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 any thing 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.

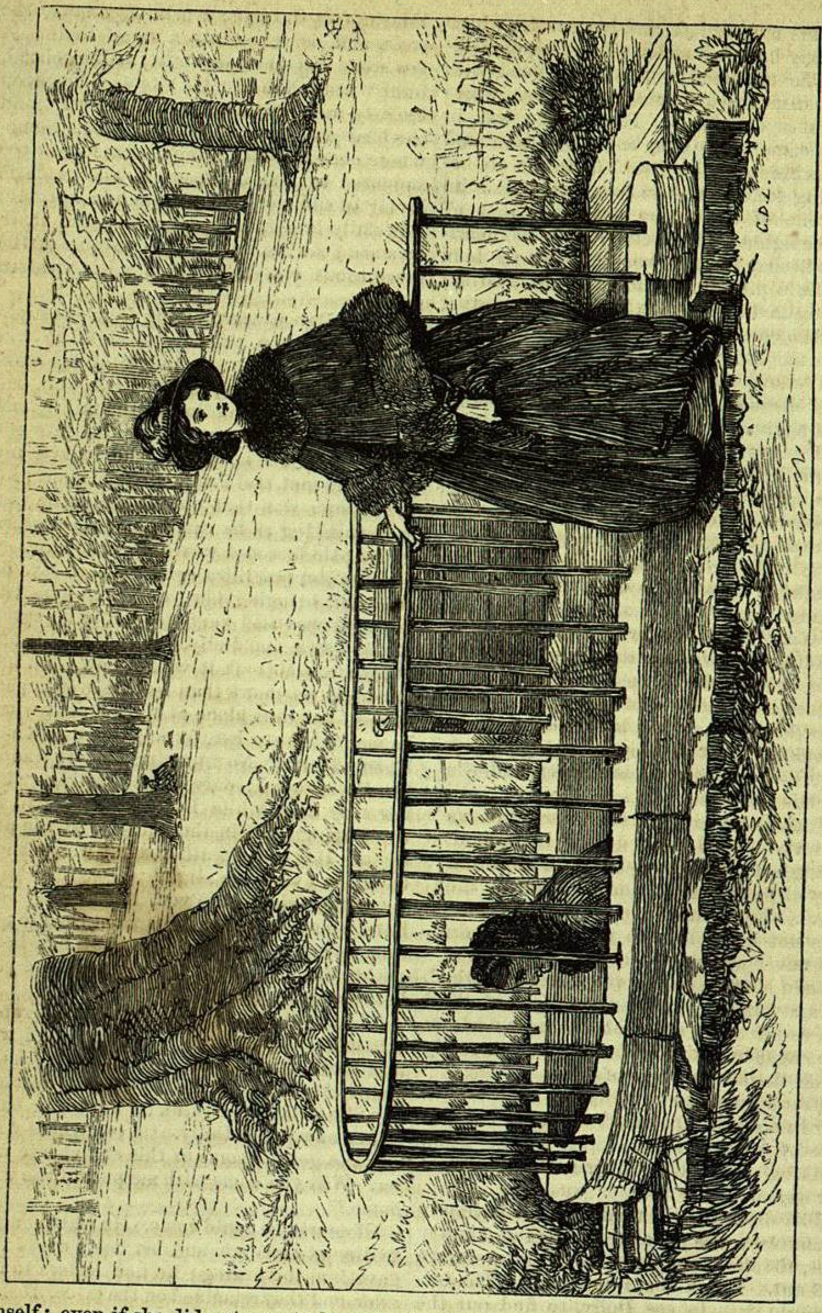
"I am so glad to see you," she said. "You have heard our good news from George; it came two nights ago. My aunt has been asking for you, Mr. Raban. What have you been doing all this time?"

"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



AT THE WELL.

himself; even if she did not care to hear, he liked to tell her.

“I am in an uncertain state of mind,” he said. “Since I saw you my grandfather has taken me into favor again; after these seven years he offers me Leah. He wants me to give up driving young gentlemen, and to take to sheep-shearing and farming and a good allowance. He writes to me from Harrogate. I should have a house, and serve in bondage, and live upon him, and rescue him from the hands of the agents, who now perform that office very effectually,” said Raban, dryly.

“What do you mean?” said Dolly, looking at him doubtfully.

“This is what I mean,” said Frank. “I can not forget how badly the old people used me, and how for seven years they have left me to shift for myself. I have always

failed in ambition. I shall never win Rachel,” he said, “and I want nothing else that any body can give me; and what is the use of putting my head under the tyrannic old yoke?”

“It is so difficult to be just,” Dolly answered, leading the way under the trees. “When I try to think of right and wrong it all seems to turn into people, and what they wish, and what I would like to do for them. I wonder if some people can love by rule? And yet love must be the best rule, mustn't it? and if your poor old grandfather is sorry, and begs you to go to him, it seems cruel to refuse.”

She seemed to be speaking in tune to some solemn strain of music which was floating in the air.

Frank was looking at the ground, and without raising his eyes he presently said, “Well, I suppose you are right; I shall take your advice, and give up the dry crust of liberty and try to be content with cakes and ale; such strong ale, Miss Vanborough, such heavy cakes!” he added, looking at her absently.

Dolly blushed up, hesitated: she was rather frightened by the responsibility Frank seemed to put upon her.

“Could not you ask some one else?” she said, confusedly. “Perhaps Rachel,” she added, not without a little jealous pang lest Rachel might be Rhoda, and her poor boy's last chance undone.

The light seemed to come from Raban's dark eyes. “I *have* asked Rachel,” he said, in a low voice that seemed to thrill clear and distinct on her ears. “Is it possible,” he added—“do you not know it? Is not your name Rachel to me? are you not the only Rachel in the whole world for me? I never thought I should tell you this,” cried Frank, “until just now, when I heard from John Morgan that you were free; but now, whatever your answer may be, I tell you, that you may know that you are the one only woman whom I shall ever love. My dear, don't look frightened, don't turn away. Robert Henley never loved you as I do.”

His coldness was gone; his half-sarcastic, half-sulky, careless manner was gone. It had given way to a sort of tender domination; the real generous fire of truth and unselfish love that belonged to the man, and had always been in him, seemed to flash out. The music still clanged on, solemnly jarring with his words. Dolly turned pale and cold.

“I am not free; it has all been a mistake,” she said, very quickly. “You must not speak to me of Robert like that.”

His face changed. “Are you still engaged to him?” he asked, looking at her steadily.

“I promised to wait for him, and you have no right to ask me any thing at all,” she cried, turning angrily upon him. “Oh, why did you—how can you speak to me so?”

He was silent, but she had answered his eyes, not his spoken words. He saw that her eyes were full of tears. She spoke vehemently, passionately. He had read her too carefully to have had much hope. He saw that she was overpowered, that she was bound to Robert still, that his wild dream of happiness was but a vision. It was no new revelation to him. “You might have guessed it all long ago,” said he, shortly. “But you would not understand me before, when I tried to tell you that I loved you. This is not the first time that I have spoken. Now you know all,” he said, with a sigh. “Forget it if you like.”

He would have left her, but Eliza had disappeared, and a crowd of people were gathered outside the gate, rough-looking Irish among them from the buildings opposite. A military funeral was passing by, the music had ceased, and the soldiers went tramping down the street in a long and solemn line; the slow fall of their feet struck upon the hard road and echoed with a dull throb. People were looking on in silence, and crowding to the windows and in the doorways. As the dead man's horse was led by, with the empty saddle and the boots swinging from the side, Dolly turned away pale and trembling, and Raban was glad then he had not left her. She put out her hand for a moment. She seemed blinded and scared.

Then she recovered herself quickly, and when the crowd gave way she walked on in silence by his side until they came to the turning that led to the old house. “Thank you,” she said, a little tremulously. “Forgive me if I spoke harshly: it was best to tell you the truth.”

Raban had meant to leave her without a word; now he suddenly changed his mind. He held out his hand.

“Good-by, Rachel,” he said, still looking at her with silent reproach. “Do not fear that I shall trouble and annoy you again; it would be hard to take your friendship and confidence away from me because of John Morgan's mistake.”

“How can you be my friend?” cried poor Dolly, suddenly, passionate and angry once more. “Leave me now—only go, please go.”

Henley would have been satisfied if he had been present.

Frank walked away bitterly hurt and wounded; she seemed to resent his love as if it had been an insult. He was disappointed in Dolly, in life; the light was gone out, that one flash of happiness had shown him his own disappointment all the more plainly. We don't hope, and yet our hearts sink with disappointment: we expect nothing, but that nothing overwhelms us. And meanwhile life is going on, and death and the many interests and changes of mortals coming and going on their journey through space. When Frank got back to Cambridge he found a telegram summoning him at once to Harrogate. It was sent by some unknown person.

People part; each carries away so much of the other's life; very often the exchange is a hard-driven bargain, willingly paid, indeed, which the poor debtor is in no inclination to resent. A whole heart's fidelity and remembrance in sleepless nights, tendered prayers, and blessings, in exchange for a little good grammar, a pleasant recollection, and some sand and ink and paper, all of which Dolly duly received that evening. All day long she had been haunted by that little scene at the well; it seemed to bring her nearer to Henley, and his letter came as an answer to her thoughts. George's letter had been for them all. Robert's was for herself alone, and she took it up to her room to read.

Robert's letter was not very short, it was sufficiently stamped, it said all that had to be said; and yet "How unreasonable I am! how can men feel as women do?" thought Dolly, kissing the letter to make up for her passing disappointment. Then came a thought, but she put it away with a sort of anger and indignation. She would not let herself think of Frank with pity or sympathy. It seemed disloyal to Robert to be sorry for the poor tutor.

Lady Henley also received a blotted scrawl from Jonah by that same post, and she made up her mind at last to go home, and she sent the brougham for Dolly and her mother to come and wish her good-by. On her first arrival Dolly was pounced upon by her cousins and taken in to Sir Thomas. When she came up stairs at last she found her aunt and her mother in full committee, apparently on good terms, and with their heads close together. The little lady was upon the sofa. Mrs. Palmer was upon the floor, in a favorite attitude. There only could she find complete rest, she said. Lady Henley had a great heap of Jonah's clothes upon the sofa beside her; she had been folding them up and marking them with her own hands. The drawing-room seemed full of the sound of the bells from the towers outside, and autumn leaves were dropping before the windows.

"Come here," said Lady Henley, holding out her hand to Dolly. "I have been talking to your mother about you. Look at her—as if there were no chairs in the room! I wanted to show you Jonah's letter. Foolish boy, he sends you his love. I don't know why I should give the message. You know you don't care for him, Dolly. Have you heard from Robert? Is he properly heart-broken?" with a sort of hoarse laugh. "Jonah mentions that he seems in very good spirits." Then Lady Henley became agitated. Dolly stood silent and embarrassed. "Why don't you answer?" said her aunt, quite fiercely. "You can't answer; you can't show us his letter; you know in your heart that it has been a foolish affair. Your mother has told me all."

Lady Henley was flushed, and getting more and more excited, and, at the same time, a great jangling of bells came into the room from the abbey towers outside. Philippa gave one of her silvery laughs, and starting actively to her feet, came and put her arm round Dolly's waist.

"All! No indeed, Joanna. Delightful creature as he is, Robert tells one nothing. Forgive me, dearest, it is a fact. He really seemed quite to forget what was due to me, a lady in her own drawing-room, when he said good-by to you. I only mention it, for he is not generally so *empressé*, and if he had only explained himself—"

"What have you been saying, mamma?" said Dolly, blushing painfully. "There is nothing to explain."

"There is every thing to explain," burst in Lady Henley, from her corner; "and if you were my own daughter, Dolly, I should think it my duty to remonstrate with you, and to tell you frankly what I have always said from the beginning. There never was the slightest chance of happiness in this entanglement for either of you: take the advice of an older woman than yourself. Robert has no more feeling for you than—than—a fish, or do you think he would consent to be free? Ah! if you were not so blinded. There is one honest heart," she said, incoherently, breaking down for an instant. She quickly recovered, however, and Dolly, greatly distressed, stood looking at her, but she could not respond; if ever she had swerved, her faithful heart had now fully returned to its first allegiance. All they said seemed only to make her feel more and more how entirely her mind was made up.

"Robert and I understand each other quite well," said Dolly, gravely; "I wish him to be free. It is my doing, not his. Please don't speak of this to me or to any one else again."

She had promised to herself to be faithful, whatever came. Her whole heart had gone after Robert as he left her. She knew that she loved him. With all her humility, the thought that she had made a mistake in him had been painful beyond measure. It seemed to her now that she was answerable for his faith, for his loyalty, and she eagerly grasped at every shadow of that which she hoped to find in him.

She walked away to the window to hide her own gathering tears. The bells had come to an end suddenly. Some children were playing in the middle of the road and pursuing one another, and a stray organman, seeing a lady at the window, pulled out his stop and struck up a dreary tune—

"Partant pour la Syrie, le jeune et beau Dunois." It was the tune of those times, but Dolly could never hear it afterward without a sickening dislike. Dolly, hearing the door bang, turned round at last.

"My dear Dolly, she is gone—she is in a passion—she will never forgive you," said Philippa, coming up in great excitement.

But she was mistaken. Lady Henley sent Dolly a little note that very evening.

> "My Dear,—I was very angry with you to-day. Perhaps I was wrong to be angry. I will not say forgive an old woman for speaking the truth; it is only what you deserve. You must come and see us when you can in Yorkshire. We all feel you belong to us now.
>
> Yours affectionately,
> "J. Henley."
>
> "P.S.—I see in this evening's paper that our poor old neighbors at Ravensrick died at Harrogate within a day of one another. I suppose your friend Frank Raban comes into the property."

CHAPTER XLIII.

CRAGS AND FRESH AIR.

The old town of Pebblesthwaite, in Yorkshire, slides down the side of a hill into the hollow. Rocks overtop the town-hall, and birds flying from the crags can look straight down into the gray stone streets, and upon the flat roofs of the squat houses. Pebblesthwaite lies in the heart of Craven—a country little known, and not yet within the tramp of the feet of the legions. It is a district of fresh winds and rocky summits, of thymy hill-sides, and of a quaint and arid sweetness. The rocks, the birds, the fresh rush of the mountain streams as they dash over the stones, strike Southerners most curiously. We contrast this pleasant turmoil with the sleepy lap of our weed-laden waters, the dull tranquillity of our fertile plains. If we did not know that we are but a day's journey from our homes, we might well wonder and ask ourselves in what unknown country we are wandering. Strange-shaped hills heave suddenly from the plains; others, rising and flowing tumultuously, line the horizon: overhead great clouds are advancing, heaped in massive lines against a blue and solid sky. These clouds rise with the gusts of a sudden wind that blows into Frank Raban's face as he comes jogging through the old town on his way to the house from which he had been expelled seven years before, and to which he is now returning as master. Smokethwaite is the metropolis of Pebblesthwaite, near which is Ravensrick. The station is on a little branch line of rail, starting off from the main line toward these rocks and crags of Craven.

Frank had come down with the Henleys, and seen them all driving off in the carriages and carts that had come down to meet them from the Court. Nothing had come for him, and he had walked to the inn and ordered the trap.

"Where art goin'?" shouts a pair of leather gaiters standing firm upon the door-step of an old arched house opposite.

"Ravensrick Court," says the driver.

"'Tis a blustering day," says old leather gaiters.

The driver cracks his whip, and begins to do the honors of Pebblesthwaite as the horse clatters over the stones. "Do ye ken t' shambles?" he says, pointing to an old arched building overtopped by a great crag.

"I know it as well as you do," says Frank, smiling.

Can it be seven years since he left? Raban looks about: every stone and every pane of glass seem familiar. The town was all busy and awake. The farmers, sturdy, crop-headed, with baskets on their arms, were chattering and selling, standing in groups, or coming in and out of shops and doorways, careful as any housewives over their purchases. There were strange stores—shoes, old iron, fish, all heaped together; seven years older than when the last market-day Frank was there, but none the worse for that. There was the old auctioneer, in his tall, battered hat, disposing of his treasures. He was holding up a horse's yoke to competition. "Three shillin'! four shillin'!" says he. The people crowd and gape round. One fellow, in a crimson waistcoat, driving past in a donkey-cart, stops short and stares hard at the trap and at Raban. Frank knew him, and nodded with a smile. Two more stumpy leather gaiters, greeting each other, looked up as he drove by, and grinned. He remembered them too. There was the old Quaker, in his white neckcloth, standing at the door of his handsome old shop; and Squire Anley, walking along to the bank, all dressed from head to foot in loose gray clothes, with his bull-terrier at his heels. And then they drove out into the straight country roads; under the bridge between stone hedges, beyond which the late flames of summer green were still gleaming—the meadows still shone with spangling autumn flowers. Far away in the hollow hung the smoke of the factory, with its many windows; a couple of tall chimneys spouted blackness; a train was speeding northward; close at hand a stream was dashing; the great trees seemed full of birds. It was a different world from that in which he had been basking. Frank already felt years younger as he drove along the road—the old boyish impulses seemed waiting at every turn. "Why, there goes old Brand," he cried, leaning forward eagerly to look after an old keeper, with a couple of dogs, walking off with a gun toward the hills.

Frank called after the keeper, but the wind carried away his voice. As he drove along by each stile and corner that seemed