stamped with many Indian stamps. Dolly's mother's letters always took a long time to read; they were written up and down and on different scraps of paper. Sometimes she sent whole bouquets of faded flowers in them to the children, sometimes patterns for dresses to be returned. Henriette brought the evening's mail in with the lamp and the tea-tray, and put the whole concern down with a clatter of cups and saucers on the table before Lady Sarah. There was also a thick blue lawyer-looking letter with a seal. The little girls peeped up shyly as Lady Sarah laid down her correspondence unopened beside her. She was a nervous woman, and afraid of unread letters; but after a little she opened the lilac epistle, and then began to flush, and turned eagerly to the second.

"Who is that from?" Dolly asked at last. "Is it from Captain Palmer?"

Her aunt laid one thin brown hand upon the letter, and went on pouring out the tea without speaking. Rhoda looked for a moment, and then stooped over her work once more. Long years afterward the quiet atmosphere of that lamp-lit room used to come round about Dolly again. The log fire flamed, the clock ticked on. How still it was! The leaves of her book scraped as she turned them, and Rhoda stuck her silken stitches. The roll of the carriages was so far away that it sounded like a distant sea. They were still sitting silent, and Dolly was wondering whether she might speak of the letter again and of its contents, when there came an odd muffled sound of voices and exclamations from the room underneath.

"Listen!" said Rhoda.

"What can it be?" said Dolly, shutting up her book and starting up from her chair as Henriette appeared at the door, with her white cap-strings flying, breathless.

"They were all disputing down stairs," she said. "Persons had arrived that evening. It was terrible to hear them."

Lady Sarah impatiently sent Henriette about her business, and the sounds died away, and the little girls were sent off to bed. In the morning her aunt's eyes were so red that Dolly felt sure she must have been crying. Henriette told them that the gentleman was gone. "Milady had been sent for before he left: she had lent him some money," said Henriette, "and paid the milliner's bill;" but the strange people who had come had remained. The lady had been packing up and carrying off every thing, to Julie's disgust. "A great stout lady and a little gentleman," said Henriette—connections, she imagined.

Events and emotions come very rarely alone; they fly in troops, like the birds. It was that very day that Lady Sarah told Dolly that she had had some bad news—she had lost a great deal of money. An Indian bank had failed in which they all had a share.

"Your mamma writes in great trouble," said Lady Sarah, reading out from a lilac scrap. "'Tell my precious Dolly that this odious bank will interfere once more with my heart's longing to see her. Captain Palmer insists upon a cruel delay. I am not strong enough to travel round the Cape, as he proposes. You, dear Sarah, might be able to endure such fatigue; but I, alas! have not the power. Once more my return is delayed.'"

"Oh, Aunt Sarah, will she ever come?" said Dolly, struggling not to cry......Dolly only cheered up when she remembered that they were ruined. She had forgotten it in her disappointment about her mother. "Are we really ruined?" she said, more hopefully. "We should not have spent that money yesterday. Shall we have to leave Church House? Poor mamma! Poor Aunt Sarah!"

"Poor Marker is most to be pitied," said Lady Sarah, "for we shall have to be very careful, and keep fewer maids, and wear out all our old dresses; but we need not leave Church House, Dolly."

"Then it is nothing after all," said Dolly, again disappointed. "I thought we should have had to go away and keep a shop, and that I should have worked for you. I should like to be your support in your old age, and mamma's too."

Then Lady Sarah suddenly caught Dolly in her arms, and held her tight for a moment—quite tight to her heart, that was beating tumultuously.

The next time Rhoda came out of her school for a day's holiday Lady Sarah took the little girls to a flower shop hard by. In the window shone a lovely rainbow of sun rays and flowers: inside the shop were glass globes and china pots, great white sprays of lilacs, lilies, violets, ferns, and hyacinths, and golden bells, stuck into emerald-blue vases, all nodding their fragrant heads. Lady Sarah bought a great bunch of violets and two yellow garlands made of dried immortelles.

"Do you know where we are going?" she asked.

Dolly didn't answer; she was sniffing, with her face buried in a green pot of mignonette.

"May I carry the garlands?" said Rhoda, raising her great round eyes. "I know: we are going to the poor lady's grave."

Then they got into the carriage, and it rolled off toward the heights.

They went out beyond the barriers of the town by dusty roads, with acacia-trees; they struggled up a steep hill, and stopped at last at the gate of the cemetery. All round about it there were stalls, with more wreaths and chaplets to sell, and little sacred images for the mourners to buy for the adornment of the graves. Children were at play, and birds singing, and the sunlight streamed

bright. Dolly cried out in admiration of the winding walks, shaded with early green, the flowers blooming, the tombs and the garlands, and the epitaphs, with their notes of exclamation. She began reading them out, and calling out so loudly that her aunt had to tell her to be quiet. Then Dolly was silent for a little, but she could not help it. The sun shone, the flowers were so bright; sunshine, spring-time, sweet flowers, all made her tipsy with delight; the thought of the kind, pretty lady, who had never passed her without a smile, did not make her sad just then, but happy. She ran away for a little while, and went to help some children who were picking daisies and tying them by a string.

When she came back, a little sobered down, she found that her aunt had scattered the violets over a new-made grave, and little Rhoda had hung the yellow wreath on the cross at its head.

Dolly was silent then for a minute, and stood, looking from her aunt, as she stood straight and gray before her, to little Rhoda, whose eyes were full of tears. What was there written on the cross?—

TO EMMA,
THE WIFE OF FRANCIS RABAN,
AND ONLY DAUGHTER OF DAVID PENFOLD, OF EARLSCOURT,
IN THE PARISH OF KENSINGTON.
DIED MARCH 20, 18—. AGED 22.

"Aunt Sarah," Dolly cried, suddenly, seizing her aunt's gown, "tell me, was that young Mr. Raban from John Morgan's house and Emma from the cottage? When he looked at me once I thought I knew him, only I didn't know who he could be."

"Yes, my dear," said Lady Sarah. "I did not suppose that you would remember them."

"I remembered," said Rhoda, nodding her head; "but I thought you did not wish me to say so."

"Why not?" asked Lady Sarah. "You are always imagining things, Rhoda. I had forgotten all about them myself; I had other things on my mind at the time they married;" and she sighed and looked away.

"It was when Dolly's papa—" Rhoda began.

"Mr. Raban reminded me of Kensington before he left," said Lady Sarah, hastily, in her short voice. "I was able to help him—foolish young man. It is all very sad, and he is very unhappy and very much to blame."

"Is he?" said Dolly; and then she walked away quietly; but before they got to the carriage she was at her rigs again.

This was their only visit to poor Emma Raban's grave. A few days after, Lady Sarah, in her turn, left Paris, and took Dolly and little Rhoda, whose schooling was over, home to England. Rhoda was rather sorry to be dropped at home at the well-known door in Old Street, where she lived with her aunt Morgan. Yes, it would open in a minute, and all her old life would begin again. Tom and Zoe and Cassie were behind it, with their loud voices. Dolly envied her; it seemed to her to be a noisy elysium of welcoming exclamations into which Rhoda disappeared.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BOW-WINDOWED HOUSE.

Rhoda, as she sat at her work, used to peep out of the bow-windows at the people passing up and down the street—a pretty girlish head, with thick black plaits pinned away, and a white frill round the slender throat. Sometimes, when Mrs. Morgan was out, Rhoda would untwist and unpin, and shake down a cloud upon her shoulders; then her eyes would gleam with a wild willful light as she looked at herself in the little glass in the work-box, but she would run away, if she heard any one coming, and hastily plait up her coils. The plain speaking and rough dealing of a household not attuned to the refinements of more sensitive natures had frightened instead of strengthening hers. She had learned to be afraid and reserved. She was timid and determined, but things had gone wrong with her, and she was neither brave nor frightened in the right way. She had learned to think for herself, to hold her own secretly against the universal encroachments of a lively race. She was obliging, and ready to sacrifice her own for others, but when she gave up she was conscious of the sacrifice. She could forgive her brother unto seven times. She was like the disciple, whose sympathy did not reach unto seventy times seven.

Rhoda was not strong, like Cassie and Zoe. She was often tired as she sat there in the window corner. She could not always touch the huge smoking heaps that came to table. When all the knives and forks and voices clattered together, they seemed to go through her head. The bells and laughter made her start. She would nervously listen for the boys' feet clattering down the stairs. At Church House there was a fresh silence. You could hear the birds chirruping in the garden all the time Lady Sarah was reading aloud. There were low comfortable seats covered with faded old chintz and tapestry. There were court ladies hanging on the walls. One wore a pearl necklace; she had dark bright eyes, and Rhoda used to look at her, and think her like herself, and wonder. There were books to read and times to read them at Church House, and there was Dolly always thinking how to give Rhoda pleasure. If she exacted a certain fealty and obedience from the little maiden, her rule was different from Aunt Morgan's. Dolly had no sheets to sew, no dusty cupboards to put straight, no horrible boys' shirts to front or socks to darn and darn and darn, while their owners were disporting themselves out-of-doors, and making fresh work for the poor little Danaides at home.

To Dolly Old Street seemed a delightful place. She never could understand why Rhoda was so unhappy there. It seemed to Dolly only too delightful, for George was forever going there when he was at home. The stillness of Church House, its tranquil order and cheerful depression, used to weary the boy: perhaps it was natural enough. Unless, as Rhoda was, they are constitutionally delicate, boys and girls don't want to bask all day long like jelly-fish in a sunny calm; they want to tire themselves, to try their lungs; noise and disorder are to them like light and air—wholesome tonics with which they brace themselves for the coming struggles of life. Later in life there are sometimes quite old girls and boys whose vitality can not be repressed. They go up mountains and drive steam-engines. They cry out in print, since it would no longer be seemly for them to shriek at the pitch of their voices, or to set off running violently, or to leap high in the air.

"The Morgans" certainly meant plenty of noise and cheerful clatter, the short tramp of school-boy feet, huge smoking dishes liberally dispensed. John Morgan would rush in, pale, breathless, and overworked, in a limp white neckcloth, as befitted his calling; he would utter a breathless blessing on the food, and begin hastily to dispense the smoking heap before him.

"Take care, John dear," cries Mrs. Morgan.

"What? where?" says John. "Why, George! come to lunch? Just in time."

It was in John Morgan's study that George established himself after luncheon. The two windows stood open as far as the old-fashioned sashes would go. The vine was straggling across the panes, wide spreading its bronzed and shining leaves. The sunlight dazzled through the green, making a pleasant flicker on the walls of the shabby room, with its worn carpet and old-fashioned cane chairs and deal book-cases.

A door opened into an inner room, through which George, by leaning forward from his arm-chair behind the door, can see Mrs. Morgan's cap-ribbons all on end against the cross light in the sitting-room windows. Cassie is kneeling on the floor, surrounded by piles of garments; while her brother, standing in the middle of the room, is rapidly checking off a list of various ailments and misfortunes that are to be balanced in the scales of fate by proportionate rolls of flannel and calico. Good little Cassie Morgan feels never a moment's doubt as she piles her heaps—so much sorrow, so many petticoats; so much hopeless improvidence, so many pounds of tea and a coal ticket. In cases of confirmed wickedness she adds an illuminated text sometimes, and a hymn-book. Do they ever come up, these hymn-books and bread tickets cast upon the waters? Is it so much waste of time and seed? After all, people can but work in their own way, and feel kindly toward their fellow-creatures. One seed is wasted, another grows up, as the buried flora of a country starts into life when the fields are plowed in after-years.

"Go on, Cassie," says Mrs. Morgan: "Bonker—Wickens—Costello."

"Costello is again in trouble," says John. "It is too bad of him, with that poor wife of his and all those children. I have to go round to the court about him now. Tell George I shall be back in ten minutes."

"I have kept some clothes for them," said Cassie. "They are such nice little children;" and she looks up flushed and all over ravelings at the relenting curate, who puts Mrs. Costello down in his relief-book.

All over John Morgan's study, chairs, and tables such books are lying, with pamphlets, blue books, black books, rolls, and registers, in confusion, and smelling of tobacco.

In this age of good reports and evil reports people seem like the two boys in Dickens's story, who felt when they had docketed their bills that they were as good as paid. So we classify our wrongs and tie up our miseries with red tape; we pity people by decimals, and put our statistics away with satisfied consciences. John Morgan wrote articles from a cold and lofty point of view, but he left his reports about all over the room, and would rush off to the help of any human being, deserving or undeserving. He had a theory that Heaven had created individuals as well as classes; and at this very moment, with another bang of the door, he was on his way to the police court to say a good word for the intemperate Costello, who was ruefully awaiting his trial in the dark cell below.

George, although comfortably established in the Morgan study, was also tired of waiting, and found the house unusually dull. For some time past he had been listening to a measured creaking noise in the garden; then came a peal of bells from the steeple; and he went to the window and looked out. The garden was full of weeds and flowers, with daisies on the lawn, and dandelions and milk-wort among the beds. It was not trimly kept, like the garden at home; but George, who was the chief gardener, thought it a far pleasanter place, with its breath of fresh breeze and its bit of blue over-roof. For flowers there were blush-roses, nailed against the wall, that Rhoda used to wear in her dark hair sometimes, when there were no earwigs in them; and blue flags, growing in the beds among spiked leaves; and London pride, and Cape jasmine, very sweet upon the air; and also ivy, creeping in a tangle of leaves and tendrils. The garden had been planted by the different inhabitants of the old brown house—each left a token. There was a medlar-tree, with one rotten medlar upon a branch, beneath which John Morgan would sit and smoke his pipe in the sun, while his pupils construed Greek upon the little lawn. Only Carlo was there now, stretching himself comfortably in the dry grass (Carlo was one of Bunch's puppies, grown up to be of a gigantic size and an unknown species). Tom Morgan's tortoise was also basking upon the wall. The creaking noise went on after the chimes had ceased, and George jumped out of window on to the water-butt to see what was the matter. He had forgotten the swing. It hung from a branch of the medlar-tree to the trellis, and a slim figure, in a limp cotton dress, sat clinging to the rope—a girl with a black cloud of hair falling about her shoulders. George stared in amazement. Rhoda had stuck some vine leaves in her hair, and had made a long wreath, that was hanging from the swing, and that floated as she floated. She was looking up with great wistful eyes, and for a minute she did not see him. As the swing rose and fell, her childish wild head went up above the wall and the branches against the blue, and down "upon a background of pure gold," where the Virginian creeper had turned in the sun. George thought it was a sort of tune she was swinging, with all those colors round about her in the sultry summer day. As he leaped down a feeling came over him as if it had all happened before, as if he had seen it and heard the creaking of the ropes in a dream. Rhoda blushed and slackened her flight. He seemed still to remember it all while the swing stopped by degrees; and a voice within the house began calling, "Rhoda! Rhoda!"

"Oh! I must go," said Rhoda, sighing. "I am wasting my time. Please don't tell Aunt Morgan I was swinging."

"Tell her!" said George. "What a silly child you are! Why shouldn't you swing?"

"Oh! she would be angry," said Rhoda, looking down. "I *am* very silly. I can't bear being scolded."

"Can't you?" says George, with his hands in his pockets. "I'm used to it, and don't mind a bit."

"I shouldn't mind it if—if I was you, and any one cared for me," said Rhoda, with tearful eyes. She spoke in a low, depressed voice.

"Nonsense!" said George; "every body cares for every body. Dolly loves you; so—so do we all."

"Do you?" said Rhoda, looking at him in a strange, wistful way, and brightening suddenly, and putting back all her cloudy hair with her hands. Then she blushed up, and ran into the house.

When George told Dolly about it, Dolly was very sympathizing, except that she said Rhoda ought to have answered when her aunt called her.

"She is too much afraid of being scolded," said Dolly.

"Poor little thing!" said George. "Listen to this," and he sat down to the piano. He had made a little tune he called "The Swing," with a minor accompaniment recurring again and again, and a pretty modulation.

"It is exactly like a swing," said Dolly. "George, you must have a cathedral some day, and make them sing all the services through."

"I shall not be a clergyman," said George, gravely. "It is all very well for Morgan, who is desperately in love. He has often told me that it would be his ruin if he were separated from Mrs. Carbury."

George, during his stay in Old Street (he had boarded there for some weeks during Lady Sarah's absence), had been installed general confidant and sympathizer, and was most deeply interested in the young couple's prospects.

"I believe Aunt Sarah has got a living when old Mr. Livermore dies," he went on, shutting up the piano and coming to the table where Dolly was drawing. "We must get her to present it to John Morgan."

"But she always says it is for you, George, now that the money is lost," said Dolly. "I am afraid it will not be any use asking her. George, how much is prudent?"

"How much is how much?" says George, looking with his odd blue eyes.

"I meant prudent to marry on?" says Dolly.

"Oh, I don't know," said George, indifferently. "I shall marry on any thing I may happen to have."

"What are you children talking about?" said Lady Sarah, looking up from her corner by the farthest chimney-piece. She liked one particular place by the fire, from which she could look down the room at the two heads that were bending together over the round table, and out into the garden, where a west wind was blowing, and tossing clouds and ivy sprays.

"We are talking about prudence in marriage," says George.

"How can you be so silly?" says Lady Sarah, sharply. At which George starts up offended, and marches through the window into the garden.

"What is it?" said the widow. "Yes, Dolly, go to him," she said, in answer to Dolly's pleading eyes. "Foolish boy!"

The girl was already gone. Her aunt watched the white figure, flying with windblown locks and floating skirts along the ivy wall. Dolly caught her brother up by the speckled holly-tree, and the two went on together, proceeding in step to a triumphant music of sparrows overhead, a wavering of ivy along their path; soft winds blew every where, scattering light leaves; the summer's light was in the day, and shining from the depth of Dolly's gray eyes. The two went and sat down on the beach by the pond, the old stone-edged pond, that reflected scraps of the blue-green overhead; a couple of gold-fishes alternately darted from side to side. George forgot that he was not understood as he sat there throwing pebbles into the water. Presently the wind brought some sudden voices close at hand, and, looking up, they saw two people advancing from the house, Robert Henley walking by Lady Sarah and carrying her old umbrella.

"Oh, he is always coming," said George, kicking his heels, and not seeming surprised. "He is staying with his grandmother at the Palace, but they don't give him enough to eat, and so he drops in to the Morgans', and now he comes here."

"Hush!" said Dolly, looking round.

Robert Henley was a tall, handsome young fellow, about twenty, with a straight nose and a somewhat pompous manner. He was very easy and good-natured when it was not too much trouble; he would patronize people both younger and older than himself with equally good intentions. George's early adoration for his cousin, I fear, is now tinged with a certain jealousy, of which Robert is utterly unconscious; he takes the admiration for granted. He comes up and gives Dolly an affable kiss. "Well, Dolly, have you learned to talk French? I want to hear all about Paris."

"What shall I tell you?" says simple Dolly, greatly excited. "We had such a pretty drawing-room, Robert, with harps on all the doors, and yellow sofas, and such a lovely, lovely view." And Lady Sarah smiled at Dolly's enthusiasm, and asked Robert if he could stay to dinner.

"I shall be delighted," says Robert, just like a man of the world. "My grandmother has turned me out for the day."

CHAPTER X.

A SNOW GARDEN.

Is it that evening or another that they were all assembled in the little bow-windowed drawing-room in Old Street listening to one of Rhoda's interminable "pieces" that she learned at her French school? And then came a quartette, but she broke down in the accompaniment, and George turned her off the music-stool.

The doors were open into John's inner room, from which came a last western gleam of light through the narrow windows, and beyond the medlar-tree. It would have been dark in the front-room but for those western windows. In one of them sat Lady Sarah leaning back in John's old leathern chair, sitting and listening, with her hands lying loosely crossed in her lap, to the youthful din of music and voices and the strumming piano and the laughter. She had come by Dolly's special request. Her presence was considered an honor by Mrs. Morgan, but an effort at the same time. In her endeavors to entertain her guest, Mrs. Morgan, bolt upright in another corner, had fallen asleep, and was nodding her head in this silent inner room. There was noise and to spare in the front-room; people in the street outside stopped to listen to the music.

When George began to play it seemed another music altogether coming out of the old cracked yellow piano; smash, bang, crack, he flew at it, thumping the keys, missing half the notes, sometimes jumbling the accompaniment, but seizing the tune and spirit of the music with a genuine feeling that was irresistible.

"Now all together," cries George, getting excited.

It was an arrangement of one of Mendelssohn's four-part songs. "As pants the hart," sang Rhoda, shrill and sweet, leading the way. "As pants the hart," sang George, with a sort of swing. "As pants the hart," sang Dolly, carefully and restrainedly. She sang with great precision for a child of her age, quietly, steadily; but even her brother's enthusiasm did not inspire her. George flung his whole impulse into his music, and banged a chord at her in indignation at her tameness. John Morgan piped away with a face of the greatest seriousness, following his pupil's lead: he had much respect for George's musical capabilities. Cassie and Zoe sang one part together, and now and then Robert Henley came out with a deep trumpet-like note, placing it when he saw an opportunity. Dolly laughed the first time, but Rhoda's dark eyes were raised admiringly. So they all stood in the twilight, nodding their heads and clearing their voices, happy and harmlessly absorbed. They might have stood for a choir of angels; any one of the old Italian masters might have painted them as they sang, with the addition of lilies and wings, and gold glories, and the little cherubim who seemed to have flitted quite innocently out of ancient mythologies into the Legende Dorée of our own days, indifferently holding the music for a St. Cecilia, or the looking-glass for the Mother of Love.

Dolly, with her flowing locks, stood like a little rigid Raphael maiden, with eyes steadily fixed upon her scroll. Rhoda blushed and shrilled and brightened. How well a golden glory would have become her dark cloudy hair!

As the room darkened Cassie set some lights, and they held them to read their music by. George kept them all at work, and gave no respite except to Rhoda, whose feelings he feared he had hurt. "Please come and turn over my music, Rhoda," he said; "Dolly's not half quick enough."

He had found some music in an old box at home the day before, some old-fashioned glees, with a faded and flourishing dedication to the Right Honorable the Countess of Churchtown, and then in faint ink, S. C. 1799.

It was easy music, and they all got on well enough, picking out the notes. Lady Sarah could remember her mother playing that same old ballad of "Ye gentlemen of England" when she was herself quite a little girl. One old tune after another came, and mingled with Mrs. Morgan's sleeping, Lady Sarah's waking dreams of the past that was her own, and of the future that was to be for others; as the tunes struck upon her ear, they seemed to her like the new lives all about her repeating the old notes with fresh voices and feelings. George was in high good humor, behaving very well until Robert displeased him by taking somebody else's part; the boy stopped short, and there might have been some discussion, but Mrs. Morgan's fat maid came in with the tray of gingerbread-nuts, and the Madeira and orange wine, that the hospitable old lady delighted to dispense, and set it down with a jingle in the back-room where the elder ladies were sitting.

This gingerbread tray was the grand closing scene of the entertainment, and Robert affably handed the wine-glasses, and John Morgan, seizing the gingerbread-nuts, began scattering them all about the room as he forced them upon his unwilling guests. He had his sermon to finish for the next day, and he did not urge them to remain. There was a little chattering in the hall: Dolly was tied up and kissed and tucked up in her shawl; Lady Sarah donned a capoche (as I think she called it); they stepped out into the little star-lit street, of which the go-to-bed lights were already burning in the upper windows. Higher still was Orion and his mighty company, looking down upon the humble illumination of the zigzag roofs. The door of the bow-windowed house opened to let out the voices. "Good-night," cried every body, and then the door closed, and all was silent again, except for the footsteps traveling down the street.

"Do you ever think of all the people lying out flat in long rows as you go along at night?" George was saying to Dolly; "I do."

"Like nine-pins," said Robert, offering his arm to Lady Sarah. That lady pushed it impatiently away. There was nothing annoyed her so much as little unnecessary attentions; so Henley, repulsed, fell back and came along the middle of the road with the other two, who began asking him how long he was to be in town.

Fifteen or twenty years ago, as I have said, Dolly Vanborough and the other ladies and gentlemen her contemporaries were not the respectable middle-aged people they are now, but for the most part foolish young folks just beginning their lives, looking out upon the world with respectful eyes, arrogant—perhaps dogmatic, uncertain—but with a larger belief, perhaps a more heroic desire, than exists among them now. To-day, for a good many of them, expediency seems a great discovery, and the stone that is to turn every thing to gold. Take things as you find them; do so and so, not because you feel inclined, or because it is right and generous, but because the neighbors are looking on, and it is expected of you; and then, with our old friend the donkey-man, we stagger off, carrying the ass upon our shoulders. I suppose it is a law of nature that the horizon should lower as we climb down the hill of life, only some people look upward always, "and stumble among the briers and tumble into the well." This is true enough as regards my heroine, who was often in trouble, often disappointed, ashamed, angry, but who will persist in her star-gazing to the end of her journey.

When Dolly was nearly fifteen her brother George was eighteen, and had just gone to college, starting in high spirits, and with visions of all the letters of the alphabet before him, and many other honorable distinctions. Dolly, dazzled, helped to pack his portmanteau.

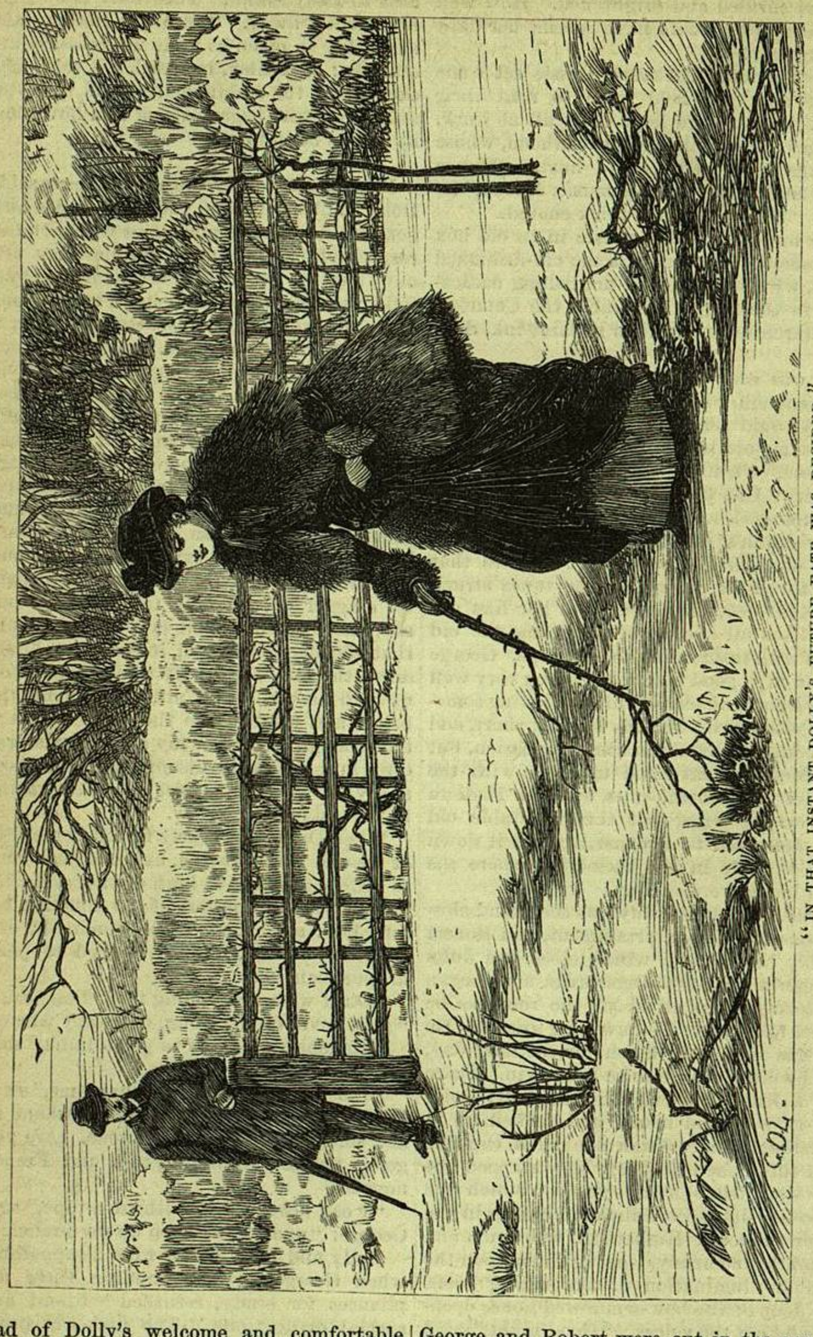
"Oh, I wish I was going too!" Dolly said; "girls never do any thing, or go any where."

"Mamma wants you to go to India," said George.

"But the Admiral won't have me," says Dolly; "he wrote to Aunt Sarah about it, and said they were coming home. Are you going to take all these pipes and French novels?"

"I can never study without a pipe," said George; "and I must keep up my French."

Dolly and Lady Sarah were disappointed when George, notwithstanding these appliances for study, returned without any special distinctions. The first Christmas that he came back he brought Robert Henley with him. The old grandmother in the Palace was dead, and the young man had no longer a lodging in Kensington. The two arrived after dinner, and found Lady Sarah established by the fire in the oak parlor. They had come up driving through a fierce Christmas wind from the station, and were



"IN THAT INSTANT DOLLY'S FUTURE FATE WAS DECIDED."

glad of Dolly's welcome and comfortable cups of tea.

When Dolly awoke next morning up in her little room the whole country was white with snow. The iron wind was gone, the rigid breath of winter had sobbed itself away, the soft, new-fallen snow lay heaped on the fields and the hedges, on the fir-trees and laurels. Dolly ran to the window. George and Robert were out in the garden already. Overhead was a blue, high heaven; the white snow-country she could see through her window was sparkling and dazzling white. Sharp against the heavens stood the delicate branches of the trees, prismatic lights were radiating from the sloping lawns, a light veil of falling drift wreathed the distant coppices; and Dolly,

running down stairs soon after, found the dining-room empty, except for the tea-pot, and she carried her breakfast to the window. She had scarcely finished when George and Robert both came tapping at the pane.

"Come out!" cried George.

"Let her finish her breakfast," said Robert.

"I've done!" cried Dolly, gayly jumping up and running to fetch her hat and her coat, and to tie up her long skirts. Dolly possessed a warm fur cloak, which had been Lady Sarah's once, in the days of her prosperity, and which became the girl so well that her aunt liked her to wear it. Henley, standing by a frozen cabbage in the kitchen-garden, watched her approvingly as she came along the snowy path. All her brown furs were glistening comfortably; the scarlet feather in her hat had caught the light and reflected it on her hair.

Dolly's hair was very much the color of seal-skin, two-colored; the hollows of its rippling locks seemed dark, while the crests shone like gold. There was something autumnal in her colors. Dolly's was a brilliant russet autumn, with gray skies and red berries and warm lights. She had tied a scarlet kerchief round her neck, but the snow did not melt for all her bright colors. How pretty it was! leaves lying crisped and glittering upon the white foaming heaps, tiny tracks here and there crossing the pathways, and then the bird-steps, like chainlets lightly laid upon the smooth, white field. Where the sun had melted the snow in some sheltered corner some redbreasts were hopping and bobbing; the snow-sheets glittered, lying heavy on the laurel leaves on the low fruit walls.

Robert watched her coming, with her honest, smiling face. She stopped at the end of the walk to clear away a corner of the bed, where a little colony of snow-drops were crushed by a tiny avalanche that had fallen upon their meek heads. It was the work of an instant, but in that instant Dolly's future fate was decided.

For, as my heroine comes advancing unconscious through this snow and diamond morning, Henley thinks that is the realization of a dream he has sometimes dreamed, and that the mistress of his future home stands there before him, bright and bonnie, handsome and outspoken. Dorothy rules him with the ascendency of a youthful, indifferent heart, strong in its own reliance and hope; and yet this maiden is not the person that she thinks herself, nor is she the person that Henley thinks her. She is strong, but with an artificial strength not all her own; strong in the love of those round about her, strong in youth and in ignorance of evil.

They walked together down the garden walks and out into the lanes, and home again across the stile. "Dolly," said Robert, as they were going in, "I shall not forget our morning's expedition together. Will you, too, promise me—" He stopped short. "What are those?" he said, sentimentally; "snow-drops?" and he stooped to pick one or two. Dolly also turned away. "Here is something that will remind you—" Robert began.

"And you," cries Dolly, flinging a great snow-heap suddenly into his face and running away. It was very babyish and vulgar, but Robert looked so solemn that she could not resist the impulse. He walked back to the house greatly offended.

CHAPTER XI.

RABAN MEETS THE SHABBY ANGEL.

Sometimes winter days come in autumn, just as hours of old age and middle age seem to start out of their places in the due rotation of life and to meet us on the way. One October evening in the following year a damp fog was spreading over London; the lights from the windows streamed faintly upon the thick veils of vapor. Many noisy shadows were out and about it, for it was Saturday night, and the winding Kensington thoroughfare was almost blocked by the trucks and the passers-by. It was only six o'clock, but the last gleam of light had died away behind the western chimney-tops, and with the darkness, and notwithstanding the fog, a cheerful saturnalia had begun. A loitering, a clamoring through the clouds of mist, witches with and without broomsticks, little imps darting through the crowd, flaring trucks drawn up along the road, housewives bargaining their Sunday dinners. It seemed a confusion of darkness, candles, paper-shades, oranges, and what not. Now and then some quiet West End carriage would roll by, with lamps burning, through the mist, and horses tramping steadily. Here and there a bending head might be seen in some lighted window—it was before the time of Saturday half-holidays—the forge was blazing and hard at work, clink, clank fell the iron strokes, and flames flashed from the furnace.

Beyond the church and the arch and the forge the shop lights cease, the fog seems to thicken, and a sudden silence to fall upon every thing; while the great veils spread along the road, hiding away how many faces, hearths, and home-like rays. There are sometimes whole years in one's life that seem so buried beneath some gloomy shadow; people come and go, lights are burning, and voices sound, but the darkness hangs over every thing, and the sun never seems to rise. A dull-looking, broad-shouldered young man with a beard had come elbowing his way through the crowd, looking about him as he came along. After a moment's hesitation he turned up a side lane,