

housekeeper's situation, just like Aunt Morgan. She had done her best, and she had earned a rest, and she would not begin all over again. George might be as true as he liked. Rhoda ran up the steps of the old brown house in a silent passion, and gave a sharp pull at the bell. Yes, she hated it all. She was utterly tired of it all—of the noisy home, of Aunt Morgan's precepts and flannels. She could hear the clink of plates in the dining-room, where the inevitable *entrées* of cheese and cold meat were set out on the shabby table-cloth, where her aunt Morgan stood in her black cap and stiff brown curls, carving slice after slice for the hungry curate.

"You are late, Rhoda," said her aunt. "I suppose you staid to late dinner with your friends?"

"No; but I am not hungry," said Rhoda, shrinking away.

"Why, Rhoda, what is the matter?" said John, kindly, and he held out his big hand to her.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

UNBORN TO-MORROW, AND DEAD YESTERDAY.

WHATEVER Lady Sarah may have thought, Mrs. Palmer used to consider Dolly a most fortunate girl, and she used to say so, not a little to Lady Sarah's annoyance.

"Extremely fortunate," repeats Dolly's mamma, looking thoughtfully at her fat satin shoes. "What a lottery life is! I was as pretty as Dolly, and yet dear Stanham had not any thing like Robert's excellent prospects. Even the Ad— Don't go, Sarah."

Poor Lady Sarah would start up, with an impatient movement, and walk across the room to get away from Philippa's retrospec-

tions. They were almost more than she had patience for just then. She could scarcely have found patience for Philippa herself, if it had not been that she was Dolly's mother. What did she mean by her purrings and self-congratulations? Lady Sarah used to feel most doubtful about Dolly's good fortune just when Philippa was most enthusiastic on the subject, or when Robert himself was pointing out his excellent prospects in his lucid way.

Philippa would listen, nodding languid approbation. Dolly would make believe to laugh at Robert's accounts of his coming honors; but it was easy to see that it was only make-believe incredulity.

Her aunt could read the girl's sweet conviction in her eyes, and she loved her for it. Once, remembering her own youth, this fantastic woman had made a vow never, so long as she lived, to interfere in the course of true love. True love! Is this true love, when one person is in love with a phantom, another with an image reflected in a glass? True love is something more than phantoms, than images and shadows; and yet, stirred by phantoms and living among shadows, its faint dreams come to life.

Lady Sarah was standing by the bookcase, in a sort of zigzag mind of her own old times and of Dolly's to-day. She had taken a book from the shelf—a dusty volume of Burns's poems—upon the fly-leaf of which the name of another Robert Henley was written. She holds the book in her hand, looks at the crooked writing—"S. V., from Robert Henley, May, 1808." She beats the two dusty covers together, and puts it back into its place again. That is all her story. Philippa never heard of it; Robert never heard of it, nor did he know that Lady Sarah loved his name—which had been his father's too—better than she loved him. "Perhaps her happiness had all gone to Dolly," the widow thought, as she stood, with a troubled sort of smile on her face, looking at the two young people through a pane of glass; and then, like a good woman as she is, tries to silence her misgivings into a little prayer for their happiness.

Let us do justice to the reluctant prayers that people offer up. They are not the less true because they are half-hearted, and because those who pray would sometimes gladly be spared an answer to their petitions. Poor Lady Sarah! her prayers seemed too much answered as she watched Dolly day by day more and more radiant and absorbed.

"My dear creature, what are you doing with all those dusty books? Can you see our young people?" says Mrs. Palmer, languidly looking over her arm-chair. "I expect Colonel Witherington this afternoon. He admires Dolly excessively, Sarah; and I really think he might have proposed, if

Robert had not been so determined to carry her off. You dear old thing, forgive me; I don't believe she would ever have married at all if I had not come home. You are in the clouds, you know. I remember saying so to Hawtry at Trincomalee. I should have disowned her if she had turned out an old maid. I know it. I detest old maids. The Admiral has a perfect craze for them, and they all adore him. I should like you to see Miss Macgrudder—there never was any thing so ludicrous, asthmatic, sentimental—frantic. We must introduce Miss Moineaux to him, and the Morgan girls. I often wonder how he ever came to marry a widow, and I tell him so. It was a great mistake. Can you believe it?—Hawtry now writes that second marriages are no marriages at all. Perhaps you agree with him? I'm sure Dolly is quite ready to do so. I never saw a girl so changed—never. We have lost her, my dear; make up your mind to it. She is Robert, not Dolly any more—no thought for any one else, not for me, dear child! And don't you flatter yourself she will ever.....Dear me! Gone? What an extraordinary creature poor Sarah is! touched, certainly; and such a wet blanket!"

Mrs. Palmer, rising from her corner, floats across the room, sweeping over several footstools and small tables on her way. She goes to the window, and not caring to be alone, begins to tap with her diamond finger upon the pane, to summon the young couple, who pay not the slightest attention. Fortunately the door opens, and Colonel Witherington is announced. He is a swarthy man, with shiny boots, a black mustache; his handkerchief is scented with *Esse bouquet*, which immediately permeates the room; he wears tight dog-skin gloves and military shirt collars. Lady Sarah thinks him vulgar and odious beyond words; Mrs. Palmer is charmed to see him, and graciously holds out her white hand. She is used to his adoration, and accepts it with a certain swan-like indifference.

People had different opinions about Mrs. Palmer. In some circles she was considered brilliant and accomplished; in others, silly and affected. Colonel Witherington never spoke of her except with military honors. "Charming woman," he would say; "highly cultivated; you might give her five-and-twenty at the outside. Utterly lost upon that spluttering old psalm-singing Palmer. Psalms are all very well in their proper place—in the prayer-books, or in church; but after dinner, when one has got a good cigar, and feels inclined for a little pleasant conversation, it is not the time to ring the bell for the servants, and have 'em down upon their knees all of a row, and up again in five minutes to listen to an extempore sermon. The Admiral runs on like a clock. I used to stay with them at the Admiralty House. Pity

that poor woman most heartily! Can't think how she keeps up as she does!"

Little brown Lady Henley at Smoke-thwaite would not have sympathized with Colonel Witherington's admiration. She made a point of shrugging her shoulders whenever she heard Philippa's name mentioned. "If you ask me," she would say, "I must frankly own that my sister-in-law is not to be depended on. She is utterly selfish; she only lives for the admiration of gentlemen. My brother Hawtry is a warm-hearted, impulsive man, who would have made any woman happy. If he has looked for consolation in his domestic trials, and found it in religious interests, it is not I who would blame him. Sir Thomas feels as I do, and deeply regrets Philippa's deplorable frivolity. I do not know much of that poor girl of hers. I have no doubt Robert has been dazzled by mother and daughter. They are good-looking, and, as I am told, thoroughly well understand the art of setting themselves off to the best advantage. I am fond of Robert Henley, but I can not pretend to have any feeling for Dorothea one way or another. We have asked them here, of course. They are to come after their marriage. I only hope my sister-in-law appreciates her daughter's good luck, and has the sense to know the value of such a man as Robert Henley."

Mrs. Palmer was perfectly enchanted with her future son-in-law. He could scarcely get rid of her. Robert, with some discomposure, would find himself sitting on his aunt's sofa, hand in hand, listening to long and very unpleasant extracts from her correspondence. "You dear boy!" Mrs. Palmer would say, with her soft, fat fingers firmly clasped round his, "you have done me good. Your dear head is able to advise my poor perplexed heart.—Dolly, he is my prop. I give you up, my child, gladly, to this dear fellow!" These little compliments mollified the young man at first, although he found that by degrees the tax of his aunt's constant dependence became heavier and heavier. Briareus himself could scarcely have supplied arms to support her unsparing weakness, to hand her parcels and footstools about, to carry her shawls and cushions, and to sort the packets of her correspondence. She had the Admiral's letters, tied up with various colored ribbons, and docketed, "Cruel," "Moderately Abusive," "Apologetic," "Canting," "Business." She was always sending for Robert. Her playful tap at the window made him feel quite nervous.

Mrs. Palmer had begun to knit him a pair of muffatees, and used slowly to twist pink silk round ivory needles. Lady Henley laughed very loud when she heard this. "Poor Robert! He will have to pay dearly for those mittens," she said.

For a long time past Mrs. Palmer had rare-

ly left the house, but the trousseau now began to absorb her; she used to go driving for long hours at a time with Dolly in a jaded fly—she would invite Robert to accompany them—to Baker Street Bazar, to Soho Square, to St. Paul's Church-yard, back again to Oxford Street, a corner shop of which she had forgotten the number. On one occasion, after trying three or four corner shops, Robert called to the coachman to stop, and jumped out. "I think Dolly and I will walk home," he said, abruptly; "I'm afraid you must give up your shop, Aunt Philippa. It is impossible to find the place."

Poor Dolly, who was longing to escape, brightened up, but before she could speak Mrs. Palmer had grasped her tightly by both hands. "My dear Robert, what a proposal! I could not think of letting Dolly walk all the way home. She would be quite done up. And it is *her* business, her shopping, you know." Then, reproachfully and archly, "And I *must* say that even the Admiral would scarcely have deserted us so ungallantly, with all this work on our hands, and all these parcels, and no servant. You dear fellow, you really must not leave us."

Robert stood holding the door open, and looking particularly black. "I am very sorry indeed," he said, with a short laugh, "but you will be quite safe, my dear aunt, and you really seem to have done enough shopping to last for many years to come." And he put out his hand as a matter of course, to help Dorothea to alight.

"But she *can* not leave me," says Philippa, excitedly; "she would not even wish it. Would you, my child? I never drive alone—never; I am afraid of the coachman. It is most unreasonable to propose such a thing."

"I will answer for your safety," persisted Robert. "My dear aunt, you must get used to doing without your Dolly now. Come, Dora, the walk will freshen you up."

"But I don't want to walk, Robert," said poor Dolly, with a glance at her mother. "You may come for me to-morrow instead. You will, won't you?" she added, as he suddenly turned away without answering, and she leaned out of the carriage window, and called after him, a little frightened by his black looks and silence. "Robert! I shall expect you," she said.

"I shall not be able to come to-morrow, Dora," said Henley, very gravely; and then, raising his hat, he walked off without another word.

Even then Dolly could not believe that he was seriously angry. She saw him striding along the pavement, and called to him, and made a friendly little sign with her hand as the brougham passed close by a place where he was waiting to cross the road. Robert did not seem to see either the brougham or the kind face inside that was smiling at

him. Dorothea's eyes suddenly filled up with tears.

"Boorish! boorish!" cried Mrs. Palmer, putting up both hands. "Robert is like all other men; they leave you at any moment, Dolly—that is my experience, bitterly gained—without a servant even, and I have ever so much more to do. There is Parkins and Gotto's for India-paper. If only I had known that he was going to be so rude, I should have asked for old Sam." Mrs. Palmer was still greatly discomposed. "Pray put up that window, Dolly," she said, "and I do wish you would attend to those parcels—they are all falling off the seat."

Dolly managed to wink away her tears as she bent over the parcels. Forgive her for crying! This was her first quarrel with Robert, if quarrel it could be called. She thought it over all the way home; surely she had been right to do as her mother wished! Why was Robert vexed?

Philippa was in a very bad humor all that evening. She talked so pathetically of a mother's feelings, and of the pangs of parting from her child, that Lady Sarah for once was quite sorry for her—she got a little shawl to put over Philippa's feet as she lay beating a tattoo upon the sofa. As for Dolly, she had gone to bed early, very silent and out of spirits.

That evening's post brought a couple of letters: one was from George to his mother, written in his cranky, blotted handwriting:

"CAMBRIDGE; ALL-SAINTS COLLEGE.

"DEAREST MAMMA,—I am coming up for a couple of days. I have, strange as it may sound, been working too hard. Tell Aunt Sarah. Love to Dolly.

Yours affectionately, GEORGE."

The other was for Dolly, and Marker took it up to her in her room. This letter flowed in even streams of black upon the finest hot-pressed paper.

"DEAREST DORA,—I was much disappointed that you would not come with me, and condemned me to that solitary walk. I hope that a day may come, before very long, when your duty and your pleasures may seem less at variance to you than at present; otherwise I can see little chance of happiness in our future life. Yours, R. V. H."

"Was he still vexed?" Dolly, who had relented the moment she saw the handwriting, wrote him a little note that evening by moonlight, and asked Marker to post it.

"I could not leave mamma all alone," she wrote. "I wanted to walk home with you—couldn't you see that I did? I shall expect you to come to luncheon to-morrow, and we will go wherever you like. D."

Dolly lay awake after this for a long moonlight hour. She was living in what people call the world of feeling. She was absorbed, she was happy, but it was a happiness with a reserve in it. It was peace, indeed, but Dolly was too young, her life had been too easy, for peace to be all-sufficient to her. She had found out by her new experience

that Robert loved her, but in future that he would rule her too. In her life, so free hitherto, there would be this secret rule to be obeyed, this secret sign. Dolly did not know whether on the whole she liked the thought, or whether she resented it. She had never spoken of it, even to Robert. "You see you have to do as you are told," Henley sometimes said; he meant it in fun, but Dorothea instinctively felt that there was truth in his words—he was a man who held his own. He was not to be changed by an impulse. Dolly, conscious of some hidden weakness in her own nature, deified obstinacy, as many a woman has done before her, and made excuses out of her own loving heart for Henley's selfish one.

It was summer still, though August had come again; the Virginian creepers along the west wall glowed; crimson-tinted leaves fell in golden rain—the gardener swept up golden dollars and fairy money into heaps and carted them away; the geraniums put out shoots; the creepers started off upon excursions along the gravel-paths; it was a comfortable old-fashioned world, deep-colored, russet-tinted, but the sun was hot still and burning, and Dolly dressed herself in white, and listened to every bell.

The day passed, however, without any sign of Robert, or any word from him. But George walked in just as they were sitting down to luncheon. He looked very pale and yellow, and he had black lines under his eyes. He had been staying down at Cambridge, actually reading for a scholarship that Raban had advised his trying for. It was called the Bulbul scholarship for Oriental languages, and it had been founded by an enlightened Parsee, who had traveled in Europe in shiny boots and an oil-skin hat, and who had been so well received at Cambridge that he wished to perpetuate his name there.

George had taken up Persian some time ago, when he should have been reading mathematics. He was fond of quoting the "Roubaiyat" of Omar Khayyam, of which the beautiful English version had lately appeared. It was this poem, indeed, which had set him to study the original. He had a turn for languages, and a fair chance of success, Raban said, if he would only go to bed, and not sit up all night with soda-water and wet towels round his head. This time he had nearly made himself ill by sitting up three nights in succession, and the doctor had sent him home for a holiday. "My dear child, what a state your complexion is in! How ill you look!" said his mother. "It is all those horrid examinations!"

Restless George wandered out into the garden after dinner, and Dolly followed him. She began to water her roses in the cool of the evening, and George filled the cans with water from the tank and brought them to

her. Splashing and overflowing, the water lapped into the dry earth and washed the baked stems of the rose-trees. George said suddenly, "Dolly, do you ever see Raban now, and do you still snub him?"

"I don't snub him," said Dolly, blushing. "He does not approve of me, George. He is so bitter, and he never seems satisfied."

George began to recite—

"Ah, love! could you and I with fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits, and then
Remould it nearly to the Heart's Desire?"

There is Robert at last, Dolly."

Dolly looked wonderingly at her brother. He had spoken so pointedly that she could not help wondering what he meant; but the next moment she had sprung forward to meet Henley, with a sweet face alight.

"Oh, Robert, why have you been so long coming?" she said. "Did you not get my note?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

UNDER THE GREAT DOME.

THE wedding was fixed for the middle of September. In October they were to sail.

Dolly was to be married at the Kensington parish church. Only yesterday the brown church was standing—to-day a white phoenix is rising from its ashes. The old people and the old prayers seem to be passing away with the brown walls. One wonders as one looks at the rising arches what new tides of feeling will sweep beneath them, what new teachings and petitions, what more instant charity, what more practical faith and hope. One would be well content to see the old gates fall if one might deem that these new ones were no longer to be confined by bolts of human adaptation, against which, day by day, the divine decrees of mutation and progress strike with blows that are vibrating through the aisles, drowning the voice of the teachers, jarring with the prayers of the faithful.

As the doors open wide the congregations of this practical age in the eternity of ages see on the altars of to-day the new visions of the time. Unlike those of the fervent and mystical past, when kneeling anchorites beheld, in answer to their longing prayers, pitiful saints crowned with roses and radiant with light, and, vanishing away, visions of hearts on fire and the sacred stigmata, the rewards of their life-long penance; to-day, the Brother whom we have seen appears to us in the place of symbols of that which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. The teaching of the Teacher, as we understand it now, is translated into a new language of daily toil and human sympathy; our saints are the sinners helped out of the mire; our visions do not vanish; our

heavenly music comes to us in the voices of the school-children: surely it is as sweet as any that ever reached the enraptured ears of penitents in their cells.

If people are no longer on their knees as they once were, and if some are afraid and cry out that the divine images of our faith are waxing dimmer in their niches—if in the Calvaries of these modern times we still see truth blasphemed, thieves waiting on their crosses of ignorance and crime, sick people crying for help, and children weeping bitterly—why should we be afraid if people, rising from their knees, are setting to their day's work with honest and loving hearts, and going, instead of saying, "I go," and remaining and crying, "Lord, Lord?"

Once Dolly stopped to look at the gates as she was walking by, thinking, not of church reform, in those old selfish days of hers, but of the new life that was so soon to begin for her behind those baize doors, among the worm-eaten pews and the marble cherubs, under the window, with all the leaden-patched panes diverging. She looked, flushed up, gathered her gray skirts out of the mud, and went on with her companion.

The old days were still going on, and she was the old Dolly that she was used to. But there was this difference now: at any time, at any hour, coming into a room suddenly, she never knew but that she might find a letter, a summons, some sign of the new existence and interests that were crowding upon her. She scarcely believed in it all at times; but she was satisfied. She was walking with her hand on Robert's strong arm. She could trust to Robert—she could trust herself. She sometimes wondered to find herself so calm. Robert assured her that, when people *really* loved each other, it was always so; they were always calm; and, no doubt, he was right.

The two were walking along the Sunday street on their way to St. Paul's. Family groups and prayer-books were about; market-carts, packed with smiles and ribbons, were driving out in a long train toward the river. Bells far and near were ringing fitfully. There is no mistaking the day as it comes round, bringing with it a little ease into the strain of life, a thought of peace and home-meeting and rest, and the echo of a psalm outside in the City streets, as well as within its churches.

Robert called a hansom, and they drove rapidly along the road toward town. The drifting clouds and lights across the parks and streets made them look changed from their usual aspect. As they left the suburbs and drove on toward the City, Henley laughed at Dorothea's enthusiasm for the wet streets, of which the muddy stones were reflecting the lights of a torn and stormy sky. St. Clement's spire rose sharp against a cloud, the river rolled, fresh

blown by soft winds, toward the east, while the lights fell upon the crowding house-tops, and spires. Dolly thought of her moonlight drive with her mother. Now every thing was alight and awake again, she alone was dreaming, perhaps. As they went up a steep crowded hill the horse's feet slipped at every step. "Don't be afraid, Dora," said Robert, protectingly. Then they were driving up a straighter and wider street, flooded with this same strange light, and they suddenly saw a solemn sight—of domes and spires uprearing; of mist, of stormy sky. There rose the mighty curve, majestically flung against the dome of domes! The mists drifting among these mountains and pinnacles of stone only seemed to make them more stately.

"Robert, I never knew how beautiful it was," said Dolly. "How glad I am we came! Look at that great dome and the shining sky. It is like—'See how high the heavens are in comparison with the earth.'"

"I forget the exact height," said Robert. "It is between three and four hundred feet. You see the ball up at the top—they say that twenty-four people—"

"I know all that, Robert," said Dolly, impatiently. "What does it matter?"

"I thought it might interest you," said Robert, slightly huffed, "since you appear to be so little acquainted with St. Paul's. It is very fine, of course; but I myself have the bad taste to prefer Gothic architecture; it is far more suitable to our church. There is something painfully—how shall I express it?—paganish about these capitals and pilasters."

"But that is just what I mean," said Dolly, looking him full in the face. "Think of the beautiful old thoughts of the pagans helping to pile up a cathedral here now. Don't you think," she said, hesitating, and blushing at her own boldness, "that it is like a voice from a long way off coming and harmonizing now with ours? Robert, imagine building a curve that will make some one happy thousands of years afterward—"

"I am glad it makes *you* happy, my dear Dorothea. I tell you I have the bad taste not to admire St. Paul's," Robert repeated. "But here is the rain; we had better make haste."

They had come to an opening in the iron railings by this time, and Robert led the way—a stately figure—climbing the long flight of weather-worn steps that go circling to the peristyle. Dolly followed slowly: as she ascended the lights seemed to uprise, the columns to stand out more boldly.

"Come in," Robert said, lifting up the heavy leather curtain.

Dolly gave one look at the city at her feet, flashing with the many lights and

shadows of the impending storm, and then she followed him into the great cathedral.

They were late. The evening service was already begun, and a voice was chanting and ringing from column to column. "Rejoice in the Lord alway," it sang, "and again I say, again I say unto you, rejoice! rejoice!" A number of people were standing round a grating listening to the voice; but an old verger, pleased with the looks of the two young people, beckoned to them and showed them up a narrow stair into a little oaken gallery, whence they could look down upon the echoing voice and the great crowd of people listening to it: many lights were burning, for it was already dark within the building. Here a light fell, there the shadow threw some curve into sudden relief; the rolling mist that hung beyond the distant aisles and over the heads seemed like a veil, and added to the mystery. The music, the fire, the arches overhead, made Dolly's heart throb. The cathedral itself seemed like a great holy heart beating in the midst of the city. Once, when Dolly was a child in the green ditch, her heart had overflowed with happiness and gratitude; here she was a woman, and the future had not failed her; here were love and faith to make her life complete—all the vibration of fire and music, and the flow of harmonious lines, to express what was beyond words.....

"Oh, Robert, what have we done to be so happy?" she whispered, when the service was over and they were coming away in the crowd. "It almost frightens me," the girl said.

Robert did not hear her at first; he was looking over the people's heads, for the clouds had come down and the rain was falling heavily.

"Frighten you?" said Robert, presently, opening his umbrella. "Take my arm, Dolly: what is there to frighten you? I don't suppose we are any happier than other people under the same circumstances. Come this way; let us get out of the crowd."

Robert led the girl down a narrow lane closed by an iron gate. It looked dark and indistinct, although the west still shone with changing lights. Dolly stood up under a doorway, while the young man walked away down the wet flags to look for a cab to take them home. The rain fell upon the pavement, upon the stone steps where Dolly was standing, and with fresh cheeks blooming in the mist, and eyes still alight with the radiance and beauty of the psalm she had been singing in her heart. "I don't suppose we are any happier than other people." She wished Robert had not said that; it seemed cold, ungrateful almost. The psalm in her ears began to die away to the dull patter of the rain as it fell. What was it that came to Dolly as she stood in the twi-

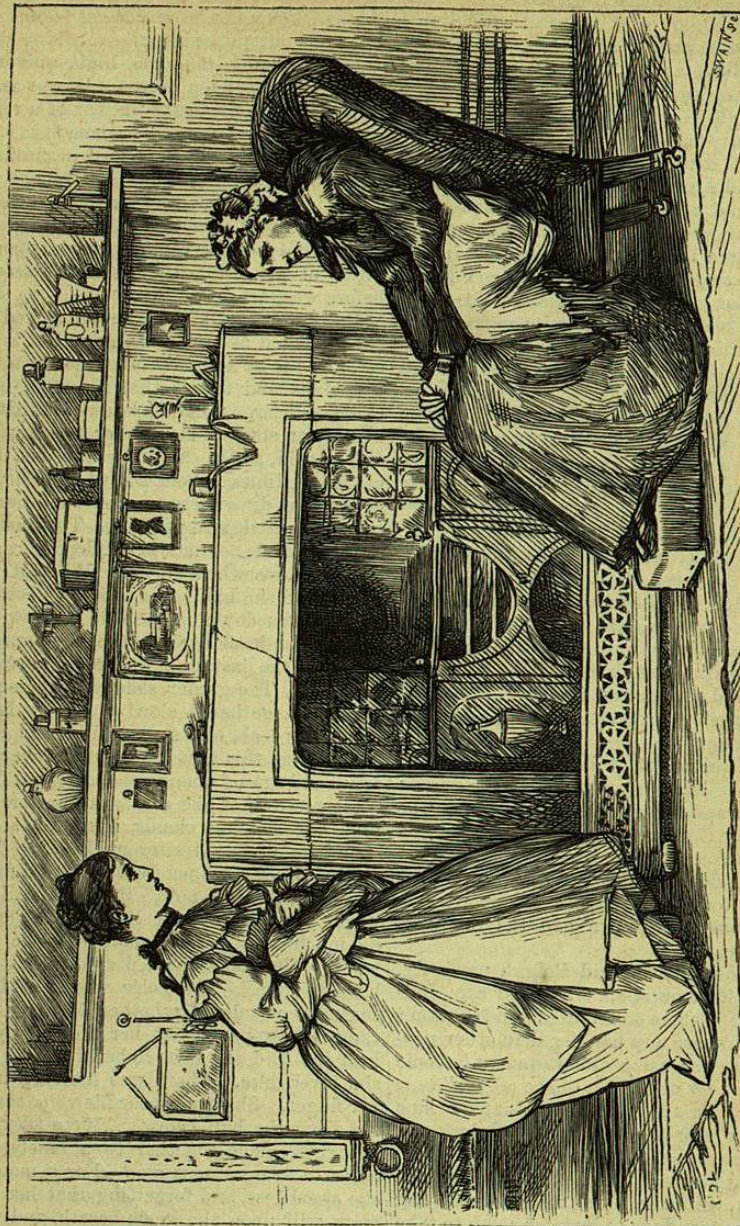
light of the doorway—a sudden chill coming she knew not from whence—some one light put out on the altar?

Dolly, strung to some high quivering pitch, felt a sudden terror. It was nothing; a doubt of a doubt—a fear of a terror—fearing what—doubting whom?

"The service was very well performed," said Robert, coming up. "I have got you a cab." He helped her in, and then, as he seated himself beside her, began again: "We shall not have many more opportunities of attending the cathedral service before we start."

Dolly was very silent; Robert talked on. He wondered at her seeming want of interest, and yet he had only talked to her about her plans and things that she must have cared to hear. "I shall know definitely about our start to-morrow or the day after," he said, as the cab drew up at the door of Church House. Poor Dolly! She let him go into the drawing-room alone, and ran up to her own little nest up stairs. The thought of the possible nearness of her departure had suddenly overwhelmed her. When it was still far off she had never thought about it. Now she sat down on the low window-sill, leaned her head against the shutter, and watched the last light die out above the ivy wall. The garden shadows thickened; the night gathered slowly; Dolly's heart beat sadly—oh, how sadly! What hopeless feeling was this that kept coming over her again and again? coming she knew not from what recesses of the empty room, from behind the fleeting clouds, from the secret chambers of her traitorous heart? The voice did not cease persecuting. "So much of you that lives now," it said, "will die when you merge your life into Robert's. So much love will be more than he will want. He takes but a part of what you have to give." The voice was so distinct that she wondered whether Marker, who came in to put away her things, would hear it. Did she love Robert? Of course she loved him. There was his ring upon her finger. She could hear his voice sounding from the hall below.....Were they not going off alone together to a lonely life, across a tempestuous sea? For a moment she stood lost, and forgetting that her feet were still upon the home hearth, and that the far-off sea was still beating upon distant shores. Then she started up impatiently, she would not listen any more. With a push to the door she shut her doubts up in the cupboard where she was used to hang her cloak, and then she came slowly down the wooden stairs to the oak room below.

Dolly found a candle alight, a good deal of darkness, some conversation, a sofa drawn out with her mamma reposing upon it, Robert writing at a table to Mrs. Palmer's dictation. "My child," said Mrs. Palmer, "come here.



SAD MUSINGS.

You have been to St. Paul's. I have been alone the whole afternoon. Your aunt Sarah never comes near me. I am now getting this dear fellow to write and order a room for us at Kingston. I told you of my little plan. He is making all the arrangements. It is to be a little *festa* on my husband's birthday—shall we say Tuesday, if fine, Robert? The Admiral will hear of it, and understand that we do not forget him. People say I have no resentment in my nature," said Mrs. Palmer, with a smile. "It is as well,

perhaps, that I should leave untasted a few of the bitter dregs of my hard lot. My spirit is quite broken," continued Mrs. Palmer, cheerfully. "Give me that small hand-screen, Dolly. Have you written to Raban, Robert? My George would wish him remembered."

"Oh, don't let us have Raban, Aunt Philippa," said Robert. "There will be Morgan and George and Colonel Witherington and myself, and your little friend Rhoda will like to come—and any one else?"

"I am thankful to say that Mrs. Morgan and those dreadful two girls are going into the country for two days; that is one reason for fixing upon Tuesday," says Mrs. Palmer. "I don't want them, Dolly dearest. Really the society your poor aunt lives in is something too ludicrous. She will be furious; I have not dared tell her, poor creature. I have accepted an invitation for you on Wednesday. Colonel Witherington's sister, in Hyde Park Gardens, has a large dinner-party. She has asked us all three in the kindest manner. Colonel Witherington called himself with the note this afternoon. I wanted him to stay to dinner. I'm afraid your aunt was vexed. Robert, while you are about it, just write a line for us all to Mrs. Middleton."

Robert wrote Mrs. Palmer's notes, sealed and stamped them, and, between whiles, gave a cheerful little description of their expedition. "Dolly was delighted with the service," said he; "but I am afraid she is a little tired." Then he got up and pulled an arm-chair for her up to the fire, and then he went back and finished putting up Mrs. Palmer's correspondence. He was so specially kind that evening, cheerful, and nice to Mrs. Palmer, doing her behests so cleverly and naturally, that Dolly forgot her terrors, and wondered what evil spirit had possessed her. She began to feel warm and happy once more, and hopeful, and she was unaffectedly sorry when Henley got up and said he must go.

He was no sooner gone and the door shut than Mrs. Palmer said, languidly, "I think I should like Frank Raban to be asked, poor fellow. It will please Rhoda, at all events. Just write, dear."

Dolly blushed up crimson. She had not seen him since that curious little talk she had had with George.

"But Robert doesn't want it, mamma," said Dolly.

"Nonsense, child. I want it. Robert is not your husband yet," said Mrs. Palmer; "and if he were—"

"Shall I bring you a pen and ink?" Dolly asked, shyly.

"Just do as I tell you, dearest," said her mother, crossly. "Write, 'Dear Mr. Raban, my mother desires me to write and tell you with what pleasure she would welcome you on Tuesday next, if you would join a small expedition we are meditating, a water-party, in honor of Admiral Palmer's fifty-seventh birthday.'"

"That is not a bit like one of my letters," said Dolly, finishing quickly. "Where can Aunt Sarah be?"

"I am sure I don't know, my dear. She left in the rudest manner when Witherington called. I have seen nothing of her."

Lady Sarah was sitting up stairs alone—oh, how alone!—in the cheerless bedroom

overhead, where she used to take her griefs and her sad mistrusts. They seemed to hang from the brown faded curtains by the window; they seemed to haunt all round the bed, among its washed-out draperies; they were ranged along the tall chimney-piece in bottles. Here is "morphia" and chlorodyne, or its equivalent of those days; here is "the liniment"—liniment for a strained heart! chloroform for anxious love! Are not each one of those the relics of one or another wound, reopening again and again with the strains of the present? Sarah's hands are clasped and her head is bent forward as she sits in this half darkness—laden gray without, chill within—by the empty hearth. Did Robert love Dolly? Had he love in him? Had she been right to see him through Dolly's eyes?

Just then the door opens, and Dolly, flushed, brightening the dull twilight, comes into the room.

"Come down directly, you wicked woman," she says. "You will be catching cold here all by yourself."

CHAPTER XXX.

WAVE OR FLAME.

How sweet they are, those long sunset evenings on the river! The stream, flowing by swift and rippling, reflects the sky: sometimes, in the still gleams and depths of dying light, it would seem as if the sky itself reflected the waters. The distant woods stand out in bronzed shadow; low sunset fires burn into dusk beyond the fringe of trees; sudden sweet glooms fall upon the boats as they glide in and out by dim creeks and ridges. Perhaps some barge travels past through the twilight, drawn by horses tramping along the towing-path, and dragging against the sky. As the boats float shoreward peaceful sights and sounds are all about, borne upon the flowing water.

"I am so sorry it is over," said Dolly, tying on her straw hat.

The sun was setting, a little star was shining overhead, the last bird had flown home to its nest. Robert pushed them right through a bed of rustling reeds on their way to the landing-place. It was crowded with dancing boats; many people were standing along the shore; the gables of the "Red Lion" had been all aglow for a few minutes past. They could hear the laugh of a boating party scrambling to land. Here and there heads were peeping from the bridge, from the landing-places and windows; some twinkled with the last sunset gleams, others with lights already burning. Dolly had been silent for the last half hour, scarcely listening to its desultory talk. They had exchanged broadsides with George and John Morgan in the other boat; but by degrees