenox had sent her that morning some beautiful rose-buds. When she was dressed she took them up, uncertain whether or not to wear them in her hair.

"They are lovely," said Laura. "I wish you would wear them."

"I cannot see why I should not; a flower is a very simple gift, and I am sure I like Mr. Lenox well enough to wear his flowers."

"I cannot see why you should not like him well enough to wear his name, if he should ask you to."

"Don't, Laura! I want to disconnect these flowers from any such associations. I am going to enjoy a real pleasant friendship."

Laura smiled and continued dressing, while Grace arranged the flowers in her hair. It was a very pleasant party, particularly to Mr. Lenox; not that he secured Grace to himself as much as usual, but he regarded the disposal of his flowers

as a good omen, and determined to decide the matter as soon as an opportunity presented itself. Parties were done with for the present, and neither of the girls were sorry. Grace could not divest herself of the feeling that she was living very much for herself. She often thought of her mother's weary footsteps and Annie's busy fingers, and then she sewed industriously on the yet unfinished garments for her sister. Laura shared in the pleasure of Doctor Allerton's letters, and often remarked that they always made her feel as if there was something higher to be attained than she had ever found.

"He does not preach," said she; "he carries you right along and makes you think as he does, and he tells of things at home so charmingly that I always see just how it looks there."

Grace thought so too, even if she did not say so. She did not find them difficult to answer, either; they were so suggestive, and she never thought how much they influenced her.

One evening in the latter part of April Colonel Winthrop was suffering from a severe cold and headache, a thing so unusual with him that he required Mrs. Winthrop's constant attention. He went to his room as soon as tea was over, and the girls were left alone in the parlor. It seemed so still all over the house, and so unusual to have a quiet evening down-stairs, that Laura declared it was either the Spring air or the silent house which had made her very sleepy. She believed she should go to bed.

"I am not sleepy," said Grace. "I do not be-

lieve we shall have any company, so I will let you go while I stay and finish the book which I began last week."

"That is a very good example for me, but I cannot follow it to-night. I've been sleepy all day."

"Mother says sleep is a very good medicine," said Grace, laughing. "So go and take it and I will have a nice time all to myself."

Laura went, and Grace, drawing her aunt's easy chair near the light, sat down to read. Her book was very interesting, and she was soon deeply engaged in its contents. How long she had been reading, she did not know. She did not hear anybody come in until a familiar voice said, "Good evening, Miss Winthrop," and looking up she saw Mr. Lenox standing near her.

"Why, Mr. Lenox!" said she, "how did you come in?—I did not hear a sound."

"Not through the key-hole, or down the chimney; the day for doing such things in Massachusetts is past, you know; but I found the house so silent that I almost fancied I had got into the wrong one. Are you lady hostess alone to-night?"

"Not lady hostess, exactly. I was more selfishly occupied. Laura and I make a great many resolutions to read, and I have been trying to carry out one single one of mine. Uncle has a headache and went to his room after tea. Aunt is with him, and Laura, I am sorry to say, Mr. Lenox—but if I should go for her, I am afraid I should find her fast asleep. She was very tired to-night."

Mr. Lenox had been standing near the fire opposite to Grace; he had hardly listened to a word

she said, he was so charmed with the picture she made in her aunt's deeply-cushioned chair. The light from the tall wax candles fell on her shining hair and bright face. There was nothing studied in her attitude, or in anything she said. It was God's gift of beauty, and simple unaffected grace, that made her so lovely to look upon, and His gift of higher love which had kept back the dark shadow of vanity and pride from spoiling the fair temple. Mr. Lenox's silence made Grace look up to meet his eyes, so intently fixed upon her that the color came quickly to her face, and she said, "I will go and see if the journey up-stairs did not wake Laura up, if you will excuse me."

"No," said he; "I cannot excuse you, or allow you to call your cousin. I do not wish to see her to-night; this opportunity to see you alone is just what I have been seeking, to tell you what I am sure you must know already."

He had come nearer to her now, and Grace listened to his words of strong pleading affection with a frightened, aching heart; for weeks she had feared that this hour would come, and she—how was she to meet it?

Mr. Lenox was every thing she could ask, so far as this world goes, and the wonder to her had often been that a gentleman so accepted and flattered by ladies generally, should seek her so decidedly. She admired him and enjoyed his society, and yet she could never think of him, except as a very pleasant friend, just as she did Henry Marshall. She had studiously avoided being alone with him, and he knew it; but he was none the less determined to

win her. It was late when the interview closed. Mrs. Clark had come at the usual hour to put out the lights and shut the house; but quickly taking in how matters stood, she kept her own counsel and waited until the quiet shutting of the front door reminded her that she might again appear on the scene of action.

Laura had awakened and wondered where Grace was; the fire was still burning and the light was not put out. She looked at her watch, and finding it so late was just going to look for her when she heard her come in and shut the door, so still that she evidently designed to disturb nobody.

"Why, Grace!" said she, "do you know what time it is? I shall never leave you down-stairs alone again, if this is the way you are going to do."

"I am sure I hope you will not," said Grace, as she threw herself on the bed and, covering her face with her hands, wept such bitter tears as she had never shed before.

"What is the matter—what has happened?" said Laura, really alarmed, "is father sick?"

"No; it's Mr. Lenox."

"Mr. Lenox sick?" said Laura.

"Oh, Laura! nobody is sick. Mr. Lenox has been here this evening, and I'm so sad and wretched," and again she wept convulsively.

"Oh, that is it!" and a very clear light dawned into Laura's mind. "Wait until you have lived three years more. Have you refused Mr. Lenox, Grace?"

"Yes; and he is angry with me, and he has been so kind ever since I knew him. He was willing to

wait without an answer, and let every thing go on as before. I knew that was not best, and told him so; but he says he shall not consider himself answered until I have waited two months. It is very foolish for him to prolong the matter. I'm sure I have considered it enough. I wish uncle need not know it."

"I think he suspects the state of affairs now, but it is not necessary for him to know anything more. I am sure it would please him very much to have you marry Mr. Lenox. You will never do better; and if you do not love Doctor Allerton, I cannot understand your indifference to him."

"Please, Laura, do not speak of Doctor Allerton or anybody else. I wish I could stay up in this room and see only you for a whole month. I do not believe Annie ever had so much trouble. She liked Sanford Ross and he liked her. I think it's dreadful to be a young lady."

"Well, don't cry about it any more. If you do not look after the fire and the light, you will have to come to bed in the dark, and that will not help anything, you know."

Grace passed a wearisome night. Sometimes she would contrast the ease which wealth brings with the care and toil of her mother's daily life. She knew she could enjoy the leisure which might be hers, and then Mr. Lenox was such a pleasant friend. She really enjoyed his society. Why could she not accept what really seemed to be a most desirable offer. Doctor Allerton was nothing to her; he had startled her by his unexpected proposition; while Mr. Lenox had given her timely warning.



So far as she was concerned, the result was the same in both cases. The more she thought, the more perplexed she grew, until at last, in a strong, fervent petition for help and strength to Him who giveth wisdom to His children when they ask it, she let the burden go and fell asleep.

The days which followed were sadder than Grace had ever known, life seemed to her so real and earnest. She thought of the time when she felt no responsibility about anything, when she just mingled with all the joys and perplexities of home, and frolicked with the children, and went and came with Ernest, and had such a free, bounding world of happiness.

Her position with Mr. Lenox was painful, he was so delicate in his attentions, doing just the things which she could not reject, and never presuming on any claim. He gave her no opportunity to be annoyed, and yet she felt that he held her to the promise of another interview. Things were in this way when one day about the middle of May, Colonel Winthrop handed Grace a letter to read. It was from Ernest. The vacancy which Colonel Winthrop had so long kept in view would occur the first of June. He had written to Ernest making the necessary arrangements, and informing him to come on a week before the time, to make a visit, and get ready for his new occupation. This letter was Ernest's acceptance, and announced his intention to be with them in a few days. Grace could hardly believe it possible that he was actually coming. To see him and talk with him would be almost equal to going home.

"Now, Grace," said Laura, "I expect you will bid me good-bye for some days, until you have exhausted Ernest's whole catalogue of news."

The day he was to come Grace watched and waited. At last, leaning over the balusters, she caught the sound of his well-known voice, and went down the stairs in most undignified haste to welcome him. Ralph smiled all over his face to "see Miss Grace so happy." And Ernest felt that her fond greeting was worth all the world to him just then. "Why, Grace, how you have changed!" said he, as he held her at arm's length, and surveyed her with mingled love and pride.

"Oh, no! I have not changed, Ernest, only grown older. I'm going to be nineteen, sometime, and that is older than you used to be," added she, laughing.

Grace's style of dress was so unlike that in which he had been accustomed to see her, that at first glance she seemed unlike herself. She looked older, more like a beautiful woman, than the thoughtless girl he had always known her. The new scenes through which she had passed, and being obliged to act on her own responsibility, had insensibly developed her character.

Ernest was cordially welcomed by the rest of the family. Colonel Winthrop smiled to see how happy Grace looked. "I knew it would be necessary for you to come in advance of any business arrangements," said he, "for Grace must be satisfied about Beechford before she can let you go."

Grace had indeed a great many questions to ask. Annie had written her by Ernest, but her letter

covered only a small part of her inquiries. She wanted to know every thing that had happened in her absence.

Ernest had much to tell of his final coming. "I missed you, Grace. I wanted you to help me over the difficulties; but then, perhaps, you helped me as much being here. I should be almost faint-hearted without you, father will miss me, and mother's face looked so sad when I told her good-bye, that my courage half failed me; but Charles is getting to be a big boy, and Henry and Arthur are fast coming on. I did not know that I loved the old farm so well until I went over it for the last time. It did not seem much like our journey with only the prospect of staying away two weeks."

Grace understood it all, but she was too happy to think he had come to be where she could see him perhaps every day, to allow him to be very despondent. She asked about every body but Doctor Allerton, and of him Ernest had much to say. "I feel greatly indebted to him for many valuable suggestions," said he, "his teachings and his society have been highly useful to me. I was sorry to leave him, but I am glad Beechford has so valuable a man in it. I do not expect to find many such men even in Boston."

As the days of Ernest's visit wore on, Grace found herself no nearer the end of her conversation with him. He told her how much they all missed her, and that mother had often said she did not know that Grace filled so large a place in the house.

Colonel Winthrop would have offered Ernest a

home in his family if he had thought it the best thing for him. "Our hours do not suit the hours of business men," said he. "I want you to have no hindrances. You have a fine situation, and I expect you to fill it with fidelity. Come here every Sunday, and as often as you find it convenient during the week, but attend to your business first. You shall have a room which we will call yours, and a welcome always."

Grace saw at once that this was best, though it would have rejoiced her heart to meet him every day.

Ernest entered upon his new duties in humble reliance on that Divine aid which had so effectually kept him thus far on his way. Religion had become to him a living reality; before he left his father's house he had publicly professed his faith in his Saviour. This had softened the parting to his mother's heart; she could trust her boy, when he trusted his Saviour. The change in his life was very great, but he was determined to meet it faithfully; of course he had much to learn, but he had all of the elements of success in his character. His uncle's recommendation and influence gave him a good foundation in the opinion of his employers, and right manfully did he undertake the task.

If he had loved and confided in his sister before, he found her doubly valuable now. Her clear views, and bright colorings, lifted him out of his sombre moods. He looked forward to the evenings he would spend with her with a sense of rest, and through her he began to feel better acquainted

with his aunt and cousin, and the house assumed more of a home look. She had found great relief in telling him of her correspondence with Doctor Allerton, and her acquaintance with Mr. Lenox.

He was surprised and delighted at the former. "I used to wonder, Grace, that he never made many inquiries about you. I think you may feel yourself honored that he has chosen you for a correspondent. If I only knew half as much as he does I should be glad; he has been of great assistance to me in fitting me for my place. I am sorry for Mr. Lenox, and if I am going to live in Boston, I should consider my happiness complete to have you here, too; but don't marry a man whom you do not thoroughly like, Grace."

"I do like Mr. Lenox, but I do not want to marry him. I have about made up my mind not to marry any body; you will be surprised when you come home to visit a few years from now, to find me making clothes for the boys just as Annie does."

"I suppose so," said her brother, with an incredulous smile. "In the meantime, you will, doubtless try your skill on me. Annie has been fitting me up all winter, and at present I am in a very good condition; but by and by the buttons will begin to fall off, and the rents come, and then I shall know where to go."

"You cannot find a busier needle. Aunt thinks I need every thing new, now that summer is coming, and I suppose I do. I am so glad that she is finding out that I can help myself a little. She even consented to my cutting a pretty dress for myself yesterday. I always think how pleased

mother would be when I do a thing nicely. Sometimes I imagine I hear her say, 'Annie, what do you suppose Grace is doing?' and I answer back in my heart, 'Remembering what you told her, mother; remembering it always.'"

"That is just the way with me," said Ernest. "Mother's words come to me many times in the day. They seem to be part of myself. I do not think we had better talk about it any more, or I shall go straight to Beechford."

The green leaves, the budding flowers, and the singing birds told that June had come, and changed the whole outward aspect of the goodly city. Laura's world was changing, too, for she had promised Henry Marshall she would leave her father's house, and go to dwell with him. Her father and mother approved her choice, and Grace extended a right cousinly hand to one whom she had learned to esteem and respect. It seemed to be another link binding her to Mr. Lenox. Laura told her that it was the only thing wanting to make her happiness complete. Ernest was a great comfort to her. He made no attempt to influence her, nor was he greatly surprised, when, one evening in the early part of July, she told him, with more cheerfulness than he had seen her have of late, that Mr. Lenox and herself could never be any more to each other than they were at present. The question was decided, and painful as their interview had been, she had been happier ever since. The result of that decision was of greater importance than she could then comprehend. The choice was hers, and she decided it as she wished.

Mr. Lenox was what the world calls a brilliant match. What hindered her from walking with him through the paths of ease and luxury which were his, and which her presence would have adorned?

Had she not been given to her Saviour in the very dawning of her existence, and had not fervent petitions gone up from the heart of her father and mother that she might be kept from temptation, and delivered from evil? Mr. Lenox's love, with his views of her faith, would have been a snare, a vital hindrance to her earthly mission. So, *walking freely in directed steps*, she went on her way without him.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### RESULTS OF EARLY TRAINING.

GRACE'S final decision in regard to Mr. Lenox was a real disappointment to Henry Marshall. He was so happy himself, that his cousin's sadness oppressed him. Besides, he thought Grace so fitted to complete Mr. Lenox's character, he wondered she could not see how necessary she was to his future life. Laura shared in his grief. She wished now more than ever that her cousin had been prevailed on to stay without going home when she and Ernest came to visit them a year ago; then she would not have known Doctor Allerton, and though Grace did not acknowledge it, she was very sure he was the strong power which held her so firmly, and made her indifferent to Mr. Lenox's love, and the advantages which his position offered. Occasionally she would think she could not have it so; but her warmest remonstrances were met with so much sincerity, that she ended with a conviction that Grace acted from right principles, and there was no use in trying to influence her to do contrary to her inclinations in the matter. One thing she resolved she would do. She would cease

to feel any interest in Doctor Allerton's letters. She was vexed at him, but she forgot it when the next one came, and listened to it as she always did, and felt involuntarily drawn towards him as a personal friend. She was perplexed and vexed, and finally gave the matter up as something beyond her control.

Colonel Winthrop had been a close observer of the way things were going ever since Mrs. Marshall's party in the early winter. He regarded Henry Marshall and Mr. Lenox as every way desirable matches for his daughter and niece.

To have Grace so finely provided for, "set in the very niche she seemed made to fill," as he told Mrs. Winthrop, was a matter for quiet congratulation. He kept his own counsel, and expected the satisfactory ending with certainty, when suddenly Mr. Lenox's frequent visits were discontinued. After waiting long enough to assure himself that something was wrong, he took an opportunity when he was alone with Grace to ask, with assumed indifference, where Mr. Lenox was.

Grace was conscious of blushing very deeply, and betraying a good deal of agitation; but she managed to reply, "We do not see him as often as we did in the winter."

Suddenly stopping before her, he said, "Is Doctor Allerton in the way of your choice of Mr. Lenox?"

It was terrible for her to be thus questioned by her uncle. With a beating heart, she only replied, "I do not think he is."

"Doctor Allerton is a gentleman; I admired him,

but he has his own way to make, while Mr. Lenox can place his wife in a home of ease and luxury. The woman of his choice may feel herself honored. I should be sorry to have you act unwisely in this matter. Young people do not always know what is best for them."

"I do not think—I am almost sure—" began Grace, but the seal of silence fell on her lips. She could not vindicate herself to him; he would not understand her. Besides, she was so overcome by his gentleness, when she expected severity, that she could not trust herself to speak; and when she looked up he had gone without saying another word.

Her uncle had been her great dread. She expected little less than positive displeasure, if he ever knew it; but even he had uttered no reproof. She knew she had disappointed him, and that was hard enough for her to bear.

"I have gone contrary to the wishes of the dearest friends I have outside of my home, and I cannot, cannot help it. Ernest thinks I have done right, and that is such a comfort."

Ernest came just then, and a long walk with him in the cool evening air refreshed and strengthened her spirits. She had need of these lifts out of her daily life, for besides the consciousness of her friends' disappointments, she had occasionally to meet Mr. Lenox. He endeavored to conceal his wounds from observant eyes, but to one who knew him as she did, his bitterness was distressing. She could not show him the kindness she felt, and was greatly relieved when she learned through Henry

Marshall that he would be absent on business for some weeks.

The evening after he left, Henry Marshall brought her a note and a little sealed package. She excused herself, and went up-stairs. She opened the box, and found it contained an exquisite gold watch, just the mate to Laura's. The note was from Mr. Lenox. The language was as kind as a brother's could have been. "If," said he, "you will accept and wear this, I shall regard it as a seal of friendship, and will promise you, with it for my token, that I will endeavor to cultivate less of bitterness than I have known since my last interview with you. I am convinced of your sincerity, and shall not seek to change your decision. If you return this, I shall consider it a rejection of a peace-offering, on your part, to one who has great need of peace. Its acceptance cannot involve you in any trouble; its return will grieve and disappoint me." Grace took the beautiful little time-keeper in her hand; it was something she should value—but ought she to keep it? Wear a watch which was a gift from Mr. Lenox, when she had rejected him! That did not coincide with her views of things, and she laid it back in its velvet case. Then she took up the note and re-read it. Taking in view her whole acquaintance with him, and its results, was it right to reject this "peace-offering," as he had termed it? "It is beyond my power to decide to-night," thought she; "I must wait. One thing I do know: it cannot entangle me as Doctor Allerton's letters have done. It only says 'forget, and be friendly;' while they are con-

stantly drawing me on with their charming variety, all woven up with home and every body I know there," and she blushed at this unexpected confession, as if somebody had heard her make it.

Laura had told her not to be gone long, for she wanted to practice some songs which Henry had brought. So she put the package and note into her drawer, and went down to the parlor. Henry gave her a searching look, and she wondered how much he knew of the contents of the parcel. When they were alone, she gave the package and the note to Laura, without saying a word. When she had read the note, and admired the beautiful gift, she listened to Grace's "What *shall* I do?" uttered in beseeching terms.

"It seems to me you had better keep it. You cannot return it at present, for Mr. Lenox has gone. I know he has suffered very much, from what Henry has told me."

"Does he know it?"

"Yes."

"I am sorry; but I cannot help it. If I thought it would really gratify him, and he could perfectly understand my motives, I would keep it. It is beautiful; and if Ernest had given it to me, I should be in ecstasies over it. How strange it is, that the thing itself isn't the thing, after all."

"I must repeat the same expression I have so often used. What a queer girl you are! You seem so old and so young—all mixed up together. Sometimes I should think I had your mother for my room-mate, and then I might believe your little sister Mary had dropped in. I wonder if there is



any thing in that old house at Beechford which makes people prematurely wise! I am glad you cannot send this beautiful thing back to-night, and I am strongly disposed to think, in view of all the circumstances, that you would do wrong to do so at all. Ask Dr. Allerton. I believe he is accountable for some of your strange fancies, ignorant as you, seem to be of the fact. If he only lived in Boston in time I might learn to forgive him."

The world went on as usual; only to Grace life was more serious than it used to be.

Henry Marshall had a long talk with Laura about his cousin and hers. He could not understand why she had refused him, but he never once accused her of seeking to mislead him. "She is a rare treasure," said he, "and would, I think, have sufficient influence over Lenox to bring him into clearer view on some points where he is rather wandering. He is very fastidious in his tastes, and now I shall not be surprised if he is never suited. I hope Grace will keep that watch."

"Then you knew about it?"

"Yes; he told me all about it. It seemed, after his first sorrow had passed, to be a decided comfort to him to express his continued regard in some way that might occasionally remind her of him. He proposed several things, but nothing suited him until he saw a watch exactly like yours. He could see no objection to this: it would be useful, and he was sure she could accept it as a token of his continued friendship. He sent no chain with it, on purpose. He designed to have no links in any way connected with it. I think she ought to

keep it, and I hope you will advise her to that effect; I shall, if she gives me an opportunity. At any rate, I shall not take it back to Lenox. I do not care to witness the effects of its return."

"I believe Grace will do right," said Laura. "She is very firm, when a principle is involved."

"Then she will keep the watch. I do not ask her to marry my cousin, if she does not wish to, but I do ask her to deal kindly with him."

Laura repeated the conversation to Grace, and added her opinion that she should keep it. Grace listened. The beautiful gift was safe in her drawer. She wound it up every day, and waited to see how time influenced her views of calling it her own. She showed Ernest the note, and asked him what she should do.

"I will trust your own good sense in the matter," said he. "Henry Marshall has given you his views, from an intimate knowledge of the facts. I think, if I had asked a lady to have me, and she had told me no, I should not lavish many beautiful things upon her. You have proved yourself an excellent instructor, to bring out such a sense of forgiveness in his mind. Father told me when I was coming away, to remember that different men had different opinions. So I will allow that your Mr. Lenox has a right to his own views in this case."

"He isn't 'my Mr. Lenox,' Ernest, but he is a very pleasant man, one whom I should like for a friend always. When he comes home, if he acts as if the past were forgotten, I think I will keep

the watch. So many advisers ought to help me do right in the matter."

One evening, Grace had been sitting in the twilight with Henry and Laura, when Ernest came for her to go out to walk. "Poor Lenox," said Henry, "I seldom see that girl, that I do not wish it had been in her power to love him."

"I wish it could have been so," said Laura. "It is a greater trial, since it is just what we would have it, if we could arrange it. It is a great disappointment to father and mother, but they astonish me by their quietness about it. Mother says, father thinks she will change her mind; but I know she will not. She is a peculiar girl. She is one of the dearest companions you can imagine. She has done me a great deal of good. She always sees things in such a cheerful way. I tell her sometimes I believe she was born to conquer difficulties. *Right* and *wrong* are very clearly defined in her mind, and, without seeming to know it, she brings one to her way of thinking."

"Just the qualities Lenox needed. It is well he is not your listener. You would destroy all the effects of his change of scene and stoical determination. I hope she will be wise enough to keep his watch. I shall think her lacking in appreciating circumstances, if she does not."

"I think she has decided to do so, for even Ernest did not object."

"Her brother has decision enough to be your father's son. I saw that, by the expression of his mouth, the first evening I met him. I like him much. Are the rest of the family like these two?"

"In many respects; they are all younger, except one sister, who is older than Ernest. I think you would like them all. I enjoyed my visit there very much, and wish I could go every year."

Notwithstanding the troubled days, there were many bright ones for Grace, during the summer. Sometimes Colonel Winthrop would go to the seashore. Nahant was only a comfortable drive, and its long, smooth beach and rolling waves were as wonderful then as now. Colonel Winthrop would drive over very early, and after resting his horses at Lynn, drive on to the beautiful beach, and watch the restless waves, and refresh himself in the cool breezes which swept over them.

Laura and Grace loved these days. They rambled about, when they were tired of riding, and in the roar of the waters heard strange, wild music. Ernest found little time for day excursions, but an evening with his sister, after she had been enjoying one, made him almost believe he had been along with her. "How do they compare with huckleberry parties?" said he, laughingly, when sitting together in the little garden summer-house.

She was telling him of her day with a small party of friends at Nahant. "I was thinking, this afternoon, of one we had last summer," said she. "You remember, we all rode in the cart over to the foot of Eagle Mountain, and what nice times we had picking berries; not that we really got so many, but we enjoyed the ride, and the woods, and that clear, sparkling brook that runs down the rocks and hides away in the glen. And our lunch was excellent, out of the clean basket which poor old

Eben had made for mother. Sandford and Annie, Julia and Charlie Thorn, Edward Nelson, and you and I, and Mary Ross, in our clean cart, with father's strong oxen, were just as happy as we have been to-day."

"Do you mean that you enjoy riding in father's cart, with oxen to draw you, just as well as you do uncle's carriage, with his fine horses?"

"Why, no! I do not mean that at all; and I do not mean that picking huckleberries on Eagle Mountain will compare with sitting on the rocks at Nahant to-day, and seeing the great waves which the easterly wind rolled up. They were so grand, that I could not speak a word. I kept thinking of 'terrible majesty' all of the time. I cannot explain what I think about it; only I like certain things in certain places. I enjoy the ease of my life this summer, and the beautiful drives, and having plenty of nice clothes, and the pleasant people I meet; and I know how different it is at home, where we have to be so careful of every thing, and father and mother have so much to do, and I have to set the table, and wash dishes, and sweep—things that you know I do not really like at all—and yet I am going back to my old life, from choice. Now, Ernest, explain all this, if you can."

"How would it be if father, mother, Annie, the children and—and their family physician were coming to Boston to live?" asked her brother, smiling.

Grace blushed in spite of herself, and added: "Of course, if father and mother and all of the family were coming, I should feel very differently. If

we had always lived here as uncle has, I suppose I should wonder how I could be content in Beechford with our plain ways."

"Unless—you know you asked me to explain, Miss Winthrop, and I begin to feel quite an ability to do so—unless Doctor Allerton should write one of his charming letters and tell you he was very lonely at Beechford, that he had discovered that you were very necessary to his future happiness and usefulness there, I begin to think that the luxury of a wealthy home in Boston would suffer in comparison with the domestic happiness nestled away in Beechford."

"Ernest, you are too bad. I shall not accept your explanation; you and Laura have grown wonderfully discerning. Sometimes I think if mother sends for me this Fall, I will urge her to let me stay all winter, just to prove how mistaken you are."

"That would please us both. I'll keep on explaining if you will stay all winter. Now, shall I tell you something more? I think Mr. Rexford is very polite to somebody; he certainly is to me, and I never called myself particularly attractive."

"He comes here to sing with us; he has been in the habit of coming all winter. Since Mr. Lenox has been away, and Henry and Laura have grown exclusive, I am thrown more into his society. Somebody must talk to him; and when you are not here I feel obliged to be polite. Don't get that idea into your head, if you do I shall go home before mother sends for me."

"What! when you just said you were going to

ask her to let you stay all winter. Oh, Grace Winthrop! I wonder if all the girls in the world are like you."

"I don't suppose they all have such brothers. I wish you were going back to Beechford to stay always. Are you really glad that you have come here to live?"

"Yes, I can say I am; for you know I could not always be a boy and live at home with father and mother. I must make a home for myself somewhere, and I mean to carry out their principles in it. I hope I shall be able to say, 'The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.'"

"That sounds just like mother. You know she has a passage of Scripture ready for any occasion. There is one thing here, Ernest, so different from home; it seems as if people never think of anything but this world. When auntie has one of her terrible headaches, she always seems so frightened and asks if headaches do not sometimes kill people. Once when I told her of Aunt Mary's dying, just as grandmother has told it to me so many times, she said it did not seem to her possible that a young girl of eighteen could be happy at the thought of dying. She asks me if mother does not scold and fret when she has so much to do, and how it is possible that we all seem so happy. One Sunday when she was not well, and I stayed at home with her, she wanted me to read her some of the chapters which mother likes. Uncle seems to respect religion, and he always goes to church; and here is another thing which I cannot explain, fa-

ther's religion seems himself. I cannot separate him from it, while uncle's seems like our Sunday clothes at home—the very best things we can have, but not absolutely necessary to our real comfort and happiness."

"Uncle came away from home very early. Mother says he had so many temptations in the army, and his success in business was so uninterrupted, and his wealth so abundant, that he had greater temptations to 'feed on husks' than father had in his self-denying life. I do not believe I shall ever forget the conversation I had with mother about a week before I came away. She made it so plain that earthly riches were dangerous possessions, and increased a man's responsibility so much, that I am trying to keep to her motto of diligence. She marked this text: 'Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.'"

"Isn't it strange, Ernest, that the Bible has something in it for every body's troubles. I think I am something like uncle. I have the greatest respect for it, but I never could see how mother could remember so many passages that were exactly the thing you wanted. I remember once when I was a little girl, she sent me with some broth for old Bethia Newal. She seemed very glad to see me, and I thought I would do as I had read about good people doing when they visited the sick, repeat some comforting passage of Scripture; but the more I tried the more I could not think of a single one; and finally, when she asked me if I could not tell her a little news to cheer her up, I asked her

if she knew about 'Joseph and his brethren.' She did not seem to know who they were, but she liked the story.

"This winter when I have been so really troubled and perplexed, all of a sudden up would come a text without my looking for it, and it would be just the thing I needed and make the way seem plainer. When you first came, Ernest, you said you thought I had grown older, and sometimes I think I have, for I feel so much more responsibility than I used to when I knew that father and mother were thinking for me. I did not trouble myself much about anything, but here it is different. I often find myself questioning the right and wrong of things which people do and say. I try to throw it off by saying they are older and a great deal wiser than I am, but that does not satisfy me. I know that mother's views are right and her texts mean just what they say."

"It would make mother very happy if she knew that you remember these things. She used to say last winter, 'Grace is so young and thoughtless, and so fond of things which please the eye, that I'm afraid she will get notions which will hinder her from being happy in the plain ways she has been accustomed to. If I only knew that she was a Christian, I could trust her better.'"

"I am not a Christian, Ernest, I know I am not; but my life has been so entirely different from ours at home, that I have thought more of the difference between those who are Christians and those who are not, than I should in years there, with father and mother and grandfather and grandmother. I

had no contrasts for them. I thought, if I ever thought at all, that all fathers and mothers were Christians."

"Grace! where are you?" said Laura, coming out to look for her. "Henry has gone and Mrs. Clark is waiting for you to lock the house."

"If I have outstayed Henry," said Ernest, rising quickly, "you must charge it to this cousin of yours, who has a way of keeping folks longer than they mean to stay. I'll take it off of my next evening," said he, laughing, as the girls followed him to the door and bade him good-night.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE BEACH PARTY.

MR. LENOX had returned, and Grace had met him two or three times. He was kind, but evidently avoided her. And she, understanding him, managed to keep out of his way.

There was less necessity for their meeting now than during the winter. He did not call, and there were no parties to throw them together.

"Mr. Rexford calls oftener than he used to; have you thought of it, Grace?" said Laura, one day.

"Yes; and do you know, Laura, that I am getting to be suspicious, or vain, or something else disagreeable, because instead of enjoying his society as I used to last winter, I begin to imagine I shall get into trouble again. It is dreadful to be suspicious, Laura."

"I'm suspicious of Doctor Allerton's letters as the occasion of a good deal of your trouble. Why don't you give them up?"

Grace blushed, and answered, with some difficulty for her, "How can I now? Ernest likes them as well as I do. Annie is so busy, she has n't time to write us half we want to know."

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"Well, I advise Mr. Rexford not 'waste his sweetness on the desert air.'"

"He shall not, if I can help it," said Grace.

A long silence followed, in which both girls were evidently thinking. Laura, looking up, saw such a serious expression on her cousin's face, that she immediately called her to an account for it.

"Taking yourself to task, I always know, when I see that expression. What have you been doing now?"

"It's what I have n't been doing. I've been contrasting my life with Annie's. Sometimes I feel so idle—just as if I was doing nobody any good."

"How glad I am that I feel so well qualified to answer some of your doubts. In the first place, you have been teaching me ever since you came here. Don't look so incredulous, Miss Winthrop! The lessons you have given me I could never have learned in any other way; and if I should attempt to draw up a set of resolutions, you would be astonished at their extent."

Grace did look incredulous, for the idea of being any real benefit to Laura never came into her head; and that very evening, when Ernest told her it was a subject of daily thankfulness to him that she was where he could tell her of his perplexities, and that her sympathies made him stronger for his new mode of life, a light seemed to dawn upon her. Perhaps Ernest had needed her more than her mother and Annie had. How she had helped Laura, she could not tell; but she was very glad that she had not been living for herself only. Ernest would get accustomed to his surroundings,



and make friends who would esteem him, and then he could do without her better. She was sorry there seemed so little that she could do to show her affection for her uncle and aunt. She did not know that her bright, cheerful face, and her thoughtful anticipations in little acts of dutiful attention, made him wish that she might never leave him until she had a home of her own. He had been really tried in her refusal of Mr. Lenox. If the matter had been reversed, and she had fancied some one whom he disliked, he would never have kept so quiet; but he could not see how any interference on his part would help the state of things.

"That young doctor at Beechford has something to do with her decision," was his usual response to himself, when he thought the matter over. He made very particular inquiries after him of Ernest, and found that he held him in high esteem. He was making his mark, and promising to be a man of much importance at Beechford. He hoped nothing would be said of Grace's going home for another year; perhaps in that time things would take a different turn.

Mrs. Winthrop had gone beyond loving Grace because her husband and daughter did. She loved her because she could not help it. Her fingers had a kind of magnetic touch which soothed her frequent headaches more than medicine; and now that Laura had so many exclusive demands upon her, Grace filled in the vacancy most acceptably. She thought if her mother should send for her, a visit would satisfy her, and she would consent to her returning with them for another year at least.

She felt more sure of it now that Ernest was there, for she knew that he would not be willing to have her go away, if it was possible to keep her. Grace had been trained in active usefulness; so that she did not really understand or rightly estimate the passive form. There are so many departments in the great work-shop of life, that it needs time and severe discipline to open our eyes to the fact that *our accustomed way* is only one of the infinite ways in which the workman is employed. We cannot judge of the importance of our task simply by its relative position. Grace was standing on the threshold, with only a dim perception of what was folded up in the leaves she was daily turning.

"Mother told me two years ago that I knew very little of life," said she to Laura. "I thought she had a very limited idea of my attainments, but I begin to see that she was wiser than her daughter. I think I have learned something in these two years. Ernest says I seem older than I used to; but, good-bye, there comes Henry Marshall; if he is really disappointed at not finding me here, you can call me," and laughingly she disappeared. In a little time, Laura came for her.

"According to agreement, I am here to find you. Henry wishes to see you especially."

"I suppose so," said Grace, without showing the least sign of obeying the summons.

"He does, really; I came on purpose to find you. If you had been a little less anxious to be out of the way, I should not have had to come up these long flights of stairs."

Henry was in the summer-house, which was

built under a broad elm that had been left standing in the enclosed space back of the house.

"My call at this hour was on purpose to see you, Grace; but, as usual, you were out of sight. I am going to get up a beach party, and my first question is, what shall I do with you?"

"If Ernest can go, I will quickly tell you. Will it do for him to leave his business?"

"Better not until he has been there longer. Laura says you must be talked over and disposed of before hand, or you will give us a great deal of trouble."

"Quite a compliment!" said Grace, laughing. "I'll stay with aunt, and after dinner ride over to Charlestown, call and invite Mr. Ernest Winthrop to tea, and be ready to welcome you home when you come."

"Exactly what I said!" responded Laura. "But you must go, Grace; I want you to very much. We are to go early in the morning, take lunch with us, and eat it on the rocks. It will be delightful, if you will only do as we want you to."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Go with whoever of Henry's friends ask you."

"Not Mr. Lenox! You would not approve of that, Henry, I am sure."

"No, Grace; Lenox believes in you; he will not ask you. I hope he will go; but if he does, it will be on horseback. The truth is, if you are disengaged, Rexford will ask you. He is a good fellow; but if you mean to spare him, I should not advise you to spend much time over him. You have proved yourself such a dangerous companion, that

*we*, your affectionate relatives, must look out for you. There's Russell—you know him very well; and if I tell him first of the party, he will have the advantage of Rexford, and I think you will find him an agreeable companion. I can recommend him. Will you go with him?"

"Say, 'Yes,' before he asks me—is that what you mean by doing what you want to have me?" said Grace, laughing.

"No, my lady, not at all. I know what I am talking about. Will you go with Russell if he asks you?"

"Yes, to please you and Laura I will, if you will promise not to say to him, 'I don't exactly know what to do with Grace Winthrop. I suppose Laura and I *can* take her.' But remember, I shall not go with Mr. Rexford, and I shall not be unhappy to stay at home. Please, can I go now, Mr. Marshall?" and Grace assumed an air of mock humility quite ridiculous to behold.

"I must, if you do not; remember you are to leave your fate in my hands so far as this party is concerned."

"Yes, sir," said Grace, making a low courtesy, and then she was gone back to her room, where Laura soon joined her, and their talk and work went on uninterruptedly for the rest of the morning.

The party was arranged for the last day of August. Mr. Russell's early invitation was accepted. Mr. Rexford came as soon as he heard of it, and seemed decidedly surprised that somebody had secured Miss Winthrop before him. He declined

going entirely, but Henry Marshall ignoring the fact, that he cared particularly for any young lady, urged him to make some other arrangement. He must not stay at home for they could not spare him.

Six o'clock is a very pleasant hour to start on a long ride of a warm summer morning. Ernest came up to see them off and join Grace in the wish that he was going. Mr. Russell was a very pleasant companion, and the whole party were in excellent spirits. Without driving fast they reached Lynn before nine o'clock, and after resting an hour were ready to drive to the beach. Here they strolled about, watching the play of the good-natured waves. They climbed the rocks and found seats as they could in groups or single companies. Every body had come for a pleasant day, so they were social and merry, enjoying the refreshing breezes. Mr. Lenox came much later than the rest, and as Henry Marshall had predicted, he was on horseback. He was cheerful, but not a leading spirit, as he once would have been. He joined the group where Grace was sitting, and occasionally addressed a remark to her. Once he asked her about her brother, and of his success in his business, but he offered her none of those little attentions which had always before seemed a part of his nature.

Lunch was in this case really an entertainment, for it not only ministered to their appetites, but its arranging and serving furnished a good deal of amusement. Cold, roast chickens were plenty, and sandwiches and a variety of cake and fruit. Each carriage had a basket, and altogether the

good things would have been sufficient for a party of twice their number.

The repast occupied some time, and then Lizzie Marshall proposed to explore among the rocky cliffs. Grace joined her, and in a short time all of the party were in motion. Grace was very independent in her efforts, climbing rocks was no new thing for her, it really was very exhilarating, and brought a glow on her cheeks such as they used to wear at Beechford. She was quite in advance of the others and thought she was alone, making a bold effort to go round a point she missed her foothold and would have fallen if a strong hand had not caught her, and held her firmly until she stood in safety. It was Mr. Lenox. She had come into his lonely retreat very unexpectedly. His surprise, and her sudden danger, threw him off his guard, and caused him to utter an expression of passionate tenderness. His quick apology had something so painful in it, that as he turned away and left her with Mr. Russell, she realized how manfully he had striven to keep his pledge, and be to her only a friend.

Henry Marshall and Laura coming up just then, found Mr. Russell and several others assiduous in their inquiries after Grace, who was sitting, unusually pale, but very quiet, on the rock.

"Your cousin, Miss Winthrop, came very near paying dearly for her independence. She is indebted to Mr. Lenox's sudden appearance from somewhere for her ability to look so composedly over it now. She so outstripped me in the race that I could render her no assistance."

Laura looked alarmed, but Grace assured her that she did not fall, only a stone rolled and made her lose her footing, she was not hurt in the least.

"I shall have to put an injunction on Miss Grace, to the effect that she shall stay down where the rest of us mortals do for the remainder of the day," said Henry Marshall, with an air of assumed authority. "I also propose that we have a little music on this festive occasion, provided I can get our forces together."

Grace would rather have sat awhile in silence waiting for the shock, and the expression of Mr. Lenox's face, to pass away; but with her usual effort at self-command, she joined her voice with the others. Mr. Lenox's part was wanting and there was a general call for him, but he had disappeared, and they were obliged to go on without him.

The waves sang, too, regardless of the tiny sounds on shore; the world was wide enough for both. By and by the horses were brought and the party rode slowly up and down the wonderfully beautiful beach, watching the declining sun as it poured its farewell flood of golden radiance all over the unmindful waters. The hard sand had retained sufficient water to give it the appearance of a high polish, and the tread of the horses was so soft, that they might have been shod with velvet for any sound they gave. Grace took in the beautiful outline with its varied scenery from beach to lofty precipice, with intense longings for Ernest to share in her enjoyment of it. She was in no mood to express to Mr. Russell the half she felt,

so she kept reasonably silent. The ride home was very pleasant, the moon supplying the sun's place most acceptably.

Grace's accidental encounter with Mr. Lenox had been her greatest drawback in the pleasures of the day. He did not join the company any more. His cousin covered his retreat, by saying, "He was an uncertain guest, and had only promised to ride out and look on awhile."

Ernest was waiting for them, and listened with interest to Grace's description of the excursion.

"Your sister's spirit of adventure must have been cultivated somewhere," said Mr. Russell, "she set all my gallantry at defiance; how Lenox produced himself so suddenly, I am at a loss to know."

"I met Mr. Lenox so early, that I concluded he did not go."

"He only stayed a short time," said Henry. And then the subject dropped.

Mr. Rexford made up his disappointment about the beach party by coming oftener than before. Grace found Ernest very convenient, now that Laura was often engaged without her, trying to cultivate a friendship between himself and Mr. Rexford, he told Laura, seemed to be her present aim.

Ernest had now been in Boston about four months, in a situation of trust and responsibility. It had been obtained through his uncle's influence, and he was determined to give him no cause to regret his agency in the matter. Colonel Winthrop had been exceedingly gratified to hear from his em-

players occasional commendations on his growing fitness for the place. "I was not afraid to recommend him," said he, to Mrs. Winthrop, "I believed he would be equal to it. Brother Henry has brought up his children well; money is a very necessary thing, I should not know what to do without it. But if I had a family of sons, I should rather they would have such a foundation as Henry's children have without the money; than the money I could give them without the foundation.

Mrs. Winthrop had very little idea of what the training of sons would be, and not the slightest of what the real want of money was; but she agreed with her husband perfectly, in thinking that the two of his children she knew were honors to their parents.

About the middle of September, Grace received a letter from Annie, in which her mother said, "'Tell your uncle that I cannot let you go back with him. I sometimes think Ernest is not, and Grace is not, and if I have to add Annie is not, I shall be desolate, indeed.'"

This letter caused quite a sensation. Laura proposed to write a remonstrance at once. Ernest looked very sober when he read it, though he had expected it, and could understand better than Laura why his mother needed Grace. Mrs. Winthrop was disposed to treat it lightly. She thought a letter could be written explaining how impossible it was to let her go before spring at any rate.

Colonel Winthrop was disappointed; but, with his usual precision, he said, "I promised your mother, Grace, and I will try and fulfill my word,

unless we can induce her to consent to your remaining."

Grace knew that her mother really needed her, especially if Annie was going. It was a great trial to leave Ernest, but her mother knew that, and would not separate them if she could help it.

The evening before Annie's letter came, Mr. Rexford had found an opportunity to convey to Grace in language she could neither misunderstand nor evade his life plan for her.

The interview, on her part, was less painful than the one with Mr. Lenox, because she had never come so near loving him; but, with the feelings of a true woman, she was pained to be the cause of disappointment and sorrow to one who so earnestly offered her his richest gifts. She had never given him reason to suppose she liked him beyond a pleasant friend, and when she grew conscious that he was advancing farther than this she had withdrawn, sometimes almost to coldness.

"Another friend lost," said she, in answer to Laura's inquiries. "I am glad I am sure of Ernest and Henry Marshall."

Her mother's desire for her to come home seemed an outlet for the troubles she had so unintentionally encountered.

Related to Henry Marshall and Laura, as she and Mr. Lenox were, they must meet occasionally, and when winter came it would be impossible to avoid meeting often. Every thing would be changed. Mr. Rexford belonged to their musical set and to all their social gatherings. It would be impossible to get back the old, careless friendship. New

acquaintances would not help the matter. She had a slight curiosity, too, to see how Doctor Allerton really appeared, now that she was so much better acquainted with him. Still she did not oppose Laura's writing, for, if she staid, she should have Ernest, and there were many congenial surroundings in her present home.

Colonel Winthrop decided to write himself to his sister-in-law. He asked an extension of the visit until spring, and laid before her many reasons why it was desirable for her daughter to remain with them.

The reply convinced him that it would be useless to urge her staying any longer at present. Ernest and Grace saw it too, but Mrs. Winthrop and Laura were not convinced.

Mrs. Winthrop had not been well during the latter part of the summer. Riding wearied her so much that her physician discouraged her going to Beechford.

"Then, of course, Grace must stay," said Laura.

"No," said her father. "I promised to return her in safety in a year if nothing happened to prevent. I shall keep her until I find a good opportunity. A friend of mine, who comes to Boston on business about the first of November, goes within twenty miles of Beechford on his way home. She can go with him, and her father can meet her."

Ernest wrote to his father, and it was arranged that he should meet her at Norcross, where the stage would leave her.

The weeks between were very busy ones. It

seemed strange that in one short year she should have become so much at home in her uncle's family and have so many pleasant friends who regretted her going. Mrs. Winthrop felt personally aggrieved; she did not try to be reconciled to it. Ernest made the best of it, but he dreaded the vacancy which her going would leave. The last of October Mr. Olcott, Colonel Winthrop's friend, came, and willingly promised to see his young charge in safety until she met her father.

The little trunk was brought down from the attic, but its owner's wealth had so outgrown its size that the large one Mrs. Winthrop had brought from New York had to take its place.

"Shall I take these handsome evening dresses, aunt?" said she, as she thoughtfully surveyed them, and remembered that they would be rather out of place in their little social gatherings at Beechford.

"Yes, child, take every thing; they will be old-fashioned when you come back next winter. You will want new ones then."

It seemed to Grace that her wardrobe was very extensive. She thought her mother and Annie would think so too.

"Here is something for Annie," said Mrs. Winthrop, handing her a parcel. "Tell her I do not like her getting married and taking you away; but I will forgive her enough to send her this."

It was a silver-gray silk with the necessary trimmings, and Grace added it to her store with great pleasure.

Laura helped her pack. It was astonishing how



many useful things for little Mary went into the spaces, Laura all the while protesting against packing at all.

Grace had worn a pin and earrings of topaz, set with pearls, belonging to her cousin ever since she came to Boston. Taking them from her drawer, she was going to put them in their old place when Laura said, "No, keep them; mother gave them to me on my seventeenth birthday. She told me to give them to you, for I have two other sets, you know, and I had rather you would keep these. And now, you must wear that watch; here is a chain for it from Henry;" and she took out from her drawer one which exactly matched her own. "He brought it to me last night, and told me to ask you to wear it for my sake in memory of him."

"A pleasant combination, and a beautiful gift," said Grace, admiringly. "I did not expect such a remembrance from him. Mother will say I have been spoiled with kindness. Oh! Laura, what a poor return I can ever make for all"—and the poor girl broke down under the sense of obligation which had been culminating all day.

Laura meanwhile fastened the chain to the watch and passed it over her cousin's neck without saying a word. She was thinking how strange it was that Grace would give herself and her friends so much trouble. She might stay with them always and have a beautiful home of her own, its chosen, almost idolized mistress. She was so fitted to the place, and they all wanted her in it so much. It was all Doctor Allerton—she knew it was, and she

wished he had never come to Beechford. It would have been a great relief to her burdened mind to pour out a torrent of wrathful words on his far off head just at that moment, but she was perfectly conscious that it would not do a particle of good, so she at once smothered it down and busied herself with her cousin's trunk until she grew cheerful again.

"I cannot wear this to-night; uncle would notice it, and I could never explain it to him. I hope you will tell Henry that I appreciate his beautiful gift. I shall wear the watch with more pleasure for his association with it."

The last evening brought a good many calls. Mr. Lenox was among the number, but Mr. Rexford was not. Mr. Lenox only staid a few moments, but he seemed cheerful, and told her good-bye so kindly, that it was pleasant to remember. She was glad he came; it seemed to quiet the painful recollection she had of her meeting him at Nahant. Colonel Winthrop spoke of her going as of a visit she was making. "If nothing happens, I shall come for you next year," he said.

Ernest caught at this idea, and wore a more cheerful face than he had for several days. As he was leaving for the night, his uncle said, "I saw Mr. Hillard this afternoon, and asked him to give you a holiday to-morrow. I want you to drive about twenty miles from here with this young lady. Her baggage will go with Mr. Olcott, by the stage, and you can see her safely on board."

This thoughtful kindness on the part of his uncle was so unexpected, that Ernest said good-night

with almost as light a heart as if he had been going all the way.

The November sun strove to gladden the earth and give a cheerful look to the stirring city, as Ernest and Grace once more drove out of it. The parting was past; her going was regretted in the household, from her uncle down to Ralph. This ride with Ernest was a great help to them both. There was so much to say, that they were in danger of being behind the stage-hour. Grace looked at her watch, which she wore for the first time to-day, and found it was necessary to drive a little faster. Ernest had messages for his father and mother, Annie and all the rest, not forgetting Doctor Allerton. They reached the appointed place, a little in advance of the stage-coach. Mr. Olcott and the trunks were both along with it. The horses were changed, the horn blew, and Ernest saw his sister seated, and watched the wave of her handkerchief until the vehicle was out of sight. With a lonely heart he turned away and drove back to Boston. This sister's love had been one of the strong daily influences of his life. How would he get on without it now? It was a slight hope that she might come back the next year. He tried to shut out the thought that he should never again belong to the home circle as one of its daily members. He must work on manfully. He had a place to fill, and he would not lose strength in useless regrets. So, with thankful memories for the treasures he had in such safe keeping, he went back to his duties. He had no fear of being forgotten in the welcome which would be extended

to his sister, and she had promised to write to him as often as possible, knowing from experience how the absent one values home tidings.

## CHAPTER XX.

### BEECHFORD AGAIN.

MR. OLCOTT proved himself an excellent traveling companion. He was about Colonel Winthrop's age, and had daughters older and younger than Grace. Without many delays, the lumbering old stage-coach, the day it was due, drove up to the little inn at A——. The first face Grace saw was her father's. That dear face! how it beamed upon her, and how that hand clasped hers as it helped her from her seat! Let those who have known a loving father's welcome understand how glad her heart was. In a few moments, who should appear but Charles and Henry, grown taller, but smiling all over their happy faces!

"I should think I had got home," said Grace. "Did anybody else come with you?"

"No," said her father. "Arthur and Mary wanted to. It would not have taken much to have brought your mother and Annie, too; but I thought four would be enough for one wagon."

Grace remembered to introduce her father to Mr. Olcott. He joined her in thanking him for his kindness, by the way, and then the stage rode off.

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"Is that big trunk yours, Grace?" said Charles, looking in amazement at the large one which the driver had set down beside the small one.

"Yes."

"Whew!" says he. "They have big things in Boston, don't they? What have you got in it?"

The boys soon drove Fearnaught and Cæsar round to the door, and, with their father's help, lifted the trunks into the wagon. They were very anxious to be on their way. They had so many questions to ask, they wanted their sister all to themselves.

Deacon Winthrop had, of course, much to inquire about her journey and of Ernest.

The twenty miles were soon passed over. As the early twilight deepened into night, the "old house at home" came full in view.

"Please stop at the corner of the garden, father, and let Grace go in by herself," said Charles.

Grace was quickly out of the wagon and opening the gate, without making any noise, she went into the porch, and looked in the little window by the side of the door. Her mother and Annie were sitting before the fire, in quiet expectancy, while Arthur and Mary had gone to the window, for perhaps the tenth time in the last five minutes. She lifted the latch, and in a moment her arms were about her mother's neck.

"Grace! my dear child, have you indeed come!" Then the mother cast a longing look beyond her, as if Ernest must not be far away. Annie, Arthur and Mary all gathered round her, full of rejoicings. Deacon Winthrop and the two boys came

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in to see how she really looked at home once more.

She had pictured just this meeting a great many times during her absence. For the first half of her journey her thoughts had lingered with her Boston friends, but as she drew nearer home they had come before her and made her anxious to keep up with them.

"Just look at this monstrous trunk, mother," said Charles, as he helped bring in the baggage. "I think Grace is as fine as Aunt Winthrop and Laura. Henry and I went out of sight, when we heard the stage coming. We wanted to surprise her, and when we saw father helping her out, we thought Cousin Laura must have come by mistake."

"I think she is handsomer than Laura," said Henry. "I did not think she was so pretty. When I used to see her every day, perhaps I never thought any thing about it; but now I think she is very handsome. Don't you, mother?"

"We all love her so much; she looks handsomer to us," said the quiet, thankful mother, as she stepped briskly about, preparing tea. "But we must make haste, now, for father is hungry, and I think Grace will care more for something to eat than to have us compliment her good looks."

Annie, meantime, had taken her sister's bonnet and cloak, and drawn a chair close to the fire for her. Mary, as of old, seated herself in her lap, and Arthur stood with his arm around her neck.

"Promise us you will never go away again," said Mary. "We have wanted you every day.

Nobody tells us any stories now, for mother and Annie never have any time."

"Tea is ready," said Charles, and the announcement was followed by a general gathering into the warm kitchen.

"It does not look much like your uncle's dining-room," said Mrs. Winthrop.

"It looks very much like my old home," said Grace, "and you look very much like the dear good mother I have always seen sitting at the head of the table."

There was a hush, and from the earthly father's heart there went up to the heavenly Father a simple petition for a renewed blessing on every fresh token of His love. Grace had heard nothing like it since she left that table more than a year ago.

"Ernest's seat seems very empty to-night," said Mrs. Winthrop; "it seemed as if he must be coming with you, Grace."

"I think mother is almost as much disappointed as if he had not come home with you two years ago," said Annie, trying to be cheerful over it. "I am so glad to get one of you back that I feel like rejoicing."

"So do I," said Mrs. Winthrop. "I am sure Grace knows that well enough."

Just as the tea was over, Aunt Lois slowly opened the kitchen door and looked cautiously in. Grace saw her in a moment, and welcomed her as cordially as her kind heart could desire.

"Wall, you've come, and I'm about as glad as I know how to be. I told Nannie that I must run over if it was dark. She's got a dreadful cold, and

I left her b'iling up a few yarbs to take just as she goes to bed. Dear me, Mis' Winthrop! I don't believe I should have known the child. She allurs would rig up, and I suppose they have a good many notions in Boston that we don't git here. My caps haint had no kind of a look to um since she went away." And the old lady gave the strings of her ancient head-gear an extra smooth. "We've had a pretty lonesome time since you and Ernest went away. I hope you'll stay to home now, as long as I live, at any rate."

"Oh, yes!" said Grace. "I'm going to stay at home as long as mother will keep me, and I will make you and Aunt Nannie some new caps; and next Spring you and I will have nicer flower-beds than we have ever had."

By this time Aunt Lois had blown out the bit of tallow candle that glimmered in her old lantern and set it down behind the door.

"I'll take care of the dishes, Mis' Winthrop. I told Nannie I should stay long enough to wash um, so you go right in t'other room; you may leave the door open, so as I can hear your voices. I want to know for sartain that Grace has come, and I can't stay long, 'cause Nannie wants to go to bed."

There was much to say when they were all gathered round the sitting-room fire.

"You have grown so heavy, Mary, that you must not sit on your sister's lap," said Mrs. Winthrop; and Mary, drawing her little bench close to her sister, contented herself with sitting as near her as possible, and occasionally resting her head on

her lap. Arthur stood by her side and Charles and Henry sat on each side of her. It seemed so exactly like the scene two years ago, when she and Ernest came from Boston, that Grace felt strangely lonely; but she cheered herself and them by telling all about his coming to her uncle's; of his success, and her uncle's satisfaction in finding how well he pleased his employers. She had a very attentive audience, for the letters had told so little compared with their wish to know so much of all that concerned him.

Though Grace was talking, she had time to look about her; it seemed strange that the rooms had grown so small and the ceilings so low. She was sure they could not always have been so, and yet every thing was just as she had left it. Her mother's face, in the faint light which fell upon it, looked weary and care-worn, and she felt that it would have been wrong for her to have stayed away when she might lighten some of the burdens at home. Her father looked quietly glad, and the children seemed so delighted to see her that she knew they must have missed her sadly.

"Well," said Deacon Winthrop, as the clock struck ten, "we are no nearer through being glad to see Grace, or coming to the end of her stories, than we were when she first came in, so I propose we shall go to bed and take a fresh day for the rest."

Charles had taken Ernest's place in reading the chapter, and when Grace heard her father's prayer for the absent brother, she realized how fervently she had been remembered all the days she had

been away. She went up to her room, so plain, compared to the one she had occupied the past year, impressed with the feelings that her father and mother were very dear possessions, and that their presence in the old house would make up for the lack of beauty there. Her mother's weary face troubled her, and she waited for Annie to come to ask if she was well.

"Yes," said Annie; "but I think she has had too much to do all summer. When we talked of your coming home, and uncle wrote that letter, she hardly knew what to say. She really needed you so much, and yet she was sorry to send for you, when they were all so unwilling to have you come, especially when your coming would leave Ernest alone."

"You mean especially when you were going to run away and leave her. I don't know as I shall consent to that."

"Did Ernest tell you I was going?"

"Yes; I do not want you to go, Annie; I shall miss you very much; I dread to think of it."

"I thought you would be used to it by this time. What is this?" said she, suddenly attracted by the glitter of the chain which had been concealed by her dress. Grace took it from her neck and placed it and the watch in her sister's hand.

"Is this yours?" and "Who gave it to you?" were questions which quickly followed each other.

"It is mine, Annie, and some time I will tell you all about it. I must tell you and mother, for I cannot enjoy having it without I do; but I do not wish to tell anybody else."

"Does it mean that you are going back to Boston?"

"It means I am not going back to Boston, except as Grace Winthrop; it is a long story, and I cannot tell it to-night. I have a good deal to tell you, and I want to hear all about your plans, and help you enough to make up for going away to leave you so long; but good-night now, I must go to bed or we shall talk as long as Laura and I used to sometimes. You look too tired for that, to say nothing of how I feel."

Mary had taken possession of Grace's bed, meaning to keep awake until her sister came; but she was fast asleep and could not enjoy the nice talk she was going to have with her. Tired as Grace was, she could not sleep. She remembered how wretched she was the last night she slept in this room, and all that she had passed through since. She felt years older, and the life before her looked troubled. She had come back to take up her old occupations again. This was her place; the luxury that had surrounded her for the last year was not her own; it would be idle in her to regret it. She should be so lonely without Ernest; but he had missed her, and she must try to get on cheerfully without him. Of one thing she was certain, she did not regret that she was not going back as the wife of Mr. Lenox. She would think of him always as a pleasant friend; and after she got used to her old ways again, she would forget that she had ever left them. She was going to be a child again and try to think and feel as she used to. Thus comforting herself she fell asleep.



Mary made up her lost opportunity by waking very early in the morning. She had a great many things to tell her sister; among others, that she met Doctor Allerton the afternoon before and told him that father and the boys had gone for her. "He and I are great friends," said she. Annie looked in to see if they were awake. "Must I come down and set the table?" said Grace, laughing.

"If you are ready to come down when it is set, we will excuse you from anything else this morning," said Annie.

Grace was ready and received a most hearty welcome as she took her old place. "I must go up and see grandfather and grandmother this morning," said she.

"Before you open your big trunk? I was going to stay at home from school on purpose to see what is in it," said Mary, looking very much disappointed.

"Perhaps mother will let you go with me to grandfather's, and that will do as well, won't it?"

Mary's face brightened; she was ready to accompany her sister on her morning visit. The first thing was to look into the little brown house and say, "How do-do," to the loving old inmates. Aunt Nannie seemed more feeble, but Aunt Lois said it was only her dreadful cold; she would get well right away when she saw Grace sitting in her old corner again. "Nobody knows how we've missed you," said she; "I had n't no heart for any thing last spring. Mary, here, set away with me to gather wild flowers, but she soon got tired of it,

and my pinks and sweet Williams and roses hung on for days with nobody to make um into flower-pots. I told Nannie last night that I was dreadful 'fraid I should hear by and by that somebody was coming to take you back to Boston to live."

"No, Aunt Lois," said Grace, "I have come back to help you 'look after things.' You need not be afraid of losing me—it is Annie we are going to lose. Mother and you could not spare us both."

Aunt Lois was a little comforted, but she could not quite believe, as she told Nannie, that Boston folks would let such a beautiful "garl" as that come back to Beechford if they could help it.

Grace found her grandfather and grandmother looking not a day older than when she left them. The same restful, sunny old people, waiting for the summons which would transplant them to their heavenly home.

They were delighted to see their granddaughter, and had many questions to ask after Ernest. "We miss the dear boy," said the old gentleman, wiping his eyes. "I wish he could have found something to do nearer home, but it does me good to see your face again. I was afraid, from what they told me, that your uncle would think he had a right to you."

"Your mother has missed you, my child," said her grandmother, "and I am glad you have come back to her."

The visit lasted until after dinner, and then, with blithe little Mary for her companion, she went back through the same path she so well remem-

bered the day before she left home. The walk and the call had done her good.

The trunks were opened, and Mary's wondering eyes feasted on their contents. Annie was very much pleased with her dress. "It is something I needed, but never thought of having," said she.

Mary's remark's over her sister's dresses were most original and amusing. She was sure nobody in the world ever looked half so pretty as she must have done in these beautiful things.

Grace folded and carefully laid away her white silk, her pink crape and her soft, India muslins—they already began to seem to her things of the past. Then she produced the garments she had made for Annie.

"A whole set! Why, Grace, such unexpected riches will turn my head!" and she sat down, hardly knowing whether to laugh or to cry.

"You must thank Aunt Winthrop and Laura. I only made them; it was one of my greatest pleasures last winter. Here is Ernest's gift. He told me to tell you he had had only one payment, so he could not buy just what he wanted to."

Annie untied the package and found a beautiful collar and a pair of white gloves. "And here is something to pin your collar with from Laura;" and Grace handed her a little box containing a very pretty breast-pin, the like of which Annie had never owned.

"Do call mother, Mary," said Annie. "I am so overpowered with my sudden wealth that I cannot move."

Mother came, and smiled, in her loving way, to see her daughters so happy.

Mary had some useful remembrances, too. Her heart was bubbling over in its joy. First it was Grace, then it was her beautiful clothes, then it was Annie's fine things, then it was her own.

It took Grace some weeks to get back into her old routine of home duties. Sometimes they seemed wearisome to her, but her love for her home and friends helped her over these points; and, as her old interests came back, she entered on her daily life with increasing desire to meet the demands upon her.

The second evening after her return she came into the sitting-room and found Doctor Allerton there talking with her father. She was conscious of blushing deeply at this unexpected meeting, and making a wrong answer to his pleasant greeting, but he did not seem to notice it. He was self-possessed as usual. He placed a chair for her near the fire, and began asking her of her journey and of Ernest.

The mention of Ernest seemed to restore her quiet tone of thoughts. She delivered his message, and spoke of her regret at leaving him. Then followed a pleasant conversation, easily maintained. She did not feel afraid of him, neither did he seem so near her father's age as she had imagined him to be. His easy flow of choice language had not, in the least, diminished; and, on the whole, she passed the first dreaded interview with less embarrassment than she had anticipated.

His letters seemed to her now a part of her Bos-

ton life; he made no allusions to them, and but for the fact that, in some way, she understood and appreciated him more than she used to, she would almost have believed that they had never been written.

Annie expressed astonishment at her sociability with Doctor Allerton. She really believed she had grown older since she had been away. So all of her friends said—not less cheerful, but more dignified and womanly.

The year had, indeed, been an eventful one to her; one in which her character had developed rapidly. Charles persisted in saying that she had grown handsome, and none of her friends were disposed to contradict him. Charlie Thorn and Edward Nelson declared that she had grown just a little haughty, but that was only because they did not understand the change.

She was no longer the light-hearted, thoughtless girl they had known all of their lives, but she was just as good a friend. Sandford Ross playfully told her that it was Annie's mantle of eldest daughtership falling on her that impressed her so much.

She found the old church as much changed as her father's house. It had grown so small and plain. It seemed to her, as she sat in her seat in the choir, that one could almost shake hands across the galleries.

Her good, common sense, made her keep all of these impressions to herself. Sometimes she would tell Charles, who was fast growing into her confidence, and who was highly amused at her descriptions; but these thoughts quickly passed away,

and she, "a natural branch," was soon at home in her "own olive-tree," realizing where her love and duty lay. She told her mother and Annie the story of the watch. She could not wear it until she had done this. Mrs. Winthrop was heartily sorry for Mr. Lenox, but glad her daughter had come back to her.

"I did not tell any body all the fears I had," said she. "If I had not been so afraid of losing you, I should have borne your absence better, but it has all come out right in the end."

Grace did not mention Mr. Rexford, it was not necessary, neither had she told them of her correspondence with Doctor Allerton. She knew how highly her father and mother esteemed him, and that she had done nothing of which they would not approve. Perhaps that was all past now, and, if it was, silence was its best keeper.

The days were very busy ones, and Grace missed Ernest every-where. Thanksgiving came and went—a good, old festival, though Ernest was not in it. Doctor Allerton spent the evening at Deacon Winthrop's, and seemed quite at home in the family. His manner to Grace was deferential and friendly, but nothing more.

In writing to Ernest, she said, "Your friend Doctor Allerton was very polite to mother, and made many inquiries about you. He treats me as if I was a strange lady—some distant connection of the family. I thought I might feel sorry for the obligation our correspondence would almost insensibly impose, but I might have spared myself, for he has evidently forgotten it."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A WEDDING.

AT last the all-important day for Annie's wedding was appointed, and there was enough between now and then to make Grace forget every thing else. "I am going to be dress-maker for the occasion," said she, "and must proceed to fit up my room to receive orders from the bride elect." So she negotiated with Henry and Arthur to make her a work-box and keep it filled. The long unused fireplace was soon glowing with a bright, warm fire, the little table was set out, and the self-appointed seamstress proceeded to remodel and make up her sister's wardrobe; very simple it was, compared with the present day; but it was all she wanted; Grace's skillful fingers made the pretty brown silk a marvel of beauty—almost too fine—Annie thought she should not feel at home in it. Julia Thorn and Mary Ross came occasionally to admire and help, too; for their needles were fast flying, and their interest quite inspiring. When the dress-making was all done, Grace went into the kitchen, where Aunt Lois was now oftener than ever, doing nameless household things. "I tell Nannie," said she, "that we sha'n't get along much

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with spinning this winter. At least, I sha'n't; for, when weddings come, they must be attended to. I don't know, for my part, how we are going to keep house without Annie. I tell Nannie I reckon she'll be missed; but I suppose she must go. Sanford is a nice young man, and, after all, if she don't go now, there's no knowing when she will. There always comes a little easing-up time after butchering, and between us all I guess we can manage to wait on company."

Aunt Lois always had a way of answering her own objections. She had grown used to comforting herself and Nannie, and usually managed to be cheerful when the time to need it came. "Between them all," as Aunt Lois said, loaves of nicely frosted cake and a variety of good cheer stood in waiting for the occasion.

Grace had got some new ideas which she could make available, without extra expense. She was very happy in all the commotion. It was just the thing to bring back her old spirits and make her fully at home again. She found Charles a most efficient helper, and very companionable, too. "I tell you what, Grace," said he, one evening, throwing down his book, "I can't learn much until this wedding is over, and I don't mean to try. I've been casting the interest on a bigger sum of money than I ever expect to see out of this arithmetic, and all it comes to is 'so many cups of sugar,' and 'so many cups of butter,' and 'two dozen eggs, white and yolks beaten separately.' Now, what's the use, did you know I made cake when you were gone?"

"Cake! Charles," said his mother; "I wonder when?"

"Well, I did twice in harvest. You see, I was expected to fill your place. I had to set the breakfast table just as often as Annie could catch me. 'Besure, I always forgot the plates, or the knives, or the tea-cups; but a litte help was better than none. Then, when Ernest went, I was expected to be Ernest, and I was Charles always. Now, it's a good deal to stand for three people on one pair of feet. 'It wore on me,' as Aunt Lois says. If you had staid away much longer, you would have found me an old man in spectacles."

Grace laughed, and Mrs. Winthrop sagely added, "that it was strange how boys would talk."

As the time drew near, Arthur and Mary were very mysterious at school, and hurried home the moment it was out, fearing they would lose some important particular. Annie, with her quiet ways, went about as usual, taking last stitches for her brothers, and appearing to be an unimportant actor in the scenes.

Early in February, when the moon shone brightly and the sleighing happened to be very fine, the eventful evening came. About a hundred guests had been invited. The fires, up stairs and down, were all lighted before dinner and kept burning briskly through the day. "Try to keep folks warm," Deacon Winthrop kept saying. "Our woods can hold out for Annie's wedding. We won't send her away cold."

The boys heaped on the wood, until mother began to fear the chimneys would get on fire. Grand-

mother's dishes and spoons were on duty, and her bright brass candlesticks, too. She had sent half a box of her nicest tallow candles, made on purpose for this occasion, and Grace had disposed of them with an eye to effect. Aunt Lois had brought over a basket of dishes, out of a closet she seldom opened, except to brush away the dust, and Julia Thorn and Mary Ross had contributed from their households. They had also helped Grace tie ever-green wreaths for the walls and mirrors, and over the high mantel-shelves. The new striped carpet, which Mrs. Winthrop and Annie, with the help of Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois, had made during the year, had been put on the sitting-room floor, and gave it a look of added warmth and cheerfulness.

The bride was dressed and waiting. Her silver-grey silk was very becoming. Ernest's gift of collar and gloves, and Laura's pin, were just what she needed. Like Grace, she had soft, abundant hair. This her sister had dressed and adorned with a choice wreath, one which she had worn herself the previous winter. Taking her as she stood ready, when the hour came, Annie Winthrop was a sweet trusting bride—such an one as the eye likes to rest upon—for something whispered, as you behold her, "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her; she will do him good and not evil all the days of his life." Grace wore her blue cashmere, and it was always very becoming. Her mother had insisted upon her being warmly dressed, for she must, in her manifold duties, get into draughts and be exposed to taking cold. Her own taste for fitness readily consented to the blue cashmere.



But little Mary was sadly disappointed; she thought Grace would look so beautiful in that pink crape she wore in Boston. Her hair was arranged in the way Laura so much loved to see it, and fastened back with an ornamental comb, a belonging of her last winter's toilette. She was so absorbed in Annie, and the desire to have every thing pass off pleasantly, that she scarcely thought of herself.

Mary wore her crimson dress, and felt very conscious of being arrayed for a great occasion. Grandfather and grandmother came early, and were seated in state in the warmest corner. Charles and Henry were charged with opening the doors, snuffing the candles, and various other important small things. Aunt Nannie and Aunt Lois took possession of the kitchen, with most reliable intent to respond fully to the various demands upon its resources. The man who was Deacon Winthrop's principal help on the farm had the fires in charge, and another man, who was often employed as a day-laborer, was instructed to help look after the horses at the door. And now every thing was ready; only Ernest was not there; but they knew he would not come. So Mrs. Winthrop, in her black silk dress and tasteful cap, with her face both sad and glad, went into the spare-room and sat down near the two windows. Deacon Winthrop was not far away. The guests had all come, and their good pastor, Mr. Wilson, stood waiting. There was a sudden hush, for Charles and Grace came in and stood near their mother. Then Arthur and Mary, and then the bridegroom and the bride. Henry followed and stood by his

grandmother's chair. The few fitting words were spoken, and Annie Winthrop was Mrs. Ross, receiving her father's blessing, her mother's warm kiss, and the congratulation of her friends. Every thing went off pleasantly, and every body seemed to enjoy the evening. Grace was conscious that Doctor Allerton was doing his share in contributing to the general enjoyment. His genial nature had never shone more conspicuously, without seeming to do so. She knew that he came to her assistance many times during the evening. She could not have told whether she was happy or not; it seemed so strange that dear, reliable Annie was really going away from all her old duties, and that in the future she must try to fill her place. She was conscious that Doctor Allerton's presence was a relief to her, a sense of strength somewhere, without which, wanting Ernest and Annie both, she would have been desolate indeed. Charlie Thorn and Edward Nelson were very kind and attentive, but their friendship never went beyond a certain point with her. Mrs. Ross, according to the fashion of those days, gave a "second evening wedding" for her son; thus prolonging and magnifying the occasion as much as possible. Here Grace had a long, pleasant conversation with Doctor Allerton. She was in rather a lonely mood. Annie was to be left in her new home, never to come to her father's house again, except as a visitor. Ernest was, in all probability, as surely gone. Doctor Allerton seemed to understand this, and his gentle, thoughtful manner was very acceptable.



She thought of it after she got home that night, and wondered if he had forgotten what he told her the afternoon before she went away. He must have changed his mind now, for he had never alluded to it, or even to the letters. She had met him quite often during the winter, but, save for a consciousness she always had that he knew she was present, and from some quiet anticipation of her wishes, she felt that they were more strangers than they had been during her absence.

She never joined the girls in their laughing surmises about him. She seemed not to hear them. She knew that he was a general favorite, but the impression seemed to be that he was more devoted to his profession, and the interests of education, than to any lady in particular. Well, why should she care? She certainly had no claims on his particular attention. She had fled from his unexpected declaration, and refused to be more than a very indifferent friend. She wished she had never consented to correspond with him, for then she should never have cared whether he spoke to her or not. Cared for him! Who said she did care for him, with his grand indifference? She was sure she did not. If she could only have loved Mr. Lenox, she would have shown how little she cared for him! But that was all past, and she had enough to fill up every moment of her life. She would try to be to her mother all that Annie had been, and forget the strange dreams which had disturbed her for the last two years. She could not go back to Boston, however much they might want her. Mother and the boys need-

ed her more than any body else; and, with an attempt at cheerful resignation, she at last fell asleep.

The first few months after Annie's wedding seemed very strange at the old mansion. She had never been from home many days at once; it seemed as if she must come back and fill her accustomed place, but the household moved on. Aunt Lois said Grace was as "spry about the house as she used to be climbing rocks." Her mother often commended her for her helpful ways. The boys were growing more helpful, too. Charles had become so accustomed to answer his mother's calls while Grace was away, that he fitted in very nicely. He was a great comfort to his sister; he was so companionable, and her influence over him showed itself in many little refining ways. Henry had a decided taste for study, and found in Doctor Alerton an encouraging and helpful friend. Mary was very fond of her sister. She missed Annie, and had never half forgiven Sanford Ross for taking her away; but she comforted herself by saying uncle could never take Grace to Boston any more. Ernest and Laura wrote occasionally, so that she was tolerably well informed of what was going on in their circle. She never read to her mother the portions of Laura's letters which spoke of her coming back to them with so much certainty; it seemed to her at present very impossible; her duty evidently was to stay at home; she would be an excellent daughter and sister all the days of her life; and thus thinking, she went out into the opening Spring. Annie's new home was another source

of pleasure, and Sandford Ross, with his kind brotherly ways, added to her list of real friends. She was quietly happy and very busy, more thoughtful than when we first met her three years before. She had had much occasion for thinking in these three years, and its results were written in the sweet expression of her beautiful face.

"Grace has grown so womanly," her mother would say to Annie. "I used to think she would never care for anything serious, like plain household ways. I expected when she went to Boston things there would be so much to her mind that she would never care to come home to live again. We can't always tell, but I should have expected she would have found in that Mr. Lenox the very things to please her. Sometimes I think now that she is a little too sober for her, and yet I can't think anything really troubles her."

"Oh, no!" said Annie, "she is always very cheerful when I see her. She misses Ernest, and I suppose has not got quite accustomed to being the eldest at home. I do not believe she regrets leaving Boston."

"'It's home where the heart is,' you know, mother, and I do not believe Grace's heart is in Boston."

Mrs. Winthrop was so accustomed to counsel with her eldest daughter, that she still clung to her, and often sent for her to come and spend the day when she was more than usually oppressed. Thus the world moved on until June. The day had been lovely; every unfolded leaf and bud had waved a perfume in the quiet air. The birds had warbled volumes of sweet melodies, and now in

the hush of early twilight Grace sat in the porch and watched the shadows of the elm as the rising moon peeped through it.

"There comes Doctor Allerton in his span-new gig!" said Henry. "I heard the boys at school say that he had one. Look, Grace! it shines almost equal to uncle's."

In a moment it was at the gate, and Charles, Henry, Arthur and Mary had gone out to see it. Grace did not join the admiring group. She had grown very dignified of late. Doctor Allerton fastened his horse, and coming into the porch took the oaken chair and, commenting on the beauty of the evening, fell quite naturally into pleasant conversation. Suddenly rising, as if a new idea had struck him, he said: "Come, Miss Grace! isn't it possible for you to get up a little enthusiasm over my new gig, and go with me in it over to the lake this beautiful evening?"

Now Grace had made up her mind, from sundry things of late, that she was more than indifferent to him. Here was a fine opportunity; but his pleasant manner disarmed her, and then she was just a little lonely, thinking of the many happy hours she had spent with Ernest in this old porch on just such evenings as this. So she hesitated in the prompt negative she was prepared to give, and supplied its place by saying, "Mother is tired to-night, and perhaps may need me."

"Here she comes!" said Doctor Allerton. "Are you so very busy this evening, Mrs. Winthrop, that you cannot spare Miss Grace to take a ride in my new gig?"

"No," said Mrs. Winthrop; "Grace can go if she chooses."

"I really see no good reason for excusing you," said he, turning to Grace and extending his hand as if to help her rise. "While you get your shawl and bonnet, I will show your mother what a comfortable carriage we have."

"So I'm to ride when his lordship condescends to ask me," thought Grace, as she gathered up her things by the moonlight which streamed into her window. "I wonder I care to go." She did not hurry; she came slowly down-stairs and lingered in the porch, not long, for Doctor Allerton came quickly, and with a protecting care quite unnecessary, considering the shortness and security of the way, led her to the carriage.

"I wish I was going," said Mary. "Isn't there room for me, Doctor, if mother will let me go?"

"Some other time I will take you," said Doctor Allerton, and with a cheerful good-bye they rode away.

You and I, dear reader, have certain invisible privileges; if we chose we might go with Doctor Allerton on his moonlight ride; but we think they have a right to enjoy it entirely to themselves; only we cannot help knowing that the horse went very slowly on his way to the lake; that the moonbeams fell on the rippling waters very beautifully, but all unheeded by the occupants of the new gig; and that the new gig itself might have been only an ordinary wagon for any special notice it got after its first starting. But the ride marked a new era in the lives of Hugh Allerton and Grace Winthrop.

With all the determined purpose of his intense nature, after his first six months' acquaintance, Doctor Allerton resolved to win Grace Winthrop for his wife. Forced to a premature confession, by her sudden going from home, he only obtained the slightest possible hope in her consent to reply to his letters. Richly gifted as a letter-writer, he had availed himself of her love for her home and friends for subjects of real interest to her in writing. Her replies convinced him that she was not weary of the correspondence; with this meager hope, he had been obliged to rest until her return. He repressed his gladness at her coming, uncertain what he had to expect from any new acquaintance she had formed. All winter he had been mindful of her, filling up the places where he knew she missed Ernest, leading her on in pleasant conversation, but never overstepping the bounds of a privileged acquaintance. He made no allusion to the letters that had passed between them, because he wished her to feel that he would take no undue advantage of her consent to correspond with him. Of late he believed she was not indifferent to him. Once in possession of this hope, he felt justified in seeking to end his long probation. The result was what might be expected. Doctor Allerton had grown to be more of Grace's daily life than she believed could be possible; and as she listened to the story of his deep devotion and patient waiting, she forgot how she had been trying to steel her heart against him, and promised to walk with him in a pathway to outward seeming far more rugged than the one in which Mr. Lenox would have led

her, but she minded not the outward seeming. Doctor Allerton's love was the shadow in which she could rest when her footsteps were weary. This time her heart responded to its call as truly as it had grown still and heavy when Mr. Lenox sought to win it.

It was late when the new gig brought the riders back to the gate under the elm tree. After seeing Grace safely within the unfastened door, Doctor Allerton, with a rejoicing heart, drove on to his home. He drove slowly still, for he was glad to be out in the air, he wanted all the space about him to expand his thoughts and take in his new position. He wanted room to comprehend that the beautiful girl who seemed so beyond his reach had come back to him more beautiful than ever; that she had listened to his story, and with all the sweet trust peculiar to her nature, given him the love he had so earnestly sought and so long waited for. He had half a mind to turn back and see if the house which held this new treasure actually stood quiet and still where he had left it half an hour before. "Second thoughts" do come, however, on all occasions, and Doctor Allerton's took him home in perfect safety.

Grace was glad everybody had gone to bed. She answered her mother's inquiries and did her bidding about fastening the door, and then went up to her room and sat down by the open window—sat thinking, thinking. Like a long strange dream, the events of the last three years passed before her. Her share in them seemed almost unreal. Some power outside of herself and beyond

her comprehension must have been leading her. She contrasted Doctor Allerton as he seemed to her that September afternoon, and as he seemed to her to-night, and wondered whether he or she had changed so much. She saw now that it was because she was learning to love Doctor Allerton that Mr. Lenox had no place. She could not solve the mystery; so she gave it up, content to go to sleep with an undefined sense of a new blessing resting on her daily life.

Deacon and Mrs. Winthrop consented to give their daughter to Doctor Allerton more willingly than they would have done to any body else.

In her heart, Mrs. Winthrop wanted to keep her herself. She would have been quite content, in this case, with Paul's suggestion—"He that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better." Still she had no reasonable objection; it was selfish, if she analyzed it; and when she remembered how possible it would have been for her to have lost her in Boston, she grew reconciled.

Charles was a little indignant at first. He had great respect for Doctor Allerton; but just as he was beginning to enjoy himself with Grace it was mean in him to come and take her away. He had a good mind to go from home himself. At any rate he should not care half as much about her as he did before; but after awhile even this wore away, and he found Grace was not so wonderfully changed as he had thought she would be.

As engagements were not announced in those days, the fact revealed itself to the minds of the



good people of Beechford by a series of gradual convictions. Nobody wondered that Doctor Allerton should fancy so lovely a girl as Grace Winthrop; and, after the usual adjusting of the affair in the public mind it came to be an accepted thing. Of course, this settled the question of her next year in Boston.

During the summer, she wrote to Laura of her new plans, leaving her to see that it would be impossible for her to go home with them in September, and asking her to tell her father and mother so.

Laura's congratulations were mingled with many regrets. "I had so set my heart on having you here next winter," she wrote, "that I can hardly forgive Doctor Allerton for interfering with my arrangements. I wanted you for my bride's-maid and my chief counsellor in many things. How can I consent to your engagement! Father looks blank, and mother is ready to cry over it—they felt so sure of you to fill my place for a time, at least. Father says he shall not go to Beechford in September, for, as mother continues not strong, she will not be able to accompany us, and his principal object was to bring you home. He says, in his decided way, 'Doctor Allerton is a fine man, I liked him very much, but we wanted Grace in Boston.' Henry says this accounts for your indifference to good people in general; and, I add, 'Didn't I tell you so, Grace Winthrop, when you would keep up that correspondence and enjoy those letters so much!' I think Doctor Allerton has proved himself very skillful in accomplish-

ing his ends. He has really out-generaled us all and carried off the prize."

Doctor Allerton smiled very quietly over this letter, which Grace gave him to read. He remembered when her going had been to him the cause of hidden pain, and her knowledge of the fact had only made her the more glad to go. Now his expressed wish would detain her willingly; and with a glad feeling of conscious power he left her to console her cousin as best she might.

Ernest received the tidings with real pleasure. As he became acquainted with other men, his respect for Doctor Allerton increased. It was a sorrow to give up the hope of seeing his sister in Boston the next winter; but he was not sure that his mother would have consented to her coming even if no new causes had detained her.

Charles wrote him a comical description of their mother's consternation when she found that she must give up her second daughter. "She likes Doctor Allerton too much to make any real excuse," wrote he; "and father tells her that she set her daughters the example, and what else can she expect. Now my fate is sealed. I shall have to be all things in the household until Mary grows up. I had a mind to let Doctor Allerton know that I regarded him as interfering rather too much with our matters when he got our Grace. Finally, I gave it up. What's the use? I could n't change any thing; and, if she will marry, I don't know who I should like half so well. When I get mad over it, mother says we cannot expect to keep together always, and that it is a blessing to have

good, intelligent people in the family. Grace might have staid in Boston, and then I would never have seen her many more times in my life."

"Well, Grace," said her grandfather, when, in process of time, he learned the fact of her engagement, "I am glad to hear this. I have always liked Doctor Allerton, and I have always thought he liked you. I'm glad you did not find any body out to Boston. I used to tell your grandmother that I was afraid you would have such a notion for riches that you would never want to come back to us again. I tell you what, child! when any body is as near the end of life as I am, it is pretty plain what is worth living for. Doctor Allerton is an excellent young man, and I hope you will make as good a wife as your mother and grandmother have done."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ANOTHER FAMILY CHANGE.

PASS we over another year, leaving its incidents unrecorded. Laura's bridal festivities had gone on without her cousin's sharing in them. Mrs. Winthrop's health not improving, Colonel Winthrop urged Mr. and Mrs. Marshall's remaining with him. This they consented to do, Laura feeling unwilling to leave her mother alone until she grew stronger.

Grace had found each day full of occupation. She had endeavored to lighten her mother's tasks, and her mother had managed to leave her many uninterrupted hours in which she could ply her busy needle in her own service. She had found a pleasure in Doctor Allerton's companionship which gave promise of a happy future. He brought her as many books as she had time to read; and some delightful rides she took in that comfortable gig.

Julia Thorn was still her chosen friend, and pleasant hours they passed during the winter in Grace's room, where the bright fire and well-filled



wood-box bore witness to Henry and Arthur's faithfulness.

Julia Thorn and Edward Nelson were looking forward to a united home some day, so the girls had a new link of sympathy between them.

Aunt Nannie's spring bleaching exceeded all her former efforts. She and Aunt Lois were very much pleased with the idea of Grace's marrying Doctor Allerton. He had grown to be quite an oracle with them, and they wanted her to have what they called a nice outfit.

"Lois," said Aunt Nannie, one day, as she sat by her "chest of draw" carefully looking them over, "here's a pair of my fine linen sheets. I spun them before Grace was born. They are as handsome sheets as you'll see any where, and as white as snow. I never used them a dozen times in my life, and 'taint likely I shall ever want them. I'm a good mind to give them to Grace—she'll set store by them."

"So she will," said Aunt Lois, "and you've plenty to last without them. I thought I'd look up a couple of pair of mine; we've got more than we shall use, and I want to give her something to remember me by, dear child." And Aunt Lois wiped away the tears which would come.

Again the old mansion gives tokens of some coming event.

It is a lovely morning in the latter part of June; the doors and windows are all open; beautiful bunches of fragrant roses are on the shelves and on the tables; and in the fire-places in the "spare room" and sitting-room are the old familiar jars

filled with feathery asparagus and roses. Aunt Lois had brought buds and blossoms; all the wealth of her little garden was her silent offering on this eventful day. Deacon Winthrop, in his Sunday best, sits in the oaken chair in the porch, and there, too, is Ernest, looking fresh and strong in his early manhood; he is chatting familiarly with his father on topics which interest him in his new field of labor. Charles, Henry and Arthur look important and expectant. Sandford Ross has just come in and taken his seat with them. Annie is up-stairs in the room where another bride is dressing. It is hardly necessary to say that it is our Grace, and as she puts the finishing rose-buds, all dewy and fresh, in her beautiful hair, we need not wonder that Annie, who is seldom moved to enthusiasm, utters expressions of affectionate admiration over her lovely sister. The dress we may recognize, for it is the same rich white silk which she has worn only twice before on her coming out in Boston. With practical good sense she had fitted this for the occasion. The beautiful lace she had worn with it had been folded ever since she came home, and now it tastefully decorated it again. Ernest had brought her a package from her Aunt and Laura containing some valuable gifts. Her uncle had also remembered her very kindly. Her busy, tasteful fingers had put every thing in order; it was astonishing what an outfit she had. Her toilette was completed; her face had a quiet, thoughtful expression, which added to her youthful dignity.

"Oh, Grace!" said Mary, following Annie into the room, "I wish every body could see how beau-

tiful you look," and with careful loving fingers she smoothed the folds of her dress as if she would express to it her fondness for the wearer.

There was a fluttering in and out of white dresses. Julia Thorn and Mary Ross had been there all the morning arranging flowers and assisting generally; they had been dressing, too, and were now joining Annie and Mary in surveying the bride.

Grandfather and grandmother had come, looking quietly happy. "I did not expect to wait for this wedding," said the dear old gentleman. "I feel as young as I did when I came to see Sandford carry away Annie. I cannot expect to be here when little Mary goes, but the Lord knows best and I must bide my time."

The guests were now arriving fast, until in a short time every body had come. Ernest conducted Doctor Allerton to his fair bride. As he took her hand and looked into her deep blue eyes, so tender and womanly in their uplifting to his, what wonder is it if his proud, thankful heart was full of unspoken happiness! She was to be his companion until death should part them; he had toiled to win, but this hour repaid it all. In a few moments they were standing between the two windows in the spare room listening to Mr. Wilson as he asked God's blessing on their coming vows. Then the words were spoken which made them one, and as Grace stood receiving the warm congratulations of those she loved, she could scarce realize the occasion, or believe she was going out from home bearing another name and with a new protector.

It was a very social, pleasant wedding. The bridegroom did not forget his character as entertainer, and was, as usual, self-possessed and thoughtful for others. It was strange how stiffness melted away under his efforts to dispel it at any gathering, and to-day he was too happy not to diffuse his spirit all about him. Charlie Thorn and Edward Nelson were there; they had changed less than their early playmate, but they had never ceased to be friends. Mrs. Winthrop was far more cheerful than she would have been without Ernest, and Annie was at home, going about as if she had never been away. The grand old elm seemed to spread itself anew to keep out the rays of the summer's sun, and the birds came into the branches and sang some of their choicest melodies. The delicious home-made entertainment was abundant and tempting. Annie had been there several days, bringing all her experimental knowledge into service.

Doctor Allerton had so many friends that at first he had proposed to have the wedding at the church; but as this did not meet Mrs. Winthrop's views, it was given up and the invitations confined to mutual friends. Doctor Allerton had arranged to take a vacation of two weeks, and in that time visit his mother whom he had not seen for a year. About three o'clock his neat gig and strong, handsome horse was brought to the door. Grace had changed her bridal dress for a traveling habit and was standing with her friends grouped about her. Charles and Henry brought down the same little trunk that had accompanied her on her former journeys.

"How is this, Doctor?" said Ernest, "this young lady and that trunk belong to my spirit of adventure. Suppose we leave you to look after the sick folks while we set out to seek our fortunes again?"

"I will leave you with the cares this time," said the happy Doctor. "I will see that the young lady and the trunk are well looked after."

Grace's good-byes would have been prolonged for an indefinite time, had not Doctor Allerton led her to the carriage, telling her playfully that it was vacation now, and they must improve every moment of it. She lingered long enough to put her arm round Ernest's neck and whisper, "Good-bye, my darling brother. Love me always." And then she was gone.

Then came the reaction which follows the departure of the bride. The guests kept going until only the family were left. And as the twilight shades came on, the flowers drooped and the old cares came over the household. Ernest felt sad and desolate. This was his first visit home; he came a week before the wedding and had enjoyed his old, boyish freedom exceedingly. He had had some delightful talks with Grace. Until she had really gone, he had not realized that she was never going to live there any more, or how lonely it would be without her. The thought made him restless, and he wandered out over the hills to change the scene. He did not care to call anywhere to-night, for every place reminded him of his bright, joyous young sister—his companion everywhere. When he came home he found his father mother, Charles, Henry and the two younger

children sitting on the porch. "Do you remember, mother," said he, as he joined them, "that it was just such an evening as this, four years ago, that Grace and I sat here planning that wonderful journey to Boston? How wild you thought we were!"

"It was a wild thing, Ernest, for you two young people to go off on such a journey, but it has all come out right; only I wish you were nearer home. Do you really think it was the best thing you could do to go away from Beechford?"

"Yes, mother, the very best. Of course I lose a great deal of pleasure in not coming to this dear old spot every day of my life, but I can be a more useful man where I am. I must go abroad carrying the lessons you and father have taught me; these boys will fill my place here."

"I'm going to be a doctor," said Henry; "my mind is made up for that. Doctor Allerton says he will help me; he thinks it is the best thing I can do."

"It looks like something a good way off, your being a doctor," said his mother; "but I used to think it would be a great while before Annie, Ernest and Grace would leave me, and before I knew it the time has come."

"Rather a lonely time, too, isn't it, mother?" said Charles. "I don't know how I'm going to stand it without Grace. I thought this morning when I saw what a fine looking man Doctor Allerton was, and how like a gentleman all his ways were, I was quite willing he should have our Grace, but to-night I feel just as if he was a robber and

had stolen every thing. I don't believe I would speak to him if he was coming in this minute."

Charles looked so indignantly grieved, that his mother said, soothingly, "It will come morning again some time, Charles, and then you will forgive the robber; things look to us so differently by daylight."

"I don't think this will. I wish you had a place for me in your business, Ernest, I believe I would go back with you."

"Oh no, you would not!" said Ernest. "Father and mother depend very much on you. Why, boy, you are going to see Grace in less than two weeks. When do you think I shall see her? She and I grew up together, sharing each other's joys and sorrows. She helped me over many a difficult spot. I do not know what I should have done without her my first six months in Boston; but now months and years may go by and I shall never see her. If it had not been for Doctor Allerton, I think I should have seen her in Boston every day, while you would have been the one to lose her. What do you say to that?"

"*To-night*, I say, children had better stay at home with their parents, and not go to running off with strangers," said Charles, smiling at his attempted profoundness.

"I hope you will remember that a good while," said his mother, "for what I would do without you I am at present unable to say."

So the conversation went on until Sandford Ross and Annie drove up. "It's rather late, mother," said Annie, "but I knew you would all be sitting

here, talking over the day, and I told Sandford that I must come."

"She promised she would stay only half an hour," said Sandford. "I find I can trust her to any limit, except when she comes 'home;' and then time seems to have no meaning."

"I understand that pretty well," said Deacon Winthrop. "Annie's mother still wants 'to go home for a few minutes,' and I have learned by this time that these minutes mean hours. But good homes make good wives; so take it patiently, Sandford."

The conversation went to Grace and the wedding. Charles gradually got "in tune," and felt somewhat better before his sister left. Ernest had three or four days yet to stay. He visited all of his old friends, climbed Eagle Mountain, and recalled the time when he used to think it one of the boundaries of the world. He had some quiet talks with his mother, which strengthened and refreshed him. He listened to his grandfather and grandmother's words of wisdom and thought. If he could ever stand at the river's brink waiting so peacefully, and trusting to be carried over, he should be blest, indeed. And then he went back to his life-work with a new benediction over him. The family at the old mansion missed its departed inmates, but its outward life went on as before.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

## CONCLUSION.

FIVE years have passed away since that June morning when we met at the wedding of Doctor Allerton and Grace Winthrop. It is a bright, glowing sunset, in early summer, and all over the hills and vales of Beechford the soft light is falling.

Pause we where it lingers on the walls of a pretty cottage. Roses are bursting into bud and blossom, and creeping vines go trailing over their rustic frames, while a few tall trees stand up like guardians of the place. Surely it is our old friend Aunt Lois who is so busily engaged tying up a heavily laden, double blush-rose bush which the wind has swept over. Her hair is whiter than when we last met her, but her broad garden bonnet, her clean checkered apron, and her big "shears" look just as they used to when she made "alley-beds" in the garden at the little brown house close by Deacon Winthrop's garden. Evidently Aunt Lois is at home and happy in another field. The low parlor-window is open, and from it proceed the merry sounds of baby voices. Invisible as the

breeze which just moves the snowy curtain, we may venture to look in. There, sitting in a low rocking-chair, is our old friend Grace. Her face has lost some of its rosy tintings. Something which tells of tender care and loving effort is discernable about her sweet mouth and thoughtful eyes. Just now there seems to be a game going on, which equally interests the three occupants of the chair. Ernest, her noble boy of two and a half years, has crowded his way into the chair, and, perched upon the arm, is playing with the curls which still cluster about her face, now and then bursting out into a bold bo-peep with his baby brother Winthrop, who, with all the vigor and glee of ten glad months of healthy existence, is springing in his mother's arms, the very prince of babies, in his own and her estimation. Suddenly a new thought strikes the boy Ernest; climbing on the arm of the chair and putting his little fat hands on his mother's head, he exclaims, proudly, "I'se bigger than mamma; I'se bigger than mamma;" and up goes the crowing baby, tossed in mamma's arms, to catch the little adventurer behind her. Then we must make room for Doctor Allerton, who, coming home a few moments ago, pauses at our window to note the beautiful group within, so absorbed with each other that all the world is shut out, and yet he knows that when his step or voice is heard he can claim the undivided attention of the three. Stepping in at the window, he attracts Ernest's attention, who in an instant forgets the pomp of his position, and, with outstretched hands, goes right over his moth-

er's head into his father's arms. Baby Winthrop is quickly diverted too, and by a series of vigorous jumps makes known his wishes, and gets tossed high enough to convince him that his father's arms are greatly to be desired for expeditions into the air.

"What noisy little fellows!" said the tired, happy father, returning the baby to its mother's arms, and throwing himself into the big, easy chair, which was always waiting for him. Ernest's frolic was not yet over. With persevering skill he climbed upon his father's boot, and was rewarded by a tossing ride, which ended in an apparent break down of the paternal foot.

Doctor Allerton had seen much professional toil in these five years, but, with firm health and a steadfast purpose, he had gone right on, administering to the sick and suffering with a cheerful spirit, which was in itself a healing medicine. Mrs. Allerton had been to him all she had promised when he took her from her father's house. Her ability to meet the emergencies of her household had proved itself invaluable. She had found a great rest in good old Aunt Lois. Aunt Nannie died about a year after Grace's marriage, and lonely, sad Aunt Lois turned to Grace, as her greatest earthly comfort. At first she would go and stay with her days, always going home at night; but, after a while, she was persuaded to stay a week at a time, and, finally, when Doctor Allerton built his new house, and made a room in it expressly for her, she gradually took possession of it, moving all her household goods into it. The little brown

house was rented, and from that time Aunt Lois made "alley-beds" in the new garden, and "looked after things" just as she used to at Mrs. Winthrop's. She was very fond of the children, and greatly relieved their mother in the care of them. But we have wandered from the parlor-window and the scene it opened. Mrs. Allerton transferred her laughing baby to its father's arms, and went out to see that tea was soon ready, for she well knew that, however fond her husband might be of her's and the children's welcome, his long rides gave him a keen appetite, and included a quickly-coming tea in the welcome. Coming back shortly, she leaned over his chair to watch the frolic of her boys.

"Come, come, little fellows," said the doctor, "this will never do. I am too tired and hungry to be a good subject for such young kings long at once." Tossing Winthrop into the air, he landed him in his mother's arms; then opened the door for Ernest, who quickly found his way out to where Aunt Lois was still tying up rose-bushes.

That night Mrs. Allerton hushed her baby to sleep, as usual, and laid him softly down for a quiet rest. Towards morning, she was awakened by his heavy breathing and great apparent distress. Quickly rousing her husband, she followed his prompt directions, until at length the baby seemed relieved, and fell asleep in her arms, but she could not sleep again; so she watched him until the morning broke. For a time he rallied and seemed like himself, making faint attempts to play with his brother, but before evening he drooped again, and thus it went on for two days. Mrs. Winthrop



came, and Annie came. Doctor Allerton watched every symptom, and used all possible remedies. To all but Grace it was evident that the little one had come to the shore of the "shining river," and must cross the stream. She was calm and efficient, but the pleading expression of her eyes, as she turned to her husband, believing that his healing art would yet restore her child, touched him beyond expression and made him feel his own nothingness. When at last its little eyelids closed, and the soft, fluttering breath was for ever still, she clasped the baby to her heart with one passionate sob of unutterable anguish, then laid it gently down, and resting her weary head on her husband's breast, she wept without restraint. This was her first meeting with death; its strange, mysterious power had in a moment placed the life which seemed a part of her own beyond her knowledge; between it and her there had come a silence never to be broken until she should put on immortality. This treasure, which she had called her own, was not her own, after all. When the first shock had passed, she took the baby in her arms and tenderly arrayed it for its last repose. Nothing would induce her to trust the sacred task to other hands. Mrs. Winthrop and Annie looked on pityingly, and aided when they could, but they made no attempt to change her purpose.

There, robed in white, the little sleeper lay; not weary with life-toil, not a single line of sorrow written on his brow; his dimpled arms and hands looking like purest marble; his sweet face calm and perfect, revealing its divine workmanship. A

few dewy rosebuds were drooping on his snowy pillow, and scattered in the folds of his dress. Very quickly the day came when this beautiful image must be hidden from her sight—hidden until the trump of the archangel should bid it come forth free from the bondage of sin. Taking Ernest's hand in hers, the smitten mother went once more to look upon her baby's face. The wondering child had sought in vain to solve the strange mystery of the household, the baby's long, quiet sleep, his mother's sad, tearful face, and his father's grave manner!—he could not comprehend it. Doctor Allerton paused when he came to find his wife, where he knew she had gone. In the same parlor where, so few days ago, we saw him enter and surprise the laughing group, he found her sitting with Ernest on her lap, while her bowed head and fast-coming sobs told of the grief within. The boy's childish words were awed into a whisper, and he went into his father's arms with a subdued gladness, greatly in contrast to his usual manner.

"God has taken his own, my darling," said Doctor Allerton, tenderly drawing his wife towards him.

"I know it now, my husband," was her quiet reply, and, with one fervent kiss on her baby's brow, she went away and left him. Many sympathizing friends came and listened with her to the tender prayer offered by her kind, fatherly pastor, and to the precious, wonderful words he read from God's own exhaustless book. When the short, simple services were closed, she followed the little one to its resting place on the hill-side,

and came back to find her winsome, caressing baby on earth never more.

The mystery of life grows deeper as we advance along its lines. We feel more and more our own infinite ignorance and weakness, and more and more the infinite wisdom and strength of our great Creator.

We believe that, however much our plans have failed, there are no failures in God's purposes. It is not our business to explain His ways; we have only to trust Him entirely, believing that He is able and willing to take care of every event in His vast universe. So, when a spark of immortality lingers only long enough to kindle a glowing flame in a mother's heart, and then goes out, its design is all complete. With our God "one day is as a thousand years;" his accomplished purpose is not measured by our ideas of time. Who shall estimate the influence of that little life in Mrs. Allerton's heart?

As the days and weeks wore on, thoughts too sacredly tender for utterance lingered round the vacant place until they woke a new song in her heart, even a song of praise to "Him who had given, and who had taken away." Neither she nor Doctor Allerton had ever made a profession of their faith in Christ, but now the decisive hour had come, and they no longer withheld their allegiance from his name. With renewed purpose of heart, the mother gave her first-born to the Lord. He seemed no longer *hers only*, he was a treasure lent for her to restore again in due season, bearing the impress she had given him. \* \* \*

The years rolled on, and other children were given to her keeping. Her husband's professional duties led him much abroad, out into the toil and weariness of life, but she kept the altar-fires of his home burning brightly, and reared his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It was a strong, distinctive element of her educational training, that her children were created to do God's will, not "as of necessity," but as glad, willing servants, esteeming it greater honor than any earthly thing. With ever buoyant spirits, and tender sympathies, she combined the discreet, guiding mother with the loved companion and friend. Nor were her efforts confined to her own household. It was said of her, "Such a woman as Mrs. Allerton is one of Heaven's blessings to the community in which she dwells." She found untold strength in the firm, reliant power of her husband. Even on earth she learned why she was kept from the flowery paths of ease, where, resting idly, she would never have finished her appointed work.

Journeying with her, we would not lose sight of the friends she loved so well.

Mrs. Colonel Winthrop gradually declined until, two years after Laura's marriage, she died. Mr. and Mrs. Marshall remained with their father. Colonel Winthrop paid yearly visits to Beechford. Sometimes Laura accompanied him, bringing her children, and enjoying with them the hospitalities of Grace's busy, happy home. As Colonel Winthrop grew older, these visits were the crown of his year. His interest in Grace descended to her

children, and she taught them to regard his coming as a season of rejoicing.

Ernest Winthrop was abundantly prospered in business, and the Lord kept him in its manifold temptations. He was a man of influence in society, seeking "to do good as he had opportunity." He married Mary Marshall, Henry's youngest sister; thus cementing the bond already existing between himself and his uncle's family.

Annie filled well her place, carrying out her mother's plans in her busy household, and doing good to those about her.

Charles forgave Doctor Allerton, and always found in his sister Grace a strong, confiding friend. He alternated between farming and teaching, and at last settled down near the old homestead, a useful, honorable man.

Henry attained his highest purpose in a successful medical career; while Arthur, wearing the Christian armor, took up his father's life-work where he laid it down.

Mary proved herself worthy of the affection which had centered round the days of her infancy and childhood, adorning the circle in which she moved with her lovely Christian graces. \* \* \*

Once more we glide over the years, and find Ernest Allerton a student of law in the office of our old friend, Henry Marshall. We pause at one of those mysterious providences which come now and then in the lives of some of us. A case of much importance was pending. Mr. Marshall was collecting all the evidence possible to add weight to his side of the contest. Some important papers

were missing. "Allerton," said he, "you must go to Mr. Welford's at once; tell him the papers he told me of are not here, and I must have them at once. He must send them by you."

Allerton was prompt to do the bidding. Arrived at Mr. Welford's elegant mansion, he was shown into the library, where that gentleman was sitting, conversing with a middle-aged gentleman, who seemed to be an invalid. Ernest hesitated, on seeing a stranger, and remarked to Mr. Welford that he had a message from Mr. Marshall.

"I understand it," said he, "and so does this gentleman. He is a friend of Mr. Marshall and myself, and I have just been telling him the whole story of the case."

The message was delivered in such a manner that it was plain the bearer understood why he came. "I shall have to detain you a few moments," said Mr. Welford, "though I think I know exactly where to find the papers." He left the room without thinking to introduce the young man to the elder one. So they sat awhile in silence, Ernest turning over the leaves of a book which he took up from the table. The elder gentleman rose and walked slowly back and forth, keeping his eyes, Ernest thought, very keenly fixed on him. At length he stopped directly in front of him. "Pardon me, young man," said he, "may I ask you what your mother's name was before her marriage?"

"Grace Winthrop," said Ernest, looking pleased to repeat it.

"Was she a cousin of Mrs. Henry Marshall?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so. You resemble her so strongly, that I was struck with your face when you first entered the room. Give me your hand. My name is Lenox, and your mother was a much esteemed friend of mine, long years ago. Tell me all about her, and how and why you are here."

Just then Mr. Welford came in with the required papers. He was astonished to find Mr. Lenox so interested in their young student.

"Why, I knew the young man's mother, Welford, when she was younger than he is now! I should not be afraid to trust him anywhere. But I will not detain you. Can you come to see me this evening? Here is my address," giving Ernest a card.

Ernest promised, with pleasure, to call on anybody who was his mother's friend, and was soon back at the office, with his errand completed.

Coming so suddenly upon our old friend, Mr. Lenox, we must know that he had ever entertained for Grace Winthrop a sincere friendship. Years passed before he married, and then his gentle wife made him happy and content. Two charming little daughters had for a time given life and joy to his household; but they both died in early childhood, and the pensive mother drooped, and in time followed them to the grave. With wealth at his command, the lonely man left his business and went abroad, resolving to spend his days amid the storied wonders of the Old World. Here he lingered, losing sight of the changes in society at home, and feeling little interest in them. Exposure to sudden

cold, on one of his mountain expeditions, had brought on an inflammatory disease, and made him so much of an invalid that his thought turned back to his native land. The sea voyage and the old scenes had done him good. He had been in Boston about a month, when, in his morning call on his old friend, Mr. Welford, he met a face which called back the years and brought very freshly before him the bright young girl whose memory always stirred his better nature. Here was her son, and a desire to know him better took full possession of his heart. Evening brought his guest, ready to answer all his inquiries. He was more than pleased with him, and a plan came into his head which he found little difficulty in carrying out. With the full approval of his father and mother, Ernest became like a son to Mr. Lenox. The latter never again enjoyed firm health; but, through the unconscious instrumentality of Grace Winthrop's son, he found peace in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ; so that his last days were his best days.

Is not "the secret of the Lord with them that fear him?" and is not "His covenant with them?" Is not the "seed of the righteous *mighty* upon the earth?" and do not "his seed inherit the earth?" Hath not God said, "Riches and honor are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue, than choice silver?"

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