

## Family Department.

## JULIE.

## CHAPTER XX.

Change would be the best thing for her; he would take her right away. He had some business first in London for a week or so. London would be so utterly different from the quiet farm, and sight-seeing with him would do her a world of good; she would have no time to be puzzling about her past. Yes, he would take her at once. And then her wonderful confidence in him, and the clinging touch of her arms, brought a very tender look into his face. She might have been shy, and half afraid of him. Afraid of him? Nothing of the sort! Julie had taken to him directly, as if he were an old familiar friend. What a dear little girl she was! Martha had something to do with that, of course; she must have always spoken so kindly of papa. Good Martha! Could he ever thank her enough? She was fretting, too, poor soul. Sorry she was going to lose her charge. Julie would come to see her again; he would never let Julie forget her.

"I'm dressed, papa," said Julie, running into the room, and slipping her hand contentedly in his.

"Julie, I'm going to take you away. What do you say to that?"

"When, papa?" asked Julie, eagerly. "To-day?"

"To-day," said Mr. Strickland—"yes. Do you think you'll be sorry to go?"

"Sorry!" said Julie, reproachfully. "Oh no! oh no, papa! I've been longing for the time. Auntie always said you'd take me away from here. I think," she added wistfully, with a little plaintive smile, "it'll all come back when I go away, and I'll remember them all quite well."

"Of course you will," he answered, with a cheerful smile. "That's right my little girl."

And then they had breakfast in the parlor, there two alone together. Martha liked better to arrange it so; she was not at home in Mr. Strickland's presence. She had no part, she thought, with him since his own little daughter was dead. Jessie's child would have been a link between. This was only a stranger-gentleman. And Julie she knew came of gentlefolk. They would get on better without her.

They got on very well indeed, to judge from the laughter that came from the parlor; and Julie could hardly believe in her own importance at all when she found herself seated at the head of the table actually making tea for papa.

Mr. Strickland, was determined to let her have no time for remembering at all. He talked so much to her and made her talk to him, she could think only of the present; no room was left for the past. And the present seemed wonderfully pleasant to Julie now, with this darling papa.

She would always be his little housekeeper, he said. He would never leave her again, and they were going to be the whole world to each other now. And Julie seemed content.

"Shall we go and open the box?" she asked, when Mr. Strickland could drink no more tea.

He had sent his cup to be filled a tremendous number of times, just for the sake of the pleasure it gave to the maker to make the tea.

"Yes," he said, "come along," and would carry her on his shoulder upstairs; and Julie began with an earnest face to help him to unpack the trunk.

What a lot of beautiful things she saw! Everything seemed beautiful to Julie; even the case of cheroots and cigars which she fingered so curiously. But there were far more interesting

things to see, as she found a little later, especially when Mr. Strickland pulled out a package with "Julie," written in one corner.

"All for myself," asked Julie, flushing up to the roots of her hair.

"All for yourself," Mr. Strickland laughed cutting open the string with his knife.

Julie's little presents had always been of a very simple kind, so her eyes were fairly dazzled at the sight of the Maltese cross and bracelets which he put round her neck and wrists. Here, too, were an ivory elephant, and a delicate ivory fan, and a queer round box, little bigger than a powder-box, painted in red and gold.

"Open it," Mr. Strickland said, putting it into her hands. And Julie doing as she was bid, found another box inside. After that came another, and then another still, the boxes getting smaller and smaller, till the last one was so tiny she could scarcely put the tip of her little finger in; and each little box was a perfect little box, with a cover to fit each one.

"Well, Julie, do you like them?"

But he need not have asked the question. She put her arms around his neck, and gave him a loving squeeze.

"I was very ill before you came, papa," she said. "If you hadn't come, I really think I should have died."

He did not guess how earnestly she meant it. How could he guess the trouble of poor Julie's mind? That dreadful groping all in the dark, as it were, for "the others—the others" and never being able to grasp the past at all! His coming had given another turn to Julie's thoughts.

Well, they packed the treasures in the trunk again, and Mr. Strickland sought out Martha, and tried to break it to her gently that he wanted to take his little girl away to-day.

I don't think Martha was very sorry; it was such a strain on her to have him in the house with her. He was always trying to find some likeness in the child to Jessie, and she felt she could not bear it any longer, whilst her heart went out so bitterly to the real niece in her lonely far-off grave.

So she assented far more quietly than he thought she would have done, agreeing with him that entire change was the best thing now for Julie, and went upstairs to get her things together—the clothes Mr. Strickland's money had bought, but that had been the other Julie's—the Julie that was dead.

I think Mr. Strickland was a little disappointed to find that Julie did not regret so very much to leave her aunt—the good but homely woman who had nursed her all her life. Was it because he was just "a change" she had taken so wonderfully to him? Would she tire of him too, when the excitement of his arrival had worn a little away? Was this pensive eyed, affectionate Julie only a butterfly? Well, time alone could tell.

"Good-bye! Good-bye!"

The cab was at the door. Large tears were raining down poor Martha's cheeks.

"I've made the father happy," she kept repeating to herself. "I could not have told him that his child was dead." But it did not help to relieve her conscience at all.

"I'll come again," Julie was repeating. "Papa says we both shall come." And her tender heart reproached her that she felt so glad to go.

To go! Go where? She hardly knew, she hardly cared. Papa had not satisfied all the longing of her heart. There was something, something wanting still. If one face from the dear old home had come—one voice to speak a word or two to Julie—the misty past would have cleared up there and then. But it wasn't to be just yet. Poor Julie!

Martha's handkerchief still fluttered in the air, and Julie's waved still from the carriage window.

"God have mercy on me!" Martha cried. "It didn't seem such a dreadful thing to do at

first. No body came to claim her," she muttered in a mournful voice. "I wish they had."

John Gerring did not answer her. He sneaked into the house, and glottingly felt the crisp bank notes that Mr. Strickland had left behind.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## IN GORDON TERRACE.

The house felt, oh, so cramped, the rooms so dark and small, after the big airy ones they had been used to all their lives. And the stone yard behind—how the little Bridges hated it!

There were no delightful corners for Chubbie and Puff to poke about in: it was just square. They used to play at "shop" in a dismal kind of way but not at "horses" ever. Horses indeed! Even Puff felt he could hardly stretch his tiny legs in that "nasty place," after the long path in the dear old garden they had left behind for ever. How full the small rooms seemed when the children trooped in all together, always getting into each other's way, and treading on each other's toes! And the little ones were such a bother.

"Why couldn't they play by themselves?" Elsie said. She was tired of having to amuse them. "It's so stupid to go on growling like a bear! And Puff will growl for hours."

"Elsie, come and play; come and play with us, just a little bit!" urged Puff.

"No, Puff, I can't. Don't bother me. Chubbie will play with you."

"Two can't play 'shop' alone," said Chubbie, chiming in. "I'm Mr. Tozer and Puff's the errand boy. There must be a lady to come and buy, you know."

"It's such a babyish game," said Elsie, peevishly. "It's so stupid to want to sell some silly leaves and sticks."

"Not silly!" stoutly retorted Puff. "It's tea and sugar, Elsie. Lollipops, too," he added, as a kind of bait.

Elsie flung aside her book with an impatient sigh. "Little bothers!" she muttered.

"I'll only play for ten minutes, mind; not a minute longer than that."

Ten minutes seemed a good way off from now, so the "little bothers" skipped into their places with alacrity.

The counter this time was on two chairs placed together in the corner of the rooms; it was far too cold a day for the children to be in the yard. Chubbie began to speak like Mr. Tozer, in a gruffish kind of voice, and Puff began to squeeze bits of paper together, with an angelic smile on his face.

"Want some sugar," Elsie began, talking fast to get it done as soon as possible.

"Yes, mum," Mr. Tozer touched his curls.

"How much shall I put up, mum?"

"Half a pound," said Elsie, wearily.

"Yes mum. Anything else, mum?"

"Some tea," said Elsie, with a snort.

Then suddenly remembering her part, "One ounce will do. Send it to thirteen Gordon Terrace," and she walked away.

The delightful business of packing up began. Puff brought out twine and paper; and when it was all tied up, he ran four or five times round the room, for he ignored going a very short way, and came and rapped with his knuckles on the sofa head.

No answer. Elsie was buried in her book again.

Rap! rap! rap!

No answer. The errand boy took the liberty of pulling the customer's hair. He had learned from former occasions that it was a very good way of rousing this customer up.

"Oh," said Elsie, vacantly, "you've brought the parcel; put it down."

"Yes, mum," answered the errand boy, laying it on her lap. He returned to the shop after taking an extra round, and both he and Mr. Tozer waited.