

—far more than she had any idea of—about George.

"I might have been able to be of some little use to your brother if he had chosen the army for a profession," said Colonel Fane, guessing that something was amiss.

Dolly was surprised to find herself talking to Colonel Fane as if she had known him all her life. A few minutes before he had been but a name. When he offered to help George, Dolly blushed up, and raised two grateful eyes.

There is something in life which is not love, but which plays as great a part almost—sympathy, quick response—I scarcely know what name to give it; at any moment, in the hour of need, perhaps, a door opens, and some one comes into the room. It may be a commonplace man in a shabby coat, a placid lady in a smart bonnet: does nothing tell us that this is one of the friends to be, whose hands are to help us over the stony places, whose kindly voices will sound to us hereafter voices out of the infinite? Life has, indeed, many phases, love has many a metempsychosis. Is it a lost love we are mourning—a lost hope? Only dim, distant stars, we say, where all was light. Lo, friendship comes dawning in generous and peaceful streams!

Before dinner was over Colonel Fane said to Dolly: "I hope to have another talk with you some day. I am not coming up stairs now; but, if you will let me do so, I shall ask my sister, Mrs. William Fane, to write to you when she is free."

Robert was pleased to see Dolly getting on so well with her neighbor. He was a man of some mark, and a most desirable acquaintance for her. Robert was just going to introduce himself, when Mrs. Middleton bowed to Lady Portcullis, and the ladies began to leave the room.

"Good-by," said Dolly's new friend, very kindly; "I shall ask you not to forget your father's old companion. If I come back, one of my first visits shall be to you."

Then Dolly stood up blushing, and then she said, "Thank you very much; I shall never forget you. I, too, am going away—to India—with—" and she looked at Henley, who was at that moment receiving the parting fire of the lively lady. There was no time to say more; she put out her hand with a grateful pressure. Colonel Fane watched Dolly as she walked away in the procession. For her sake he said a few civil words to Henley; but he was disappointed in him. "I don't think poor Stan Vanborough would have approved of such a cut-and-dry son-in-law," the Colonel said to himself as he lighted his cigar and came away into the street.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## "ONLY GEORGE."

THOUGHTS seem occasionally to have a life of their own—a life independent; sometimes they are even stronger than the thinkers, and draw them relentlessly along. They seize hold of outward circumstances with their strong grip. How strangely a dominant thought sometimes runs through a whole epoch of life!

With some holy and serene natures this thought is peace in life; with others it is human love, that troubled love of God.

The moonlight is streaming over London; and George is not very far away, driven by his master thought along a bright stream that flows through the gates and by the down-trodden roads that cross Hyde Park. The skies, the streets, are silver and purple; abbey towers and far-away houses rise dim against the stars; lights burn in shadowy windows. The people passing by, and even George, hurrying along in his many perplexities, feel the life and the echo every where of some mystical chord of nature and human nature striking in response. The very iron rails along the paths seemed turned to silver. George leaps over a silver railing, and goes toward a great sea of moonlight lying among the grass and encircled by shadowy trees.

In this same moon-lit stream, flowing into the little drawing-room of the bow-windowed house in Old Street, sits Rhoda, resting her head against the pane of the lantern-like window, and thinking over the events of the last two days.

On the whole, she feels that she has acted wisely and for the best. Lady Sarah seemed to think so—Uncle John said no word of blame. It was unfortunate that Aunt Morgan's curiosity should have made her insist upon reading George's letter; but no harm had come of it. Dolly, of course, was unreasonable. Rhoda, who was accustomed to think of things very definitely, begun to wonder what Frank Raban would think of it all, and whether Uncle John would tell him. She thought that Mr. Raban would not be sorry to hear of what had occurred. What a pity George was not more like Mr. Raban or Robert Henley. How calm they were; while he—he was unbearable; and she was very glad it was all over between them. Lady Sarah was evidently deeply offended with him.

"I hope she will leave him *something*," thought Rhoda. "He will never be able to make his way. I can see that; and he is so rough, and I am such a poor little thing;" and Rhoda sighed. "I shall always feel to him as if he were a brother, and I shall tell Mr. Raban so if—" Here Rhoda looked up, and almost screamed out, for there stood George, rippling with moonlight, watching her through the window from the opposite

side of the street. He looked like a ghost as he leaned against the railings. He did not care who noticed him, nor what other people might think of him. He had come all this way only to see Rhoda once more, and there she was, only separated from him by a pane of glass.

When Rhoda looked up, George came across and stood under the window. The moonlight stream showed him a silver figure plain marked upon the darkness. There she sat with a drooping head and one arm lightly resting against the bar. Poor boy! He had started in some strange faith that he should find her. He had come up all the way only to look at her once more. All his passionate anger had already died away. He had given up hope, but he had not given up love; and so he stood there, wild and haggard, with pulses throbbing. He had scarcely eaten any thing since the evening before. He had gone back to Cambridge he knew not why. He had lain awake all night, and all day he had been lying in his boat hiding under the trees along the bank, looking up at the sky and cursing his fate.

Rhoda looked up. George, with a quick movement, pointed to the door, and sprang up the steps of the house. He must speak to her, now that she had seen him. For what else had he come? She was frightened, and did not move at first in answer to his signs. She was alone. Aunt Morgan and the girls were drinking tea at the schools, but Uncle John was in the study. She did not want him to see George. It would only make a fuss and an explanation—there had been too much already. She got up and left the window, and then went into the hall and stood by the door undecided; and as she stood there she heard a low voice outside say, "Rhoda! let me in."

Rhoda still hesitated. "Let me in," said the voice again, and she opened the door a very little way, and put her foot against it.

"Good-night, George," she said, in a whisper. "Good-night. Go home. Dolly is so anxious about you."

"I have come to see you," said George. "Why won't you let me in, Rhoda?"

"I am afraid," said Rhoda.

"You need not be afraid, Rhoda," he said, going back a step. "Dear, will you forgive me for having frightened you?" and he came nearer again.

"I can't—go, go," cried Rhoda, hastily. "Here is some one;" and suddenly, with all her might, she pushed the door in his face. It shut with a bang, with all its iron knobs and locks rattling.

"What is it?" said John Morgan, looking out of his study.

"I had opened the door, Uncle John," said Rhoda. Her heart beat a little. Would George go away? She thought she heard footsteps striking down the street. Then

she felt more easy. She told herself once more that it was far better to have no scenes nor explanations, and she sat down quietly to her evening's task in a corner of her uncle's study. She was making some pinafores for the little Costellos, and she tranquilly stitched and tucked and hemmed. John Morgan liked to see her busy at her womanly work, her little lamp duly trimmed, and her busy fingers working for others more thriftless.

And outside in the moonlight George walked away in a new fury. What indignity had he subjected himself to? He gave a bitter sort of laugh. He had not expected much, but this was worse than any thing he had expected. Reproaches, coldness, indifference—all these he was prepared for. He knew in his heart of hearts that Rhoda did not care for him; and what further wrong could she do him than this injury that people inflict every day upon each other? She had added scorn to her indifference; and again George laughed to himself, thinking of this wooden door Rhoda had clapped upon his passion, and her summary way of thrusting him out.

At one time, instead of banging the door, she used to open it wide. She used to listen to him, with her wonderful dark eyes fixed on his face. Now what had happened? He was the same man, she was the same woman, and nothing was the same. George mechanically walked on toward his own home—if Church House could be so called. He went across the square, and by a narrow back street, and he tried the garden gate, and found it open, and went in, with some vague idea of finding Dolly, and calling her to the bench beside the pond, and of telling her of all his trouble. That slam of the door kept sounding in his ears, a sort of knell to his love.

But George was in no vein of luck that night. The garden was deserted and mysterious, heavy with sweet scents in the darkness. He went down the dark path and came back again, and there was a rustle among the trees; and as he walked across the lawn toward the lighted window of the oak room, he heard two voices clear in the silence, floating up from some kitchen below. He knew Sam's croak; he did not recognize the other's voice.

"Mademoiselle is gone to dance. I like to dance too," it said. "Will you come to a ball and dance with me, Mr. Sam?"

Then followed old Sam's chuckle. "I'll dance with you, mademoiselle," he said.

George thought it sounded as if some evil spirit of the night were mocking his trouble. And so Dolly was dancing while he was roaming about in his misery. Even Dolly had forgotten his pain. Even Rhoda had turned him out. Who cared what happened to him now?

He went to the window of the oak room and looked in. Lady Sarah was sitting there alone, shading her eyes from the light. There were papers all round about her. The lamp was burning behind her, and the light was reflected in the narrow glass above her tall chimney-piece.

He saw her put out her hand and slowly take a paper that was lying on the table, and tear it down the middle. It looked like a will, he thought. Poor Aunt Sarah! she looked very old and worn and sad. How ill he had repaid her kindness! She should be spared all further anxiety and trouble for him. Then he put out his two hands with a wild farewell motion. He had not meant her to see him, but the window was ajar and flew open, and then he walked in; and Lady Sarah, looking up, saw George standing before her. He was scarcely himself all this time: if he had found Dolly, all might have ended differently.

"George?" said Lady Sarah, frightened by his wild looks; "what has happened, my dear?"

"I have come to say good-by to you!" he wildly cried. "Aunt Sarah, you will never have any more trouble with me. You have been a thousand thousand times too good to me!" And he flung his two arms round her neck and kissed her, and almost before she could speak he was gone.....

A few minutes later Marker heard a fall, and came running up stairs. She found Lady Sarah lying half conscious on the ground.

#### CHAPTER XXXVI.

##### THE SLOW SAD HOURS.

DOLLY and her mother had left the Middlesons' when John Morgan drove up in a hansom, with a message from his mother to bring them back at once. The servant told him that they were only just gone, and he drove off in pursuit. Bucklersbury House was blazing in the darkness, with its many windows open and alight, and its crowds pouring in and its music striking up. Morgan sprang out of his cab and hurried across the court, and under the horses' noses, and pushed among the footmen to the great front-door, where the inscribing angels of the *Morning Post* were stationed. The servants would have sent him back, but he told his errand in a few hasty words, and was allowed to walk into the hall. He saw a great marble staircase all alight, and people going up; and, by some good fortune, one of the very first persons he distinguished was Dolly, who had only just come, and who was following her mother and Robert. She, too, caught sight of the familiar face in the hall below, and stopped short.

"Mamma," she said, "there is John Mor-

gan making signs. Something has happened."

Mrs. Palmer did not choose to hear. She was going in; she was at the gates of Paradise: she was not going to be kept back by John Morgan. There came a cheerful clang of music from above.

Dolly hesitated; the curate beckoned to her eagerly. "Mamma, I must go back to him," said Dolly, and before her mother could remonstrate she had stopped short and slid behind a diplomat, a lord with a blue ribbon, an aged countess; in two minutes she was at the foot of the staircase, Robert meanwhile serenely proceeding ahead, and imagining that his ladies were following.

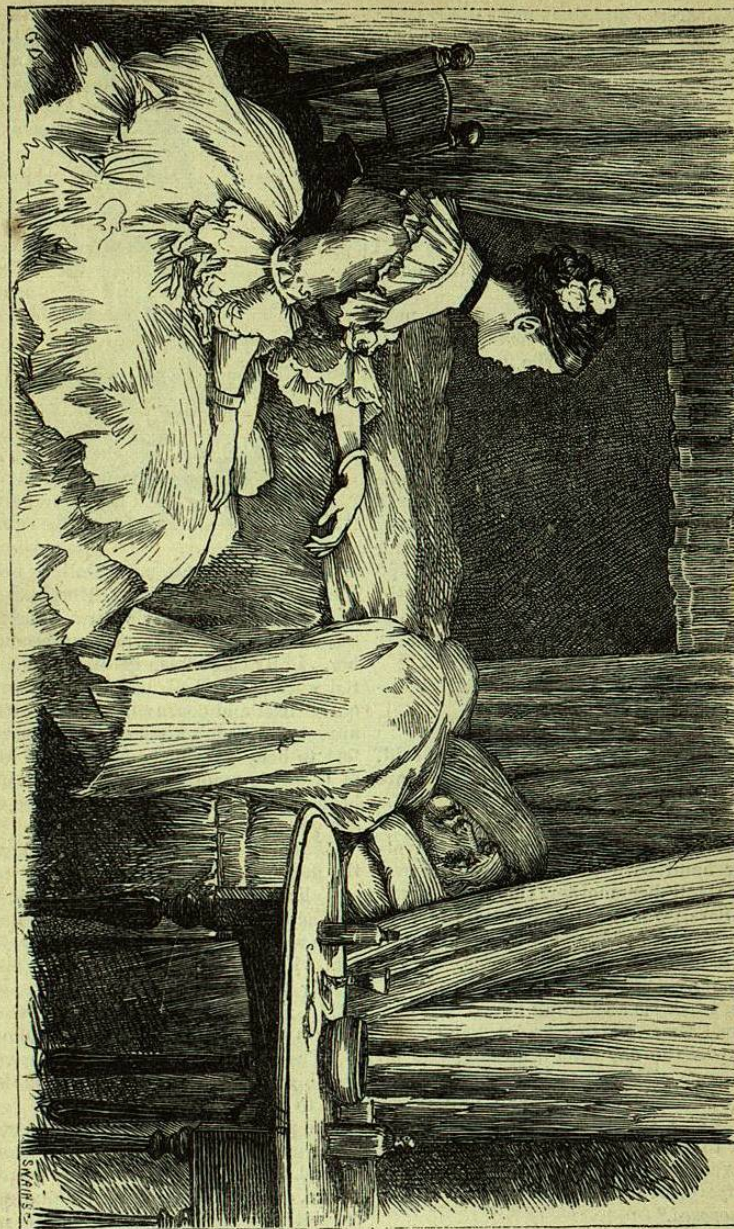
In two words John Morgan had told Dolly to get her shawl, that her aunt was ill, that she had been asking for her. Dolly flew back to the cloak-room: she saw her white shawl still lying on the table, and she seized it and ran back to John Morgan again, and then they had hurried through the court and among the carriages to the place where the hansom was waiting.

"And I was away from her!" said Dolly. That was nearly all she said. It was her first trouble—overwhelming, unendurable, bewildering, as first troubles are. When they drove up to Church House, the front looked black, and closed, and terrible somehow. Dolly's heart beat as she went in.

Every thing seemed a little less terrible when she had run up stairs, and found her aunt lying in the familiar room, with a faint odor of camphor and chloroform, and Marker coming and going very quietly. Mrs. Morgan was there, with her bonnet cocked a little on one side; she came up and took Dolly's hand with real kindness, and said some words of encouragement, and led her to the bedside. As Dolly looked at Aunt Sarah's changed face, she gulped for the first time one of life's bitter draughts. They don't last long, those horrible moments; they pass on, but they leave a burning taste; it comes back again and again with the troubles of life.

Lady Sarah seemed to recognize Dolly when she came to the bedside, then she relapsed again, and lay scarce conscious, placid, indifferently waiting the result of all this nursing and anxious care. The struggles of life and its bustling anxieties had passed away from that quiet room, never more to return.

Dolly sat patiently by the bedside. She had not taken off her evening dress, she never moved, she scarcely breathed, for fear of disturbing her dear sick woman. If Frank Raban could have seen her then he would not have called her cold! Those loving looks and tender ways might almost have poured new life into the worn-out existence that was ebbing away. The night sped on as such nights do pass. She heard the sound



of carriage wheels coming home at last, and crept down stairs to meet the home-comers.

Dolly did not ask her mother what had delayed her when the two came in. She met them with her pale face. She was still in her white dress, with the dying roses in her hair. Henley, who had meant to reproach her for deserting them without a word, felt ashamed for once before her. She seemed to belong to some other world, far away from that from which he had just come. She told her story very simply. The

doctors said there had been one attack such as this once before, which her aunt had kept concealed from them all. They ordered absolute quiet. Marker was to be nurse, and one other person. "Of course that must be me, mamma. I think Aunt Sarah would like me best," she said, with a faint smile. "Mrs. Morgan! No, dear mamma, not Mrs. Morgan." Then suddenly she burst into tears. "Oh, mamma, I have never seen any one so ill!" she said; but the next minute she had overcome her emotion, and wiped her eyes.

"My dearest child, it is most distressing, and that you should have missed your ball, too!" said Philippa. "I said all along, if you remember, that she was looking a perfect wreck. You would not listen to me. Robert, turn that sofa out of the draught. I shall not go to bed. Julie can come down here and keep me company after you go."

"I must go," said Robert. "I have still some work to finish. Take care of yourself, Dora. Remember, you belong to me now. I hope there will be better news in the morning."

From one room to the other all the next day Dolly went with her heavy heart; it seemed to drag at her as she moved, to dull her very anxiety. It was only a pain; it did not rise to the dignity of an emotion. Mrs. Palmer felt herself greatly neglected; she was taken ill in the afternoon, and begged to see the doctor, who made light of her ailment; toward evening Mrs. Palmer was a great deal better. She came down into the drawing-room, and sent Eliza Twells over for John Morgan. Lady Sarah still lay stricken silent; but her pulse was better, the doctor said; she could move her arm a little; it had been lying helpless before. Faithful Marker sat by her side rubbing her cold hands.

"Aunt Sarah, do you know me?" whispered Dolly, bending over her.

Lady Sarah faintly smiled in answer.

"Tell George to come back," she said, slowly. "Dolly, I did as you wished; are you satisfied?" She had gone back to the moment when she was taken ill.

"Dearest Aunt Sarah!" said Dolly, covering her hand with kisses. Then she ran down to tell her mother the good news. "Aunt Sarah was rallying, was talking more like herself again. We only want George to make her well again; he must come. Where is he? Why does he not come?"

"Don't ask me any thing about George," said Mrs. Palmer, putting up her hands.

This was the day after the ball; but no George came, although Dolly looked for him at every instant. John Morgan, of his own accord, sent a second message to him, and another to Raban. In the course of the day an answer arrived from the tutor: "*G. left Cambridge yesterday. Your telegram to him lying unopened.*"

### CHAPTER XXXVII.

#### IN AN EMPTY ROOM.

AMONG inquiring friends Mrs. Morgan was one of the first and most persistent. Mrs. Palmer was very tired of her whispers and emphasis, and yawned and fidgeted without disguise, not a little to the elder lady's indignation. Mrs. Morgan's one consolation was that Mrs. Palmer felt, as they did, that dear Rhoda had behaved admirably and with



the greatest discretion. "Dolly is not at all kind about it," said Mrs. Morgan. Rhoda had come to see Dolly with a little modest, self-satisfied air that was very becoming to her. Dolly came from up stairs with heavy, red eyes. She had been crying, and was quite tired and confused with the two days' anxiety. Rhoda's kiss certainly was no comfort to her. If Rhoda had only told Dolly of George's moonlight visit it might have been of some use, but of this the girl did not say one word.

That same day Dolly, coming down into the garden, found Raban with her mother, and she went up eagerly to meet him, hoping for the news she was looking for. But news there was none, although her mother, arm in arm with Raban, had been for the last hour slowly pacing the gravel-walks, recapitulating all their anxieties and all the complaints they had against that tiresome boy.

"The Admiral will be so shocked. I expect him hourly; and I look to you, Mr. Raban, to tell me the plain truth."

The plain truth was that Frank could discover nothing of George. All that long day he had followed up every trace, been every where, questioned every one, including Rhoda, without result. He had come now in the faint hope of finding him at home, after all. When Dolly came to meet them he thought she looked anxious enough already, and he made light of his long efforts, and shrugged his shoulders.

"I have no doubt George will turn up at Cambridge in the course of a day or two. I have some business calls me away. I will write immediately on my return," he said.

Frank saw Dolly's look of surprise and disappointment as she turned away, and his heart ached for her; but what could he do? He watched her as she turned back toward

the house again, walking slowly and with a thoughtful bent head.

"It is quite painful to see Dolly: she has no feeling whatever for me left," cried Mrs. Palmer. "Ever since dear George's conduct I see the saddest change in her. I can do nothing. I would drive her out. Colonel Witherington offered me his sister's barouche any day, but Dolly won't hear of it. I am sure it is quite miserable for us all. Dolly, you know, is simply impossible," said Mrs. Palmer. "I never knew a more desponding nature."

"Indeed," said Raban.

It was not his place to be sorry for her. He was not able to shield her from grief. It was not his place to think for her, to love her in her trouble. It was not for him: all this was for Robert Henley to do.

There was a great red sunset in the sky, islands floating, and lakes and seas of crimson light overhead, as Dolly walked sadly and slowly into the house, and went back to the dim sick-room.

There is no need to dwell upon the slow hours. Dolly found that they came to an end somehow. And all the time one miserable conviction pursued her—George was gone. Of this she was convinced, notwithstanding all they could say to reassure her. While they had been expecting him, and blaming him, and wondering, and discussing his plans, he had fled from them all. Dolly at first did not face the truth, for she had sat by her aunt's bedside, half dull, half absorbed by her present anxiety; but when Lady Sarah began to rally a little the thought of George grew more constant, the longing for news more unendurable; time seemed longer: it became an eternity at last. One day she felt as if she could bear it no longer.

Robert found her looking very much moved; her cheeks were glowing, her eyes were shining blue; she had a cloak on her arm, and some white summer dress, and she began tying her bonnet strings nervously.

"Robert, I want you to take me to Cambridge," she said. "I want to go now. I know I could find him—I dreamed it. Aunt Sarah wants him back directly—"

"You are quite unreasonable, dearest," said Robert, soothingly.

"I am not; I am reasonable," poor Dolly said, with an effort at self-control. "Mr. Raban can not find him. Robert, let me go." And Robert yielded reluctantly to her wish.

"Have you got a 'Bradshaw' in the house?" said he.

Dolly had got one all ready, with the page turned down—she could spare but a few hours, and was in a hurry to get back.

After all, sympathy is more effectually administered by indirect means than by the

crow-bars of consolation with which our friends, even the kindest, are apt to belabor our grief. According to some, people don't die, they don't fall ill, they don't change—every thing always goes right. Some reproach us with our want of faith; others drag it forth—that silent grief that would fain lie half asleep and resting in our hearts. Poor Dolly could not speak of George scarcely even to Robert. She sat very silently in the railway carriage, her hands lying listlessly in her lap, while he refuted all the fears she had not even allowed herself to realize. This state of things annoyed Robert. He hated to see people dull and indifferent. It was distressing and tiresome too.

Few people were about when Robert and Dolly came across the great triumphant court of St. Thomas, with its gateways and many stony eyes and narrow doorways. They were on their way to All-Saints, close by. The place seemed chiefly given over to laundresses. A Freshman was standing under the arched gateway that leads to the inner court; he was reading some neatly written announcement in the glass shrine hanging outside the buttery. The oaken doors were closed. Robert, seeing a friend crossing the court, went away to speak to him. Dolly walked on a little, and stood by the railings and the flight of steps that lead into the beautiful inner court of this great Palace of Art. She watched the many lines flowing in waves of stone, of mist. At the far end of the arched inclosure were iron-scrrolled gates, with green and gold, and misty veils of autumn drifting in the gardens beyond. And then she remembered the summer's day when she last stood there with George, and as she thought of him suddenly his image came before her so distinctly that she almost called out his name. It was but an instant's impression; it was gone; the steps were Robert's; the image was in her own mind.

"Are you tired of waiting?" said Henley. "Now, if you like, we will go on to All-Saints," he said.

It seemed to Dolly as if she was looking at the old summer day, dimmed, silenced, saddened, seen through some darkened pane, as they went on together, passing under archways and galleries, and coming at last into the quaint and tranquil court that Dolly remembered so vividly. There she had stood; and there was George's staircase, and there was his name painted up, and there was his window with its lattice.

Robert went off for the key of George's room, and Dolly waited. It was so sweet, so sad, so tranquil—like the end of a long life. Dolly wandered in and out the narrow galleries; the silence of the place comforted her. She was glad to be alone a little bit, unconstrained, to feel as she felt, and not as she ought to feel; quietly despondent,

not nervously confident, as they would all have her be. It was a crumbling, sweet, sunshiny sort of waking dream. Some gleams had broken through the clouds, and shone reflected from the many lattice windows round about the little court. She heard some voices, and some young men hurried by, laughing as they went. They did not see the young lady with the sweet, sad face standing under the gallery. Chrysanthemums were growing up against the wall, with faint lilac and golden heads, the last bright tints left upon the once gorgeous palette of summer. A delicate cool sky hung overhead, and the light was becoming brighter. Dolly passed an open door, and peeped in from the quaint gallery to a warm and darkened room, paneled and carpeted. It was dark and untenanted; a fire was burning in the grate.

"That is Fieldbrook's room; he will give us some tea presently," said Robert, coming up; "but now we can get into George's."

Robert, who seemed to have keys for every key-hole, opened an oak door, and led the way up some stone steps. George's room was on the first floor. Henley went in first, opened the window, dragged forward a chair. "If you will rest here," he said, "I will go and find Fieldbrook. They tell me he last heard from George. I have to speak to the Vice-Chancellor too." Then he was gone again, after looking about to see that there was nothing he could do for her.

Dolly was glad to be alone. She sat down in George's three-sided chair, resting her head upon her hand. She was in his room. Every thing in the place seemed to have a voice, and to speak to her: "George, George," it all said. She looked out of the little window across the court. She could see the old windows of the library shining, and then she heard more voices, and more young men hurried by, with many footsteps.

Ever after Dolly remembered that last half hour spent in George's rooms *with* George: so it seemed to her, looking back from a time when she had ceased to hope. She went to the writing-table, and mechanically began to straighten the toys and pens lying on the cloth. There was the little dagger his mother had sent him from India years before; the desk she had given him out of her savings; and it occurred to her to open the lid, of which she knew the trick. She pushed the spring, and the top flew up with a sudden jerk, as it always did. Then Dolly saw that the box was full of papers, hastily thrown in, verses, notes of lectures, and a letter torn through. "Dearest Rh—" it began; and there was a blue paper, not unlike one of Aunt Sarah's, sealed. She had no great shame looking over George's papers; a tear fell on the dear heap as she bent over the signs and ink-marks that told of her poor boy's trouble. What was this? A letter,

stamped, and addressed to herself. Had it been thrown in with the rest by mistake? She tore it open hastily, with eager hands. He must have written the night of their water-party. It had no date.

"DEAREST DOLLY" (said the crooked lines),—"This is one more good-by, and one more service that I want you to do me: and you have never grudged any human being love or help. I am going, and before I go I shall make my will, and I shall leave what little I have—not to you—but to Rhoda; and will you see to this? Hers is but a frail measure of strength to struggle for a living. I sometimes think she has not even a heart to help her through life: she will like my money better than me. It is quite late at night, but I can not sleep; she comes and awakens me in my dreams. I shall go away from this as soon as the gates are open. It is no use struggling against my fate. Others are giving their lives for a purpose, and I shall join them if I can. I have been flung from my anchor here, and the waves seem to close over me. If I live you will hear from me. Dearest old Dolly, take warning by me, and don't expect too much. God bless you."

"G. V.  
"Will you pay Miller at the boat-house £2 10s. I owe him. I think I have cleared up all other scores. I will leave the papers with him. I shall not come back here any more."

That was all. She was standing with her letter still in her hand, blankly looking at it, when the door opened and Tom Morgan came in. "If I live! What did he mean? 'Ask at the boat-house?'" She laid the letter down and went on turning over the papers without noticing the young man.

Tom walked in with a broad grin and great volubility. "Well," said he, cheerfully, "I thought it was you. I was walking with Magniac and some others, and noticed the windows open, and I saw you standing just where you are now, and I said to Magniac, 'I know that lady.' He wouldn't believe me; but I was right—knew I was. How are you, and how is Lady Sarah? Where's George? When did he come back?" Then suddenly remembering some rumor to which he had paid but little heed at first, "Nothing wrong, I hope?" said Tom.

"Tom! where is this?" said Dolly, without any preamble, in her old abrupt way; and she gave him a crumpled bill which she had been examining:

"MR. VANBROUGH TO J. MILLER—  
"To hier of the *Wave* twelve hours.  
To man's time, etc., etc.  
To new coteing hir with tare, etc."

"I want to go there," she said. "Will you show me the way?"

"To the boat-house?" said Tom, doubtfully, looking at the bill. "Miller's, you mean?"

She saw him hesitate.

"I must go," she cried. "You must take me. Is it Miller's? Show me the way, Tom."

"Of course I can show you the way if you wish it," said Tom.

He looked even more stupid than usual, but he did not like to refuse. He had to be in Hall by three o'clock; that was why he

had hesitated. He had been thinking of his dinner; but Dolly began to tie on her bonnet. She hurried out and ran down stairs, and he followed her across the court into the street. He was not loath to be seen walking with so pretty a young lady. He nodded to several of his friends with velvet bands upon their gowns. A professor went by; Tom raised his well-worn cap.

Dolly might have been amused, at any other time, by the quaint medieval ways of the old place.

It was out of term time, but there had been some special meeting of the college magnates. Crimson coats and black, square caps and tassels and quaint old things were passing. The fifteenth century was standing at a street corner. To-day heartily shook hands with 1450 and hurried on. Dolly saw it all without seeing it. Tom Morgan tried to give her the latest news.

"That is Brown," said he, "the new Professor of Modern Literature." Dolly never even turned her head to look after Brown.

"There's Smith," said Tom; "they say he will be in the first six for the Mathematical Tripos."

Then they came out of the busy High Street by a narrow lane with brick walls on either side. It led to the mill by the river, and beyond the river spread a great country of water-meadows. It was a world, not of to-day or of 1500, but of all time and all hours. Pollards were growing at intervals; the river flowed by, dull and sluggish; the land, too, seemed to flow dull and sluggish to meet a gray horizon. There were no animals to be seen—only these pollard-trees at intervals, and the spires of Cambridge crowding in the mist.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE POLLARD-TREES.

MISS VANBROUGH walked on; she seemed to know the way by some instinct. Sometimes she looked at the water, but it gave her a sort of vertigo. Tom looked at Dolly with some admiration as she passed along the bank, with her clear-cut face and stately figure, following the narrow pathway. They came at last to a bend of the river where some boats were lying high and dry in the grass, and where a little boat-house stood upon a sort of jutting-out island among tall trees upspringing suddenly in the waste. Tall sycamore, ivy-grown stumps, greens of every autumnal shade, golden leaves dropping in lazy showers on the grass or drifting into the sluggish stream, along which they floated back to Cambridge once more. It was a deserted-looking grove, melancholy and romantic. But few people came there. But there was a ferry-man and a black boat-

house, and a flat ferry-boat anchored to the shore. Some bird gave a cry and flew past, otherwise the place was still with that peculiar river silence of tall weeds straggling, of trees drooping their green branches, of water lapping on the brink.

"Is this the place you wanted?" said Tom; "or was it the other boat-house, after all?"

Dolly walked on without answering him. She beckoned to the boatman; and then, as he came toward her, her heart began to beat so that she could scarcely speak or ask the question that she had in her mind to ask. "Has my brother been here? Where is his letter? Is the *Wave* safe in your little boat-house?" This was what she would have said, only she could not speak. Some strange fever had possessed her and brought her so far: now her strength and courage suddenly forsook her, and she stopped short, and stood holding to an old rotten post that stood by the river-side.

"Take care," said Tom; "that ain't safe. You might fall in, and the river is deep just here."

She turned such a pale face to him that the young man suddenly began to wonder if there was more in it all than he had imagined.

"It's perfectly safe, I mean," he said. "Why, you don't mean to say—"

He turned red; he wished with all his heart that he had never brought her there—that he could jump into the river—that he had staid to dine in Hall. To his unspeakable relief unexpected help appeared.

"Why, there is Mr. Raban," said Tom, as Raban came out of the boat-house and walked across under the trees to meet them.

Dolly waited for the two men to come up to her, as she stood by her stump among the willow-trees. Raban did not seem surprised to see her. He took no notice of Tom, but he walked straight up to Dolly.

"You have come," he said; "I had just sent you a telegraphic message."

His manner was so kind and so gentle that it frightened her more than if he had spoken with his usual coldness.

"What is it?" she said, "and why have you come here? Have you too heard—"

She scanned his face anxiously.

Then she looked from him to the old boatman, who was standing a few steps off, in his shabby red flannel shirt, with a stolid brown face and white hair—a not unpicturesque figure standing by the edge of the stream. Winds and rain and long seasons had washed all expression out of old Miller's bronzed face.

"George came here on Tuesday," said Raban to Dolly. "I only heard of it this morning. Miller tells me he gave him a letter or a paper to keep."

"I know it," said Dolly, turning to the old boatman; "I am Mr. Vanborough's sister; I