



"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 ascendancy 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,

looming away out of the region of lamps. It was so black and silent that he thought at first he must have been mistaken. He had been carefully directed, but there seemed no possibility of a house. He could just make out two long walls; a cat ran hissing along the top of one of them, a wet foggy wind flickered in his face, and a twig broke from some branch overhead. Frank Raban, for it was he, wondered if the people he was in search of could be roosting on the trees or hiding behind the walls this damp evening.

He was turning back in despair when suddenly a door opened with a flash of light through the brick-work, and a lantern was held out.

"Good-night," said a loud, cheerful voice. "Why, your street lamp is out; take my arm, Rhoda. Go in, Dorothea, you will catch cold." And two figures, issuing from the wall like apparitions in the "Arabian Nights," passed by hurrying along—a big, comfortable great-coat, and a small, dark thing tripping beside it. Meanwhile the person who had let them out peeped for an instant into the blackness, holding the lantern high up so as to throw its light upon the lane. There came a sudden revelation of the cranies of an old brick wall, of creeping green ivy, rustling in the light which seemed to flow from leaf to leaf, and of a young face smiling upon the dim vapors. It was all like the slide of a magic lantern passing on the darkness. Raban almost hesitated to come forward, but the door was closing on the shining phantasmagoria.

"Does Lady Sarah Francis live here?" he said, coming up.

The girl started—looked at him. She, in turn, saw a red beard and a pale face appearing unexpectedly, and with a not unnatural impulse she half closed the door. "Yes," she said, retreating a step or two toward the house, which Raban could now see standing ghost-like within the outer wall. It was dimly lighted, here and there, from the deep windows. It seemed covered with tangled creepers. Over the open hall door an old-fashioned stone canopy still hung, dripping with fog and overgrown with ivy.

The girl, with her lantern, stood waiting on the steps. A blooming maiden in a dark green dress, cut in some quaint old-fashioned way, and slashed with black. Her dress was made of coarse, homely stuff, but a gold chain hung round her neck; it twinkled in the lantern light. Her reddish-brown hair was pinned up in pretty twists, and some berries glistened among its coils.

"If you want to see Lady Sarah," she said, a little impatiently, "come in, and shut the garden door."

He did as he was bid. She ran up the steps into the house, and stood waiting in the old hall, scanning him still by her lamp-

light. She had put the lantern on a corner of the carved chimney-sill, from whence its glimmers fell upon oaken panels, and black and white flags of marble, upon a dark oak staircase winding up into the house.

"Will you go in there?" said the girl, in a low voice, pointing to an open door.

Then she quickly and noiselessly barred and fixed the heavy bolts; her hands slid along the old iron hasps and hooks. Raban stood watching her at work; he found himself comparing her to an ivy plant, she seemed to bloom so freshly in the damp and darkness, as she went moving hither and thither in her odd green gown. The next minute she was springing up the staircase. She stopped, however, on the landing, and leaned over the balusters to point again, with a stiff quick gesture, to the open door.

Raban at last remembered that he had not given his name. "Will you kindly say that—"

But the green dress was gone, and Raban could only walk into the dark room, and make his way through unknown passes to a smouldering fire dying on the hearth. On his way he tumbled over a growl, a squeak. Then a chair went down, and a cat gave a yell and sprang into the hall. It was an odd sort of place, and not like any thing that Raban had expected. The usual proprieties of life have this advantage, that people know what is coming, and pull at a wire with a butler or a parlor-maid at the other end of it, who also know their parts, and in their turn correspond with an invisible lady up stairs, at the right-hand corner of the drawing-room fire-place. She is prepared to come forward with a nice bow, and to point to the chair opposite, which is usually on casters, so that you can pull it forward; and as you sit down you say, "I dare say you may remember," or "I have been meaning to," or, etc.

But the whole machinery seemed wanting here, and Frank Raban remained in the dark, looking through the unshuttered black windows, or at the smouldering ashes at his feet. At first he speculated on the ivy-maiden, and then, as the minutes went by and no one came, his mind traveled back through darkness all the way to the last time he had met Lady Sarah Francis, and the old sickening feeling came over him at the thought of the past. In these last few years he had felt that he must either fight for life or sink forever. Heaven knows, it was through no merit of his own that he had not been utterly wrecked; that he was here to-night, come to repay the debt he owed; that, more fortunate than many, he had struggled to shore. Kind hands had been held out to help him to drag safe out of the depths. Lady Sarah's was the first; then came the younger, firmer grasp of some

of his companions, whom he had left but a year or two ago in the old haunts, before his unlucky start in life. It was habit that had taken him back to these old haunts at a time when, by a fortunate chance, work could be found for him to do. His old friends did not fail him; they asked no questions; they did not try to probe his wounds; they helped him to the best of their ability, and stood by him as men stand by each other, particularly young men. No one was surprised when Mr. Raban was elected to one of the tutorships at All Saints. He had taken a good degree; he had been popular in his time, though now he could not be called a popular man. Some wondered that it should be worth his while to settle down upon so small an inducement. Henley, of St. Thomas's, had refused it when it was pressed upon him. Perhaps Raban had private means. He had lived like a rich man, it was said, after he left college. Poor Frank! Those two fatal years had eaten up the many lean kine that were to follow. All he had asked for now was work, and a hope of saving up enough to repay those who had trusted him in his dismay. His grandfather had refused to see him after his marriage. Frank was too proud a man to make advances, but not too proud to work. He gratefully took the first chance that came in his way. The morning he was elected he went to thank one or two of his supporters. He just shook hands, and said, "Thank you;" but they did not want any fine speeches, nor was Frank inclined to make them.

Three years are very long to some people, while they are short to others. Mrs. Palmer had spent them away from her children not unpleasantly, except for one or two very passing differences with the captain, who had now, it was said, taken to offering up public prayers for Philippa's conversion. Lady Sarah had grown old in three years. She had had illness and money troubles, and was a poor woman, comparatively speaking. Her hair had turned white, her face had shrunk, while Dolly had bloomed into brightness, and Frank Raban had grown into middle age, as far as hope and feeling went. There he sat in the warm twilight, thinking of the past—ah! how sadly! He was strong enough for to-day, and not without trust in the future; but he was still almost hopeless when he thought of the past. He had not forgiven himself. His was not a forgiving nature, and as long as he lived, those two fatal years of his life would make part of his sorrowful experience. Once Sarah Francis had tried to tell him—(but many things can not be understood except by those who have first learned the language)—that for some people the only possible repentance is to do better. Mere repentance, that dwelling upon past misery and evil-doing which people call re-

morse, is, as often as not, madness and meaningless despair.

Sometimes Frank wondered now at the irritation which had led him to rebel so furiously at his fate. Poor, gentle fate! he could scarcely understand his impatience with it now. Perhaps, if Emma had lived—

We often, in our blindness, take a bit of our life, and look at it apart as an ended history! We take a phase incomplete, only begun, perhaps, for the finished and irrevocable whole. Irrevocable it may be, in one sense, but who shall say that the past is completed because it is past, any more than that we ourselves are completed because we die? Frank had not come to look at his own personal misdoings philosophically (as what honest man or woman would?), or with any thing but shrinking pain as yet; he could bear no allusion to those sad days.

"You know Paris well, I believe, Mr. Raban," said some young lady. "How long is it since—"

He looked so odd and angry that she stopped, quite frightened. Dark, fierce lines used to come under his heavy eyes at the smallest attempt to revive what was still so recent and vivid. If it was rude, he could not help it.

He never spoke of himself. Strangers used to think Raban odd and abrupt when he sometimes left them in the middle of a sentence, or started away and did not answer. His old friends thought him changed, but after a great crisis we are used to see people harder. And this one talks, and you think he has told you all; and that one is silent, and he thinks he has told you nothing. Feelings come and go, the very power to understand them comes and goes, gifts and emotions pass, our inmost feelings change as we go on wandering through the narrow worlds that lie along the commonest commonplaces and ways of life. Into what worlds had poor Frank been wandering as he stood watching the red lights dull into white ashes by the blue tiles of the hearth!

Presently a lantern and two dark heads passed the window.

"Where is he?" said a voice in the hall. "Dolly, did you say Mr. Raban was here? What! all in the dark?"

The voice had reached the door by this time, and some one came and stood there for an instant. How well he remembered the kindly croaking tones! When he heard them again it seemed to him as if they had only finished speaking a minute before.

Some one came and stood for an instant at the doorway. No blooming young girl with a bright face and golden head, but a gray-haired woman, stooping a little as she walked. She came forward slowly, set her light upon the table, and then looked at him with

a pair of kind, shaggy eyes, and put out her long hand as of old.

Raban felt his heart warm toward the shabby face, the thick, kindly brows. Once that woman's face had seemed to him like an angel's, in his sorest need. Who says angels must be all young and splendid? Will there not be some comforting ones, shabby and tender, whose radiance does not dazzle nor bewilder; whose faces are worn, perhaps, while their stars shine with a gentle tremulous light, more soothing to our aching, earth-bound hearts than the glorious radiance of brighter spirits? Raban turned very red when he saw his old friend. "How could you know I was here? You have not forgotten me?" he said; not in his usual reluctant way, but speaking out with a gentle tone in his voice. "I should have come before, but I—" Here he began to stammer and to feel in his pocket. "Here it is," and he pulled out a packet. "If it hadn't been for you, I should never have had the heart to set to work again. I don't know what I should have done," he repeated, "but for you." And then he looked at her for an instant, and then, with a sudden impulse, Raban stooped—as he did so she saw his eyes were glistening—he stooped and kissed her cheek.

"Why, my dear!" said Lady Sarah, blushing up. She had not had many kisses in her life. Some people would as soon have thought of kissing the poker and tongs.

Raban blushed up too, and looked a little foolish, but he quickly sobered down again. "You will find it all right," he went on, quietly. "The one hundred and fifty pounds you lent me, and the interest for three years at five per cent., make one hundred and sixty-five pounds," said Raban, folding her long thin hand over the little parcel. "And good-night, and thank you."

Still Lady Sarah hesitated. She could not bear to take it. She felt as though he had paid her twice over; that she ought to give it back to him, and say, "Here, keep it. I don't want your money, only your kiss and your friendship. I was glad to help you." But no, she *could* not give it back, she wanted the money so. She looked up in his pale face in a strange wistful way, scanning it with her gray eyes. They almost seemed to speak, and to say, "You don't know how I want it, or I would not take it from you."

"How changed you are!" she said at last, speaking very slowly. "I am afraid you have been working too hard to pay me. I oughtn't to—" He was almost annoyed by this wistful persistency. Why did she stand hesitating? Why did she not take it and put it in her pocket, and have done with it? Now again she was looking at the money with a pathetic look. And meanwhile Raban was wondering, Could it be that this

woman cared for money—this woman who had forced her help upon him so generously? He hated himself for the thought. This was the penalty, he told himself, for his own past life—this fatal suspicion and mistrust of others. Even his benefactress was not to be spared.

"I must be going," he said, starting away, in his old stiff manner. "You will let me come again, won't you?"

"Come again! Of course you will come again," Lady Sarah said, laying her thin fingers on his arm. "I shall not let you go now until you have seen my Dolly." And so saying, she led him back into the hall. "Go in; you will find her there. I will come back," said Lady Sarah, abruptly, with her hand on the door-handle. She looked quite old and feeble as she leaned against the oak. Then again she seemed to remember herself. "You—you will not say any thing of this," she added, with a sudden imploring look; and she opened her thin fingers, still clutching the packet of bank-notes and gold, and closed them again.

Then he saw her take the lantern from the chimney and hurriedly toil up the stairs, and he felt somehow that she was going to hide it away.

What would he have thought if he could have seen her safe in her own room, with the sovereigns spread out upon the bed and the bank-notes, while the poor soul stood eagerly counting over her store? Yes, she loved money, but there were things she loved still more, and for them she hoarded, and, at need, dispensed her secret stores for them—she sacrificed even her feelings. Sarah Francis, alone in the world, might have been a miser if she had not loved Dolly so dearly—Dolly, who was Stan's daughter. There was always just this difference between Lady Sarah and open-handed people. With them money means little—a moment's weakness, a passing interest. With Lady Sarah to give was doubt, not pleasure; it meant disorder in her balanced schemes; it meant truest self-denial; to give was to bestow on others what she meant for Dolly's future ease and happiness; and yet she gave.

CHAPTER XII.

DOROTHEA BY FIRE-LIGHT.

LADY SARAH had left Raban to go into the drawing-room alone. It was all very strange, he thought, and more and more like a crazy dream. He found himself in a long room of the color of fire-light, with faded hangings sweeping mysteriously from the narrow windows, with some old chandeliers swinging from the shadows. It seemed to him, though he could not clearly see them, that there were ghosts sitting on the chairs,

denizens of the kingdom of mystery, and that there was a vague fit and consternation in the darkness at the farther end of the room, when through the opening door the gleam of the lantern, which by this time was traveling up stairs, sped on with a long slanting flash. For a moment he thought the place was empty; the atmosphere was very warm and still; the fire-light blazed comfortably; a coal started from the grate; then came a breath, a long, low, sleepy breath from a far-away corner. Was this a ghost? And then, as his eyes got accustomed, he saw that the girl who had let him in sat crouching by the fire. Her face was turned away; the light fell upon her throat and the harmonious lines of her figure. Raban, looking at her, thought of one of Leonardo's figures in the Louvre. But this was finer than a Leonardo. What is it in some attitudes that is so still, and yet that thrills with a coming movement of life and action? It is like the harmony of a bar progressing to its keynote; it is life, not inanimately resting, but suspended from motion, as we see it in the old Greek art. That flying change from the now to the future is a wonder sometimes written in stone. It belongs to the greatest creations of genius as well as to the living statues and pictures among which we live.

So Dolly, unconscious, was a work of art as she warmed her hands at the fire; her long draperies were heaped round about her, her hair caught the light and burned like gold. If Miss Vanborough had been a conscious work of art, she might have remained in her pretty attitude; but being a girl of sixteen, simple and somewhat brusque in manners, utterly ignoring the opinions of others, she started up and came to meet Raban, advancing quick through the dimness and the familiar labyrinth of chairs.

"Hush—sh!" she said, pointing to a white heap in a further corner. "Rhoda is asleep; she has been ill, and we have brought her here to nurse." Then she went back in the same quick silence, brought a light from the table, and, beckoning to him to follow her, led the way to the very darkest and shadiest end of the long drawing-room, where the ghosts had been flitting before them. There was a tall oak chair, in which she established herself. There was an old cabinet and a sofa, and a faded Italian shield of looking-glass, reflecting waves of brown and reddish light. Again Dolly motioned. Raban was to sit down there on the sofa opposite.

Since he had come into the house he had done little but obey the orders he had received. He was amused and not a little mystified by this young heroine's silent imperious manners. He did not admire them, and yet he could not help watching her, half in wonder, half in admiration of her beauty. She, as I have said, did not think

of speculating upon the impression she had created; she had other business on hand.

"I knew you at once," said Dolly, with the hardihood of sixteen, "when I saw you at the gate." As she spoke in her girlish voice somehow the mystery seemed dispelled, and Raban began to realize that this was only a drawing-room and a young lady after all. Miss Vanborough was sitting on the high-backed chair erect, and like a picture, with her gold chain round her neck.

"Ever since your letter came last year," she continued, unabashed, "I have hoped that you would come; and—and you have paid her the money she lent you, have you not?" said the girl, looking into his face doubtfully, and yet confidently too.

Raban answered by an immense stare. He was a man almost foolishly fastidious and reserved. He was completely taken aback and shocked by her want of discretion—so he chose to consider it. Dolly, utterly inexperienced and unused to the ways of the world, had not yet appreciated those refinements of delicacy with which people envelop the simplest facts of life.

Raban, living alone as he had done so long, at all times uncomfortably silent respecting himself, with no intimate friends to exercise his powers of confidence upon, could not be expected to give the details of his private affairs to this almost strange girl. "Dolly" conveyed no meaning whatever to his mind, although he might have guessed who she was. Even if Lady Sarah had not asked it of him, he would not have answered her. Whatever they may say, reserved people pique themselves upon some mental superiority in the reservations they make. Miss Vanborough misinterpreted the meaning of the young man's confused looks and silence.

He had not paid the money! she was sorry. Oh, how welcome it would have been for Aunt Sarah's sake and for George's sake! Poor George! how should she ever ask for money for him now? Her face fell; she tried to speak of other things to hide her disappointment. Now she wished she had not asked the question—it must be so uncomfortable for Mr. Raban, she thought. She tried to talk on; one little sentence came jerking out after another, and Raban answered more or less stiffly. "Was he not at Cambridge? Did he know her brother there—George Vanborough?"

Raban looked surprised, and said, "Yes, he knew a Mr. Vanborough slightly. He had known him at his tutor's years before." Here a vision of a stumpy young man flourishing a tankard rose before him. Could he be this beautiful girl's brother?

"Did he know her cousin, Robert Henley?" continued Dolly, eagerly.

Raban (who had long avoided Henley's companionship) answered even more stiffly

that he had been a pupil of his, but did not see much of him. So the two talked on; but they had got into a wrong key, as people do at times, and they mutually jarred upon each other. Even their silence was inharmonious. Occasionally came a long, low, peaceful breath: it seemed floating on the warm shadows.

Every thing was perfectly commonplace, and yet to Raban there seemed an element of strangeness and incongruity in the ways of the old house. There was something weird in the whole thing—the defiant girl, the sleeping woman, Lady Sarah, with her strange hesitations and emotions, and the darkness. How differently events strike people from different points of view! Here was a commonplace half hour, while old Sam prepared the seven-o'clock tea with Marker's help, while Rhoda slept a peaceful little sleep. To Raban it seemed a strange and puzzling experience, quite out of the common run of half hours.

Did he dislike poor Dolly? That off-hand manner was not Frank Raban's ideal of womanliness. Lady Sarah, with her chilled silence and restrained emotions, was nearer to it by far, old and ugly though she was. And yet he could not forget Dolly's presence for a single instant. He found himself watching and admiring and speculating about her almost against his will. She, too, was aware of this silent scrutiny, and resented it. Dolly was more brusque and fierce and uncomfortable that evening than she had ever been in all her life before. Dorothea Vanborough was one of those people who reflect the atmosphere somehow, whose lights come and go, and whose brilliance comes and goes. Dull fogs would fall upon her sometimes, at others sunlight, moonlight, or faint reflected rays would beam upon her world. It was a wide one, and open to all the winds of heaven.

So Frank Raban discovered when it was too late. He admired her when he should have loved her. He judged her in secret when he should have trusted or blamed her openly. A day came when he felt he had forfeited all right even to help her or to protect her, and that, while he was still repenting for the past, he had fallen (as people sometimes do who walk backward) into fresh pitfalls.

"My cousin Robert has asked me and Rhoda to spend a day at Cambridge in the spring," said Dolly, reluctantly struggling on at conversation.

Frank Raban was wondering if Lady Sarah was never coming back.

There was a sigh, a movement from the distant corner.

"Did you call me?" said a faint, shrill voice, plaintive and tremulous; and a figure rose from the nest of soft shawls and came slowly forward, dispersing the many wraps that lay coiling on the floor.

"Have I been asleep? I thought Mr. Henley was here?" said the voice, confusedly.

Dolly turned toward her. "No, he is not here, Rhoda. Sit down; don't stand. Here is Mr. Raban come to see us."

And then, in the dim light of the fire and distant candle, Raban saw two dark eyes looking out of a pale face that he seemed to remember.

"Mr. Raban!" said the voice.

"Have you forgotten?" said Dolly, hastily, going up to the distant sofa. "Mr. Raban, from Paris—" she began; then, seeing he had followed her, she stopped; she turned very red. She did not want to pain him. And Raban, at the same instant, recognized the two girls he had seen once before, and remembered where it was that he had known the deep gray eyes, with their look of cold repulsion and dislike.

"Are you Mr. Raban?" repeated Rhoda, looking intently into his face. "I should have known you if it had not been so dark." And she instinctively put up her hand and clasped something hanging round her neck.

The young man was moved.

"I ought, indeed, to remember you," he said, with some emotion.

And as he spoke he saw a diamond flash in the fire-light. This, then, was the child who had wandered down that terrible night, to whom he had given his poor wife's diamond cross.

Rhoda saw with some alarm that his eyes were fixed upon the cross.

"I sometimes think I ought to send this back to you," she faltered on, blushing faintly, and still holding it tight clasped in her hand.

"Keep it," said Raban, gravely; "no one has more right to it than you." Then they were all silent.

Dolly wondered why Rhoda had a right to the cross, but she did not ask.

Raban turned still more hard and more sad as the old memories assailed him suddenly from every side. Here was the past living over again. Though he might have softened to Lady Sarah, he now hardened to himself; and, as it often happens, the self-inflicted pain he felt seemed reflected in his manner toward the girls.

"I know you both now," he said, gravely, standing up. "Good-night; will you say good-by to your aunt for me?"

He did not offer to shake hands; it was Dolly who put out hers. He was very stiff, and yet there was a humble look in his pale face and dark eyes that Dolly could not forget. She seemed to remember it after he was gone.

Lady Sarah came in only a minute after Frank had left. She looked disappointed.

"I have just met him in the hall," she said

"Is he gone?" said Dolly. "Aunt Sarah, he is still very unhappy."

A few minutes afterward Rhoda said what a pity that Mr. Raban was gone, when she saw how smartly the tea-table was set out, how the silver candlesticks were lighted, and some of the good old wine that George liked sparkled in the decanter. Dolly felt as if Mr. Raban was more disagreeable than ever for giving so much trouble for nothing. Rhoda was very much interested in Lady Sarah's visitor, and asked Dolly many more questions when they were alone up stairs. She had been ill, and was staying at Church House to get well in quiet and away from the school-boys.

"Of course one can't ever like him," Dolly said, "but one is very sorry for him. Good-night, Rhoda."

"No, I don't like her," said Raban to himself; and he thought of Dolly all the way home. Her face haunted him. He dined at his club, and drove to the shabby station in Bishopsgate. He seemed to see her still as he waited for his train, stamping by the station fire, and by degrees that bitter vision of the past vanished away and the present remained. Dolly's face seemed to float along before him all the way back as the second-class carriage shook and jolted through the night, out beyond London fog into a region of starlit plains and distant glimmering lights. Vision and visionary traveled on together, until at last the train slackened its thunder and stopped. A few late Cambridge lights shone in the distance. It was past midnight. When Raban, walking through the familiar by-ways, reached his college gates, he found them closed and barred; one gas-lamp flared—a garish light of to-day shining on the ancient carved stones and gables of the past. A sleepy porter let him in, and as he walked across the dark court he looked up and saw here and there a light burning in a window, and then some far-away college clock clang-ed the half hour, then another, and another, and then their own clock overhead, loud and stunning. He reached his own staircase at last, and opened the oak door. Before going in Raban looked up through the staircase window at George Vanborough's rooms, which happened to be opposite his own. They were brilliantly illuminated, and their lights streamed out and lighted up many a deep lintel and sleeping window.

CHAPTER XIII.

LITTLE BROTHER AND LITTLE SISTER.

As the actors pass across the stage of life and play their parts in its great drama, it is not difficult at the outset to docket them for the most part "a lawyer," "a speculator,"

"an amiable person," "an intelligent, prosy man," "a parson," etc.; but after watching the piece a little (on this all-the-world stage it is not the play that ends, but the actors and speculators that come and go) we begin to see that, although some of the performers may be suited to their parts, there are others whose characters are not so well cast to the piece—Robert Henley, for instance, who is not quite in his element as a very young man. But every one is in earnest, in a certain fashion, upon this life-stage, and that is why we find the actors presently beginning to play their own characters instead of those which they are supposed to represent—to the great confusion, very often, of the drama itself. We have all read of a locksmith who had to act the part of a king; of a nephew who tried to wear his uncle's cocked hat; of a king who proclaimed himself a god, and of the confusion that ensued; and it is the same in private as in public life. Where people are set to work experiments in love, money, sermon, hay, or law making, with more or less aptitude for the exercise, what a strange jumble it is! Here is the lawyer making love to his client, instead of writing her will; the lover playing on the piano while his mistress is expecting him; the farmer, while his crops are spoiling, pondering on the theory of original sin. Among women, too, we find wives, mothers, daughters, and even professed aunts and nieces, all with their parts reversed by the unkind freaks of fate. Some get on pretty well; some break down utterly. The higher natures, acting from a wider conception of life, will do their best to do justice to the character, uncongenial though it may be, which happens to be assigned to them. Perhaps they may flag now and then, specially toward the middle of the performance; but by degrees they come to hear the music of "duty done." And duty is music, though it may be a hard sort of fugue, and difficult to practice—one too hard, alas! for our poor George as yet to master. Henley, to be sure, accomplished his ambitions; but then it was only a one-fingered scale that he attempted.

Dolly's was easy music in those early days of her life: at home or in Old Street the girl herself and her surroundings were in a perfect harmony. Dolly's life was a melody played to an accompaniment of loving tones and tender words among the tranquil traditions of the old house and the old ivy-grown suburb in which it stood. Rhoda used to wonder why people cared so much for Dolly, who was so happy, who never sacrificed herself, but did as she liked, and won all hearts to her, even Robert Henley's, thought Rhoda with a sigh. As for Dolly, she never thought about her happiness, though Rhoda did. The girl's life sped on peacefully among the people who loved her. She knew she meant so well