

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,

Dolly," said the young fellow, melting; "you don't know—how should you?—what it is—what the real thing is. Never let yourself be deceived by any Brummagem and paste, when the real Koh-i-noor is still to be found—a gem of the purest water," said George, gently.

Dolly listened, but she was only half convinced by George's earnestness.

"I would give any thing that this had not happened," the young man went on.

Dolly listened, and said but little in answer. When George scolded her for having unduly encouraged Robert, she meekly denied the accusation, though her brother would not accept her denial.

"Had she, then, behaved so badly? Was Robert unhappy? Would he never forgive her? Should she never see him again?" Dolly listened sadly, wondering, and leaning against the old desk. There was a book lying open upon it—the History of the Universe—with many pictures of strange beasts and serpents, roaring, writhing, and whisking their tails, with the Garden of Eden mapped out, and the different sorts of angels and devils duly enumerated. Dolly's mind was not on the old book, but in the world outside it; she was standing again by the river and listening to Robert's voice. The story he told her no longer seemed new and strange. It was ended forever, and yet it would never finish as long as she lived. She had thought no one would ever care for her, and he had loved her, and she had sent him away; but he had loved her. Had she made a mistake, notwithstanding all that George was saying? Dolly, loving the truth, loving the right, trying for it heartily, in her slow, circuitous way, might make mistakes in life, but they would be honest ones, and that is as much as any of us can hope for, and so, if she strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel, it will be forgiven her. George's opposition was too vague to influence her. When he warned her against Henley, it sounded unreasonable. Warning! There was no need of warning. She had said no to her cousin. Already the terrace seemed distant miles and miles off, hours and hours ago, though she could see it through the window, and the swans on the river, and the sunlight striking flame upon the water; she could hardly realize that she had been there, and that with a word and a hasty movement she had sent Robert away of her own deliberate will.

"Yes," said George, coming up and banging his hand down upon the big book before her; "you were right, Dolly. He isn't half good enough for you. This is not like the feeling that I and Rhoda—"

But Dolly interrupted him almost angrily. "Not good enough! It is because he is too good, George, that I—I am not—not worthy of him."

It was more than she could bear to hear George speaking so.

Was Robert unhappy? had she used him ill? The thoughts seemed to smite her as they passed. She began to cry again—foolish girl!—and George, as he watched her worthless tears dribbling down upon the valuable manuscript, began to think that perhaps, after all, his sister had wished him to blame instead of approving of her decision. He was bound to sympathize, since she had kept his secret.

"Don't, Dolly," he said; "you will spoil the little devils if you cry over the book."

He spoke so kindly that Dolly smiled, and began to wipe her eyes. It was not a little thing that George should speak so kindly to her again. When she looked up she saw that he was signaling and bowing and waving his cap through the open window.

"It is the girls. They ought not to miss our college library," he said, gravely; and then he walked toward the door, to meet a sound of voices and a trampling of feet.

As for Dorothea, with a sudden shy impulse she escaped, tears, handkerchief, and all, and disappeared into the most distant niche of the gallery. Many footsteps came sounding up the wooden staircase, and Henley's voice was mingling with the Misses Morgan's shrill treble.

"How funny to see so many books!" said Zoe, who was a very stupid girl. (Clever people generally make the same remarks as stupid ones, only they are in different words.)

"What a delicious old place!" cried Rhoda, coming in. She was usually silent, and not given to ecstasies.

"Why didn't John bring us here before?" said Cassie. "I do envy you, Mr. George. How nice to be able to read all these books!"

"I am not so sure of that," said George, laughing.

Meanwhile Zoe had stumped up to the desk, where the history of the whole world was lying open.

"Why, look here," she said; "somebody has been reading, I do believe. How funny!"

As for Henley, he had already begun to examine the pictures that hung over every niche. He did not miss one of them as he walked quickly down the gallery. In the last niche of all he found the picture he was in search of. It was not that of a dignitary of the church. It was a sweet face, with brown crisp locks, and clear gray eyes shining from beneath a frown. The face changed, as pictures don't change, when he stood in the arch of the little recess. The pale cheeks glowed, the frown trembled and cleared away.

She wondered if he would speak to her or go away. Henley hesitated for an instant, and—spoke.

"Dolly, that was not an answer you gave me just now. You did not think that would

content me, did you?" he said; and as he looked at her fixedly her eyes fell. "Dolly, you do love me a little?" he cried; "you can not send me away?"

"I thought I ought to send you away," she faltered, looking up at last, and her whole heart was in her face. "Robert, I don't know if I love you, but I love you to love me," she said; and her sweet voice trembled as she spoke.

He had no misgivings. "Dearest Dolly," he said, in a low voice, "in future you must trust to me. I will take care of you. You need not have been afraid. I quite understood your feelings just now, and I would not urge you then. Now—" He did not finish the sentence.

When Dolly, the frigid maiden, surrendered, it was with a shy, reluctant grace. Hers was not a passionate nature, but a loving one; feeling with her was not a single simple emotion, but a complicated one of many impulses: of self-diffidences, of deep, deep, strange aspirations that she herself could scarcely understand. Humility, a woman's pride, the delight of companionship and sympathy, and of the guidance of a stronger will: a longing for better things. All these things were there. Ah! she would try to be worthier of him. It was a snow and ice and fire maiden who put her trembling hands into Robert's, and whom he clasped for an instant in his arms.

Meanwhile some of the party had straggled off again to the hotel after Mrs. Palmer. George was to escort the young ladies, who seemed determined to stay on turning over the manuscripts. The unlucky Zoe was babbling innocently, knocking over stools, and playfully pulling Latin sermons and dictionaries out of their places on the shelves. George, while he made himself agreeable in his peculiar fashion, was wondering what was going on at the farther end of the library. He longed to tell Rhoda and ask her advice, but that tiresome Zoe was forever interrupting. Was this a very old book? Did he like Greek or Latin best? She thought it all looked very stupid. Was Rhoda coming to the hotel to rest before dinner? And so on. Rhoda must have guessed what was in George's mind, for presently she started away from the page over which she was leaning, and went to the window.

"Shall we go out a little way?" she said, gently. "One would like to be every where to-day."

"I'm sure we have been every where," said Zoe.

"I know you are tired. I shall not allow you to come, dear Zoe," said Rhoda, affectionately. "You must rest; I insist upon it. You look quite worn out. Mr. George, will you help me?" and Rhoda began struggling with a heavy chair, which she pulled

into the window. "And here is a stool," said Rhoda, "for your feet. We will come back for you directly. My head aches; I want a little fresh air."

"Oh, thank you," said Zoe, doubtfully. "Do I look tired, Rhoda? I am sure—" But Rhoda was gone before she had time to say more. Zoe was not sure if she was pleased or not. It was just like Rhoda: she never could understand what people wanted, really; she was always kissing them and getting them chairs out of the way. No doubt she meant to be kind. Rest! any body could rest for themselves. What was that noise? "Who is there?" says Zoe, out loud; but there was no answer. Yes, she wanted to be with the others. Why did they poke her away up here? By leaning out of the open window she could just see the ivy wall and the garden beyond. There was no one left under the tree. They were all gone: just like them. How was she to find her way to the hotel? It was all very well for Rhoda, who had George Vanborough at her beck and call; they knew well enough she had nobody to take care of her, and they should have waited for her. That was what Zoe thought. There was that noise again, and a murmur, and some one stirring. Poor Zoe jumped up with her heart in her mouth; she knocked over the stool; she stood prepared to fly; she heard some one whispering; they might be garroters, ghosts, proctors—horror! Her terrors overpower her. Her high heels clatter down the wooden stairs, out into the sunny, silent court, where her footsteps echo as she runs—poor nymph flying from an echo! George and Rhoda are walking quietly up and down in the sunshine just beyond the ivy gate: their two shadows are fitting as they go. John Morgan is coming in at the great entrance. Zoe rushes up to him, panting with her terror.

"Oh, John," she says, "I didn't know where to go. Why don't you stop with me? I was all alone, and—"

"Why, Zoe, tired already! Come along quick to the hotel," says John, "or you won't get any rest before dinner."

They caught up the Morgans on their way, and met Raban, coming out of Trinity. Meanwhile Robert and Dorothea are leisurely following along the street. Henley had regained his composure by this time, and could meet the others with perfect equanimity. Not so his cousin. So many lights were coming and going in her face, so many looks and apparitions, that Robert thought every one must guess what had happened, as they came into the common sitting-room, where some five-o'clock tea was spread. But there is nothing more true than that people don't see the great facts that are starting before their very eyes, so busy are they with the details of life. Mrs. Palmer was trying to disentangle the silk strings of

her bag as they came in (she had a fancy for carrying a bag), and she did not observe her daughter's emotion.

Then came a clatter of five-o'clock tea-cups at the hotel; of young men coming and going, or waiting to escort them according to the kindly college fashion. Dolly was not sorry that she could find no opportunity to speak to her mother. Mrs. Palmer's feelings were not to be trifled with; and Dolly, in her agitation, scarcely felt strong enough to bear a scene. Robert staid for a few minutes, rang the bell for hot water, helped to move a horse-hair sofa, to open the window.

What foolish little memories Dolly treasured up in after-life of tea-making and tea-talking! Poor child! her memories were not so very many; but nothing is small and nothing is great at times.

Frank Raban stood a little apart talking to Rhoda, whose wonderful liquid eyes were steadily fixed upon him. George, on the sofa by his mother, was alternately biting his lips, frowning at Dolly over her tea and love-making, and at Rhoda and her companion.

"Darling George, can not you keep your feet still?" said Mrs. Palmer. "Are you going, Mr. Raban? Shall we not see you again?"

"I shall have the honor of meeting you at dinner," said Raban, stiffly. "I would come and show you the way, but Mr. Henley has promised to see you safe."

Every one seemed coming into the room at once, drinking tea, going away. There seemed two or three Georges: there were certainly two Dorotheas present. Henley only was composed enough for them all, and twice prevented his cousin from pouring all the sugar into the milk jug.

In the middle of the table there was a plateful of flowers, arranged by the waiter. Robert took out a little sprig of verbena, which he gave to Dorothea. She stuck it in her girdle, and put it away, when she got home, between the leaves of her prayer-book, where it still lies, in memory of the past, a dried-up twig that was once green and sweet. Rhoda, after Raban had left her, came up with her tea-cup, and, for want of something to do, began pulling the remaining flowers out of the dish.

"I can't bear to see flowers so badly used," said Rhoda, piling up the sand with her quick, clever fingers. "George, will you give me some water?"

In a few minutes the ugly flat dishful began to bloom quite freshly.

"That is very nicely done," George said, sarcastically. "Why didn't you get Raban to help you to arrange the flowers, Rhoda, before he left?"

"We were talking, and I didn't like to interrupt him," said Rhoda. "I was asking him all about political economy."

George's ugly face flushed.

"Are you satisfied that the supply of admiration equals the demand?" said George.

"George, how can you talk so?" says Rhoda.

An hour later they were all straggling down the narrow cross streets that led to the college again.

Dolly came, walking shyly by her lover's side. Mrs. Palmer leaned heavily upon John Morgan's arm. Every moment she dropped her long dress, and had to wait to gather the folds together. Surely the twilight of that summer's day was the sweetest twilight that Dolly had ever set eyes upon. It came creeping from the fields beyond the river, from alley to alley, from one college to another. It seemed to the excited girl like a soft tranquilizing veil let down upon the agitations and excitements of the day. She watched it growing in the old hall, where she presently sat at the cross-table under the very glance of the ubiquitous *Founder*, who was again present, in his frill and short cloak, between the two deep-cut windows.

The long table crossed the hall, with a stately decoration of gold and silver cups all down the centre; there were oaken beams overhead, old college servants in attendance. The great silver tankards went round brimming with claret and hock, and with straggling stems of burrage floating on fragrant seas.

By what unlucky chance did it happen that some one had written out the names of the guests, each in their place, and that Dolly found a strange young don on one side of her plate, and Raban on the other? Henley did not wish to excite remark, and subsided into the place appointed for him, when he found that he was not to sit where he chose.

"Drink, Dolly," said George, who was sitting opposite to her; "let us drink a toast."

"What shall I drink?" asked Dolly.

"Shall we drink a toast to fortune?" said George, leaning forward.

"I shall drink to the new President of the College of Boggleywollah," says John Morgan, heartily.

Dolly raised her eyes shyly as she put her lips to the enormous tankard and sipped a health.

As for Raban, he did not drink the toast, although he must have guessed something of what had happened. He never spoke to Dolly, though he duly attended to her wants, and handed bread and salt and silver flagons and fruit and gold spoons; still he never spoke. She was conscious that he was watching her. In some strange way the dislike and mistrust he felt for Henley seemed reflected upon poor Dorothea again. Why had she been flirting and talking to that man? She, of all women, Robert Henley, of all men, thought Raban, as he handed her a pear. Mrs. Palmer looked at Dorothea

more than once during dinner. The girl had two burning cheeks; she did not eat; she scarcely answered the young don when she was spoken to by him: but once Henley leaned forward and said something, then she looked up quickly. Stoicism is, after all, but a relic of barbarous times, and may be greatly overrated.

Dolly had not yet grown so used to her thick-coming experience that she could always look cold when she was moved, dull when she was troubled, indifferent when her whole heart was in a moment's decision. Later it all came easier to her, as it does to most of us. As the ladies left the dining-room Henley got up to let them out, and made a little sign to Dolly to wait behind. Being in a yielding mood, she lingered a minute in the anteroom, looking for her cloak, and allowed the others to pass on. Henley had closed the door behind him and come out, and seemed to be searching too. It was very dark in the anteroom, of which the twilight windows were small and screened by green plants. While her aunt was being draped in burnooses by Rhoda, and Mrs. Morgan's broad back was turned upon them, Dorothea waited for an instant, and said, "What is it, Robert?" looking up with her doubtful, yet kindly glance.

"Dear Dorothea, I wanted to make sure it was all true," said Robert, with one of the few touches of romance which he had experienced in all his well-considered existence. "I began to think it was a dream, and I thought I should like to ask you."

"Whether it is all a dream?" said Dolly, almost sadly. "It is not I who can answer that question; but you see," she added, smiling, "that I have begun to do as you tell me. They will think I am lost." And she sprang away, with a little wave of the hand.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### GOOD-NIGHT.

"GOOD-NIGHT, dearest Dolly," whispered Henley, as they all stood waiting for their train in the crowded station. "You can tell your mother as you go home."

"Here, Dolly! jump in," cried John Morgan, standing by an open carriage-door. "Your mother is calling you."

"I can't come up till Tuesday," Henley went on, in a low voice, "but I shall write to your mother to-night."

He helped her into the dark carriage; every body seemed to lean forward at once and say good-night; there was a whistle, a guard banged the door, Mrs. Palmer stretched her long neck through the window, but the train carried her off before she could speak her last words.

Dolly just saw Henley turning away, and

George under a lamp-post; then they were gone out of the station into the open country; wide and dim it flowed on either side into the dusk. The day had come to an end—the most wonderful day in Dolly's life. Was it a real day; was it a day out of somebody else's existence? As Dolly sat down beside her mother she had felt as if her heart would break with wonder and happiness; it was not big enough to hold the love that was her portion. He loved her! She had floated into some new world where she had never been before; where people had been living all their lives, thought Dolly, and she had never even guessed at it.

Had her mother felt like this? Had Frank Raban's poor young wife felt this when he married her? So she wondered, looking up at the clear evening sky. Might not death itself be this, only greater still and completer—too complete for human beings? Dolly had got her mother's hand tight in hers.

"My dear child, take care, take care!" cried Mrs. Palmer, sharply. "My poor fingers are so tender, Mr. Morgan, and Dolly's is such a grip. I remember once when the Admiral, with his great driving gloves— Her voice sank away, and Dolly's mamma began telling John Morgan all about one episode in her life.

Meanwhile Dolly went on with her speculations. How surprised Aunt Sarah would be! how surprised she was herself! Dolly had had a dream, like most young maidens, formless, voiceless, indefinitely vague, but with a meaning to it all the same, and a soul; and here was Robert, and the soul was his, and he loved her! "Thanks, half-way up," murmured Mrs. Palmer to a strange passenger who did not belong to the party.

"Tired, Zoe?" said John to his sister. "A little bit sleepy, eh?"

"Every body thinks I'm always tired," said Zoe, in an aggrieved tone. "Rhoda made me rest ever so long when I didn't want to. She popped me down on a stool in that stupid old library, and said I looked quite worn out, and then she was off in a minute, and I had to wait, oh! ever so long, and I was frightened by noises."

"Poor Zoe!" said John, laughing.

"It was too bad of her; and then they all kept leaving me behind," continued Zoe, growing more and more miserable; "and now you say it has been too much for me: I am sure I wouldn't have missed coming for any thing."

"Next time we go any where you keep with me, Zoe," said John, good-humoredly, "and you sha'n't be left behind."

"I think we are all tired," said Mrs. Palmer, languidly, "and we shall be thankful to get home. Dolly, my darling, you don't speak; are you quite worn out too?"

Dolly looked out from her dreams with a glance of so much life and sweetness in her

bright face—even the dim lamp-light could not hide her happy looks—that her mother was struck by it. “You strange child,” she said, “what are you made of? You look brighter than when we started.”

“Dolly is made of a capital stuff called youth and good spirits,” said John Morgan, kindly.

The rest of the journey was passed in shifting the windows to Mrs. Palmer's various sensations. They all parted hurriedly, as people do after a long day's pleasuring, only Dolly found time to give Rhoda a kiss. She felt more kindly toward her than she had done for many a day past. Rhoda looked curiously, and a little maliciously, into Dolly's face. But she could not read any thing more than she guessed already.

Mrs. Palmer was greatly disturbed to find herself driving home alone with Dolly in the hansom.

“I am afraid of cabmen. I am not accustomed to them. John Morgan should have come with me,” Mrs. Palmer said. “I am sure the Admiral would not approve of this! Ah! he will be over. Dolly, darling, ask the man if he is sober. Dear me, I wish Robert was here.”

Dolly, too, was wishing that Robert was there instead of herself. Her heart began to beat as she thought of what she had to say. She looked up at Mrs. Palmer's pale face in the bright moonlight through which they were driving homeward, through streets silver and silent and transformed. They come to the river and cross the bridge; the water is flowing, hushed and mysterious; the bridge throws a great shadow upon the water; one barge is slowly passing underneath the arch. The dim, distant crowd of spires, of chimneys, and slated roofs are illumined and multiplied by strange silver lights. Overhead a planet is burning and sinking where the sun set while they were still in the college garden. The soft moonwind comes sweeping fresh into their faces, and Dolly from this trance awakens to whisper, “Mamma, I have something to tell you—something that Robert—”

“He will throw us over! I know he will!” interrupts Mrs. Palmer, as the cab gave a jolt. “It is quite unsafe, Dolly, without a gentleman.”

Poor Dolly forced herself to go on. She took her mother's hand: “Dear mamma, don't be afraid.”

“He was not sober. I thought so at the time,” cried Mrs. Palmer, with a nervous shriek, as they came off the bridge.

Then the cab went more quietly, and Dolly found words to tell her news.

So the hansom drove on, carrying many agitations and exclamations along with it. The driver from his moon-lit perch may have heard the sounds within. Mrs. Palmer spared herself and Dolly no single emotion.

She was faint; she was hysterical; she rallied; she was overcome. Why had she not been told before? She had known it all along; she had mentioned it to the Admiral before her departure; he had sneered at her foolish dreams. Dolly would never have to learn the bitter deception of some wasted lives. Cruel boy! why had he not told her? why so reserved?

“He feared that it would agitate you,” Dolly said, feeling that Robert had been right. “He told me to tell you now, dear.”

“Dear fellow, he is so thoughtful,” said Mrs. Palmer. “Now he will be my son, Dolly, my real son. I never could have endured any one of those Henley girls for him. How angry Lady Henley will be. I warned Robert long ago that she would want him for one of them. Dolly, you must not be married yet. You must wait till the Admiral returns. He must give you away.”

When Dolly told her that Robert wanted to be married before he left for India, Mrs. Palmer said it was preposterous. He might have to sail any day—that Master told her so; the fat old gentleman in the white neck-cloth. “No, my Dolly, we shall have you till Robert comes back. Let the man keep the shilling for his own use.”

They had reached the turnpike by this time, with its friendly beacon-fire burning, and the red-faced man had come out with three pennies ready in his hand. Then by dark trees, rustling behind the walls of the old gardens, past the palace avenue gates, where the sentry was pacing, with the stars shining over his head, they come to the ivy gate at home, and with its lamp burning red in the moonlight. Marker opened the door before they had time to ring.

“Softly, my dear,” said Marker to Dolly, in a sort of whisper. “My lady is asleep; she has not been well, and—”

“Not well!” said Mrs. Palmer. “How fortunate she did not come. What should we have done with her? I am quite worn out, Marker; we have had a long day. Let Julie make me a cup of coffee, and bring it up to my room. Good-night, my precious Dolly. Don't speak to me, or I shall scream.”

“Marker, is Aunt Sarah ill?” said Dolly, anxious, she knew not why.

“Don't be frightened, my dear,” said Marker; “it is nothing—that is, the doctor says she only wants rest.”

Dolly went up to her own room, fitting carefully along the passage, and shading her light. Lady Sarah's door was closed. Mrs. Palmer was safe for the night, with Julie in attendance. Dolly could hear their voices as she went by. In her own little room all was in order, and cool and straight for her coming. The window was open; the moonlight fell upon her little bed, where she had dreamed so many peaceful dreams, and Dolly set her light upon the window-seat and stood

looking out. She was half radiant still, half saddened. All the sights and sounds of that long, eventful day were passing before her still, ringing, dazzling, repeating themselves on the darkness..... Was it possible that he loved her—that she loved him? The trees rustled, the familiar strokes of the church-clock came striking twelve, swinging through darkness into silence. “Do I love him? I think so,” said Dolly to herself. “I hope so.” And with an honest heart she told herself that all should be well. Then she wondered if she should sleep that night; she seemed to be living over every single bit of her life at once. She longed to tell Aunt Sarah her wonderful story. A daddy-longlegs sailed in at the open window, and Dolly moved the light to save its straggling legs; a little wind came blowing in, and then Dolly thought she heard a sound as of a door below opening softly. Was her aunt awake and stirring? She caught up the light and crept down to see. She could hear Julie and Mrs. Palmer still discoursing.

There is something sacred about a sick-room at times. It seems like holy ground to people coming in suddenly out of the turmoil and emotion of life. Dolly's excitement was hushed as she entered and saw Lady Sarah lying quietly stretched out asleep upon a sofa. It had been wheeled to the window, which was wide open. The curtain was flapping; all the medicine bottles stood in rows on the table and along the shelves. There lay Sarah, with her gray hair smoothed over her brown face, very still and sleeping peacefully—as peacefully as if she was young still, and loved, and happy, with life before her; though, for the matter of that, people whose life is nearly over have more right to sleep at peace than those who have got to encounter they know not what trials and troubles—struggles with others, and, most deadly of all, with that terrible shadow of self that rises with fresh might, striking with so sure an aim. What does the mystery mean? Who is the familiar enemy that our spirit is set to overcome and to struggle with all the night until the dawn? There lay poor Sarah's life-adversary, then, nearly worn, nearly overcome, sleeping and resting while the spirit was traveling I know not to what peaceful regions.

Dolly crept in and closed the door. Lady Sarah never stirred. A long time seemed to pass. The wind rose again, the curtain flapped, and the light flickered, and time seemed creeping slowly and more slowly to the tune of the sleeping woman's languid breath. It was a strange ending to the long, glittering day, but at last a flush came into Sarah Francis's cheeks, and she opened her eyes..... A strange new something was in that placid face—a look. What is it, that

first look of change and blur in features that have melted so tranquilly before us from youth to middle age, or from middle age to age, modulating imperceptibly? The light of Dolly's own heart was too dazzling for her to be in a very observant mood just then.

“Is that my Dolly?” said the sick woman. Dolly sprang forward. “Oh! I am so glad you are awake,” said the girl. “Dear Aunt Sarah, has your sleep done you good? Are you better? Can you listen to something? Can you guess?” And she knelt down so as to bring her face on a level with the other; but she couldn't see it very plainly for a dazzle between them. “Robert says he loves me; and, indeed, if he loves me, I must love him,” Dolly whispered; and her face fell hidden against the pillow, and the mist turned to haze. Some bird in the garden outside began to whistle in its sleep. A belated clock struck something a long way off, and then all was silence and darkness again.

Lady Sarah held Dolly close to her, as the girl knelt beside her.

“Do you care for him? Is it possible?” said Lady Sarah, bewildered.

Dolly was hurt by her doubt. “Indeed I do,” she answered, beginning to cry once more from fatigue and excitement.

One of the two women in that midnight room was young, with the new kindling genius of love in her heart, and she was weeping; the other was old, with the first knell of death ringing in her ear, but when Dolly looked up at last she saw that her aunt was smiling very tenderly. Lady Sarah smiled, but she could not trust herself to speak. She had awakened startled, but in a minute she had realized it all. She had felt all along that this must be. She had not wished for it, but it was come. It was not only of Dolly and of Robert that Lady Sarah thought that night; other ghosts came into the room and stood before her. And then came every day, very real, into this dream-world—Marker, with a bed-chamber candlestick, walking straight into conflicting emotions, and indignant with Miss Dolly for disturbing her mistress. She had been shutting up, and seeing to Mrs. Palmer's coffee. She was scarcely mollified by the great news. Lady Sarah was awake; Dolly had awakened her.

“Let people marry who they like,” said Marker; “but don't let them come chattering and disturbing at this time o' night when they should 'a known better.”

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### GOOD-MORNING.

DOLLY passed through the sleeping house, crept by the doors, slid down the creaking stairs into the hall. The shutters were un-