

clouds, and I awoke so happy, and so calm!"

## CHAPTER XLIV

### FOUR YEARS AFTER

It was a splendid evening in July, and the sky was filled high with gorgeous tabernacles of purple and gold, the remains of a grand thunder-shower which had freshened the air and set a separate jewel on every needle leaf of the old pines.

Four years had passed since the fair Pearl of Orr's Island had been laid beneath the gentle soil, which every year sent monthly tributes of flowers to adorn her rest, great blue violets, and starry flocks of ethereal eye-brights in spring, and fringy asters, and goldenrod in autumn. In those days, the tender sentiment which now makes the burial-place a cultivated garden was excluded by the rigid spiritualism of the Puritan life, which, ever jealous of that which concerned the body, lest it should claim what belonged to the immortal alone, had frowned on all watching of graves, as an earthward tendency, and enjoined the flight of faith with the spirit, rather than the yearning for its cast-off garments.

But Sally Kittridge, being lonely, found something in her heart which could only be comforted by visits to that grave. So she had planted there roses and trailing myrtle, and tended and watered them; a proceeding which was much commented on Sunday noons, when people were eating their dinners and discussing their neighbors.

It is possible good Mrs. Kittridge might have been much scandalized by it, had she been in a condition to think on the matter at all; but a very short time after the funeral she was seized with a paralytic shock, which left her for a while as helpless as an infant; and then she sank away into the grave, leaving Sally the sole care of the old Captain.

A cheerful home she made, too, for his old age, adorning the house with many little tasteful fancies unknown in her mother's days; reading the Bible to him and singing Mara's favorite hymns, with a voice as sweet as the spring blue-bird. The spirit of the departed friend seemed to hallow the dwelling where these two worshiped her memory, in simple-hearted love. Her paintings, framed in quaint woodland frames of moss and pine-cones by Sally's own ingenuity, adorned the walls. Her books were on the table, and among them many that she had given to Moses.

"I am going to be a wanderer for many years," he said in parting, "keep these for me until I come back."

And so from time to time passed long letters between the two friends,--each telling to the other the same story,--that they were lonely, and that their hearts yearned for the communion of one who could no longer be manifest to the senses. And each spoke to the other of a world of hopes and memories buried with her, "Which," each so constantly said, "no one could understand but you." Each, too, was firm in the faith that buried love must have no earthly resurrection. Every letter strenuously insisted that they should call each other brother and sister, and under cover of those names the letters grew longer and more frequent, and with every chance opportunity came presents from the absent brother, which made the little old cottage quaintly suggestive with smell of spice and sandal-wood.

But, as we said, this is a glorious July evening,--and you may discern two figures picking their way over those low sunken rocks, yellowed with seaweed, of which we have often spoken. They are Moses and Sally going on an evening walk to that favorite grotto retreat, which has so often been spoken of in the course of this history.

Moses has come home from long wanderings. It is four years since they parted, and now they meet and have looked into each other's eyes, not as of old, when they met in the first giddy flush of youth, but as fully developed man and woman. Moses and Sally had just risen from the tea-table, where she had presided with a thoughtful housewifery gravity, just pleasantly dashed with quaint streaks of her old merry willfulness, while the old Captain, warmed up like a rheumatic grasshopper in a fine

autumn day, chirruped feebly, and told some of his old stories, which now he told every day, forgetting that they had ever been heard before. Somehow all three had been very happy; the more so, from a shadowy sense of some sympathizing presence which was rejoicing to see them together again, and which, stealing soft-footed and noiseless everywhere, touched and lighted up every old familiar object with sweet memories.

And so they had gone out together to walk; to walk towards the grotto where Sally had caused a seat to be made, and where she declared she had passed hours and hours, knitting, sewing, or reading.

"Sally," said Moses, "do you know I am tired of wandering? I am coming home now. I begin to want a home of my own." This he said as they sat together on the rustic seat and looked off on the blue sea.

"Yes, you must," said Sally. "How lovely that ship looks, just coming in there."

"Yes, they are beautiful," said Moses abstractedly; and Sally rattled on about the difference between sloops and brigs; seeming determined that there should be no silence, such as often comes in ominous gaps between two friends who have long been separated, and have each many things to say with which the other is not familiar.

"Sally!" said Moses, breaking in with a deep voice on one of these monologues. "Do you remember some presumptuous things I once said to

you, in this place?"

Sally did not answer, and there was a dead silence in which they could hear the tide gently dashing on the weedy rocks.

"You and I are neither of us what we were then, Sally," said Moses. "We are as different as if we were each another person. We have been trained in another life,--educated by a great sorrow,--is it not so?"

"I know it," said Sally.

"And why should we two, who have a world of thoughts and memories which no one can understand but the other,--why should we, each of us, go on alone? If we must, why then, Sally, I must leave you, and I must write and receive no more letters, for I have found that you are becoming so wholly necessary to me, that if any other should claim you, I could not feel as I ought. Must I go?"

Sally's answer is not on record; but one infers what it was from the fact that they sat there very late, and before they knew it, the tide rose up and shut them in, and the moon rose up in full glory out of the water, and still they sat and talked, leaning on each other, till a cracked, feeble voice called down through the pine-trees above, like a hoarse old cricket,--

"Children, be you there?"

"Yes, father," said Sally, blushing and conscious.

"Yes, all right," said the deep bass of Moses. "I'll bring her back when I've done with her, Captain."

"Wal',--wal'; I was gettin' consarned; but I see I don't need to. I hope you won't get no colds nor nothin'."

They did not; but in the course of a month there was a wedding at the brown house of the old Captain, which everybody in the parish was glad of, and was voted without dissent to be just the thing.

Miss Roxy, grimly approbative, presided over the preparations, and all the characters of our story appeared, and more, having on their wedding-garments. Nor was the wedding less joyful, that all felt the presence of a heavenly guest, silent and loving, seeing and blessing all, whose voice seemed to say in every heart,--

"He turneth the shadow of death into morning."