

By the side of the ayah stands my heroine, a little puppy-like girl, staring as Indian children stare, at the strange dismal shores upon which they are cast; staring at the lady in the gray cloak, who had come on board with her papa's face, and caught her in her arms, and who is her aunt Sarah; at the big boy of seven in the red mittens, whose photograph her papa had shown her in the veranda, and who is her brother George; at the luggage as it comes bumping and stumbling off the big ship; at the passengers departing. The stout little gentleman, who used to take her to see the chickens, pats Dolly on the head, and says he shall come and see her; the friendly sailor who carried her on shore shakes hands, and then the clouds close in, and the sounds and the faces disappear.....

Presently into Dolly's gallery come pleasanter visions of the old house at Kensington, to which Lady Sarah took her straight away, with its brick wall and ivy creepers and many-paned windows, and the stone balls at either side of the door—on one of which a little dark-eyed girl is sitting, expecting them.

"Who is dat?" says little three-year-old Dolly, running up, and pulling the child's pinafore, to make sure that she is *real*.

Children believe in many things, in fairies, and sudden disappearances; they would not think it very strange if they were to see people turn to fountains and dragons in the course of conversation.

"That is a nice little girl like you," said Lady Sarah, kindly.

"A nice little girl like me?" said Dolly.

"Go away," says the little strange girl, hiding her face in her hands.

"Have you come to play wiss me? My name is Dollicia-vanble," continues Dolly, who is not shy, and quite used to the world, having traveled so far.

"Is that your name? What a funny name!" says the little girl, looking up. "My name is Rhoda, but they call me Dody at our house. I's four years old."

Dolly was three years old, but she could not speak quite plain; she took the little girl's hand and stood by the ayah, watching the people passing and repassing, the carriage being unpacked, Lady Sarah directing and giving people money, George stumping about in every body's way, and then, somehow, every thing and every body seem going up and down stairs, and in confusion; she is very tired and sleepy, and forgets all the rest.

Next day Dolly wakes up crying for her mamma. It is not the ship any more. Every thing is quite still, and her crib does not rock up and down. "I sought she would be here," said poor little Dolly, in a croaking, waking voice, sitting up with crumpled curls and bright warm cheeks. It is not

her mamma, but Aunt Sarah, who takes her up and kisses her, and tries to comfort her, while the ayah, Nun Comee, who has been lying on the floor, jumps up and dances in her flowing white garment, and snaps her black fingers, and George brings three tops to spin all at once. Dolly is interested, and ceases crying, and begins to smile and to show all her little white teeth.

Lady Sarah rarely smiled. She used to frown so as not to show what she felt. But Dolly from the first day had seemed to understand her; she was never afraid of her, and she used to jump on her knee and make her welcome to the nursery.

"Is you very pretty?" said little Dolly one day, looking at the grim face with the long nose and pinched lips. "I think you is a very ugly aunt." And she smiled up in the ugly aunt's face.

"Oh, Dolly! how naughty!" said Rhoda, who happened to be in Dolly's nursery.

Rhoda was a little waif *protégée* of Lady Sarah's. She came from the curate's home close by, and was often sent in to play with Dolly, who would be lonely, her aunt thought, without a companion of her own age; Rhoda was Mr. Morgan's niece, and a timid little thing; she was very much afraid at first of Dolly; so she was of the ayah, with her brown face and ear-rings and monkey hands; but soon the ayah went back to India with silver pins in her ears, taking back many messages to the poor child-bereft parents, and a pair of Dolly's shoes as a remembrance, and a couple of dolls for herself, as a token of good-will from her young mistress. They were for her brothers, Nun Comee said, but it was supposed that she intended to worship them on her return to her native land.

The ayah being gone, little Rhoda soon ceased to be afraid of Dolly, the kind, merry, helpful little playmate, who remained behind, frisking along the passages and up and down the landing-places of Church House. She was much nicer, Rhoda thought, than her own real cousins the Morgans in Old Street.

As days go by, Dolly's pictures warm and brighten from early spring into summertime. By degrees they reach above the table and over and beyond the garden-roller. They are chiefly of the old garden, whose brick walls seem to inclose sunshine and gaudy flowers all the summer through; of the great Kensington parks, where in due season chestnuts are to be found shining among the leaves and dry grasses; of the pond, where the ducks are flapping and diving; of the house which was little Rhoda's home. This was the great bare house in Old Street, with plenty of noise, dried herbs, content, children without end, and thick bread-and-butter. There was also cold stalled ox on Sundays at one.

In those days life was a simple matter to the children; their days and their legs lengthened together; they loved, they learned, and they looked for a time that was never to be—when their father and mother should come home and live with them again, and every body was to be happy. As yet the children thought they were only expecting happiness.

George went to school at Frant, near Tunbridge Wells, and came home for the holidays. Dolly had a governess too, and she used to do her lessons with little Rhoda in the slanting school-room at the top of Church House. The little girls did a great many sums, and learned some French, and read little Arthur's "History of England" to every body's satisfaction.

Kind Lady Sarah wrote careful records of the children's progress to her brother, who had sent them to the faithful old sister at home. He heard of the two growing up with good care and much love in the sunshine that streamed upon the old garden; playing together on the terrace that he remembered so well; pulling up the crocuses and the violets that grew in the shade of the white holly-tree. George was a quaint, clever boy, Sarah wrote; Dolly was not so quick, but happy and obedient, and growing up like a little spring flower among the silent old bricks.

Lady Sarah also kept up a desultory correspondence with Philippa, her sister-in-law. Mrs. Vanborough sent many minute directions about the children; Dolly was to dine off cold meat for her complexion's sake, and she wished her to have her hair crimped; and George was to wear kid gloves and write a better hand; and she hoped they were very good, and that they sometimes saw their cousin Robert, and wrote to their uncle, Sir Thomas Henley, Henley Court, Smokethwaite, Yorkshire; and she and dear papa often and often longed for their darlings. Then came presents—a spangled dress for Lady Sarah, and silver ornaments for Dolly, and an Indian sword for George, with which he nearly cut off Rhoda's head.

CHAPTER III.

TO OLD STREET BY THE LANES.

IN those days, as I have said, the hawthorn spread across the fields and market-gardens that lay between Kensington and the river. Lanes ran to Chelsea, to Fulham, to North End, where Richardson once lived and wrote in his garden-house. The mist of the great city hid the horizon and dulled the sound of the advancing multitudes; but close at hand, all round about the old house, were country corners untouched—blossoms instead of bricks in spring-time, summer

shade in summer. There were strawberry beds, green, white, and crimson in turn. The children used to get many a handful of strawberries from Mr. Penfold, the market-gardener at the end of the lane, and bunches of radish when strawberries were scarce. They gathered them for themselves on a bank where paving-stones and coal-holes are now, and a fine growth of respectable modern villas. I believe that in those days there were sheep grazing in Kensington Gore. It is certain that Mr. Penfold kept Alderneys in the field beyond his orchard, and that they used to come and drink in a pond near his cottage. He lived with his wife and his daughter, under an old tiled roof, and with a rose-tree growing on the wall. In the window of the cottage a little card was put up, announcing that "Curds-and-whey were to be had within," and the children sometimes went there to drink the compound out of Emma Penfold's doll's tea-things. The old pond was at the garden gate; there was a hedge round about it, and alder-trees starting up against the sunset, and the lanes and orchards beyond. The water reflected the sunset in the sky and the birds flying home to the sound of the evening bells. Sometimes Emma would come out of the cottage, and stand watching the children play. She was a pretty girl, with rosy cheeks and dark soft eyes. It was a quaint old corner, lonely enough in the daytime; but of evenings people would be passing—laborers from their work, strollers in the fields, neighbors enjoying the air. The cottage must have been as old as Church House itself. It was chiefly remarkable for its beautiful damask rose-trees, of which the red leaves sprinkled the threshold, across which pretty Emma Penfold would step. I think it was for the sake of the rose-tree that people sometimes stopped and asked for curds-and-whey. Emma would dispense the horrible mixture, blushing beneath her basket-work plaits.

Mr. Penfold was a well-to-do man. At the end of his garden a wicket gate led into the orchard, where Dolly and Rhoda went sometimes to play in the long grass beneath the fruit trees, while overhead was a Raphael-like trellis of blue sky and twisted branches and singing birds, beneath which the children disported, while their attendant, Marker, stood gossiping with Mrs. Penfold over the gate. Only the other day I saw the last of the old apple-trees peacefully flowering with the blossom of never-to-be apples, while an engine was at work upon the roots, and draining the land for a new terrace and a macadamized road.

Sometimes in May mornings the children would gather hawthorn branches out of the lanes, and make what they liked to call garlands for themselves. The white blossoms looked pretty in Rhoda's dark hair; and

Mademoiselle, coming to give them their music-lesson, would find the little girls crowned with May-flower wreaths. It was hard work settling down to lessons on those days. How slowly the clocks ticked when the practice hour began; how the little birds would come hopping on the window-ledge, before Dolly had half finished her sum; how cruel it was of Mademoiselle to pull down the blind and frighten the poor little birds away! Many pictures in Dolly's gallery belong to this bit of her life. It seems one long day as she looks back to it, for when the sun set, Dolly too used to be put to bed.

As for little Rhoda, she would be sent back to Old Street. When prayers were over, long after Dolly was asleep, she would creep up stairs alone to the very top of the house, and put herself to bed, and blow out her own candle if Zoe did not come for it. How bare and chill and lonely it was to be all by one's self at the top of that busy house! "I don't think they would come, even if I screamed," Rhoda would think as she lay staring at the cupboard door, and wondering if there was any one behind it.

Once the door burst open, and a great cat jumped out, and Rhoda's shriek brought up one of John Morgan's pupils, who had been reading in his room.

"Is any thing the matter?" said the young man at the door.

"Oh, no, no—o! Please don't say I screamed," said little Rhoda, disappearing under the bedclothes.

"Silly child!" (This was Aunt Morgan's voice in the passage.) "Thank you, Mr. Raban; I will go to her. A little girl of ten years old frightened at a cat! For shame, Rhoda! There—go to sleep directly." And her aunt Morgan vigorously tucked her up and gave her a kiss.

The Morgans were a cheerful and noisy household; little Rhoda lived there, but she scarcely seemed to belong to it: she was like a little cuckoo born into some strange nest full of active, early, chirping birds, all bigger and stronger than herself. The Rev. John Morgan was master of the nest, which his mother kept in excellent order and ruled with an active rod. There were two pupils, two younger brothers, two sisters, and Rhoda Parnell, the forlorn little niece they had adopted. Down stairs the fat parlor-maid and the old country cook were established, and a succeeding generation of little charity-boys, who were expected by Mrs. Morgan to work in the garden, go errands, and learn their catechisms, while blacking the young gentlemen's boots in a vault-like chamber set apart for that purpose.

Mrs. Morgan was a thrifty woman, and could not bear to think of time or space being wasted, much less comestibles. Her life had been one long course of early rising, moral and physical rectitude. She allowed John

to sit in an arm-chair, but no one else if she could help it. When poor little Rhoda was tired, she used to go up to the room she shared with Zoe, her youngest cousin, and lie down on the floor. If Zoe told her mother, a message would come immediately for Rhoda to help with the poor flannel.

This poor flannel was Mrs. Morgan's own kingdom. She used to preside over passive rolls of gray and blue. She could cut out any known garment in use in any civilized community. She knew the right side of the stuff, the right way to turn the scissors. She could contrive, direct, turn corners, snip, snap on occasions, talking the whole time; she was emphatic always. In her moments of relaxation she dearly loved a whisper. She wore a front of curls with a velvet band, and Kensington-made gowns and shoes. Cassie and Zoe, when they grew up to be young ladies, used to struggle hard for Knights-bridge fashions. The Kensington style was prim in those days. The ladies wore a dress somewhat peculiar to themselves, and cut to one pattern by the Misses Trix in their corner house. There was a Kensington world (I am writing of twenty years ago) somewhat apart from the big uneasy world surging beyond the turnpike—a world of neighbors bound together by the old winding streets and narrow corners in a community of venerable elm-trees and bricks and traditions that are almost leveled away. Mr. Awl, the boot-maker, in High Street, exhibited peculiar walking-shoes long after high heels and kid brodekins had come into fashion in the metropolis. The last time I was in his shop I saw a pair of the old-fashioned, flat, sandaled shoes directed to Miss Vieuxtemps in Palace Green. Tippetts, poke-bonnets, even a sedan-chair, still existed among us long after they had been discarded by more active minds. In Dolly's early days, in Kensington Square itself, high heels and hoops were not unknown; but these belonged to ladies of some pretension, who would come in state along the narrow street leading from the Square, advancing in powder and hoops and high-heeled shoes—real hoops, real heels, not modern imitations, but relics unchanged since the youth of the ghost-like old sisters. They lived in a tall house with a mansard-roof. As the children passed they used to look up at the cobweb windows, at the narrow doorway with its oaken dais, and the flagged court and the worn steps. Lady Sarah told Dolly that Mrs. Francis had known Talleyrand when he was living there in one of the old houses of the Square. At any time it would be easy to conjure up ghosts of great people with such incantations of crumbling wall and oaken device and panel. Not Talleyrand only, but a whole past generation, still lives for us among these quaint old ruins.

The Kensington trades-people used to be

Conservative, as was natural, with a sentry in the High Street, and such a menagerie of lions and unicorns as that which they kept over their shop-fronts. They always conversed with their customers while they measured a yard of silk or sold a skein of thread across their counters. Dolly would feel flattered when Mr. Baize found her grown. Even Lady Sarah would graciously reply to his respectful inquiries after her health on the rare occasions when she shopped herself. Mrs. Morgan never trusted any body with her shopping.

"I always talk to Baize," she would say, complacently, coming away after half an hour's exchange of ideas with that respectable man. She would repeat his conversation for the benefit of her son and his pupils at tea-time. "I think trades-people are often very sensible and well-informed persons," said Mrs. Morgan, "when they do not forget themselves, Mr. Raban. Radical as you are, you must allow that Kensington trades-people are always respectful to the clergy—our position is too well established; they know what is due to us," said Mrs. Morgan, gravely.

"They don't forget what is due to themselves," said Mr. Raban, with an odd sort of smile.

"That they don't," said Robert Henley, who was Morgan's other pupil at that time. "I dare say Master George wishes they would; he owes a terrible long bill at Baize's for ties and kid gloves."

Presently came a ring at the bell. "Here he is," cries John, starting up hastily. "No more tea, thank you, mother."

George Vanborough used also to read with John Morgan during the holidays. The curate's energy was unflagging; he slaved, taught, panted, and struggled for the family he had shouldered. What a good fellow he was! Pack clouds away; no shades or evil things should come near him as he worked. Who ever piped to him that he did not leap, or called to him that he did not shout in answer? With what emphasis he preached his dull Sunday sermon; with what excitement he would, to his admiring sisters and mother, read out his impossible articles in the *Vestryman's Magazine* or elsewhere; how liberally he dashed and italicized his sentences; how gallantly he would fly to his pen or his pulpit in defense of friend or in attack of foe (the former being flesh and blood, and the latter chiefly spiritual)! And then he was in love with a widow—how he admired her blue and pink eyes! He could not think of marrying until the boys were out in the world and the girls provided for. But with Joe's wit and Tom's extraordinary powers, and the girls' remarkable amiability, all this would surely be settled in the course of a very short time.

The Morgan family was certainly a most

united and affectionate clan. I don't know that they loved each other more than many people do, but they certainly believed in each other more fervently. They had a strange and special fascination for George, who was not too young to appreciate the curate's unselfishness.

The younger Morgans, who were a hearty, jolly race, used to laugh at George. Poor boy, he had already begun to knock his head, young as it was, against stone walls; his school-fellows said he had cracked it with his paradoxes. At twelve he was a stout fellow for his age, looking older than he really was. He was slow and clumsy; he had a sallow complexion, winking blue eyes, a turn-up nose, and heavy dark eyebrows; there was something honest and almost pathetic at times in the glance of these blue eyes, but he usually kept them down from shyness as well as from vanity; he didn't dare look in people's faces; he thought he should see them laughing at him. He was very lazy, as sensitive people often are; he hated games and active amusements; he had a soft melancholy voice that was his one endowment, besides his gift for music; he could work when he chose, but he was beginning life in despair with it, and he was not popular among his companions; they called him conceited, and they were right; but it was a melancholy conceit, if they had but known it. The truth was, however, that he was too ugly, too clever, too clumsy, to get on with boys of a simpler and wholesomer mind. Even John Morgan, his friend and preceptor, used to be puzzled about him and distressed at times. "If George Vanborough were only more like his own brothers, there would be something to be done with him," thought honest John, as those young gentlemen's bullet-heads passed the window where the pupil and his preceptor were at work. If only—there would be a strange monotony in human nature, I fancy, if all the "if onlys" could be realized, and we had the moulding of one another, and pastors and masters could turn assenting pupils out by the gross like the little chalk rabbits Italian boys carry about for sale.

Dolly was very well contented with her brother just as he was. She trusted his affection, respected his cleverness, and instinctively guessed at his vanities and morbidities. Even when she was quite a child, Dolly, in her sweet downright way, seemed to have the gift of healing the wounds of her poor St. Sebastian, who, when he was a little boy, would come home day after day smarting and bleeding with the arrows of his tormentors. These used to be, alternately, Lady Sarah herself, Cassie Morgan, and Zoe, the two boys when they were at home for the holidays, and little Rhoda, whom he declared to be the most malicious of them all. The person who treated George with most

sympathy and confidence was Mrs. Morgan, that active and garrulous old lady, to whom any body was dear who would listen to the praises of her children.

Robert Henley, as I have said, was also studying with John Morgan. He had just left Eton. Lady Sarah asked him to Church House at her sister-in-law's request; but he did not often find time to come and see them. He used to be tramping off to Putney, where he and his friend Frank Raban kept a boat; or they would be locked up together with ink and blots and paper in John Morgan's study. Raban was older than Henley. He was at college, but he had come up for a time to read for his degree.

Old Betty, the cook at John Morgan's, was a Yorkshire woman, and she took a motherly interest in the pupils. She had much to say about young Mr. Raban, whose relations she knew in Yorkshire. Betty used to call Frank Raban a "noist young man."

"He's Squoire's hair and grandsun loike," she told Rhoda and Dolly one day. "They can not do n' less nor roast a hox when 'a cooms t' hage."

After this Rhoda used to stand on tiptoe and respectfully peep through the study window at the heads and the books and the tobacco-smoke within; but there was a big table in the way, and she could never see much more than her own nose reflected in the glass. Once or twice, when George was in the way, as a great favor he would be allowed to accompany the young men in one of their long expeditions in big boots. They would come home late in the evening, tired and hungry, and calling out for food. At whatever hour they came old Betty had a meal of cold meat and cake for them, of which George partook with good appetite. At Church House, if George was late for dinner, he had to wait for tea and thin bread-and-butter at eight o'clock. Lady Sarah, who had fought many a battle for George's father, now—from some curious retrospective feeling—seemed to feel it her duty to revive many of her late husband's peculiarities, and one of them was that nothing was to be allowed to interfere with the routine of the house. Routine there was none at the curate's, although there were more hours, perhaps, than in any other house in Old Street. The sun rose and set, the seasons drifted through the back garden in changing tints and lights, each day brought its burden, and the dinner-time was shifted to it.

CHAPTER IV.

AN AFTERNOON AT PENFOLD'S.

To this day Dolly remembers the light of a certain afternoon in May, when all was hot and silent and sleepy in the old school-room

at Church House. The boards cracked, the dust-motes floated; down below, the garden burned with that first summer glow of heat that makes a new world out of such old, well-worn materials as twigs, clouds, birds, and the human beings all round us. The little girls had been at work, and practiced, and multiplied, and divided again; they had recollected various facts connected with the reign of Richard the Second. Mademoiselle had suppressed many a yawn; Dolly was droning over her sum—six and five made thirteen—over and over again. "That I should have been, that thou shouldst have been, that he shouldst have been," drawled poor little Rhoda. Then a great fly hums by as the door opens, and Lady Sarah appears with a zigzag of sunlight shooting in from the passage—a ray of hope. Lady Sarah has her bonnet on, and a sort of put-away-your-lessons-children face.

Is there any happiness like that escape on a summer's day from the dull struggle with vacuity, brown paper-covered books, dates, ink-blots, cramps, and crotchets, into the open air of birds, sounds, flowers, liberty every where? As the children come out into the garden with Lady Sarah, two butterflies are flitting along the terrace. The Spanish jasmine has flowered in the night, and spreads its branches out, fragrant with its golden drops. Lady Sarah gathers a sprig and opens her parasol. She is carrying a book and a shawl, and is actually smiling. The pigeons go whirring up and down from their pigeon-cote high up in the air. Four o'clock comes sounding across the ivy wall; the notes strike mellow and distinct above the hum of human insects out and about. Half Lady Sarah's district is sunning itself on the door-steps; children are squatting in the middle of the road. The benches are full in Kensington Gardens; so are the steamers on the river. To these people walking in their garden there comes the creaking sound of a large wheelbarrow, and at the turn of the path they discover Mr. Penfold superintending a boy and a load of gravel. Mr. Penfold is a cheerful little man, with gloomy views of human nature. According to Penfold's account, there were those (whoever they might be) who was always a-plotting against you. They was hup to every thing, and there was no saying what they was not at the bottom of. But Penfold could be heven with them, and he kep' hisself to hisself, and named no names. Dolly felt grateful to these unknown beings when she heard Mr. Penfold telling Lady Sarah they had said as how that Miss Dorothea 'ad been makin' hinqury respectin' of some puppies. He did not know as how she wished it generally know'd, but he might mention as he 'ad two nice pups down at his place, and Miss Dorothea was welcome to take her choice.

It is a dream Dolly can scarcely trust herself to contemplate. Lady Sarah does not say no, but she looks at her watch, telling Dolly to run back to the house and see if the post is come in, and continues, graciously, "I am much obliged to you, Penfold; I have no doubt Miss Dorothea will be glad to have one of your puppies. What is your daughter doing? Is she at home?"

"Yes, my lady," says Penfold, mysteriously pointing over his shoulder with his thumb. "They would have 'ad us send the gurl away, but she is a good gurl, though she takes her own way, and there are those as puts her hup to it."

"We all like our own way, without any body's suggestions," said Lady Sarah, smiling. Then Dolly comes flying from the house, and tumbles over a broomstick, so that she has to stop to pick up her handful of letters.

"Thank you, my dear. Now, if you like, we will go and see the puppies," says Aunt Sarah. "No Indian letter" (in a disappointed voice). "I wish your mother would—Run on, Dolly."

So Dolly runs on with Rhoda, thinking of puppies, and Lady Sarah follows, thinking of her Indian letter, which is lying under the laurel-tree where Dolly dropped it, and where Penfold presently spies it out and picks it up, unconscious of its contents. After examining the seal, and some serious thought, he determines to follow the trio. They have been advancing in the shadow of the hedges, through the gaps of which they can see people at work in the sunshiny cabbage fields. Then they come to Earl's Court, and its quaint old row of houses, with their lattices stuffed with spring flowers, and so to the pond by the road-side (how cool and deep it looked as they passed by!); and then by the wicket gate they wander into the orchard, of which some of the trees are still in flower, and where Lady Sarah is soon established on the stump of a tree. Her magazine pages flutter as the warm, sweet winds come blowing from across the fields—the shadows travel on so quietly that you can not tell when they go or whither. There is no sound but a little calf bleating somewhere. Rhoda is picking daisies in the shade; Dolly is chirping to herself by the hedge that separates the orchard from the Penfolds' garden. There is a ditch along one part of the hedge, with a tangle of grass and dock leaves and mallows; a bird flies out of the hedge, close by Dolly's nose, and goes thrilling and chirping up into the sky, where the stars are at night; the daisies and buttercups look so big, the grass is so long and so green; there are two purple flowers with long stalks close at hand, but Dolly does not pick them; her little heart seems to shake like the bird's song, it is all so pretty; the May blossom is as big as her hand,

the dandelions are like lamps burning. She tries to think she is a bird, and that she lives in the beautiful hedges.

From behind the hawthorn hedge some voices come that Dolly should certainly know.....

"You'll believe me another time," cries some one, with a sort of sniff, and speaking in tones so familiar that Dolly, without an instant's hesitation, sets off running to the wicket gate, which had been left open, and through which she now sees, as she expects, George, with his curly head and his cricketing cap, standing in the Penfolds' garden, and with him her cousin Robert, looking very tall as he leans against a paling, and talks to Mrs. Penfold. There is also another person, whom Dolly recognizes as Mr. Raban, and she thinks of the "hox," as she gazes with respect at the pale young man with his watch-chain and horseshoe pin. He has a straw hat and white shoes, and a big knobstick in his hand, and nodding to Robert, he strides off toward the cottage. Dolly watches him as he walks in under the porch; no doubt he is going to drink curds-and-why, she thinks.

"Why, Dolly! are you here?" says Robert, coming toward her.

"Missy is often here," says Mrs. Penfold, looking not overpleased. "Is Mrs. Marker with you, my dear?"

Dolly would have answered, but from the farther end of the garden, behind Mrs. Penfold, two horrible apparitions advance, rusty black, with many red bobs and tassels dangling, and deliberate steps and horrible crinkly eyes. Old Betty would call them Bubby Jocks; Dolly has no name for them, but shrinks away behind her big cousin.

"Here are Dolly's bogies," says George, who is giving himself airs on the strength of his companionship and his short cut. "Now then, Dolly, they are going to bite like ghosts."

"Don't!" cried Dolly.

"Are you afraid of turkeys, Dolly? Little girls of eight years old shouldn't be afraid of any thing," said Rhoda, busy with her flowers. Alas! Rhoda's philosophy is not always justified by subsequent experience. It is second-hand, and quoted from Mrs. Morgan.

"We are going to see the puppies," says Dolly, recovering her courage as the turkey-cocks go by. "Won't you come, Robert?"

"Puppies!" said Robert. "We have plenty of them at the Court. My aunt Henley says she prefers them to her own children."

"So should I," says Dolly, opening her eyes.

Presently Robert and Dolly come back, with two little fuzzy heads wildly squeaking from Dolly's lap, and old Bunch, the mother of the twins, following, half agonized, half radiant. They set the little staggering bundles down upon the ground, and Dolly squats



DOLLY AND THE PUPPIES.

in admiration, while Robert goes off upon his business, and Mrs. Penfold hurries back into the house as Mr. Penfold appears crossing the lane.

Mr. Penfold was gone, Dolly was still watching with all-absorbed eyes, when the boy started up. "I say, Dolly! look there at Aunt Sarah."

Aunt Sarah! What had come to her, and

how strange she looked walking through the orchard with a curious rapid step, and coming toward the open wicket gate, through which the children could see her! Her bonnet was falling off her face; her hair was pushed back; she came very quick, straight on, looking neither to the right nor to the left, with her fixed eyes and pale cheeks. Penfold seemed hurrying after her; he followed Lady Sarah into the garden, and then

out again into the road. She hardly seemed to know which way she went.

What had happened? Why didn't she answer when Dolly called her? As she passed so swiftly, the children thought that something must have happened; they did not know what. George set off running after her; Dolly waited for a minute.

"Why did she look so funny?" said Rhoda, coming up.

"I don't know," said Dolly, almost crying.

"She had a black-edged letter in her hand," said Rhoda, "that Mr. Penfold brought. When people think they are going to die, they write and tell you on black paper."

Then Mrs. Penfold came running out of the cottage with a shriek, and the children, running too, saw the gardener catch Aunt Sarah in his arms, as she staggered and put out her hands. When they came up she lay back in his arms scarce conscious, and he called to them to bring some water from the pond. No wonder Dolly remembered that day, and Aunt Sarah lying long and straight upon the grass by the road-side. The letter had fallen from her hand; they threw water upon her face; it wetted her muslin dress and her pale cheeks; a workman crossing from the field stood and looked on a while; and so did the little children from the carpenter's shed up the road, gazing with wondering eyes at the pale lady beginning to move again at last, and to speak so languidly.

The laborer helped to carry her into the cottage as she revived. George had already run home for Marker. Dolly and Rhoda, who were shut out by Mrs. Penfold, wandered disconsolately about the garden and into the orchard again, where Aunt Sarah's parasol was lying under the tree, and her book thrown face downward. Presently the little girls came straggling back with it to the garden-house once more.

The parlor door was shut close when they reached it; the kitchen door was open. What was that shrill, shivering cry? Who could it be? Perhaps it was some animal, thought Dolly.

In the kitchen some unheeded pot was cooking and boiling over; the afternoon sun was all hot upon the road outside, and Bunch and the puppies had laid down to sleep in a little heap on the step of the house.

Long, long after Dolly remembered that day, every thing as it happened; Marker's voice inside the room; young Mr. Raban passing by the end of the lane talking to Emma Penfold. (Mrs. Penfold had unlocked the back-door, and let them out.) After a time the shrill sobs ceased; then a clock struck, and the boiling pot in the kitchen fell over with a great crash, and Rhoda ran to see, and at that moment the parlor door opened, and Lady Sarah came out, very pale

still, and very strange, leaning, just as if she was old, upon Marker and Mr. Penfold. But she started away, and seemed to find a sudden strength, and caught Dolly up in her arms. "My darling, my darling," she said, "you have only me now—only me. Heaven help you, my poor, poor children!" And once more she burst into the shrill, sighing sobs. It was Aunt Sarah who had been crying all the time for her brother who was dead.

This was the first echo of a mourning outcry that reached the children. They were told that the day was never to come now of which they had spoken so often; their father would never come home—they were orphans. George was to have a tall hat with crape upon it. Marker went into town to buy Dolly stuff for a new black frock. Aunt Sarah did not smile when she spoke to them, and told them that their mamma would soon be home now. Dolly could not understand it all very well. Their father had been but a remembrance; she did not remember him less because Lady Sarah's eyes were red and the letters were edged with black. Dolly didn't cry the first day, though Rhoda did; but in the night, when she woke up with a little start and a moan from a dream in which she thought it was her papa who was lying by the pond, Aunt Sarah herself came and bent over her crib.

But next morning the daisies did not look less pretty, nor did the puppy cease to jump, nor, if the truth be told, did Dolly herself; nor would kind Stanham Vanborough have wished it.....

Robert came into the garden and found the children with a skipping-rope, and was greatly shocked, and told them they should not skip about.

"I was not skipping," said Rhoda. "I was turning the rope for Dolly."

Dolly ran off, blushing. Had she done wrong? She had not thought so. I can not say what dim, unrealized feelings were in her little heart; longings never to be realized, love never to be fulfilled. She went up into her nursery, and hid there in a corner until Rhoda came to find her, and to tell her dinner was ready.

CHAPTER V.

STEEL PENS AND GOOSE QUILLS.

THE letter announcing poor Stanham's death came from a Captain Palmer, a friend of Stan's, whose ship was stationed somewhere in that latitude, and who happened to have been with him at the time. They had been out boar-hunting in the marshes near Calcutta. The poor Major's illness was but a short one, produced by sunstroke, so the captain wrote. His affairs were in perfect order. He had been handsomely noticed in