

**PHOEBE: OR, RUDE TIME
THE
LIVING ROSES BLIGHTS.
FOUNDED ON FACT**

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SARAH GWENT

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P H Œ B E.

CHAPTER I.

“O little child, O darling child,
I see thee eager at thy play;
Now shouting to the apples on the tree,
With cheeks as round and red as they;
And now among the yellow stalks,
Among the flowering shrubs and plants,
As restless as a bee.”—*Longfellow.*

“The grace of heaven,
Before, behind thee, and on every hand,
Enwheel thee round.”—*Shakespeare.*

EARLY summer was “stealing on
spring’s sweet’ prime,” the day
was one of peerless beauty, un-
surpassed even under Italian skies; the

air was fragrant with the breath of flowers, and filled with the warbling of birds, the cooing of doves, and the humming of bees; silvery clouds were sleeping in the deep blue sky, and the trees and shrubs seemed to vie with each other in putting forth their "brightest, tenderest green."

A fair-haired, blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked child, of about four years old, was playing in the garden of a cottage situated in the picturesque village of H— in Devonshire, and above which towered a magnificent chestnut-tree with its pyramids of pink and white flowers, through whose roseate drifts a wreath of blue smoke was curling up from the chimney of the cottage.

The child had for some time been wheeling her little carriage along the garden walks, singing to the music of her own footsteps, and the sound of her merry voice was as sweet as the song of the lark that carolled up in the crystalline blue.

Phœbe—or *shining, pure*—was her name; she was a flower among the flowers, a "bud of life folded in leaves and love,"

and she presented a charming picture of childish innocence and happiness.

And so thought the fond young mother, as she sat at the cottage door, working diligently, and looking up now and then at her darling child, who was the sunshine of her home.

John and Mary Slater, the parents of Phœbe, were good, honest, industrious people, and had lived in that cottage since their marriage some six years before my story begins.

John was a clever gardener, and worked at the Rectory, which was about a mile distant from his home.

In his leisure hours he read much, and cultivated flowers in his own small garden, and brought some of them to rare perfection.

Mary was a Honiton lace-maker, and in the long summer days was to be seen sitting at the cottage door, with her pillow before her, working industriously at her beautiful lace.

She loved her work very much, and

intended bringing up her little daughter to the same occupation, for the sake of the gentle mother whom she had lost long since, and whose memory she fondly cherished as the most sacred treasure of her heart.

And as on that sunny June day Mary's fingers moved rapidly among the innumerable pins, she silently prayed for strength to follow the path of duty, whence alone can come happiness and peace;—prayed to be made watchful against all temptations, strong in faith, fervent in prayer;—prayed earnestly that a blessing might rest upon her little child, that God would guard and guide her always. That, when the sunlight of happiness glowed around her, she might feel God's goodness; and, when clouds gathered around, she might still discern His presence and love in the darkest night.

And when the little child, with half-closed eyes, smiled as she softly sank to sleep that night, a sense of peace and calm arose within the mother's heart.

“Light dwell in thee, and thou
Dwell ever in the light ;
No wrinkle on thy brow,
Thine eye still blue and bright.

Peace be thy gentle guest,
Peace holy and divine ;
God's blessed sunlight still
Upon thy pathway shine.

His Spirit fill thy soul,
And cast out every sin ;
His own deep joy impart,
And make a heaven within.”



CHAPTER II.

“A child no longer, but a maiden now,
A thoughtful maiden with a gentle brow,
A cheek tinged lightly, and a dove-like eye,
And all hearts bless her as she passes by.”

“Trip along, bright feet of May,
Trip along from day to day,
Trip along in sun and showers,
Trip along to wake the flowers,
Trip along the breezy hills,
Trip beside the prattling rills.
Trip away, all fresh and gay,
Trip away, bright feet of May.”

Dr. Horatius Bonar.

THE fifth of May dawned brightly, not a cloud sullied the empyreal arch, which was almost as blue as lapis-lazuli. The breath of the hawthorn perfumed the air; dewdrops rested with the pure lustre of pearls upon the flowers,

and all nature rejoiced in the revivifying refulgence of the orb of day.

It was Sunday morning, and the anniversary of Phœbe's seventeenth birthday. From the gay, prattling child, she had grown into a thoughtful, quiet girl, with gentle, modest ways, and a kind word for every one.

Her parents' moral teaching of her had been very simple, and based chiefly upon one great text, "Fear God and do the right," and they had endeavoured to make her brave, truthful, and kind, pure as crystal in thought, and word, and deed.

Her pious mother had led her daughter into the quiet and deep recesses of her own faith, and with cheerful look, loving voice, and gentle guidance, made her familiar with the thoughts of One who was ever near, the Giver of every mercy—One who hated the false and loved the true, and was ever ready to bless and strengthen those who wished and tried to follow His steps.

Her father, too, knew how to lead her