

ful look, and in that moment he understood her better than he had ever done before; his mistrust was stilled, his load was lightened, and he felt as if a sudden ray of faith and love had fallen into his dark heart.

Before they left Mr. Royal introduced Dolly to the two ladies who were in the studio. She met them again long afterward, and remembered the pale, eager face of one of them.

All the way home Dolly was talking of the pictures.

"I saw a great many likenesses which were really admirable," said Robert. "I have met several of the people out at dinner."

Rhoda could not say a single word about the pictures.

"Why, what were you about?" said Dolly, after she had mentioned two or three one after another. "You don't seem to have looked at any thing."

"You didn't come into the back-room, Dolly. I had an excellent cup of tea there," said George; "that kind lady had it sent up for us."

CHAPTER XVII.

"INNER LIFE."

THE next time Raban came to town he called again at Church House. Then he began to go to John Morgan's, whom he had known and neglected for years. He was specially kind to Rhoda, and gentle in his manner when he spoke to her. Cassie, who had experience, used to joke her about her admirer. Not unfrequently Dolly would be in Old Street during that summer, and the deeply interested recipient of the girls' confidences.

"Cassie, do you really mean that he has fallen in love with Rhoda?" said Dolly. "Indeed, he is not half good enough for her." But all the same, the thought of his admiration for her friend somewhat softened Dolly's feelings toward Raban.

Rhoda herself was mysterious. One day she gave up wearing her diamond cross, and appeared instead with a pretty pearl locket. She would not say where she had got it. Zoe said it was like Cassie's. "Had John given it to her?" Rhoda shook her head.

Dolly did not like it, and took Rhoda seriously to task. "Rhoda, how silly to make a mystery about nothing!" Rhoda laughed.

Except for occasional troubles about George, things were going well at Church House that autumn. Raban sent a warning letter once, which made Dolly very angry. The Admiral talked of coming home in the following spring. Dolly's heart beat at the thought of her mother's return. But meanwhile she was very happy. Robert used to come not unfrequently. Rhoda liked coming when he was there. They would all go out, when dinner was over, and sit upon

the terrace and watch the sun setting calmly behind the medlar-tree and the old beech walk. Kensington has special tranquil hours of its own, happy jumbles of old bricks and sunset. The pigeons would come from next door with a whirl, and with round breasts shining in the light; the ivy leaves stood out green and crisp; the birds went flying overhead and circling in their evening dance. Three together, then two, then a lonely one in pursuit.

Dolly stood watching them one evening in the autumn of that year, while her aunt and Henley were talking. John Morgan, who had come to fetch Rhoda home, was discoursing too, in cheerful tones, about the voice of nature, I think it was. "You do not make enough allowance for the voice of nature," the curate was saying. "You can not blame a man because he is natural, because his impulse cries out against rules and restrictions." As he spoke a bell in the ivy wall began to jangle from outside, and Dolly and Rhoda both looked up curiously, wondering who it could be.

"Rules are absolutely necessary restrictions," said Henley, stirring his coffee: "we are lost if we trust to our impulses. What are our bodies but concrete rules?"

"I wonder if it could be George?" interrupted Dolly.

"Oh no," said Rhoda, quickly, "because—" Then she stopped short.

"Because what, Rhoda?" said Lady Sarah, looking at her curiously. The girl blushed up, and seemed embarrassed, and began pulling the ribbon and the cross round her neck. It had come out again the last few days.

"Have you heard any thing of George?" Lady Sarah went on.

"How should I?" said Rhoda, looking up; then she turned a little pale, then she blushed again. "Dolly, look," she said, "who is it?"

It was Mr. Raban, the giver of the diamond cross, who came walking up along the side-path, following old Sam. There was a little scrunching of chair-legs to welcome him. John Morgan shook him by the hand. Lady Sarah looked pleased.

"This was kind of you," she said.

Raban looked shy. "I am afraid you won't think so," he said. "I wanted a few minutes' conversation with you."

Rhoda opened her wide brown eyes. Henley, who had said a stiff "How-dy-do?" and wished to go on with the conversation, now addressed himself to Dolly:

"I always doubt the fact when people say that impulse is the voice of one's inner life. I consider that principle should be its real interpretation."

Nobody exactly understood what he meant, nor did he himself, if the truth were to be told; but the sentence had occurred to him.

"An inner life," said Dolly, presently, look-

ing at the birds. "I wonder what it means? I don't think I have got one."

"No, Dolly," said Lady Sarah, kindly; "it is very often only another name for remorse. Not yet, my dear—that has not reached you yet."

"An inner life," repeated Rhoda, standing by. "Doesn't it mean all those things you don't talk about—religion and principles?" she said, faltering a little, with a shy glance at Frank Raban. Henley had just finished his coffee, and heard her approvingly. He was going again to enforce the remark, when Dolly, as usual, interrupted him.

"But there is *nothing* one doesn't talk about," said the Dolly of those days, standing on the garden step, with all her pretty loops of brown hair against the sun.

"I wish you would preach a sermon, Mr. Morgan, and tell people to take care of their outer lives," said Lady Sarah, over her coffee-pot, "and keep *them* in order while they have them, and leave their souls to take care of themselves. We have all read of the figs and the thistles. Let us cultivate figs; that is the best thing we can do."

"Dear Aunt Sarah," said Dolly, prettily, and looking up suddenly and blushing, "here we all are sitting under your fig-tree."

Dolly having given vent to her feelings suddenly blushed up. All their eyes seemed to be fixed upon her. What business had Mr. Raban to look at her so gravely?

"I wonder if the cocks and hens are gone to roost?" said my heroine, confused; and, jumping down from the step, she left the coffee-drinkers to finish their coffee.

Lady Sarah had no great taste for art or for *bric-à-brac*. Mr. Francis had been a collector, and from him she had inherited her blue china, but she did not care at all for it. She had one fancy, however—a poultry fancy—which harmlessly distracted many of her spare hours. With a cheerful cluck, a pluming, a spreading out of glistening feathers, a strutting and champing, Lady Sarah's cocks and hens used to awake betimes in the early morning. The cocks would chant matutinal hymns, to the annoyance of the neighborhood, while the hens clucked a cheerful accompaniment to the strains. The silver trumpets themselves would not have sounded pleasanter to Lady Sarah's ears than this crowing noise of her favorites. She had a little temple erected for this choir. It was a sort of pantheon, where all parts of the world were represented, divided off by various latitudinal wires. There were *crève-cœurs* from the Pyrenees, with their crimson crests and robes of black satin; there were magi from Persia, puffy, wind-blown, silent, and somewhat melancholy; there were Polish warriors, gallant and splendid, with an air of misfortune so courageously surmounted that fortune itself would have looked small beside it. Then came the

Dorkings, feathery and speckly, with ample wings outstretched, clucking commonplace English to one another.

To-night, however, the clarions were silent, the warriors were sleepy, the cocks and hens were settling themselves comfortably in quaint fluffy heaps upon their roosts, with their portable feather-beds shaken out, and their bills snugly tucked into the down.

Dolly was standing admiring their strength of mind in retiring by broad daylight from the nice cheerful world into the dismal darkened bed-chamber they occupied. As Dolly stood outside in the sunset, peeping into the dark roosting-place, she heard voices coming along the path, and Lady Sarah speaking in a very agitated voice.

"Cruel boy," she said, "what have I done, what have I left undone, that he should treat me so ill?"

They were close to Dolly, who started away from the hen-house, and ran up to meet her aunt with a sudden movement.

"What is it? Why is he—*Who* is cruel?" said Dolly, and she turned a quick, reproachful look upon Raban. What had he been saying?

"I meant to spare you, my dear," said Lady Sarah, trembling very much, and putting her hand upon Dolly's shoulder. "I have no good news for you; but sooner or later you must know it. Your brother has been behaving as badly as possible. He has put his name to some bills. Mr. Raban heard of it by chance. Wretched boy! he might be arrested. It is hard upon me, and cruel of George."

They were standing near the hen-house still, and a hen woke up from her dreams with a sleepy cluck. Lady Sarah was speaking passionately and vehemently, as she did when she was excited; Raban was standing a little apart in the shadow.

Dolly listened with a hanging head. She could say nothing. It all seemed to choke her; she let her aunt Sarah walk on—she stood quite still, thinking it over. Then came a gleam of hope. She felt as if Frank Raban must be answerable somehow for George's misdemeanors. Was it all true? she began to wonder. Mr. Raban, dismal man that he was, delighted in warnings and croakings. Then Dolly raised her head, and found that the dismal man had come back, and was standing beside her. He looked so humble and sorry that she felt he must be to blame.

"What have you been telling Aunt Sarah?" said Dolly, quite fiercely. "Why have you made her so angry with my brother?"

"I am afraid it is your brother himself who has made her angry," said Raban. "I needn't tell you that I am very sorry," he added, looking very pale; "I would do any

thing I could to help him. I came back to talk to you about it now."

"I don't want to hear any more," cried Dolly, with great emotion. "Why do you come at all? What can I say to you to ask you to spare my poor George? It only vexes her. You don't understand him—how should you?" Then melting, "If you knew all his tenderness and cleverness?"—she looked up wistfully; for once she did not seem stern, but entreating; her eyes were full of tears as she gazed into his face. There was something of the expression that he had seen in the studio.

"It is because I do your brother full justice," said Raban, gravely, looking at her fixedly, "that I have cared to interfere."

Dolly's eyes dilated, her mouth quivered. Why did she look at him like that? He could not bear it. With a sudden impulse—one of those which come to slow natures, one such as that which had wrecked his life before—he said, in a low voice, "Do you know that I would do any thing in the world for you and yours?"

"No, I don't know it," said Dolly. "I know that you seem to disapprove of every thing I say, and that you think the worst of my poor George—that you don't care for him a bit."

"The worst!" Raban said. "Ah! Miss Vanborough, do you think it so impossible to love those people whose conduct you think the worst?"

She was beginning to speak. He would not let her go on. "Won't you give me a right to interfere?" he said, and he took a step forward and stood close up to her, with a pale, determined face. "There are some past things which can never be forgotten, but a whole life may atone for them. Don't you think so?" and he put out his hand. Dolly did not in the least understand him, or what was in his mind.

"Nobody ever did any good by preaching and interfering," cried the angry sister, ignoring the outstretched hand. "How can you, of all people—" She stopped short; she felt that it was ungenerous to call up the past; but in George's behalf she could be mean, spiteful, unjust, if need be, to deliver him from this persecution—so Dolly chose to call it.

She was almost startled by the deep, cold tone of Frank's voice as he answered, "It is because I know what I am speaking of, Miss Vanborough, that I have an excuse for interfering before it is too late. You, at all events, who remember my past troubles, need not have reminded me of them."

Heartless, cruel girl, she had not understood him. It was as well that she could not read his heart or guess how cruelly she had wounded him. He would keep his secret henceforth. Who was he to love a beautiful, peerless woman, in her pride and the

triumph of her unsullied youth? He looked once more at the sweet, angry face. No, she had not understood him; so much he could see in her clear eyes. A minute ago they had been full of tears. The tears were all dry now: the angel was gone!

So an event had occurred to Dolly of which she knew nothing. She was utterly unconscious as she came sadly back to the house in the twilight. The pigeons were gone to roost. Lady Sarah was sitting alone in the darkling room.

"What a strange man Mr. Raban is, and how oddly and unkindly he talks!" said Dolly, going to the chimney and striking a light.

"What did he say?" said Lady Sarah.

"I don't quite remember," said Dolly, "it was all so incoherent and angry. He said he would do any thing for us, and that he could never forgive George."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN AUTUMN MORNING.

THE palace clock takes up the echo of the old church steeple; the sun-dial is pointing with its hooked nose to the Roman figures on its copper face—eleven o'clock, says the palace clock. People go crossing and recrossing the distant vistas of Kensington Gardens; the children are fluttering and scampering all over the brown turf, with its autumnal crop of sandwich papers and orange peel; governesses and their pupils are walking briskly up and down the flower walk that skirts Hyde Park. There is a tempting glitter of horsemanship in the distance, and the little girls glance wistfully toward it, but the governesses for the most part keep their young charges to the iron railings and the varied selection of little wooden boards, with Latin names, that are sprouting all along the tangled flower beds; the gravel-paths are shaken over with fallen leaves, old, brown, purple—so they lie twinkling as the sun shines upon them.

One or two people are drinking at the little well among the trees where the children are at play.

"Hoy! hugh! houp!" cries little Betty, jumping high into the air, and setting off, followed by a crew of small fluttering rags. What a crisp noise the dead leaves make as the children wade and splash and tumble through the heaps that the gardeners have swept together! The old place echoes with their jolly little voices. The children come, like the leaves themselves, and disport year after year in the sunshine, and the ducks in the round pond feed upon the crumbs which succeeding generations bring from their tables. There are some of us who still know the ducks of twenty years apart. Where is

the gallant gray (goose) that once used to chase unhappy children flying agonized before him? Where is the little duck with the bright sparkling yellow eyes and the orange beak? Quick-witted, eager, unabashed, it used to carry off the spoils of the great gray goose itself, too busy careering upon the green and driving all before it to notice the disappearance of its crusts, although the foolish floundering white ducks, placidly impatient in the pond, would lift up their canary noses and quack notes of warning. One would still be glad to know where human nature finishes and where ducks begin.

Overhead the sky lies in faint blue vaults crossed by misty autumnal streamers; the rooks sweep cawing and circling among the tree-tops; a bell is going quick and tinkling: it comes from the little chapel of the palace hard by. The old royal bricks and windows look red and purple in the autumn sunlight, against gold and blue vapors, and with canopies of azure and gray.

All the people are coming and going their different ways this October morning. A slim girl in black silk is hurrying along from the wide door leading from the Palace Green. She stops for an instant to look at the shadow on the old sun-dial, and then hurries on again, and as she goes the brazen hour comes striking and sounding from across the house roofs of the old suburb. A little boy, playing under a tree, throws a chestnut at the girl as she hurries by. It falls to the ground, slipping along the folds of her black silk dress. At the same moment two young men, who have met by chance, are parting at the end of one of the long avenues. The girl, seeing them, stops short, and turns back deliberately and walks as far as the old sun-dial before she retraces her steps.

How oddly all our comings and goings and purposes and cross-purposes combine, fulfill, frustrate each other! It is like a wonderful symphony, of which every note is a human life. The chapel bell had just finished ringing as Rhoda (for it is Rhoda) turned in through the narrow door leading to the garden, and John Morgan, with Dolly beside him, came quickly across the worn green space in front of the barracks.

"I'm glad I caught you up," panted good old John, tumbling and flying after Dolly. "So this is your birthday, and you are coming to church! I promised to take the duty for Mr. Thompson this morning. I have had two funerals on, and I couldn't get home before. We shall just do it. I'm afraid I'm going too quick for you?"

"Not at all," said Dolly. "I always go quick. I was running after Rhoda. She started to go, and then Aunt Sarah sent me after her. Do you know," Dolly said, "George, too, has become so very—I don't know what to call it—He asked me to go to church more often that day he came up."

"Well," said John, looking at her kindly, and yet a little troubled, "for myself, I find there's nothing like it; but then I'm paid for it, you know: it is in my day's work. I hope George is keeping to his?"

"Oh, I hope so," said Dolly, looking a little wistful.

"H'm," says John, doubtfully; "here we are. Go round to the left, where you see those people." And he darts away and leaves her.

The clock began striking eleven slowly from an archway of the old palace; some dozen people are assembled together in the little palace chapel, and begin repeating the responses in measured tones. It is a quiet little place. The world rolls beyond it on its many chariot wheels to busier haunts along the great high-roads. As for the flesh and the devil, can they be those who are assembled here? They assemble to the sound of the bell, advancing feebly, for the most part skirting the sunny wall, past the sentry at his post, and along the outer court-yard of the palace, where the windows are green and red with geranium pots, where there is a tranquil glimmer of autumnal sunshine and a crowing of cocks. Then the little congregation turns in at a side-door of the palace, and so, through a vestibule, comes into the chapel, of which the bell has been tinkling for some week-day service: it stops short, and the service begins quite suddenly as a door opens in the wall and a preacher, in a white surplice, comes out and begins in a deep voice almost before the last vibration of the bell has died away. As for the congregation, there is not much to note. There are some bent white heads, there is some placid middle-age, a little youth to brighten to the sunshine. The great square window admits a silenced light; there are high old-fashioned pews on either side of the place, and opposite the communion-table, high up over the heads of the congregation, a great square curtained pew with the royal arms, and a curtained gallery. It was like Dugald Dalgetty's hiding-place, one member of the congregation thought. She used to wonder if he was not concealed behind the heavy curtains. This reader of the "Legend of Montrose" is standing alone in a big pew, with one elbow on the cushioned ledge, and her head resting on her hand. She has a soft brown scroll of hair, with a gleam of sunlight in it. She has soft oval cheeks that flush up easily, gray eyes and black knotted eyebrows, and a curious soft mouth, close fixed now, but it trembles at a word or a breath. She had come to meet her friend. But Rhoda, who is not very far off, goes flitting down the broad walk leading to the great summer-house. It used to stand there until a year or two ago, when the present generation carried it bodily away—a melancholy, stately, grandiose old pile, filling one

with no little respect for the people who raised so stately a mausoleum to rest in for a moment. There was some one who had been resting there many moments on this particular morning: a sturdy young man, leaning back against the wall and smoking a cigar. He jumped up eagerly when he saw the girl at last, and, flinging his cigar away, came forward to meet her as she hurried from under the shade of the trees in which she had been keeping.

"At last, you unpunctual girl!" he cried, meeting her and pulling her hand through his arm. "Do you know how many cigars I have smoked while you have been keeping me waiting?"

She did not answer, but looked up at him with a long, slow look.

"Dear George, I couldn't get away before; and when I came just now there was some one talking to you. Your aunt came, and Dolly, and they staid, oh, such a time! I was so cross, and I kept thinking of my poor George waiting for me here."

She could see George smiling and mollified as she spoke, and went on more gayly:

"At last I slipped away; but I am afraid Dolly must have thought it so strange."

"Dolly!" said George Vanborough, impatiently (for of course it was George, who had come up to town again with another return ticket); "she had better take care and not keep you from me again! Come and sit down," said he. "I have a thousand things to say to you."

"Oh, George! it must only be for a moment," said Rhoda, hesitating; "if any body were to—"

"Nonsense!" cried George, already agitated by the meeting, and exasperated by his long waiting. "You are always thinking of what people will say; you have no feeling for a poor wretch who has been counting the minutes till he could see you again—who is going to the devil without you. Rhoda! I can not stand this much longer—this waiting and starving on the crumbs that you vouchsafe to scatter from your table. What the dence does it matter if they *don't* approve? Why won't you marry me this minute, and have done with it? There goes a parson with an umbrella. Shall I run after him and get him to splice us off-hand?"

Rhoda looked seriously alarmed. "George, don't talk like this," she said, putting her slim hand on his. "You would never speak to me again if I consented to any thing so dishonorable; Lady Sarah would never give you her living; she would never forg—"

"My aunt be hanged!" cried George, more and more excited. "If she were ever so angry, she could not divide us if we were married. I am not at all sure that I shall take her living. I only want to earn enough bread-and-butter for you, Rhoda. Now I be-

lieve she might starve you into surrender. Rhoda, take me or leave me, but don't let us go on like this. A woman's idea of honor, I confess, passes my comprehension," said he, somewhat bitterly.

"Can't you understand my not wanting to deceive them all?" Rhoda said.

"Deceive them all?" said George. "What are we doing now? I don't like it. I don't understand it. I am ashamed to look Dolly in the face when she talks to me about you. Rhoda, be a reasonable, good, kind little Rhoda." And the young fellow wrung the little hand he held in his, and thumped the two hands both down together upon the seat.

He hurt her, but the girl did not wince. She again raised her dark eyes and looked fixedly into his face. When she looked like that she knew very well that George, for one—poor tamed monster that he was—could never defy her.

"Dearest George, you know that if I could, I would marry you this moment," she said. "But how can I ruin your whole future—you, who are so sensitive and ill able to bear things? How could we tell Lady Sarah just now, when—when you have been so incautious and unfortunate—"

"When I owe three hundred pounds!" cried George, at the pitch of his voice: "and I must get it from my aunt one way or another—that is the plain English, Rhoda. Don't be afraid: nothing you say will hurt my feelings. If only," he added, in a sweet, changing voice—"if only you love me a little, and will help a poor prodigal out of the mire— But no: you virtuous people pass on with your high-minded scruples, and leave us to our deserts," he cried, with a sudden change of manner; and he started up and began walking up and down hastily in front of the summer-house.

The girl watched him for an instant—a hasty, stumpy figure going up and down, and up and down again.

"George! George!" faltered Rhoda, frightened—and her tears brimmed over unaffectedly—"haven't you any trust in my love? won't you believe me when I tell you I—I—you *know* I would give my life for you if I could!"

George Vanborough's own blue eyes were twinkling. "Forgive me, darling," he said, utterly melting in one instant, and speaking in that sweet voice peculiar to him. It seemed to come from his very heart. He sank down by her again. "You are an angel—there, Rhoda—a thousand thousand miles away from me, though we are sitting side by side; but when you are unhappy, then I am punished for all my transgressions," said George, in his gentle voice. "Now I will tell you what we will do: we will tell Dolly all about it, and she will help us."

"Oh! not Dolly," said Rhoda, imploring; "George! every body loves her, and she doesn't know what it means to be unhappy and anxious. Let us wait a little longer, George: we are happy now together, are we not? You must pass your examination and take your degree, and it will be easier to tell them then. Come."

"Come where?" said George.

"There are so many people here," said Rhoda, "you mustn't write to me again to meet you. You had much better come and see me at the house."

"I will come and see you there too," said George. "I met Raban just now. He will be telling them I am in town; he says my aunt wants to see me on business. Confound him!"

"Was that Mr. Raban?" said Rhoda, opening her eyes. "Oh! I hope he will not tell them." She led him across the grass into a quiet place, deep among the trees, where they were safe enough; for where so many come and go, two figures, sitting on a felled trunk on the slope of a leafy hollow, are scarcely noticed. The chestnuts fell now and then plash into the leaves and grasses, the breezes stirred the crisp leaves, the brown sunset of autumn glow tinted and swept to gold the changing world: there were still birds and blue overhead, a sea of gold all round them. George was happy. He forgot his debts, his dreams, the deaths and doubts and failures of life—every thing except two dark eyes, a soft harmony of voice and look beside him.

"You are like Mendelssohn's 'Songs without Words,' Rhoda," said George.

Rhoda didn't answer.

"George, what o'clock is it?" she said.

CHAPTER XIX.

KENSINGTON PALACE CHAPEL.

MEANWHILE Dolly, who has been looking for Rhoda in vain, stands alone in the pew, listening to the opening exhortation, and at the same time wandering alongside of it, as she used to do when she and Rhoda were little girls at Paris long ago. Her thoughts run somewhat in this fashion. "Inner life," thinks Dolly. "What is inner life? George says he knows. John Morgan makes it all into the day's work and being tired. Aunt Sarah says it is repentance. Robert won't even listen to me when I speak of it. Have I got it? What am I?" Dolly wonders if she is sailing straight off to heaven at that moment in the big cushioned pew, or if the ground will open and swallow it up one day, like the tents of Korah and Abiram. This is what she is at that instant—so she thinks at least: Some whitewashed walls, a light through a big window; John



Morgan's voice echoing in an odd melancholy way, and her own two hands lying on the cushion before her. Nothing more: she can go no farther at that minute toward "the eternal fact upon which man may front the destinies and the immensities."

So Dolly at the outset of life, at the beginning of the longest five years of her life, stands in the strangers' great pew in Kensington Palace Chapel—a young Pharisee, perhaps, but an honest one, speculating upon the future, making broad her phylacteries; and with these, strange flashes of self-realization that came to puzzle her all her life long—standing opposite the great prayer-books, with all the faded golden stamps of lions and unicorns. It was to please her brother George that Dolly had come to church this Saints' Day. What wouldn't she have done to please him? Through all his curious excursions of feeling he expected her always to follow, and Dolly tried to follow as she was expected.

"For our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life," the reader ran on. Dolly was ready enough to be grateful for all these mercies, only she thought that out-of-doors, in the gardens, she would have felt as grateful as she did now; and she again wondered why it was better to tender thanks in a mahogany box with red stuffings, out of a book, instead of out of her heart, in the open air. "Can this be because I have no inner life?" thought Dolly, with her vacant eyes fixed on the clergyman. A bird's shadow flitted across the sun-gleam on the floor. Dolly looked up and saw the branch of the tree through the great window, and the blue depths shining, dazzling and dominant. Then the girl pushed her hand across her eyes, and tried

to forget other thoughts as she stood reading out of the big brown prayer-book. Dolly's gloves had fallen over the side of the pew, and were lying in the oak-matted passage-place, at the feet of a little country cook-maid from one of the kitchens of the Palace, who alternately stared down at the gray gloves and up at the young lady. The little cook, whose mistress was away, had wandered in to the sound of the bell, and sat there with her rosy cheeks like some russet apple that had fallen by chance into a faded reliquary belonging to a sumptuous shrine. Was it because it was Saturday, Dolly wondered, that she could not bring her heart to the altar?—that the little chapel did not seem to her much more than an allegory? Are royal chapels only echoes and allegories? Do people go there to pray real prayers, to long passionately, with beating hearts? Have dried-up tears ever fallen upon the big pages of the old books with their curling *t's* and florid *s's*?—books in whose pages King George the Third still rules over a shadowy realm, Queen Charlotte heads the Royal Family!

Dolly had started away from her vague excursions when the Epistle ended. "Of the tribe of Zabulon twelve thousand; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand.".....It seemed to Dolly but a part of the state and the ceremony that oppressed her. As the armies passed before her, she seemed to hear the chant of the multitude, to follow the endless processions of the elect filing past with the seals on their triumphant brows, the white robes and palms in their extended hands!

But listen: what is this? John Morgan thundered out the long lists of the tribes; but his voice softened as he came to the well-loved Gospel of the day: "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom; blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted; blessed are the merciful, the pure, the peace-makers....."

"Are these the real tribes upon earth for whom the blessing is kept? Am I of the tribe of the merciful, of the peace-makers?" Dolly asked herself again. "How can I make peace?—there is no one angry," thought the girl; "and I'm sure no one has ever done me any harm to be forgiven, except—except Mr. Raban, when he spoke to Aunt Sarah so cruelly about George. Ought I to forgive that?" thought the sister, and yet she wished she had not spoken so unkindly.....

When the end came there was a rustle. The old ladies got up off their knees, the curtains stirred in the big Dugald Dalgetty pew: Dolly was to meet John Morgan in the outer room, but the old clerk gave her a message to say that Mr. Morgan had gone to the chaplain's, and would meet her in the clock court of the Palace.

"There was a gentleman asking for him just a minute by," said the old clerk.

So Dolly, instead of filing off with the rest of the congregation, went sweeping along the dark vaulted passages with the sunlight at either end—a gray maiden floating in the shade.

Dolly's dress was demure enough: for though she liked bright colors, by some odd scruples she denied herself the tints she liked. If she sometimes wore a rose or a blue ribbon, it was Lady Sarah who bought them, and who had learned of late to like roses and blue ribbons by proxy. Otherwise she let Dolly come, go, dress as she liked best; and so the girl bought herself cheap gray gowns and economical brown petticoats: luckily she could not paint her pretty cheeks brown, nor her bright hair gray. Sometimes Rhoda had proposed that they should dress in black with frill caps and crosses, but this Aunt Sarah peremptorily refused to permit. Lady Sarah was a clever woman, with a horror of attitudinizing, and some want of artistic feeling. The poor people whom she visited, Rhoda herself, soon discovered the futility of any of the little performances they sometimes attempted for Lady Sarah's benefit.

Dolly stepped out from the dark passage into the Palace court-yard, with its dim rows of windows, its sentinel, its brasses shining, the old doorways standing at prim intervals, with knobs and iron bells, which may be pulled to-day, but which seem to echo a hundred years ago, as they ring across the Dutch court. The little cook-maid was peeping out of her kitchen door, and gave a kind little smile. Some one else was waiting, pacing up and down that quiet place, where footsteps can be heard echoing in the stillness. But as Dolly advanced she discovered that it was not John Morgan, as she imagined. The gentleman, who had reached the end of his walk, now turned, came toward her, looking absently to the right and the left. It was the very last person in the world she had expected or wished to see. It was Frank Raban, with his pale face, who stopped short when he saw her. They had not met since that day when he had talked so strangely.

If Dolly looked as if she was a little sorry to see Mr. Raban, Mr. Raban also looked as if he had rather not have met Dolly. He gave a glance round, but there was no way by which he could avoid her, unless he was prepared, like harlequin in the pantomime, to take a somersault and disappear through one of the many windows. There was no help for it. They both came forward.

"How do you do, Miss Vanborough?" said Raban, gravely, holding out his hand, and thinking of the last time they had met.

"How do you do?" said Dolly, coldly, just giving him her fingers. Then melting a lit-

tle, as people do who have been over-stiff—"Have you seen George lately? how is he?" said Dolly, more forgivingly.

Raban looked surprised. "He is quite well—Don't you—has he not?" He interrupted himself, and then he went on, looking a little confused: "I am only in town for an hour or two. I have been calling at John Morgan's, and they sent me here to find him. Shall I find Lady Sarah at home this afternoon?"

Dolly flushed up. In a moment all her coldness was gone. Something in his manner made her suspect that all was not well. "It is something more about George," she said, frightened, and she fixed her two circling eyes upon the man. Why was he forever coming—evil messenger of ill tidings? She guessed it, she felt it, she seemed to have some second-sight as regards Raban. She almost hated him. A minute ago she had thought she could forgive him.

Dolly's cheeks flushed in vain, her eyes flashed harmless lightning.

"Yes, it is about your brother," said the young man, looking away. "I have at last been able to make that arrangement to help him, as Lady Sarah wished. It has taken me some time and some trouble;" and without another word he turned and walked away toward the passage.

I think this was the first time Dolly had ever been snubbed in all her life, except by George, and that did not count.

A furtive, quick, yet hesitating footstep flutters after Frank. "Mr. Raban," says Miss Vanborough.

He stopped.

"I did not mean to pain you," blushing up (she was very indignant still, and half inclined to cry; but she was in the wrong, and bent upon apology). "I beg your pardon," she said, in a lofty, condoning, half-ashamed, half-indignant sort of way; and she held out her hand.

Frank Raban did not refuse the outstretched hand; he took it in his, and held it tight for an instant, with a grip of which he was scarcely aware, and then he dropped it. "You don't know," he said, with some emotion, "I hope you will never know, what it is to have done another great wrong. I can not forget what you said to me that last evening we met; but you must learn more charity, and believe that even those who have failed once may mean to do right another time."

How little she guessed that, as he spoke, he was thinking what a madness had been his—wondering what infatuation had made him, even for one instant, dream they could ever be any thing to one another.

As the two made it up, after a fashion, a bell tinkled through the court, a door opened, and John Morgan came running down some worn steps, twirling his umbrella like a mill.

"Here I am, Dolly. Why, Raban!" he shouts, "where do you come from? Dr. Thompson is better—he kept me discussing the church-rates. I couldn't get away. You see, where the proportion of Dissenters—Will you have an arm?"

"No, thank you," said Dolly.

"—Where the proportion is one-fiftieth of the population—"

The curate, always enthusiastic, seized Raban's arm, and plunged with him into the very depths of Dr. Thompson's argument. Dolly lingered behind for a minute, and came after them along the passage again, and out by a different way into an old avenue which leads from the Palace stables, and by a garden inclosed in high brick walls. It used to be Lady Henley's garden, and Dolly sometimes walked there. Now she only skirted the wall. The sun was casting long shadows, the mists were gone, a sort of sweet balmy ripeness was in the air, as they came out upon the green. The windows of the old guard-house were twinkling; some soldiers were lounging on the grass. Some members of the congregation were opening the wicket gates of one of the old houses that stood round about in those days, modest dependencies of the Palace, quaint-roofed, with slanting bricks and tiles, and narrow panes, from whence autumnal avenues could be descried.

There is a side-door leading from Palace Green to Kensington Gardens. Within the door stands an old stone summer-house, which is generally brimming over with little children, who for many years past have sat swinging their legs upon the seat.

As Dolly passed the gate she heard a shout, and out of the summer-house darted a little ragged procession, with tatters flying—Mikey and his sister, who had spied their victim, and now pursued her with triumphant cries.

"Tsus!—hi, Mikey!—Miss Vamper!" (So they called her.)

"Give us a napenny," says Mikey. "Father's got no work, mother was buried on Toosdy! We's so 'ungry."

"Why, Betty," said Dolly, stopping short, and greatly shocked, "is this true?"

"Ess," says little Betty, grinning, and running back through the wicket.

"What did you have for dinner yesterday?" says Dolly, incredulous, and pursuing Betty toward the summer-house.

"Please, miss, mother give us some bread-and-drippin'," says Mikey, with a caper. "I mean father did. We's so—"

"You mean that you have been telling me a wicked story," interrupted Dolly. "I am very angry, Mikey. I never forgive deception. I shall give you no apples—nothing. I—" She stopped short; her voice suddenly faltered. She stood quite still, watching two people, who came advancing

down the avenue that led to the little door, arm in arm, and so absorbed in each other that for a minute they did not see that she was standing in the way. It was a chance. If it had not happened then, it would have happened at some other time and place.

Rhoda had waited until the service was over, and in so doing she had come upon the last person whom she wished to see just then. There stood Dolly by the summer-house, with a pale face, confronting her, with the little ragged crew about her knees. Mikey, looking up, thought that for once "Miss Vamper" was in the tantrums.

Rhoda started back instinctively, meeting two blank wondering eyes, and would have pulled George away, but it was too late.

"Nonsense," said George; and he came forward, and then they all were quite silent for a minute, George a little in advance, Rhoda lingering still.

"What does this mean?" said Dolly, coldly, speaking at last.

"What does it mean?" George burst out. "Don't you see us? don't you guess? It is good news, isn't it? Dolly, she loves me. Have you not guessed it all along—ever since—months ago?"

He was half distracted, half excited, half laughing. His eyes were dim with moisture. Any one might see him. What did he care for the ragged children, the people passing by—those silent crowds that flit through our lives? He came up to Dolly.

"You will be tender to her, won't you, and help her, for my sake, and you will be our friend, Dolly? We had not meant to tell you yet; but you wish us joy, won't you, dear?"

"Tender to her? Help her? What help could she want?" thought Dolly, looking at Rhoda, who stood silent still, but who made a little dumb movement of entreaty. "Was it George who was asking her to befriend him? Was it George who had mistrusted her all this long time, and kept her in ignorance?"

"Why don't you answer? Why do you look like that? Do you wonder that I or that any body else should love her?" he went on, eagerly.

"What do you want me to do?" Dolly asked. "I can not understand it."

Her voice sounded hard and constrained: she was hurt and bewildered.

George was bitterly disappointed. Her coldness shocked him. Could it be possible that Rhoda was right, and Dolly hard and unfeeling?

Poor Dolly! A bitter wave of feeling seemed suddenly to rise from her heart and choke her as she stood there. "So! there was an understanding between them? Did he come to see Rhoda in secret, while she was counting the days till they should meet? Was it only by chance that she was to learn

their engagement? They had been stopping up the way; as they moved a little aside to let the people pass, Rhoda timidly laid one hand on Dolly's arm. "Won't you forgive me? won't you keep our secret?" she said.

"Why should there be any secret?" cried Dolly, haughtily. "How could I keep one from Aunt Sarah? I am not used to such manoeuvrings."

Rhoda began to cry. George, exasperated by Dolly's manner, burst out with, "Tell her, then! Tell them all—tell them every thing! Tell them of my debts! Part us!" he said. "You will make your profit by it, no doubt, and Rhoda, poor child, will be sacrificed." He felt he was wrong, but this made him only the more bitter. He turned away from Dolly, and pulled Rhoda's hand through his arm.

"I will take care of you, darling," he said.

"George! George!" from poor Dolly, sick and chilled.

"Dolly!" cried another voice, from without the gate. It was John Morgan's. He had missed her, and was retracing his steps to find her.

Poor weak-minded Dolly! now brought to the trial and found wanting: how could she withstand those she loved? All her life long it was so with her. As George turned away from her, her heart went after him.

"Oh, George! don't look at me so. My profit! You have made it impossible for me to speak," she faltered, as she moved away to meet the curate and Frank Raban.

"What is the matter? are you ill?" said John Morgan, meeting Dorothea in the doorway. "Why did you wait behind?"

"Mikey detained me. I am quite well, thank you," said Dolly, slowly, with a changed face.

Raban gave her a curious look. He had seen some one disappear into the summer-house, and he thought he recognized the stumpy figure.

John Morgan noticed nothing; he walked on, talking of the serious aspect things were taking in the East—of Dr. Thompson's gout—of the church-rates. Frank Raban looked at Dolly once or twice, and slackened his steps to hers. They left her at the corner of her lane.

CHAPTER XX.

RHODA TO DOLLY.

DOLLY heard the luncheon-bell ringing as she walked slowly homeward. It seemed to her as if she had been hearing a story which had been told her before, with words that she remembered now, though she had listened once without attaching any meaning to them. Now she seemed to awake and understand it all—a hundred little

things, unnoticed at the time, crowded back into her mind, and seemed to lead up to this moment. Dolly suddenly remembered Rhoda's odd knowledge of George's doings, her blushes, his constant comings of late: she remembered every thing, even to the gloves lying by the piano. The girl was bitterly hurt, wounded, impatient. Love had never entered into her calculations, except as a joke or a far-away impossibility. It was no such very terrible secret, after all, that a young man and a young woman should have taken a fancy to each other; but Dolly, whose faults were the faults of inexperience and youthful dominion and confidence, blamed passionately as she would have sympathized. Then in a breath she blamed herself.

How often it happens that people meaning well as Dolly did undoubtedly slide into some wrong groove from the overbalance of some one or other quality! Dolly cared too much and not too little, and that was what made her so harsh to George; and then, as if to atone for her harshness, too yielding to his wish—to Rhoda's wish working by so powerful a lever.

Lady Sarah came home late for luncheon, and went up to her room soon after. Dolly gave Frank Raban's message. She herself stopped at home all day expecting George, but no George came—not even Rhoda, whom she both longed and hated to see again. Every one seemed changed to Dolly; she felt as if she was wandering lost in the familiar rooms, as if George and her aunt and Rhoda were all different people since the morning.

"Why are you looking at me, child?" said Lady Sarah, suddenly. Dolly had been wistfully scanning the familiar lines of the well-known face; there was now a secret between them, thought the girl.

Mr. Raban came in the afternoon as he had announced, and Dolly, going into the oak-room, found him there, standing in the shadow, with a bundle of papers under his arm, and looking more like a lawyer's clerk than a friend who had been working hard in their service.

Dolly was leaving the room again, when her aunt called her back for a minute.

"Did George tell you any thing of his difficulties the last time he was in town?" Lady Sarah asked from her chimney-corner. "When was it you saw him, Dolly?"

She was nervously tying some papers together that slipped out of her hands and fell upon the floor. Poor Dolly turned away, and there they lay; Dolly did not attempt to pick them up. There was a minute's silence.

Dolly flushed crimson. "I—I don't—I can't tell you," she said, confusedly.

She saw Frank Raban's look of surprise as she turned away. What did she care what he thought of her? What was it to

him if she chose to tell a lie and he guessed it? Oh, George! cruel boy! what had he asked?

Frank Raban wondered at Dolly's silence. Since she wished to keep a secret, he did not choose to interfere; but he blamed her for that, as for most other things; and yet the more he blamed her, the more her face haunted him. Those girl's eyes, with their gray lights and clouds; that sweet face, that looked so stern and yet so tender too. When he was away from her he loved her; when he was with her he accused her.

It was a long, endless day. Miss Moineaux was welcome at tea-time, with her flannel bindings and fluttering gossip. It seemed like a little bit of commonplace, familiar every-day coming in. Dolly went to the door with her when she left them, and saw black trees swaying, winds chasing across the dreary sky, light clouds sailing by. The winds rose that night, beating about the house. A chimney-pot fell crashing to the ground; elm branches broke off from the trees and were scattered along the parks. Dolly, in her little room, lay listening to the sobs and moans without, to the fierce hands beating and struggling with her window. She fell into a sleep, in which it seemed to her that she was railing and raving at George again: she awoke with a start to find that it was the wind. She dreamed the history of the day over and over. She dreamed of Raban, and somehow he always looked at her reproachfully. She awoke very early in the morning, long before it was time to get up, with penitent, loving words on her lips. Had she been harsh to George? Jealous—was she jealous? Dolly scorned to be jealous, she told herself. It was her hatred of wrong, her sense of justice, that made her heart so bitter. Poor Dolly had yet to discover how far she fell short of her own ideal. My poor little heroine was as yet on the eve of her long and lonely expedition in life. There might be arid places waiting for her, dreary passes, but there were also cool waters and green pastures along the road. Nor had she yet journeyed from their shade, and from the sound of her companions' voices and the shelter of their protection.

This was Rhoda's explanation. She was standing before Dolly, looking prettier than ever. She held a flower in her hand, which she had offered her friend, who silently rejected it. Rhoda had looked for Dolly in vain in the house. She found her at last, disconsolately throwing crumbs to the fishes in the pond. Dolly stood sulky and miserable, scarcely looking up when Rhoda spoke. They were safe in the garden out of reach of the quiet old guardians of the house. Rhoda began at once.

"He urged it," said Rhoda, fixing her great dark eyes steadily upon Dolly; "indeed he did. I said no at first; I would not