



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

the Bengal *Hurkaru*. Of his spiritual state Captain Palmer felt less able to speak. Although not a professed Christian, poor Stanham had for some time past attended the services of the Scotch chapel at Dum Dum, where Mr. McFlaggit had been permitted to awaken many sleepers to a deep sense of spiritual unrest. Captain Palmer believed that Major Vanborough had insured his life for £2000, and the widow and children would also be entitled to something from the regimental fund. Captain Palmer then went on to say that he had been attending another death-bed, that of a native gentleman, whose wives and orphan children having been left unprovided for, had been happily brought to see the past errors of their faith, and had come forward in a body. They were about to be sent to England under the charge of Miss McGrudder, who had done so much good work among the Zenanas. Captain Palmer wound up by a friendly offer of assistance, and a message from Mrs. Vanborough. She did not feel equal to writing; she was utterly prostrate. She sent fondest love, and would write by the next mail.

So this was the children's first taste of the fruit of the tree of life and death growing in that garden of Eden and childhood through which we all come wandering into life, a garden blooming still—it may be, in the square before the house, where little Adams and Eves still sport, innocent and uncared for the future, gathering the fruits as they ripen in the sunshine, hearing voices and seeing their childish visions, naming the animals as a new creation passes before them.

Lady Sarah longed to get away when her first burst of grief was over. The sleepy, drowsy old place seemed to stifle her with its calm content and sunny indifference. But she wanted to hear more of Philippa's plans before she formed any of her own, and meanwhile she could cry unobserved within the old walls where she had loved poor Stan, and seen him grow up from a boy; no wonder, no triumphant paragon, but a kindly, gentle, simple creature, whom she had loved with all her heart, as Dolly now loved George, and without whom the world seemed a wanting place—though there were many wiser and more brilliant men left in it than poor Stanham Vanborough. Robert, after some incompetent attempts at consolation, was obliged to return to Cambridge.

Poor Mrs. Vanborough's "plans" were rather vague, and all crossed one another and came on different scraps of papers, contradicting and utterly bewildering, though good Lady Sarah had docketed them and tied them up together for more convenient reference. They were to write to her by every post, Philippa said. Why could not they come to her? She longed for her children.

She scarcely knew how to bear her sorrow. She dreaded the journey, the cold, empty home-coming, the life in England, so different from what she had dreamed. The doctor said it would be madness for her to move as yet. Her brother, Colonel Henley ("Dear Charles! he was goodness itself"), suggested Italy. Would Lady Sarah consent to this, and meet her with the children? Or would she even come as far as Paris? But there were difficulties in every thing every where—cruel money difficulties, she was told. There was a lawsuit now coming on in the Calcutta courts with the insurance office in which poor dear Stan had insured his life. Captain Palmer said her presence was necessary. If it was given against her, she was utterly penniless; and meanwhile, harassed, detained.....Perhaps, on her return, she might take boarders or Indian children—would Lady Sarah advertise at once?.....What did George advise? When should she see them all again? Her heart yearned in vain—months might elapse. Dependence she could not bear. Even Sarah's kindness was bitter to her, when she thought of the past. All were kind—all was sad. The poor thing seemed utterly distracted.

Lady Sarah had written that Church House was her home, and that she must come at once to her home and her children.

Mrs. Vanborough wrote that this could not be. Alas, alas! it was only a bright dream, from which she sometimes awoke (so Philippa wrote) to find herself a mourner in a foreign land, watching the slow progress of the law.

"Why didn't she come?" wrote Lady Henley from the Court. "When will she come?" the children asked. Her room was ready, the bed was made, the fire burning. Dolly used to pick nosegays for her mamma's toilet-table, and stick pins in the cushion in stars. She made little bags of lavender to scent the great cabinet. It was one of those welcomes that are wasted in life, one of those guest-chambers made ready to which the guest does not come. There are many and many of them. They look just like any other rooms, unless you know their history.

Dolly often followed Marker when she went in to see that all was in order. One day the fire blazed comfortably; although the rain was beating against the window, a gleam of sun came from the inner dressing-room that looked out crossways along the garden. "Do you think she will come soon, Marker?" Dolly asked, peeping about the room.

"I don't think nothing at all, my dear," said Marker, poking the fire. "Why don't you go and play with Miss Rhoda? She came with Mrs. Morgan just now."

"Is Rhoda here?" cries Dolly, starting off instantly.

Rhoda was there; she had come with her

aunt, who was talking to Lady Sarah in the drawing-room.

Mrs. Morgan took a very long time to say what she had to say, and had left Rhoda outside in the hall. The little girls listened to Mrs. Morgan's voice as it went on, and on, and on. They sat on the stairs and played at being ladies too, and Rhoda told Dolly a great many secrets that she was not to tell, in a mysterious whisper just like her aunt's. Mr. Raban was gone away, she said, and he had married somebody, and Aunt Morgan said she should never speak to him again, and Mrs. Penfold came crying, and Aunt Morgan scolded and scolded, and Rhoda thought Emma Penfold was gone too; and just then the drawing-room door opened. Mrs. Morgan came out, looking very busy, and bustled off with Rhoda. Lady Sarah cut Dolly's questions very short, and forbade her going to the cottage again.

It was the very next day that Dolly and Rhoda met old Penfold walking in the lane, as they were coming home with Mademoiselle.

Gumbo ran to meet him, barking, wagging his tail, and creeping along the ground with delight.

Penfold, who had been passing on, stooped to caress the puppy's head with his brown creased hand, and seeing Dolly, he nodded kindly to her as she walked by with Mademoiselle.

"Has Emma come home to the cottage?" asked Rhoda, lingering.

Penfold frowned. His honest red face turned crimson. "She's not come back, nor will she," he said. "She has got a 'usband now, and she is gone a-travelin'; and if they hast you, you can tell them as I said so, Miss Rhoda; nor should I say otherwise if they was here to contradict me." He spoke in a fierce, defiant way. Mademoiselle called shrilly to the children to come on.

Dolly looked after the old gardener as he slowly walked away down the lane: he looked very old and tired, and she wished her aunt had not told her to keep away from the cottage.

Emma's name was never mentioned; Raban's, too, was forgotten; Mrs. Vanborough still delayed from one reason and another.

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From MRS. VANBOROUGH TO LADY SARAH FRANGOIS,
Church House, Kensington.

"DEAREST SARAH,—I fear that you will be totally unprepared (not more so, however, than I was myself) for a great and sudden change in my life of sad regrets (sad and regretful it will ever be), notwithstanding the altered circumstances which fate has forced upon me during the last few months that I have spent in sorrowful retirement, with spirits and health shattered and nerves unstrung. During these long lonely months, weighed down by care and harassed by business, which I was utterly incapable of understanding, I know not what would have become of me if (during my brother's absence on regimental duties) it had not been for the unremitting attention and generous devotion of one

without whose support I now feel I could not bring myself to face the struggle of a solitary life. For the sake of my poor fatherless children more even than for my own, I have accepted the name and protection of Captain Hawtry Palmer, of the Royal Navy, a sailor, of a family of sailors. Joanna, my brother's wife, was a Palmer, and from her I have often heard of Hawtry, at a time when I little thought.... You, dearest, who know me as I am, will rejoice that I have found rest and strength in another, though happiness I may not claim.

"Captain Palmer is a man of iron will and fervent principle. He must make *me* good, I tell him, unless sadness and resignation can be counted for goodness. Your poor Philippa is but a faulty creature, frail and delicate, and of little power; and yet, with all my faults, I feel that I am necessary to him; and, wreck as I am, there are those who do not utterly forget me. And, as he says with his quaint humor, there is not much to choose between the saints and sinners of the world. A thousand thousand kisses to my precious children. You will bring them to meet me next year, will you not, when Captain Palmer promises that I shall return to my real home—for your home is my home, is it not?"

"For the present I remain on a visit to my friend Mrs. McGrudder, an intimate friend of Captain Palmer, with one only daughter.

"The marriage will not, of course, take place for six weeks. Joanna will describe her brother to you. I am anxious to hear *all* she says about Hawtry and myself and our marriage.

"Ever, dearest Sarah, your very devoted

"PHILIPPA."

Poor Lady Sarah! She read the letter one white, cold, east-windy day, when the sun shone, and the dry, parching wind blew the wreaths of dust along the ground. As she read the curious, heartless words, it seemed to her that the east wind was blowing into the room—into her heart—drying up all faith in life, all tears for the past, all hope for the future. Had she a heart, this cruel woman, poor Stan's wife and Dolly's mother? Can women live and be loved, and bear children, and go through life without one human feeling, one natural emotion; take every blessing of God and every sacred sorrow, and live on, without knowing either the blessing or the sorrow? Lady Sarah tore the letter up carefully and very quietly, for Dolly was by her side, and would have asked to see it. She was not angry just then, but cold and sad, unspeakably sad. "Poor woman!" she thought; "was this all—this the end of Stan's tender life devotion—this the end of his pride and tender trust?" She could see him now, whispering to Philippa, as they sat together on the old bench by the pond, a handsome pair, people said, and well suited. Well suited! She got up shivering from her chair, and went to the fire, and threw the letter in, shred by shred, while the sun poured in fierce and put out the flames.

"Are you cold, Aunt Sarah?" said Dolly, coming to her side. Sarah moved away. She was afraid that even now it was burned Dolly might read the cruel letter in the fire. "For my children's sake!" The little red flames seemed to be crackling the words as they smouldered among the coals, and a

shrill, sudden blast against the window seemed hissing out that Captain Palmer was a man of iron will. As they stood side by side, Lady Sarah looked steadily away from little Dolly's eyes, and told her that her mamma was going to marry again.

Poor Dolly turned the color of the little flames when her aunt told her. She said nothing, not even to Rhoda, nor to Mrs. Morgan, who called immediately upon hearing the rumor. Lady Sarah was not at home, but Mrs. Morgan came in all the same, and closely questioned Dolly upon the subject.

"What is the gentleman's name, my dear?" she asked.

"I don't know," said Dolly.

"Why, Mr. Palmer, to be sure," said Rhoda.

In due time the news came of the marriage, and then poor Aunt Sarah had to wipe her eyes, and to give up writing on black-edged paper. The clocks went round and round, and the earth rolled on, and seasons spread their feasts, and the winds swept them away in turn; summer burned into autumn in cloud and vapor. The winter came closing in, and the snow fell thick upon the lanes and the gardens, on the Kensington house-tops and laurel-trees, on the old brown church with its square tower, and the curate's well-worn water-proof cape, as he trudged to and fro. It fell on the old garden walls and slanting roof of Church House, with little Dolly, safe sheltered within, warming herself by the baked Dutch tiles.

CHAPTER VI.

DOWN STAIRS IN THE DARK.

THERE are old houses in other places besides Kensington. Perhaps it is from early associations that Dolly has always had so great a liking for walls furnished with some upholstery of the past, and set up by strong hands that seem to have had their own secrets for making their work last on. Some of these old piles stand like rocks, defying our lives as they have defied the generations before us. We come upon them every where, set upon high hills, standing in wide country places, crowded into the narrow streets of a city. Perhaps it is the golden Tiber that flows past the old doorways, perhaps it is the Danube rushing by, or the gray Thames running to the marshes, or the Seine as it shines between the banks. There is an old house in the Champs Elysées at Paris where most English people have lived in turn, and to which Dolly's fate brought her when she was about twelve years old.

The prompter rings the bell, and the scene shifts to the Maison Valin, and to one night, twenty years ago, when the two little girls were tucked up in bed. The dim night-light



was put on the round marble table, the curtains were drawn, but all the same they could hear the noise of the horses trampling and the sabots clanking in the court-yard down below. Lady Sarah had sent her little niece to bed, and she now stood at the door and said, "Good-night, my dears." The second night-cap was only that of a little stray school-girl come to spend a holiday, from one of those vast and dreary establishments scattered all about the deserted suburbs of the great city: of which the lights were blazing from the uncurtained drawing-room windows, and its great semicircle of dark hills flashing.

Lady Sarah had come to Paris to meet Dolly's mamma, who had been married more than a year by this time, and who was expected home at last. She was coming alone, she wrote. She had at length received Captain Palmer's permission to visit her children; but not even her wishes could induce him to quit his beloved frigate. She should, therefore, leave him cruising along the Coromandel coast, and start in January, for which month her passage was taken. She implored Lady Sarah to meet her in Paris, where some weeks' rest would be absolutely necessary, she said, to recruit her strength after the fatigue of her journey; and Lady Sarah, with some misgiving, yielded to Dolly's wistful entreaties, and wrote to her old friend the Rev. W. Lovejoy, of the Marmouton Chapel, to take rooms for her for a few weeks, during which Dolly might improve her French accent and her style of dancing (Dolly had been pronounced clumsy by Mrs. Morgan) in the companionship of little Rhoda, who had been sent some time before to be established for a year in a

boarding-school near Paris, there to put on the armor of accomplishments that she would require some day in the dismal battle of life.

John Morgan had been loath that the little girl should go; he was afraid the child might feel lonely away from them all; but Rhoda said, very sensibly, that if she was to be a governess, she supposed she had better learn things. So Rhoda was sent off for a year to Madame Laplanche's, toward the end of which time Lady Sarah came to Paris with Dolly, and the faithful Marker in attendance.

Dolly did not trouble her head very much about her accent, but she was delighted to be with her friend again, to say nothing of seeing the world and the prospect of meeting her mother. She went twice a week to Rhoda's school to learn to point her bronze toes and play on the well-worn piano; and then every morning came Madame De St. Honoré, an old lady who instructed Mademoiselle Dolly in the grammar and literature of the country to which she belonged. French literature, according to Madame De St. Honoré, was in one snuffy volume which she happened to possess. Dolly asked no questions, and greatly preferred stray scenes out of "Athalie" and odd pages from "Paul and Virginia" to Noel and Chapsal, and l'Abbé Gaultier's "Geography." The two would sit at the dining-room table with the windows open, and the cupboard full of French china, and with the head of Socrates staring at them from over the stove.

Mr. Lovejoy had selected for his old friend a large and dilapidated set of rooms, the chairs and tables of which had seen better days, and had been in their prime during the classic furniture period of the Great Napoleon.

The tall white marble clock on the chimney-piece had struck nine, and Lady Sarah was sitting alone in the carpetless drawing-room on one of the stiff-backed chairs. It was early times for two girls of eleven and twelve to be popped away out of the world; but Lady Sarah was at that time a strict disciplinarian, and seemed to think that one of the grand objects of life was to go to bed and be up again an hour in advance of every body else.

"And so there is only dreaming till tomorrow morning," thought Dolly, with a dreary wide-awake sigh. Dolly and Henriette, her maid, had two beds side by side. Dolly used to lie wide awake in hers, watching the dawn as it streamed through the old flowered chintz curtains, and the shadows and pictures flying from the corners of the room; or, when the night-light burned dimly, and the darkness lay heaped against the walls, Dolly, still childish for her age, could paint pictures for herself upon them, bright phantasmagorias woven out of her brain,

faces and flowers and glittering sights such as those she saw when she was out in the daytime. Dolly thought the room was enchanted, and that fairies came into it as soon as Henriette was asleep and snoring. To-night little Rhoda was sleeping in the bed, and Henriette and Marker were sitting at work in the next room. They had left the door open; and presently, when they thought the children were asleep, began a low, mysterious conversation in French.

"She died on Tuesday," said Henriette, "and is to be buried to-morrow."

"She could not have been twenty," said Marker; "and a sweet, pretty lady. I can't think where it is I have seen such another as her."

"Pauvre dame!" said Henriette. "He feels her death very much. He is half distracted, Julie tells me."

"Serve him right, the brute! I should like to give it him!" cries the other.

"He looks such a handsome, smiling gentleman, that Mr. Rab—Rap— Who could have thought it possible?"

"Oh, they're all smiling enough," said Marker, who knew the world. "There was a young man in a grocer's shop—" And her voice sank into confidences still more mysterious.

"When they came to measure her for her coffin," said Henriette, who had a taste for the terrible, "they found she had grown since her death, poor thing. Julie tells me that she looks more beautiful than you can imagine. He comes and cries out, 'Emma! Emma!' as if he could wake her and bring her to life."

"Wake her and bring her to life to kill her again, the wretch!" said Marker, "with his neglect and cruelty."

"He is very young—a mere boy," said Henriette. "The concierge says there was no malice in him: and then he gave her such beautiful gowns! There was a moiré antique came home the day she died, with lace trimmings. Julie showed it me: she expects to get all the things. They were going to a ball at the Tuileries. How beautiful she would have looked!"

"Poor child!" said Marker.

"To die without ever putting it on! Dame! I should not like that; but I should like to have a husband who would buy me such pretty things. I would not mind his being out of temper now and then, and leaving me to do as I liked for a month or two at a time. I should have amused myself, instead of crying all day as she did. Julie tells me she has tried on the black velvet, and it fits her perfectly."

"Julie ought to be ashamed of herself," growled Marker, "with the poor child lying there still."

"Not in the least," said Henriette; "Julie was very fond of her when she was alive:

now she is dead—that is another thing. She says she would not stop in the room for worlds. She thought she saw her move yesterday, and she rushed away into the kitchen, and had an *attaque de nerfs* in consequence.”

“But did she tell nobody—could it have been true?”

“Françoise told *him*, and they went in immediately, but it was all silent as before. I am glad I sleep up stairs; I should not like to be in the room over that one. It is underneath there where are *les petites*.”

“She would do no one harm, now or when she was alive, poor thing,” said Marker. “I should like to flay that man alive.”

“That would be a pity, Mrs. Marker,” said Henriette: “a fine young man like that! He liked her well enough, allez! She cried too much. It was her own fault that she was not happy.”

“I would rather be her than him at this minute,” said Marker. “Why, he scolded and sulked and sneered and complained of the bills when he was at home, and went away for days together without telling her where he was going. I know where he was: he was gambling, and spending her money on other people. I’d pickle him, I would!” said Marker; “and I don’t care a snap for his looks; and her heart is as cold as his own now, poor little thing!”

“It’s supper-time, isn’t it?” yawned Henriette.

Then Dolly heard a little rustle, as they got up to go to their supper, and the light in the next room disappeared, and every thing seemed very silent. The night-light spluttered a little, the noises in the court-yard were hushed, the familiar chairs and tables looked queer and unknown in the darkness. Rhoda was fast asleep and breathing softly; Dolly was kicking about in her own bed, and thrilling with terror and excitement, and thinking of what she had heard of the poor pretty lady down stairs. She and Rhoda always used to rush to the window to see her drive off in her smart little carriage, wrapped in her furs, but all alone. Poor little lady! Her unkind husband never went with her, and used to leave her for weeks at a time. Her eyes used to shine through the veil that she always wore when they met her on the stairs; but Aunt Sarah would hurry past her, and never would talk about her. And now she was dead. Dolly looked at Rhoda lying so still on her white pillow. How would Rhoda look when she was dead? thought Dolly.

“Being asleep is being dead..... I dare say people would be more afraid of dying if they were not so used to go to sleep. When I am dying—I dare say I shall die about seventeen—I shall send for John Morgan, and George will come from Eton, and Aunt Sarah will be crying, and, perhaps, mamma

and Captain Palmer will be there; and I shall hold all their hands in mine and say, ‘Now be friends, for my sake.’ And then I shall urge George to exert himself more, and go to church on week-days; and then to Aunt Sarah I shall turn with a sad smile, and say, ‘Adieu! dear aunt, you never understood me—you fancied me a child when I had the feelings of a woman, and you sneered at me, and sent me to bed at eight o’clock. Do not crush George and Rhoda as you have crushed me: be gentle with them;’ and then I shall cross my hands over my chest and— and what then?” And a sort of shock came over the girl as, perhaps for the first time in her life, she realized the awful awakening. “Suppose they bury me alive? It is very common, I know—oh! no, no, no; that would be too horrible! Suppose that poor young lady is not dead down stairs—suppose she is alive, and they bury her to-morrow, and she wakes up, and it is all dark, and she chokes and cries out, and nobody hears..... Surely they will take precautions—they will make sure?..... Who will, I wonder? Not that wicked husband—not that horrid maid. But the poor lady underneath, I wonder who is sitting up with her? That wicked man has gone to gamble, I dare say; and Julie is trying on her dresses, and perhaps her eyes are opening now, and nobody to see—nobody to come! Ah, this is dreadful! I must go to sleep and forget it.”

Little Rhoda turned and whispered something in her dreams; Dorothy curled herself up in her nest and shut her eyes, and did go to sleep for a couple of hours, and then woke up again with a start, and thought it must be morning. Had not somebody called her by name? did not somebody whisper Dolly in her ear? so loud that it woke her out of a strange dream: a sort of dream in which strange clanging sounds rung round and round in the air; in which Dolly herself lay powerless, gasping and desperate, on her bed. Vainly she tried to move, to call, to utter; no one came.

Julie, in white satin, was looking at herself in the glass; the wicked husband was standing in the door with a horrible scowl. Rhoda, somehow, was quietly asleep in her bed. Ah, no! she too was dead; she would never wake; she would not come and save her. And just then Dolly awoke, and started up in bed with wide-open childish eyes. What a still, quiet room! What a dim light from the lamp! Who had spoken? Was it a warning? was it a call? was this dream sent to her as a token, as the people in the Bible dreamed dreams and dared not disobey them? Was this what was going on in the room below? was it for her to go down and save the poor lady, who might be calling to her? Something within her said, “Go, go,” and suddenly she found herself standing by the bedside, putting on her white dressing-

gown, and then pattering out barefooted across the wooden floors, out into the dark dining-room, out into the anteroom, all dark and black, opening the front-door (the key was merely turned in the lock), walking down stairs with the dim lamps glimmering and the moonlight pouring in at the blindless window, and standing at the door of the apartment below. Her only thought was wonder at finding it so easy. Then she laid her hand softly on the key and turned it, and the door opened, and she found herself in an anteroom like their own, only carpeted and alight. The room was under her own; she knew her way well enough. Into the dark dining-room she passed with a beating heart, and so came to a door beneath which a ray of light was streaming. And then she stopped. Was this a dream? was this really herself? or was she asleep in bed up stairs? or was she, perhaps, dead in her coffin? A qualm of terror came over her—should she turn and go?—her knees were shaking, her heart was beating so that she could hardly breathe; but she would not turn back—that would be a thousand times too cowardly. Just then she thought she heard a footstep in the dining-room. With a shuddering effort she raised her hand, and in an instant she stood in the threshold of the chamber. What! was this a sacred chapel? Silence and light, many flowers, tall tapers burning. It seemed like an awful dream to the bewildered child: the coffin stood in the middle of the room; she smelled a faint odor of incense, of roses, of scented tapers; and then her heart stood still as she heard a sudden gasping sigh, and against the light an awful shrouded figure slowly rising and seeming to come toward her. It was more than she could bear; the room span round, once more the loud clanging sounded in her ears, and poor Dolly, with a shuddering scream, fell to the ground.

A jumble of whispers, of vinegar, of water trickling down her back, and of an officious flapping wet handkerchief; of kind arms infolding her; of nurse saying, “Now she is coming to;” of Lady Sarah answering, “Poor little thing! she must have been walking in her sleep”—a strange new birth, new vitality pouring in at all her limbs, a dull identity coming flashing suddenly into life, and Dolly opened her eyes to find herself in the nurse’s arms, with her aunt bending over her, in the warm drawing-room up stairs. Other people seemed standing about—Henriette, and a man whom she could scarcely see with her dim weary eyes, and Julie. Dolly hid her face on the nurse’s shoulder.

“Oh, nurse, nurse! have you saved me?” was all she could say.

“What were you doing down stairs, you naughty child?” said Lady Sarah, in her

brisk tones. “Marker heard a noise and luckily ran after you.”

“Oh, Aunt Sarah, forgive me!” faltered Dolly. “I went to save the lady. I thought if she opened her eyes and there was no one there—and Julie trying on the dresses, and the wicked husband—I heard Henriette telling Marker— Oh, save me, save me!” and the poor little thing burst into tears and clung closer and closer.

“You are all safe, dear,” said Marker, “and the young lady is at rest where nothing will frighten or disturb her. Hush! don’t cry.”

“Poor little thing!” said the man, taking her hand; “do not be afraid; she is a saint in heaven. The nuns must have frightened you; and yet they are good women, and will pray and watch all through the night. You must go to sleep. Good-night.” And he raised the child’s hand to his lips and kissed it, and then seemed to go away.

“I’m ashamed of myself, my lady,” said Marker, “for having talked as I did with the chance of the children being awake to hear me. It was downright wicked, and I should like to bite my tongue out. Go to bed, Henriette. Be off, Mamzelle July, if you please.”

“We are all going to bed; but Henriette will get Miss Dolly a cup of chocolate first and a little bit of galette out of the cupboard,” said Lady Sarah.

Dolly was very fond of chocolate and galette; and this little impromptu supper by the drawing-room fire did more to quiet and reassure her than any thing else. But she was hardly herself as yet, and could only cling to Marker’s arm and hide her face away from them all. Her aunt kissed her once more, saying, “Well, I won’t scold you to-night; indeed, I am not sure but that you were quite right to go,” and disappeared into her own room. Then Henriette carried the candle, and Marker carried great big Dolly and laid her down by Rhoda in her bed; and the wearied and tired little girl fell asleep at last, holding Rhoda’s hand, and watching the faithful nurse as she sat sewing at the marble table.

CHAPTER VII.

CLOUD-CAPPED TOWERS AND GORGEOUS PALACES.

WHEN Dolly awoke next morning Rhoda was dressed and her bed was empty. The window had been opened, but the light was carefully shaded by the old brown curtains. Dolly lay quite still; she felt strangely tired, and as if she had been for a very long journey, toiling along a weary road. And so she had, in truth; she had traveled along a road that no one ever retraces; she had