

breathe more freely. Raban sat down by Dolly, and began telling her of a communication he had had from Yorkshire, from his old grandfather, who seemed disposed to take him into favor again, and who wanted him to go back and manage the estate.

"I am very much exercised about it," said Frank. "It is going into the land of bondage, you know. The old couple have used me very ill."

"But of course you must go to them," said Dolly, trying to be interested, and to forget her own perplexities. "We shall miss you dreadfully, but you must go."

"You will not miss me as I shall miss you," said Frank.

And as he spoke, Robert's head appeared at the window.

"The fly is come; don't keep it waiting, Dora," said Robert, impatiently.

"And you will let me know if ever I can do any thing for you?" persisted Frank, in defiance of Henley's black looks.

"Of course I will. I shall never forget your kindness," said Dolly, quickly putting on her shawl.

The bells were clanging all over the place for an evening service. Doors were banging, voices calling: figures came flitting from every archway.

"There goes the reader! he is late," said Tom Morgan, as a shrouded form darted across their path. Then he pointed out the Rector, a stately figure in a black and rustling silk, issuing from a side-door; and then Rector, friendly young men, arches, gable ends, had vanished, and Dolly and Robert were driving and jolting through the streets together, jolting along through explanation and misunderstanding, and over one another's susceptibilities, and over chance ruts and stones, on their way to the station. He began immediately.

"We were interrupted in our talk just now; but I have really very little more to say. If you are dissatisfied, if you really wish to break off your engagement, it is much better to say so at once, without making me appear ridiculous before all those men. Perhaps," said Henley, "we may have both made some great mistake, and you have seen some one whom you would prefer to myself?"

"You must not say such things, Robert," answered Dolly, with some emotion. "You know how unhappy I am. I only want you to let me love you. What more can I say?"

"Your actions and your words scarcely agree, then," said Henley, jealous and implacable. "I confess I shall be greatly surprised, on my return from India at some indefinite period, to find you still in the same mind. I, myself, make no professions of extra constancy."

"Oh, you are too cruel!" cried poor Dolly, exasperated.

"Will you promise me never to see Raban, for instance?" said Robert.

"How can I make such a promise?" cried Dolly, indignant. "To turn off a kind friend for an unjust fancy! If you trust me, Robert, you must believe what I say. Anyway, you are free. Only remember that I shall trust in your love until you yourself tell me that you no longer care for me."

The carriage stopped as she spoke. Robert got out and helped her down, produced the tickets, and paid the flyman.

The two went back in a dreary *tête-à-tête*; she wanted a heart's sympathy, and he placed a rug at her feet and pulled up the carriage window for fear of a draught. She could not thank him, nor look pleased. Her head ached, her heart ached; one expression of love, one word of faithful promise, would have made the world a different place, but he had not spoken it. He had taken her at her word. She was to be bound, and he was to be free. The old gentleman opposite never looked at them, but instantly composed himself to sleep; the old lady in the corner thought she had rarely seen a more amiable and attentive young man, a more ungracious young lady.

Once only Robert made any allusion to what had passed. "There will be no need to enter into explanations at present," he said, in a somewhat uneasy manner. "You may change your mind, Dora."

"I shall never change my mind," said Dolly, wearily, "but it is no use troubling mamma and Aunt Sarah; I will tell them that I am not going away. They shall know all when you are gone."

Dolly might have safely told Mrs. Palmer, who was not often disquieted by other people's sacrifices. With Lady Sarah it was different. But she was ill, and she had lost her grasp of life. She asked no question, only she seemed to revive from the day when Dolly told her that she was not going to leave her. It was enough for her that the girl's hand was in hers.

What is Dolly thinking of, as she stands by the sick-bed, holding the frail hand? To what future does it guide her? Is it to that which Dolly has sometimes imagined contained within the walls of a home, simple, as some people's lives are, and hedged with wholesome briars, and darling home ties, and leading straight, with great love and much happiness and sacred tears, to the great home of love? or is it to a broad way, unhedged, unfenced, with a distant horizon, a way unsheltered in stormy weather, easily missed, but wide and free and unshackled?.....

Mrs. Palmer, who troubled herself little about the future, was forever going off to Dean's Yard, where the Henleys were comfortably established. The eldest daughter was married, but there were two lively girls still at home; there were young officers

coming and going about the place. There was poor Jonah preparing to depart on his glorious expedition. He was in good spirits; he had a new uniform. One day, hearing his aunt's voice, he came in to show himself, accoutred and clanking with chains. He was disappointed to find that Dolly was not there, as he had expected. Bell admired loudly, but her mother almost screamed to him to go and take the hideous thing off. The dry, brisk-tongued little woman was feeling his departure very acutely. She still made an effort to keep up her old cynical talk, but she broke down, poor soul, again and again; she had scarcely spirit left to contradict Philippa, or even to forbid her the house.

The first time she had seen Dolly she had been prepared to criticize the girl; Norah and Bell were more cordial, but Lady Henley offered her niece a kid glove and a kid cheek, and was slightly disappointed to find that Dolly's frivolity, upon which she had been descanting all the way to Church House, consisted in an old gray gown and a black apron, and in two black marks under her eyes, for poor Dolly had not had much sleep after that dismal talk with Robert. This was the day after the Cambridge expedition. Miss Vanborough was looking very handsome, notwithstanding the black marks, and she unconsciously revenged herself upon Lady Henley by a certain indifference and preoccupation, which seemed to put her beyond the reach of that lady's passing shafts, but one of them wounded her at last.

"I suppose Lady Sarah will be left to servants when you go?" says Lady Henley. "Your mother is certainly not to be counted on; Hawtreys is a much better nurse than she is. Poor dear Philippa! she sees every thing reflected in a looking-glass. Your school is a different one altogether from our plain, old-fashioned country ways."

Dolly looked surprised; she had not deserved this unprovoked attack from the little gayly dressed lady perched upon the sofa. Norah was very much distressed by her mother's rudeness; Bell was struggling with a nervous inclination to giggle, which was the effect it always produced upon her.

"I have no doubt mamma would take care of my aunt if it were necessary," said Dolly, blushing with annoyance; "but I am not going away," she said. "Robert and I have settled that it is best I should stay behind. We have made up our minds to part."

The two girls were listening, open-eared. "Then she has never cared for him, after all," thought Bell.

But Lady Henley knew better. Notwithstanding a more than usual share of jealousy and cross-grainedness, she was not without a heart. Dolly's last words had been spoken very quietly, but they told the whole story. "My dear" said the little woman,

jumping up suddenly and giving her a kiss, "I did not know this" (there were tears shining among the new green bonnet strings); "my trial is close at hand. You must forgive me, I—I am very unhappy." She made a struggle, and recovered herself quickly, but from that minute Dolly and her aunt Joanna were good friends.

The next time Robert called in Dean's Yard he was put through a cross-examination by Lady Henley. "When was he coming back for Dolly? What terms were they on?" Sir Thomas came in to hear all about it, and then Jonah sauntered in. "Only wish I could get a chance," said Jonah. Robert felt disinclined to give Jonah the chance he wished for. Lady Henley was now praising Dolly as much as she had abused her before, and Robert agreed to every thing. But he gave no clew to the state of his mind. He was surprised to find how entirely Lady Henley ignored his feelings, and sympathized with Dolly's determination to remain behind. He walked away thinking that it was far from his intention to break entirely with Dolly, but he had not forgiven her yet; he was not sorry to feel his liberty in his own hands again. He meant to come back, but he chose to do it of his own free-will, and not because he was bound by any promise.

As for Dolly, she was absorbed; she was not feeling very much just then; she had been overwrought and overstrained. A dull calm had succeeded to her agitation, and, besides, Robert was not yet gone.

CHAPTER XL.

UNDER THE CLOCK-TOWER.

AN archway leads out of the great thoroughfare from Westminster Bridge into the sudden silence of Dean's Yard, where Sir Thomas had taken the house of a country neighbor. It stood within the cloisters of the Abbey, overtowered, overlocked, with bells pealing high overhead (ringing the hours away, the poor mother used to think). Dolly found time one day to come for half an hour to see Jonah before he left. She had a great regard for him. She had also found a staunch friend in Norah with the gray eyes like her own. Bell told Dolly in confidence that her mother had intended Robert to marry Norah, but this had not at all interfered with the two girls' liking for one another. Mrs. Palmer, who was going on farther, set Dolly down at the archway, and as the girl was crossing the yard she met Robert coming from the house. He was walking along by the railing, and among the dead leaves that were heaped there by the wind. Dolly's heart always began to beat now when she saw Robert. This time

he met her, and, with something of his old manner, said, "Are you in a hurry? Will you come with me a little way? I have something to say." And he turned into the cloister: she followed him at once.

From Dean's Yard one gateway leads to common life and to the day's work, struggling by with creaks and whips and haste; another gateway brings you to a cloister, arched, silent. The day's work is over for those who are lying in the peaceful inclosure. A side-door from the cloister leads into the Abbey, where, among high piles and burning windows, and the shrill, sweet echoes of the psalms, a silent voice sometimes speaks of something beyond rest, beyond our feeble mode of work and praise, and our music and Gothic types—of that which is, but which we are not.

The afternoon service was pealing on and humming within the Abbey as Dolly and Robert walked slowly along the cloister. He was silent a long time. She tried to ask him what he had to say, but she found it difficult to speak to him now. She was shy, and she scarcely knew upon what terms they were: she did not care to know. She had said that he should be free, and she meant it, and she was too generous to seek to extort unwilling promises from him, or to imply that she was disappointed that he had given none.

At last Robert spoke. "Dolly, shall you write to me?" he said.

"Yes, Robert, if you wish it," she answered, simply. "I should like to write to you."

As she looked at him, fair and blushing, Robert said, suddenly, "Tell me, Dora, have you never regretted your decision?"

Dolly turned away—she could not meet his eyes. Hers fell upon a slab to the memory of some aged woman, who had, perhaps, gone through some such experience before she had been turned into a stone. Dolly was any thing but stone. Tears slowly gathered in her eyes, and Robert saw them, and caught hold of her hand, and at that minute there came some pealing echo of an organ, and of voices bursting into shrill amens. All her life Dolly remembered that strange moment of parting, for parting she felt it to be. She must tell him the truth. She turned. "No, Robert—never once," she said; "although it is even harder than I thought to let you go."

They were standing by the door at the end of the first cloister. For the last time he might have spoken then, and told her that he only loved her the more, that distance was nothing to him, that time was nothing; but the service had come to an end; and while he hesitated a verger came out in his black gown, and the congregation followed; one or two strangers; then Jonah and Bell, with red eyes both of them,

looking foolish somehow, and ashamed of being seen; then more strangers; and then with the last remaining verger came Rhoda and Zoe Morgan, who sometimes went to church at the Abbey. They all joined the young couple, and walked back to the house with them.

This was Dolly's last chance for an explanation with her cousin. The time was drawing to an end. Fate came in between them now, for this very afternoon it was settled rather suddenly, at Sir Thomas's request, that Robert and Jonah should go as far as Marseilles together. This was Thursday, and the young men were to start on the Saturday evening.

Lady Henley bore up very well at first, and clinched her teeth, and said they should all come to dinner on Friday.

"It is no use sitting alone and crying one's eyes out," said the poor woman, valiantly; and she made Sir Thomas ask a couple of Yorkshire friends to the feast. One was a county hero, in great favor with Bell. The other was Mr. Anley, Jonah's godfather. He had a great affection for the family, and regularly dined with them upon grave crises and great occasions.

Lady Henley, being liberal in her hospitality, ordered in her viands and her Champagne bottles, and the girls went to Covent Garden and bought fruit and pine-apples and autumn flowers to dress the table; and poor Jonah brought in a great baked pie from Gunter's.

"It's pâté de foie gras," said he. "My father likes it. I thought I might as well have it to celebrate the occasion." And he held it up triumphantly.

Poor Lady Henley had almost overrated her powers of endurance, for she looked into his honest, sallow face, and then suddenly got up and rushed out of the room.

"Go to her, Jonah," said the girls, looking very pale.

Jonah came down after a little while with a very red nose, and then he went out again to buy something else. All day long he kept coming and going in cabs, bringing home one thing after another—a folding-chair, a stick to open out suddenly; a whole kitchen battery fitted into a tea-kettle; brooches for the girls; toys for his eldest sister's children. As for the contrivances, they served to make one evening pass a little less heavily, and amused them for the time, and gave them something to talk about. But soon after all poor Jonah's possessions went down in the Black Sea in an ill-fated ship that foundered with far more precious freight on board than tin pans and folding-chairs.

Punctual to her time on the Friday Lady Henley was there ready to receive her guests in her stiffest silks, laces, and jewels, looking like some battered fetich out of a shrine as she sat at the head of the table.

Dolly came to dinner sorely against her will; but she was glad she had come when she saw how Jonah brightened up, and when the poor little wooden mother held up her face and kissed her.

Lady Henley said, "How do you do?" to her guests, but never spoke to any of them. It was a dreary feast. Robert failed at the last moment, and they sat down to table with a gap where his place should have been. No one ate the pie except Sir Thomas, who swallowed a little bit with a gulp; then he called for Champagne, and his face turned very red, and he looked hard at his son, and drank a long draught.

Jonah quickly filled his glass, and muttered something as he tossed it off. He had got his mother's hand under the table in his long bony fingers. Lady Henley was sitting staring fixedly before her. As Jonah drank their healths Norah gave a little gasp. Mr. Anley took snuff. One of the country neighbors, young Mr. Jack Redmayne, whom Miss Bell used to meet striding, riding, and walking round about Smoke-thwaite, had begun a story about some celebrated mare; he paused for an instant, then suddenly rallying, went on and on with it, although nobody was listening, not even Miss Bell.

"I thought it best to go on talking," he said afterward. "I hope they didn't think it unfeeling. I'm sure I don't know what I said. I put my horse a dozen times over the same gate; even old Firefly wouldn't stand such treatment."

So the dinner went on; the servants creaked about, and the candles burned bright, but no one could rally, and Lady Henley was finally obliged to leave the table.

Immediately after dinner came old Sam with his cab, and Dolly and her mother got up to go.

"I can not think what possessed Joanna to give that funeral feast," said Mrs. Palmer, as they were putting on their cloaks.

"Hush, mamma," said Dolly, for Jonah was coming running and tumbling down stairs, breathless, from his mother's room.

"Look here, Dolly," he said, "mother wants you to come and see her to-morrow after I'm gone, and don't let her worry too much, and would you please take this," he said; "please do."

This was a pretty little crystal watch that he had bought for her; and when Dolly hesitated and exclaimed, he added, entreatingly, "It is my wedding present. I thought in case we never—I mean that I should like to give it to you myself," he said.

"Oh, Jonah," Dolly answered, in a low voice, "perhaps I may never want a wedding present."

"Never mind; keep it," said Jonah, staring at her hand, "and I'll look up George the first thing." You know my father has

written to his colonel. Keep a good heart, Dolly; we are all in the same boat."

He stood watching the cab as it drove away under the stars.

Dolly was not thinking of Jonah any more. She was looking at all the passers-by, still hoping to see Robert.

"He ought to have come, mamma, this last night," she said.

"My dear, do you ever expect a man to think of any thing but his own convenience?" said Mrs. Palmer, with great emphasis.

"Oh, mamma, why must one ever say good-by?" said Dolly, going on with her own thoughts.

"I believe even now he might persuade you to run off with him," said Mrs. Palmer, laughing.

It was over. He was gone. He had come and gone: Dolly had both dreaded and longed to be alone with Robert, but her mother had persistently staid in the room. It was about four o'clock when he came, and Dolly left her aunt's bedside and came down to the summons, and stood for an instant at the drawing-room door. She could hear his voice within. She held the door-handle, as she stood dizzy and weary. She thought of the Henleys parting from their son, and envied them. Ah! how much easier to part where love is a certainty; and now this was the last time—and he was going, and she loved him, and she had sent him away, and he had never said one word of regret, nor promised once to come back.

She had offered to set him free; she had said she could not leave them all. At this moment, in her heart, Dolly felt as if she could have left them; and as if Robert, in going and in ceasing to love her, was taking away all the light and the strength of her life. He seemed to be making into a certainty that which she had never believed until now, and proving to her by his deeds that his words were true, although she had refused to believe them. She had given him a heart out of her own tender heart, a soul out of her own loving imagination, and now where were her imaginations? Some dry blast seemed to her to be beating about the place, choking her parched throat and drying her tears. Her eyes were dull and heavy-lidded; her face looked pale and frightened as she opened the door and walked in. "Dolly is so strong," Mrs. Palmer was saying, "she has courage for us all. I do not fear for her."

"Perhaps it is best as it is," Henley answered, a little hurriedly. "I shall go out solely with a view to making money, and come home all the sooner."

He looked up and saw Dolly coming across the room, and was shocked by the girl's pale face.

"My dearest Dora," said Henley, going

to meet her, "how ill you look! you would never have been fit for the journey."

"Perhaps not," said Dolly. She was quite passive, and let him hold her hand, but a cold shadow of bitterness seemed to have fallen upon her. It was a chilly August day.

They had lit a small wood fire, and they now brought some coffee to warm Robert before he left. Robert was very much moved, for him.

He put down his coffee-cup untasted, and stood by the tall chimney looking down into the fire. Then he looked at his watch, and went up to his aunt and kissed her, and then came and stood opposite Dolly, who was by the window, and looked her steadily in the face. She could not look up, though she felt his eyes upon her, and he kissed her. "God bless you," he said, deserting his post with a prayer, as people do sometimes, and without looking back once, he walked out of the room.

Robert left the room. Dolly stood quite still where he had left her: she heard the servants' voices outside in the hall, the carriage starting off, some one calling after it, but the wheels rolled on. She stood dully looking through the window at some birds that were flying across the sky. There were cloud heaps sailing, and dead leaves blowing along the terrace; the bitter, parching wind was still blowing. It was not so much the parting as the manner of it. She had thought it so simple to love and to be loved; she had never believed that a word would change him. Was it her fault? Had she been cold, unkind? She was very young still; she longed for one word of sympathy. She turned to her mother with a sudden impulse.

"Oh, mamma!" she said, piteously.

"I can not think how you can have been so hard-hearted, Dolly," said her mother. "I could not have let him go alone. How long the time will seem, poor fellow! Yes, you have been very tyrannical, Dolly."

Was this all the comfort Mrs. Palmer had to give?

Something seemed choking in Dolly's throat: was it her hard heart that was weighing so heavily?

"Oh, mamma! what could I do?" she said. "I told him he was free: he knows that I love him, but indeed he is free."

Mrs. Palmer uttered an impatient exclamation. She had been wandering up and down the room. She stopped short.

"Free! what do you mean? You have never said one word to me. What have you been about? Do you mean that he may never come back to you?"

But Dolly scarcely heard her mother's words. The door had opened and some one came in. Never come back? This was Robert himself who was standing there. He had come to say one more farewell. He went straight up to her and he caught her in his arms. "There was just time," he said.

"Good-by once more, dearest Dora!" It was but a moment; it was one of those moments that last for a lifetime. Dolly lived upon it for many a day to come; but then some things are states, and not mere measures of life. He loved her, she thought to herself, or he would never have come back to her; and if he loved her, the parting had lost its sting.



CHAPTER XLI.

I BRING YOU THREE LETTERS—I PRAY YOU READ ONE.

THE partings were over. Dolly lived upon that last farewell for many a day to come. Such moments are states, and not mere measures of life. Robert loved her, she thought to herself, or he would never have come back to her, and if he loved her the parting had lost its sting. Poor little Lady Henley in her home in Dean's Yard was yellow and silent, and fierce in her anxiety. What was it to her that Sebastopol was to fall before the victorious armies, if the price she had to pay was the life of her son? She kept up as best she could, but the strain told upon her health and her temper. Sir Thomas kept meekly out of the way. The servants trembled and gave warning; the daughters could not give warning. Woe betide Norah if she were late for breakfast. Ill-fated Bell used to make *mal à propos* speeches, which were so sternly vented upon her that she used to go off in tears to her father. Sir Thomas himself was in an anxious, unsettled state, coming and going from his desk, poring over maps and papers, and the first of those awful broadsheets of fated names overcame him completely. He burned the paper, and would

not let it go up stairs; but how keep out the lurid gleam of victory that was spreading over the country? Her flaming sword hung over all their heads by one single thread: it was the life of one man against the whole campaign for many of them. Hoarse voices would come shouting and shrieking in the streets; there was but one thought in every body's mind. All day long it seemed in the air, and a nightmare in the darkness. Poor Sir Thomas had no heart to go out, and used to sit gloomily in a little back study with a wire blind and four pairs of boots and the *Times* and a blotted check-book; he determined at last to take his wife home to Yorkshire again. There at least some silence was to be found among the moors and the rocky ridges, and some seeming of peace.

But for a long time Lady Henley refused to go. She was nearer Jonah in London, she said. The post came in one day sooner. It must have brought news to many an anxious home. What letters they are, those letters written twenty years ago, with numbed fingers, in dark tents, on chill battle-fields, in hospital wards. All these correspondents are well and in good heart, according to their own accounts. They don't suffer much from their wounds; they don't mind the cold; they think of the dear people at home, and write to them, after a weary night's watch or a fierce encounter, in the gentlest words of loving remembrance. The dying man sends his love and a recommendation for some soldier's children or widow at home; the strong man is ready to meet his fate, and is full of compassion for suffering. "I am writing on poor —'s sabretache; I am keeping it for his brother at home," says one. Another has been to see his sick friend, and sends cheering accounts of his state. Then, too, we may read, if we choose, the hearty, ill-spelled correspondence of the common soldiers, all instinct with the same generous and simple spirit. There are also the proclamations of the generals. The French announce: "The hour is come to fight, to conquer, to triumph over the demoralized columns of the enemy. The enterprise is great and worthy of their heroism. Providence appears to be on their side, as well as an immense armament of guns and forces, and the high valor of their English allies and the chosen forces of the Ottoman Empire. The noble confidence of the generals is to pass into the souls of the soldiers." At the same time, as we read in the English correspondent's letter, Lord Raglan issues his memorandum, requesting Mr. Commissary-General Filder "to take steps to insure that the troops shall all be provided with a ration of porter for the next few days."

There is the record of it all in the old newspapers. Private Vance's letters are not given, for Dolly kept them for her own read-

ing when they came at last. By the same mail was brought news from the two last departing travelers. Marker, who had brought in the letters one evening, waited to hear the news.

"George!" cried Dolly, tearing the first envelope open, and then, half laughing, half crying, she read her letter out.

Mrs. Palmer exclaimed, "Ah! ah! ah!—mad! mad!" at every other word.

Marker stood at the door, winking away some tears. Eliza Twells, who was a good-natured girl, hovered about in the darkness outside, and tumbled over the umbrella-stand in her excitement.

George seemed in good spirits. He wrote from Varna. A previous packet must have been lost, for he said he had written before. This was a cheerful and affectionate letter, quite matter-of-fact, and with no complaints or railings at fate.

"I dare say people think me a great fool," he said, "but, on the whole, I don't regret what I have done, except for any annoyance it may have caused you. If you and mamma would go to the Horse-Guards and ask for a commission for me, perhaps two such pretty ladies might mollify the authorities. They say commissions are not difficult to get just now. I shall consult the Colonel about it; I am to see him again in a day or two. I don't know why I did not speak to him just now when he sent for me." Then he went on to say that his Bulbul scholarship had stood him in good service, and his little Turkish had been turned to account. He had already passed as second-class interpreter, and he had got hold of some books and was getting on. "This is the reason why the Colonel sent for me yesterday morning. I am Private Vance, remember, only just out of the awkward squad. Our Colonel is a grand old man, with bright eagle eyes, and the heroic manner. You would like him, Dolly. He is like one of your favorite heroes. Do you remember Aunt Sarah's talking of David Fane, our father's old friend? When I found out who he was I felt very much inclined to tell him my real name. He said to me at once, 'I see you are not exactly what you appear to be. If you will come to me in a day or two I shall be glad to talk to you about your prospects; in the mean while don't forget what a good influence one man of good education and feeling can exert in the ranks of a regiment.' Old Fane himself is no bad specimen of a true knight; we all feel the better for knowing him. He walks with a long swift stride like a deer, tossing his head as he goes. I have never seen him in battle, but I can imagine him leading his men to victory, and I am glad of the chance which has given me such a leader. I wish there were more like him. Tell Raban, if you see him, that I am getting on very well, and that, far from being a black sheep here,

no lamb-skin can compare with my pipe-clay." Then came something erased. "Dearest Dolly, you don't know what your goodness has been to me all this time. I hope Robert appreciates his good luck. This will reach you about the time of your wedding-day. I will send you a little Russian belt when I can find an opportunity. My love to them all, and be kind to Rhoda, for the sake of your most affectionate G. V."

There was a P.S.

"I forgot to ask you when I last wrote whether you got the letter I wrote you at Cambridge, and if old Miller gave you my packet. I bought the form in the town as I walked down to the boats. It all seems a horrid dream as I think of it now, and I am very much ashamed of that whole business; and yet I should like to leave matters as they are, dear, and to feel that I have done my best for that poor little girl. My love to old John; tell him to write. There has been a good deal of sickness here, but the worst is over."

The paper trembled in Dolly's hand as she dwelt upon every crooked line and twist of the dear handwriting that wrote "George is safe."

"I told you all along it was absurd to make such a disturbance about him. You see he was enjoying himself with his common associates," said Mrs. Palmer, crossly. "Strangely peculiar," she added, after a moment. "Dolly, did it ever occur to you that the dear boy was a little—" and she tapped her fair forehead significantly.

"He was only unhappy, mamma, but you see he is getting better now," said Dolly.

The next time Dolly saw Rhoda she ran up and kissed her, looking so kind that Rhoda was quite surprised, and wondered what had happened to make Dolly so nice again.

CHAPTER XLII.

RACHEL.

It was not only in the hospitals at Varna that people were anxious and at work at the time when George wrote. While the English ships were embarking their stores and their companies, their horses and their battalions, transporting them through surf and through storm to the shores of the fierce Russian empire; while Eastern hospitals were organizing their wards, nurses preparing to start on their errand; while generals were sitting in council—an enemy had attacked us at home in the very heart of our own great citadel and store place, and the peaceful warriors sent to combat this deadly foe are fighting their own battles. Cholera was the name of the enemy, and among those who had been expecting the onslaught, haranguing, driving companies of somewhat

reluctant officials, good old John Morgan had been one of the most prominent. His own district at Kensington was well armed and prepared, but John Morgan's life at Kensington was coming to an end, and he had accepted a certain small living in the city, called St. Mary Outh'gate, of which the rector was leaving after five or six years' hard work. "It is a case of bricks without straw," said the poor worn-out rector. Morgan was full of courage, and ready to try his hand. Mrs. Morgan, with a sigh given to the old brown house and its comfortable cupboards, had agreed to move goods and chattels shortly into the dark little rectory in the city court, with its iron gates and its one smutty tree. To the curate's widow and mother there was an irresistible charm in the thought of a rectory.

St. Mary Outh'gate was a feeble saint, and unable to protect her votaries from the evil effects of some open sewers and fish-heaps when the cholera broke out. At John's request the move was delayed. The girls remained at Kensington, while Mrs. Morgan traveled backward and forward between the homes. Every day the accounts grew more and more serious, and in the month of September the mortality had reached its height.

John's new parish of St. Mary Outh'gate lies on the river side of a great thoroughfare, of which the stream of carts and wheels rolls by from sunrise until the stars set. The rectory-house stood within its iron gates in a court at the end of a narrow passage. The back of the house looked into a cross-lane leading to the river. The thoroughfare itself was squalid, crowded, bare; there was nothing picturesque about it; but in the side streets were great warehouse cranes starting from high windows, and here and there some relic of past glories. Busy to-day had forgotten some old doorway, perhaps, or left some garden or terrace wall or some old banqueting-room still standing. It had swept the guests into the neighboring church-yards on its rapid way. To-day was in a fierce and reckless mood: at home and abroad were anxious people watching the times; others were too busy to be anxious. John was hard at work and untiring. He had scarcely had time to unpack his portmanteau and to put up his beloved books and reports. His start had been a dispiriting one. People had been dying by scores in the little lane at the back of the rectory. Mrs. Morgan herself fell ill of anxiety and worry, and had to go home. It must be confessed that the cares of the move and the capabilities of the drawing-room carpet added not a little to the poor lady's distress. Betty remained to take care of her master, and to give him her mind. John bore the old woman's scolding with great sweetness of temper. "You do your work, Betty, and let me do mine," said he. He had taken in two professional nurses

after his mother left, and his curate, whose landlady had died of the prevailing epidemic. The two men worked with good will. John came, went, preached, fumed, wrote letters to the *Times*. Frank, who was in town, came to see him one day. He found the curate in good spirits. Things were beginning to look a little less dark, and John was one of those who made the best of chance lights. He received his friend heartily, wheeled his one arm-chair up for him, and lit a pipe in his honor. The two sat talking in the old bare black room leading into the court. John gave a short account of his month's work.

"It's over now—at least, the worst is over," he said, "and the artisans are at work again. It's the poor little shop-keepers I pity; they have lost every thing—health, savings, customers—they are quite done up. However, I have a friend in the neighborhood to whom I go, and Lady Sarah heard of my letter to the *Times* and sent me fifty pounds for them the other day. Dolly brought it herself. I was sorry to see her looking worn, poor dear. I think it is a pity that Mrs. Palmer takes so very desponding a view of her daughter's prospects. Dolly seemed disinclined to speak on the subject, so I did not press her, and we all know," said the curate, in a constrained sort of voice, "that Henley is a high-minded man; his good judgment and sense of—"

"His own merit," said Raban, testily. "What a thing it is to have a sense of one's own virtue! He will get on in India; he will get on in every quarter of the world; he will go to heaven and be made an archangel. He has won a prize already that he does not know how to value at its worth, and never will as long as he lives."

John Morgan looked very much disturbed. "I am very sorry to hear you say this. Tell me, as a friend: when Mrs. Palmer declares the engagement is broken off, do you really think there is any fear of—"

Frank jumped up suddenly.

"Broken off!" he cried, trying to hide his face of supreme satisfaction; and he began walking up and down the room. "Does she say so?"

The dismal little room seemed suddenly illumined; the smoky court, the smutty tree, the brown opposite foggy houses, were radiant. Frank could not speak. His one thought was to see Dolly, to find out the truth; he hardly heard the rest of the curate's sentence. "I have been so busy," he was saying, "that I have scarcely had one minute to think about it all; but I love Dolly dearly; she is a noble creature, and I should heartily grieve to hear that anything had occurred to trouble her. Are you going already?"

There is a little well of fresh-water in

Kensington Gardens, sparkling among the trees, and dripping into a stone basin. A few stone steps lead down to the lion's head, from whence the slender stream drips drop by drop into the basin; the children and the birds, too, come and drink there. Somewhere near this well a fairy prince was once supposed to hold his court. The glade is lovely in summer, and pleasant in autumn, especially late in the day, when the shadows are growing long, and the stems of the murmurous elm-trees shine with western gold.

Frank Raban was crossing from the high-road toward the palace gate, and he was walking with a long shadow of his own, when he chanced to pass the little well, and he saw a nymph standing by the railing and waiting while the stream trickled into the cup below. As he passed she looked up, their eyes met, and Frank stopped short; for the nymph was that one of which he had been thinking as he came along—Dorothea of the pale face and waving bronze hair.

As he stopped Eliza came up the steps of the well, bringing her young mistress the glass; it was still very wet with the spray of the water, and Dolly, smiling, held it out to Raban, who took it with a bow from her hand. It was more than he had ever hoped, to meet her thus alone at the moment when he wanted to see her, to be greeted so kindly, so silently. No frowning Robert was in the background; only Eliza waiting, with her rosy face, while Dolly stood placid in the sloping light in the sunset and the autumn. Her broad feathered hat was pushed back, her eyes were alight.

"I am so glad to see you," she said. "You have heard our good news from George; it came two nights ago. My aunt has been asking for you, Mr. Raban. What have you been doing all this time?"

"I have been at Cambridge," said Frank. "I am only up in town for two days; I was afraid of being in your way. Is every body gone? Are you alone? How is Lady Sarah?"

"She is better, I think; I am going back to her now," said Dolly. "I come here with Eliza to get her some of this chalybeate water. Will you come with me part of the way home?"

Of course he could come. He was engaged to dine at the club, and his hosts never forgave him for failing; he had letters to answer, and they remained on the table. He had left John Morgan in a hurry, too much excited by the news he had heard to smoke out his pipe in tranquillity, but here was peace under the chestnut-trees, where the two shadows were falling side by side, and lengthening as the world heaved toward the night.

As they were walking along Frank began telling Dolly about a second letter he had received from his grandfather; he could never resist the wish to tell her all about