

"Don't make such a talk, Dolly, and a fuss. We have had it out—John Morgan—council of state. She has been—she has been" (his voice faltered a little bit) "a great deal kinder than I deserve or had any reason to expect, judging by you, Dolly. It's not your business to scold, you know."

"And she knows all?" said Dolly, eagerly, and brightening.

"She knows all about my debts," said George, expressively. "She is going to let me try once more for the next scholarship. If I had been her, I shouldn't have been so good. She sha'n't be disappointed this time. However, the past is past, and can't be helped. I've been burning a whole drawerful of it....." And he struck his foot into the smouldering heap.

People think that what is destroyed is over, forgetting that what has been is never over, and that it is in vain you burn and scatter the cinders of many a past hope and failure, and of a debt to pay, a promise broken. Debts, promises, failures are there still. There were the poems George had tried to write, the account-books he had not filled up, the lists of books he had not read, a dozen mementoes of good intentions broken. There are the ugly phenixes as well as beautiful ones that rise out of the ashes.

"And did you not tell Aunt Sarah about Rhoda?" repeated Dolly, disappointed. "Oh, George, what does Rhoda mean when she says you are no longer engaged? What does it all mean?"

"It means—it means," said George, impatiently, "that I am an idiot, but I am not a sneak; and if a woman trusts me, I can keep her counsel, so long as you don't betray me, Dolly. Only there are some things one can't do, not even for the woman one loves." Then he looked up suddenly, and seeing Dolly's pained face, he went on. "Dolly, I think you would cut off your head if I were to ask you for it: Rhoda won't snip off one little lock of hair. Poor dear, she is frightened at every shadow. She has given me back this," he said, opening his hand, which he had kept closed before, and showing Dolly a little pearl locket lying in his palm. Then he went on in a low voice, looking into the fire: "I love her enough, God knows, and I would tell the whole world if she would let me. But she says no—always no; and I can trust her, Dolly, for she is nearer heaven than I am. It is her will to be silent," he said, gently: "angels vanish if we would look into their faces too closely. She would like me to have a tranquil spirit, such as her own; she thinks me a thousand times better than I am," said George, "and if I did as she wishes, I could be happy enough, but not contented." Dolly wondered of what he was thinking as he went on pacing up and

down the room. "I can not tell lies to myself, not even for her sake. I can not take this living, as she wishes. If I may not believe in God my own way, I should blaspheme and deny him, while I confessed him in some one else's words. You asked me one day if I had an inner life, Dolly," George said, coming back to the oak chimney-piece again. "Inner life is only one's self and the responsibility of this one life to the Truth. Sometimes I think that before I loved Rhoda I was not all myself, and though the truth was the same, it did not concern me in the same degree, and I meant to do this or that as it might be most advisable. Now, through loving her, Dolly, I seem to have come to something beyond us both, and what is advisable don't seem to matter any more. Can you understand this?"

"Yes, George," said Dolly, looking at him earnestly: his sallow face had flushed up, his closed eyes had opened out. Dolly suddenly flung her arms around his neck and kissed him. She felt proud of her brother as she listened to him. She had come to blame, she remained to bless him. Ah, if every one knew him as well as she did! She was happier than she had been for many a day, and ready to believe that George could not be wrong. She could not even say no that evening after dinner when George proposed that they should go over to the Morgans'.

"Go, my dears," said Lady Sarah; and Dolly got up with a sort of sigh to get her bonnet. Just as they were starting her cousin Robert walked in unexpectedly, and proposed to accompany them. He had come in with a serious face, prepared to sympathize in their family troubles, and to add a few words in season, if desired, for George's benefit. He found the young man looking most provokingly cheerful and at home, Lady Sarah smiling, and if Dolly was depressed she did not show it, for, in truth, her heart was greatly lightened. The three walked off together.

"We shall not be back to tea," said Robert, who always liked to settle things beforehand. But on this occasion Mrs. Morgan's hospitable tea-pot was empty for once. The whole party had gone off to a lecture and dissolving views in the Town-hall. The only person left behind was Tom Morgan, who was sitting in the study reading a novel, with his heels on the chimney-piece when they looked in.

"Good-night, Tom," said Dolly, with more frankness than necessary. "We won't stay, since there is only you."

"Good-evening," said Robert, affably. And they came out into the street again. He went on: "I am sorry John Morgan was not at home. I want him to fix some time for coming down to Cambridge. You must

come with him, Dolly. I think it might amuse you."

"Oh, thank you!" says Dolly, delighted.

This prospect alone would have been enough to make her walk back enjoyable, even if George had not been by her side, if it had not been so lovely a night, if stars had not burned sweet and clear overhead, if soft winds had not been stirring. The place looked transformed, gables and corners standing out in sudden lights. They could see the dim shade of the old church, and a clear green planet flashing with lambent streams beyond the square tower. Then they escaped from the crowd, and turned down by the quiet lane where Church House was standing gabled against the great Orion. They found the door ajar when they reached the ivy gate; the hall door too was wide open, and there seemed to be boxes and some confusion.

"Oh, don't let us go in; come into the garden," said Dolly, running to the little iron garden gate inside the outer wall. There was a strange glimmer behind the gate against which the slim white figure was pushing. The garden was dark, and rustling with a trembling in the branches. A great moon had come up, and was hanging over London, serenely silencing the rooftops and spires. Its light was rippling down the straight walks, of which the gravel was glittering.

"Yes, come," said George; and the three young people flitted along to their usual haunt by the pond.

"What is that?" said Dolly, pointing in the darkness. "Didn't somebody go by?" She was only a girl in her teens, and still afraid of unseen things.

"A rat," cried George, dashing forward.

"Oh, stop!" from Dolly.

"Don't be a goose," said Robert; and as he spoke George met them, flourishing an old garden shawl of Lady Sarah's, which had been forgotten upon the bench. He flung it weirdly down upon the gravel-walk. "Dead for a ducat, dead!" said he. Then he started forward, with a strange moonlight gleam upon his face. "This counselor is now most still, most secret, and most grave," he said, "who was in life a foolish prating knave." His voice thrilled—he got more and more excited.

Robert began to laugh. "What is it that you are acting?" he said.

"Acting?" cried George, opening his eyes. "That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once." "Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth—?"

"Those are his Eton speeches," said Dolly; "but, George, you look terrible. Please don't."

"Do be quiet," said Henley, impatiently. "Is not some one calling?"

Some one was calling, lights were appear-

ing and disappearing, the drawing-room window was wide open, and their aunt stood on the terrace making signs, and looking out for them.

"Look! there goes a falling-star," said George.

"Ah, who is that under the tree?" cried Dolly again, with a little shriek. "I knew I had seen some one move;" and as she spoke a figure emerging from the gloom came nearer and nearer to them, almost running, with two extended arms; a figure in long flowing garments, silver in the moonlight; a woman advancing quicker and quicker.

"Children, children," said a voice, "it is I—George—your mother! Don't you know me—darlings? I have come. I was looking for you. Yes, it is I, your mother, children."

Dolly's heart stood still, and then began to throb, as the lady flung her arms round Robert, who happened to be standing nearest.

"Is this George? I should have known him any where!" she cried.

Was this their mother?—this beautiful, sweet, unseen woman, this pathetic voice!

Dolly had seized George's hand in her agitation, and was crunching it in hers. Robert had managed to extricate himself from the poor lady's agitated clutch.

"Here is George. I am Robert Henley," he said. "But, my dear aunt, why—why did you not write? I should have met you. I—"

It was all a strange confusion of moonlight and bewilderment, and of tears presently, for Mrs. Palmer began to cry and then to laugh, and finally went off into hysterics in her son's arms.

## CHAPTER XXII.

MRS. PALMER.

WHEN they were a little calmed down, when they had left the moon and the stars outside in the garden, and were all standing in a group in the drawing-room round the chair in which Mrs. Palmer had been placed, Dolly saw her mother's face at last. She vaguely remembered her out of the long ago, a very young and beautiful face smiling at her: this face was rounder and fuller than the picture, but more familiar than her remembrance. Mrs. Palmer was a stout and graceful woman, with a sort of undulating motion peculiar to her, and with looks and ways some of which Dolly recognized, though she had forgotten them before. There was a strong likeness to Dolly herself, and even a little bit of George's look when he was pleased, though poor George's thick complexion and snub nose were far, far removed from any likeness to that fair and del-

icate countenance. Dolly gazed admiringly at the soft white hand, with the great Louis Quinze ring upon the forefinger. Though Mrs. Palmer had come off a journey in semi-hysterics, she was beautifully dressed in a black silk dress, all over rippling waved flounces, that flowed to her feet. She was leaning back in the chair, with half-closed eyes, but with a tender, contented smile.

"I knew you would take me in," she said to Lady Sarah. "I felt I was coming home—to my dear sister's home. See," she said, "what dear Stan gave me for my wedding-gift. I chose it at Lambert's myself. We spared no expense. I have never taken off his dear ring;" and she put out her soft hand and took hold of Lady Sarah's mitten. "Oh, Sarah, to think—to think—"

Lady Sarah shrunk back as usual, though she answered not unkindly, "Not now, Philippa," she said, hastily. "Of course this house is your home, and always open to you; at least, when we know you are coming. Why did you not write? There is no bed ready. I have had the maids called up. If Admiral Palmer had let me know—"

"He did not know," said Mrs. Palmer, getting agitated. "I will tell you all. Oh, Dolly, my darling, beware how you marry; promise me—"

"He did not know?" interrupted Lady Sarah.

Dolly's mother got more and more excited.

"I had some one to take care of me," she said. "My old friend Colonel Wilkerington was on board, and I told him every thing as we were coming along. I telegraphed to you, did I not? But my poor head fails me. Oh, Sarah, exile is a cruel thing; and now how do I know that I have not come home too soon?" she said, bursting into tears. "If you knew all—"

"You shall tell us all about it in the morning, when you are rested," said Lady Sarah, with a glance at Robert.

"Yes, in the morning, yes," said Mrs. Palmer, looking relieved, and getting up from her chair, and wiping her eyes. "How good you are to me! Am I to have my old room where I used to stay as a girl? Oh, Sarah, to think of my longings being realized at last, and my darling children—dear Stan's children—there actually before me!" And the poor thing, with a natural emotion, once more caught first one, then the other, to her, and sat holding her son's hand in both hers. When he tried to take it away she burst into fresh tears; and, as a last resource, Marker was summoned.

Poor Mrs. Palmer! her surprise had been something of a failure: George was not expansive, nor used to having his hand held; the boy and girl were shy, stiff, taken aback; Aunt Sarah was kind, but cross and bewildered; Mrs. Palmer herself exhausted after

twelve hours' railway journey, and vaguely disappointed.

"It was just like her," said Lady Sarah, wearily, to Marker, as they were going up stairs some two hours later, after seeing Mrs. Palmer safe into her room, and bolting the doors, and putting out the lights of this eventful evening. "What can have brought her in this way?"

Marker looked at her mistress with her smiling round face. "The wonder to me, mum, was whatever kept her away so long from those sweet children, to say nothing of you, my lady."

"She has chosen to make other ties," said Lady Sarah; "her whole duty is to her husband. Good-night, Marker; I do not want you to-night."

"Of course you know best, my lady," says Marker, doubtfully. "Good-night, my lady."

And then all was quite silent in the old house. The mice peeped out of their little holes and sniffed at the cheese-trap; a vast company of black beetles emerged from secret places and corners; the clocks began to tick like mad. Dolly lay awake a long time, and then dreamed of her new mamma, and of the moonlight that evening, and of a floating sea. Mrs. Palmer slept placidly between her linen sheets. Sarah Francis lay awake half the night crying her eyes and her aching heart away in bitter tears. Philippa was come. She knew of old what her advent meant. She loved Philippa, but with reserve and pain; and now she would claim her Dolly, she would win her away, and steal her treasure from her again—what chance had she, sad and sorry and silent, with no means of uttering her love? She was a foolish, jealous woman; she knew it, and with all her true heart she prayed for strength and for love to overcome jealousy and loneliness. Once in her life her jealous nature had caused misery so great between her and her husband that the breach had never been repaired, and it was Philippa who had brought it all about. How jealous poor Sarah had been! how unhappy Philippa had made her! Now Sarah knew that to love more is the only secret for overcoming that cruellest madness of jealousy, and to love more was her prayer. The dawn came at last, stealing tranquilly through the drawn curtains; with what peace and tranquillity the faint light flowed, healing and quieting her pain!

Dolly's new mamma's account of herself next morning was a little incoherent. Her health was very indifferent; she suffered agonies, and was living upon morphia when the doctor had ordered her home without delay. She had been obliged to come off at a few hours' notice; she didn't write. The Admiral was fortunately absent on a cruise, or he never would have let her go. He knew

what a helpless creature she was. She had borrowed the passage-money from a friend. Would Lady Sarah please advance her a little now, as she was literally penniless, and she wished to make George and Dolly some presents, and to engage a French maid at once. She supposed she should hear by the next post, and receive some remittances. She was not sure, for Hawtry was so dreadfully close about money. She did not know what he would say to her running away. No doubt he would use dreadful language, pious as he was; that she was used to; Colonel Wilkerington could testify to it. . . . And then she sighed. "I have made my own fate; I must bear my punishment," she said. "I shall try some German baths before his return, to brace my nerves for the—the future."

There was something soft, harmonious, gently affecting, about Dolly's mamma. When Mrs. Palmer spoke she looked at you with two brown eyes shining out of a faded but charming face: she put out an earnest white hand; there was a charming natural affectation about her. She delighted in a situation. She was one of those fortunate people whose parts in life coincide with their dispositions. She had been twice married. As a happy wife people had thought her scarcely aware of the prize she had drawn. As an injured woman she was simply perfect. She did not feel the Admiral's indifference deeply enough to lose her self-possession, as he did. Admiral though he was, and extempore preacher, he could not always hold his own before this susceptible woman. Her gentle impressiveness completely charmed and won the children over.

The conversation of selfish people is often far more amusing than that of the unselfish, who see things too *diffusedly*, and who have not, as a rule, the gift of vivid description. Mrs. Palmer was deeply, deeply interested in her own various feelings. She used to whisper long stories to George and Dolly about her complicated sorrows, her peculiar difficulties. Poor thing! they were real enough, if she had but known them; but the troubles that really troubled her were imaginary for the most part. She had secured two valiant champions before breakfast next morning, at which meal Robert appeared. He had slept upon the crisis, and now seemed more than equal to it; affectionate to his aunt, with whom he was charmed, readily answering her many questions, skillfully avoiding the subject of her difficulties with the Admiral, of which he had heard before at Henley Court. He was pleased by his aunt's manner and affectionate dependence, and he treated her from the first with a certain manly superiority. And yet—so she told Dolly—even Robert scarcely understood her peculiar difficulties.

"How can he, dear fellow? He is preju-

diced by Lady Henley—odious woman! I can trace her influence. She was a Palmer, you know, and she is worthy of the name. I dread my visit to Yorkshire. This is my real home."

Mrs. Palmer's mother, Lady Henley, had been an Alderville, and the Aldervilles are all young, beautiful, helpless, stout, and elegantly dressed. Mrs. Palmer took after them, she said. But helpless as Philippa was, her feebleness always leaned in the direction in which she wished to go, and in some mysterious fashion she seemed to get on as well as other stronger people. Some young officer, in a complimentary copy of verses, had once likened her to a lily. If so, it was a water-lily that she resembled most, with its beautiful pale head drifting on the water, while underneath was a long, limp, straggling stalk firmly rooted. Only those who had tried to influence her knew of its existence.

Dolly and George hung upon her words. George felt inclined to go off to Ceylon on purpose to shoot the Admiral with one of his own Colt's revolvers. Dolly thrilled with interest and excitement and sympathy. Her mother was like a sweet angel, the girl said to her brother. It was a wonderful new life that had begun for them. The trouble which had so oppressed Dolly of late seemed almost forgotten for a time. Lady Sarah, coming and going about the house, would look with a strange half-glad, half-sad glance at the three heads so near together in the recess of the window: Philippa leaning back, flushed and pathetic; George by her side, making the most hideous faces, as he was used to do when excited; Dolly kneeling on the floor, with her two elbows in her mother's lap, and her long chin upturned in breathless sympathy. Admiral—jealousy—meanness—cruel—mere necessities; little words like this used to reach Lady Sarah, creaking uneasily and desolately, unnoticed, round and round the drawing-room.

"Is it not a pity, Philippa, to put such ideas into their heads?" says Lady Sarah, from the other end of the room.

Then three pairs of eyes would be turned upon her with a sort of reproachful wonder, and the trio would wait until she was out of hearing to begin again.

Mrs. Palmer was certainly an adaptable woman in some ways: one husband or another, one life or another. So long as she had her emotions, her maid, her cups of tea, her comfortable sofa, and some one to listen to her, she was perfectly happy. She carried about in herself such an unfailing source of interest and solicitude that no other was really necessary to her; although, to hear her speak, you would imagine her fate to be one long regret.

"My spirit is quite broken," she would say, cheerfully. "Give me that small hand-screen, Dolly. For *your* sake, Sarah, I will

gladly chaperon Dolly to Cambridge, as Robert proposes (it must be after my return from Yorkshire); but I do wish you would let me write and ask for an invitation for you. George, poor fellow, wants me to bring Rhoda and the Morgan girls. I do hate girls. It is really wicked of him."

"If that were George's worst offense—" said his aunt Sarah, grimly.

"My poor boy!" said Mrs. Palmer. "Sarah, you are not a mother, and do not understand him. Come here, darling George! How I wish I could spare you from going back to those horrid examinations!"

George flushed up very red. "I should be very sorry to be spared," he muttered.

Mrs. Palmer used to ask Robert endless questions about Henley Court and his aunt, Lady Henley. Was she looking as weather-beaten as ever? Did she still wear plaids? "Vulgar woman!" whispered Mrs. Palmer to Dolly. Robert pretended not to hear. "I shall make a point of going there, Robert," she said, "and facing the Henley buckram." Robert gravely assured her that she would be most welcome.

"Welcome, my dear Robert! You can not imagine what an impertinent letter I have received from Joanna," says Mrs. Palmer. "I shall go when it is convenient to me, if only to show her that I do not care for any thing she can say. Joanna's style is only to be equaled by the Admiral's. The mail will be in on Monday."

So Philippa remained a victim, placidly sipping her coffee and awaiting the Admiral's insulting letters. The only wonder was that they had not burst their envelopes and seals, so explosive were they. His fury lashed itself into dashes and blots and frantic loops and erasures. The bills had come in for her bracelets and mufflers and tinkling ornaments. Had she forgotten the fate of the daughters of Jerusalem, that went mincing and tinkling with their feet? She might take a situation as a kitchen maid, for all he cared. She was a spendthrift, idle, extravagant, good for-nothing, etc., etc. Not one farthing would he allow her, etc., etc.; and so on. Mrs. Palmer used to go up to her room in high spirits to lie down to rest on the days they arrived, and send for Colonel Wilkington to consult upon them.

She would not come down till dinner was just over, and appeared on these occasions in a long gray sort of dressing-gown and a *négligé* little lace cap; she used to dine off almonds and raisins and cups of coffee, to Lady Sarah's secret indignation. "Oh, Sarah, you will not turn me away?" Mrs. Palmer would say, leaning back in languid comfort. Lady Sarah was very sorry, but somewhat skeptical. She would meet Pauline carrying French novels to the library after scenes which had nearly unnerved them all.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE TERRACE AT ALL-SAINTS COLLEGE.

SOMEWHERE in the fairy-land of Dorothea's imagination rises a visionary city, with towers and gables straggling against the sky. The streets go up hill and down hill, leading by cloisters and gateways and by-walls, behind which gardens are lying, like lakes of green, among the stones and the ivy. A thrush is singing, and the shrill echoes of some boyish, melancholy voices come from a chapel hard by. It is a chapel with a pile of fantastic columns standing in the quiet corner of a lane. All round the side-door are niches and winding galleries, branches wreathing, placed there by faithful hands, crisp saints beatified in stony glory. Are these, one is tempted to ask as one looks at the generous old piles, the stones that cry out nowadays when men are silent? They have, for the last century or two, uttered warnings and praises to many a generation passing by, speaking to some of a by-gone faith, to others of a living one. They still tell of past love and hope, and of past and present charity.

But in these times charity is a destroying angel; even the divine attributes seem to have changed, and Faith, Hope, and Charity have gone each their separate way.

To Dolly Vanborough, who had thought happiness was over forever, it was the first great song of her youth that these old stones sang to her on her eighteenth birthday. She hears it still, though her youth is past. It is the song of the wonder of life, of the divine in the human. As we go on its echoes reach us, repeated again and again, reverberating from point to point: who that has heard them once will ever forget them? To some they come with happiness and the delight of new undreamed-of sympathy, to others with sorrow and the realization of love. .... Its strains came with prayer and long fasting to the saints of old. This song of Pentecost—I know no better name for it—echoes on from generation to generation from one heart to another. Sometimes by chance one has looked into a stranger's face and seen its light reflected. Frank Raban saw its light in Dolly's face that day as she came out of the chapel to where her brother had left her. Just for an instant it was there while the psalm still sung in her heart. And yet the light in Dolly's face dimmed a little when she saw, not the person she had expected to see, but Mr. Raban waiting there.

"I came in Henley's place," said he, hastily, guessing her thought. "He was sent for by the Vice-Chancellor, and begged me to come and tell you this. He will join us directly."

Mr. Raban had been waiting in the sunshiny street while Dolly deliberately advanced down the worn steps of the chapel,

crossed the flagged court, and came out of the narrow iron wicket of which the barred shadow fell upon her white fête-day dress. Miss Vanborough's face was shaded by a broad hat with curling blue feathers; she wore a pink rose in her girdle. It was no saintly costume; she was but a commonplace mortal maiden in sprigged muslin, and saints wear, as we all know, red and blue and green, stained glass and damask and goat-skins; and yet Frank Raban thought there was something saint-like in her bright face, which, for an instant, seemed reflecting all her heart.

"Henley lives on my staircase," said Raban. "Those pink frills are his. He makes himself comfortable, as you see."

"I'm glad of that," said Dolly, smiling. "How nice it must be for you to have him so near!"

"He always takes ladies to see his rooms," Raban continued. "He is a great favorite with them, and gives tea-parties."

"A great favorite!" said Dolly, warmly. "Of course one likes people who are kind and good and clever and true and nice."

"Who are, in short, an addition sum, made up of equal portions of all the cardinal virtues," said Raban.

He was ashamed of himself, and yet he did not care to hear Henley's praises from Dolly. It seemed to him dishonest to acquiesce.

Dolly stopped for half a second and looked at him.

Dorothea was a tall woman, and their eyes were on a line, and their looks met. My heroine was at no pains to disguise the meaning of her indignant glances. "How can you be so ungenerous?" she said, as plainly as if she had spoken.

Frank answered her silence in words.

"No, I don't like him," he said, "and he don't like me; and I don't care to pretend to better feelings than I really have. We are civil enough, and pull very well together. I beg your pardon. I own he deserves to succeed," said the young man. "There, Miss Vanborough, this is our garden, where we refresh ourselves with cigars and beer after our arduous studies."

Dolly was still too much vexed to express her admiration.

They all began calling to them from under the tree. John Morgan, who was of the party, was lying flat upon his broad back, beaming at the universe, and fanning away the flies. Rhoda was sitting on the grass, in a foam of white muslin and Algerian shawls. George Vanborough, privileged for the day, was astride on a wooden table; a distant peacock went strutting across the lawn; a little wind came blowing gently, stirring all the shadows; a college bell began to tinkle a little, and then left off.

"Glorious afternoon, isn't it?" says John Morgan, from the grass.

"It is like heaven," says Dolly, looking up and round and about.

Rhoda's slim fingers clasp her pearl lock- et, which has come out again. They were in the shade, the sun was shining hot and intense upon the old garden. The roses, like bursting bubbles, were breaking in the heat against the old baked bricks, upon the rows of prim collegiate flowers—lilies and stocks and marigolds. There was a multiplicity of sweet scents in the air, of shadows falling on the lawns (they flow from the old gates to the river); a tone is struck, an insect floats away along the garden wall. With its silence and flowers, and tremulous shades and sunshine, I know no sweeter spot than the old garden of All-Saints.

The gardener had placed seats and a bench under the old beech-tree for pilgrims to rest upon, weary with their journeys from shrine to shrine. Mrs. Palmer was leaning back in a low garden-chair; the sweep of her flowing silks seemed to harmonize with her languid and somewhat melancholy grace. Rhoda was helping to open her parasol (the parasol was dove-colored and lined with pink). There was a row of Morgans upon the bench; Mrs. Morgan upright in the midst, nicely curled and trimmed with satin bows, and a white muslin daughter on either side.

It all happened in a moment: the sky burned overhead, the sun shone upon the river, upon the colleges, with their green gardens; the rays seemed to strike fire where they met the water. The swans were sailing along the stream in placid state, followed by their gray brood, skimming and paddling in and out among the weeds and the green stems and leaves that sway with the ripple of the waters; a flight of birds high overhead crossed the vault of the heavens and disappeared in the distance. Dorothea Vanborough was standing on the terrace at the end of the old college garden, where every thing was so still, so sweet, and so intense that it seemed as if time was not, as if the clocks had stopped on their travels, as if no change could ever be, nor hours nor seasons sweep through the tranquil old place.

They were all laughing and talking; but Dolly, who was too lazy and too happy to talk, wandered away from them a little bit, to the garden's end, where she stood stooping over the low wall and watching the water flow by; there was a man fishing on the opposite bank, and casting his line again and again. In the distance a boat was drifting along the stream; some insects passed out toward the meadows humming their summer drone; a wasp sailed by. Dolly was half standing, half sitting, against the low terrace wall; with one hand she was holding

up her white muslin skirt, with the other she was grasping the ledge of the old bricks upon which the lichens had been at work spreading their gold and gray. So the girl waited, sunning herself—herself a part of the summer's day, and gently blooming and rejoicing in its sweetness like any rose upon the wall.

Some people that day, Frank Raban among them, had thought her not unlike a rose herself.

There are blissful moments when one's heart seems to beat in harmony with the great harmony; when one is one's self light and warmth and the delight of light, and a voice in the comfortable chorus of contentment and praise all round about. Such a minute had come to Dolly, in her white muslin dress, with the Cam flowing at her feet and the lights dazzling her gray eyes.

Mrs. Morgan gave a loud sneeze under the tree, and the beautiful minute broke and dispersed away.

"I wonder what it can be like to grow old," Dolly wonders, looking up at John Morgan; "to remember back for years and years, and to wear stiff curls and satinet?" Dolly began to picture to herself a long procession of future selves, each older and more curiously bedizened than the other. Somehow they seemed to make a straight line between herself and Mrs. Morgan under the tree. It was an uncomfortable fancy. Dolly tried to forget it, and leaned over the wall, and looked down into the cool depths of the stream again. Was that fish rising? What was this? Her own face again looking up from the depth. Then Dolly turned, hearing a step upon the gravel, to see Robert Henley coming toward her. He was dressed in his college cap and gown, and he advanced, floating balloon-like, along the terrace. He looked a little strange, she thought, as he came up to her.

"I couldn't get away before," he said. "I hope you have been well looked after?"

"Yes, indeed. Come and sit down here, Robert. What a delicious old garden this is! We are all so happy! Look at those dear little swans in the river!"

"Do you like the cygnets?" said Robert, abruptly, as he looked her full in the face, and sat down on the low wall beside her. "Do you remember Charles Martindale," he asked, "whom we met once at John Morgan's, who went out to India? He is coming home next October."

"Is he?" said Dolly. "Look at that little gray cygnet scuttling away!"

"Dolly," said Henley, quickly, "they sent for me to offer me his place, and I—I—have accepted it."

"Accepted it?" said his cousin, forgetting the cygnets, and looking up a little frightened. "Oh, Robert, but you will have to go to India and leave every body!"

Her face changed a little, and Robert's brightened, though he tried to look as usual.

"Not every body," he said. "Not if— He took the soft hand in his that was lying on the wall beside him. "Dolly, will you come too?" he said.

"Me?" cried the unabashed Dolly. "Oh, Robert, how could I?"

"You could come if I married you," said Robert, in his quiet voice and most restrained manner. "Dearest Dorothea, don't you think you can learn to love me? It will be nearly five months before I start."

It was all so utterly incomprehensible that the girl did not quite realize her cousin's words. Robert was looking very strange and unlike himself. Dolly could hardly believe that it was not some effect of the dazzle of light in her own eyes. He was paler than usual; he seemed somehow stirred from his habitual ways and self. She thought it was not even his voice that she heard speaking. "Is this being in love?" she was saying to herself. A little bewildered flush came into her cheeks. She still saw the sky, and the garden, and the figures under the tree; then, for a minute every thing vanished, as tangible things vanish before the invisible—just as spoken words are hushed and lose their meaning when the silent voices cry out.

It was but for a moment. There she stood again, staring at Robert with her innocent, gray-eyed glance.

Henley was a big, black-and-white, melancholy young man, with a blue shaved chin. To-day his face was pale, his mouth was quivering, his hair was all on end. Could this be Robert, who was so deliberate, who always knew his own mind, who looked at his watch so often in church while music was going on? Even now, from habit, he was turning it about in his pocket. This little trick made Dolly feel more than any thing else that it was all true—that her cousin loved her—incredible though it might appear; and yet even still she doubted.

"Me, Robert?" repeated Dorothea, in her clear, childish tones, looking up with her frank yet timid eyes. "Are you sure?"

"I have been sure ever since I first saw you," said Henley, smiling down at her, "at Kensington three years ago. Do you remember the snow-ball, Dolly?"

Then Dolly's eyes fell, and she stood with a tender, puzzled face, listening to her first tale of love. She suddenly pulled away her hand, shy and blushing.

The swans had hardly passed beyond the garden terrace; the fisherman had only thrown his line once again; Dolly's mamma had time to shift her parasol: that was all. Henley waited, with his handsome head a little bent. He was regaining his composure; he knew too much of his cousin's uncompromising ways to be made afraid by her

silence. He stood pulling at his watch, and looking at her—at the straight white figure amidst dazzling blue and green, at the line of the sweet face still turned away from him.

"I thought you would have understood me better," he said, reproachfully.

Still Dolly could not speak. For a moment her heart had beat with an innocent triumph, and then came a doubt. Did she love him—could she love him? Had he, then, cared for her all this time, when she herself had been so cold and so indifferent, and thinking so little of him? Only yesterday she had told Rhoda she should never marry. Was it yesterday? No, it was today—an hour ago. . . . What had she done to deserve so much from him—what had she done to be so overprized and loved? At the thought, quick upspringing into her two gray eyes came the tears, sparkling like the diamonds in Rhoda's cross.

"I never thought you thought—" Dolly began. "Oh, Robert, you have been in earnest all this time, and I only—only playing!"

"Don't be unhappy," said her cousin. "It was very natural; I should not have wished it otherwise. I did not want to speak to you till I had something worth your acceptance."

"All this long time!" repeated Dolly.

Did the explanations of true love ever yet run smooth? "Dolly!" cried Mrs. Palmer, from under the tree.

"Hulloa, Robert!" shouted George, coming across the grass toward them.

"Oh, Robert!" said Dorothea, earnestly, unexpectedly, with a sudden resolution to be true—true to him and to herself, "thank you a thousand times for what you have told me: only it mustn't be—I don't care enough for you, dear Robert! You deserve—"

Henley said not a word. He stood with a half-incredulous smile; his eyes were still fixed on Dolly's sweet face; he did not answer George, who again called out something as he came up. As for Dolly, she turned to her brother and sprang to meet him, and took his arm as if for protection, and then she walked quickly away without another look, and Henley remained standing where she had been. Instead of the white muslin maiden, the cygnets may have seen a black silk young man, who looked at his watch, and then walked away too, while the fisherman quietly baited his line and went on with his sport.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

ROSES HAVE THORNS, AND SILVER  
FOUNTAINS MUD.

THE doors of the old library at All-Saints were open wide to admit the sunshine: it lighted up the starched frill collars of *Fun-*



*dator Noster* as he hung over the entrance. It was good stiff starch, near four hundred years old. The volumes stood in their places, row upon row, line after line, twinkling into the distant corners of the room; here and there a brass lock gleamed, or some almost forgotten title in faded gold, or the links of the old Bible chained to its oaken stand. . . . So the books stood marshaled in their places: brown, and swept by time, by dust, brushed by the passing generations that had entered one by one, bringing their spoils and placing them safe upon the shelves, and vanishing away. What a silent Babel and medley of time and space and languages and fancies and follies! Here and there stands a fat dictionary or prophetic grammar, the interpreter of echoes to other echoes. So, from century to century, the tradition is handed down, and from silent print and signs it thrills into life and sound. . . .

Those are not books, but living voices, in the recess of the old library. There is a young man stumping up and down the narrow passage, a young woman leaning against a worm-eaten desk. Are they talking of roots, of curves? or are they youthful metaphysicians speculating upon the unknown powers of the soul?

"Oh, George," Dolly says, "I am glad you think I was right."

"Right! Of course you would have been very wrong to do otherwise," says George, as usual, extremely indignant. "Of course you are right to refuse him. You don't care for him; I can see that at a glance. . . . It is out of the question. Poor fellow! He is a very good fellow, but not at all worthy of you. It is altogether preposterous. No,