so." But he did not understand one word of it, and Frank might just as well have addressed one of the fat oxen grazing in the field outside.

"You will find I have always studied your interests, Sir," said Mr. Close, rubbing his hands, "and I shall continue to do so. Perhaps you will allow me to point out that the proposed improvements will amount to more than you expect. You will have heavy expenses, Sir. Some parties let their houses for a time: I have an offer from a wealthy gentleman from Manchester," said the irrepressible Close.

Frank shortly answered that he did not wish to let the house, and that he must arrange for the improvements. A domestic revolution was the consequence, for when the new master proposed to reduce the establishment the butler gasped, choked, and finally burst into tears. He could not allow such aspersions upon his character. What would his old master and mistress have said? His little savings were earned by faithful service, and sooner than see two under-footmen dismissed he should wish to leave.

Mrs. Roper, the housekeeper, also felt that the time was come for rest and a private bar. She had been used to three in the kitchen, and she should not be doing her duty by herself if she said she could do with less.

Raban let them all go, with a couple of years' wages. For the present he only wanted to be left alone. He staid on with a groom and a couple of countrywomen sent in by Mrs. Brand. They clattered about the great kitchen, and their red shock heads might be seen half a mile off. Of course the neighbors talked: some few approved; old friends who had known him before troubled themselves but little; the rest loudly blamed his proceedings. He was a screw; he had lived on a crust, and he now grudged every half-penny. He was cracked (this was Mr. Close's version); he had been in a lunatic asylum; he had murdered his first wife.

When the county began to call, in friendly basket-carriages and wagonettes, it would be shown in by Betty and Becky to the library and the adjoining room, in which Mr. Raban lived. Frank had brought the lurcher away from the keeper's lodge; it had made friends with the foxy terrier, and the two dogs would follow him about, or lie comfortably on the rug while he sat at work upon his papers. The periwigged ancestor looked on from the wall, indifferently watching all these changes. One table in the window was piled with business papers, leases, check-books, lawyers' letters in bundles. A quantity of books that Frank had sent for from London stood in rows upon the floor. After the amenities and regularities of the last few years, this easy life came as a rest and reinvigoration. He did not want society. Frank was so taken up with schemes for sweeping clean with his new broom that he was glad to be free for a time, and absolved from the necessity of dressing, of going out to dinner, and making conversation. He would open his windows wide on starry nights. The thymy wind would sough into his face; clear beam the solemn lights; the woods shiver softly. Does a thought come to him at such times of a sick woman in an old house far away, of a girl with dark brows and a tender smile, watching by her bedside?

People who had been used to the pale and silent college tutor in his stuff gown might scarcely have recognized Frank riding about from farm to farm in the new and prosperous character of a country gentleman, begaitered and bewideawaked. The neighbors who exclaimed at the shabbiness of Mr. Frank's in-door establishment might also, and with more reason, exclaim at the regiment of barrows and men at work, at the drains digging, roofs repairing, fences painting. The melancholy outside tumble-down-looking houses were smartening up. The people stood at their doors watching with some interest and excitement the works as they hammered on.

Frank superintended it all himself. He was up to his waist in a ditch one day when the Henley party drove past in the break on their way to call at Ravensrick. They left a heap of cards—Sir Thomas and Lady Henley, Mr. Jonah Anley, Captain Boswarrick—and an invitation for him to dine and sleep the following day. The red-headed girls took the cards in, and grinned at the fine company; the fine company grinned in return at Sukey.

"Why, what sort of society can he have been used to?" cried little Mrs. Boswarrick. She was the eldest daughter: a pretty, plump little woman, very much spoiled by her husband, and by her father too, whose favorite she was.

"He has evidently not been used to associate with butlers and footmen," said Mr. Anley.

"Hulloh!" shouted Sir Thomas, as he drove out at the park gates. "Look there, Anley! he is draining Medmere, and there's a new window to the schools. By Jove!"

"Foolish young man!" said Mr. Anley, "wasting his substance draining cottages and lighting school-rooms!" and he looked out with some interest.

"Then, Uncle Jonah, you are foolish yourself," said Bell.

"Are you turned philanthropist, Uncle Jonah?" said Mrs. Boswarrick. "I wish some one would take me and Alfred up. What have you been doing?"

"I make it a rule never to do any thing at the time I can possibly put off till the

morrow," said Mr. Anley, apologetically. "My cottages were tumbling down, my dear, so I was obliged to prop them up."

"He bought them from papa," said Bell. "I can't think why."

"It is all very well for bachelors like you and Raban to amuse yourselves with rebuilding," said Sir Thomas, joining in from his box in an aggravated tone; "if you were a married man, Anley, with a wife and daughters and milliners' bills, you would see how much was left at the end of the year for improvements."

"To hear them talk, one oughtn't to exist at all," said Mrs. Boswarrick, with a laugh.

CHAPTER XLIV.

WHITE WITH GAZING.

Frank accepted Lady Henley's invitation, and arrived at Henley Court just before dinner-time one day. The place lies beyond Pebblesthwaite, on the Smokethwaite road. It was a more cheerful house than Ravensrick—a comfortable, modern, stone-piled house, built upon a hill, with windows north and south and east and west, with wide distant views of valleys and winding roads and moors. Through one break of the hills, when the wind blew south, the chimneys of Smokethwaite stood out clear against the sky; at other times a dull black cloud hung over the gap. The garden was charming: on one side a natural terrace overhung the valley; a copper beech rustled upon the lawn; and a few great chestnut-trees gave shade in summer to the young people of the house, to the cows browsing in the meadow, who would come up to the boundary fence to watch Miss Bell's flirtations with gentle curiosity, or the children at play, or to listen to Sir Thomas reading out the newspaper. He had a loud voice and a secret longing for Parliamentary distinction. When he read the speeches he would round his periods, address Lady Henley as "Sir," and imagine himself in his place, a senator in the company of senators. He was a stupid man, but hospitable, and popular in the neighborhood—far more so than Lady Henley, who was greatly disliked. Bell was fast, handsome. Norah was a gentle, scatter-brained creature, who looked up to every body; she especially adored her sister, Mrs. Boswarrick, who had captivated Captain Boswarrick one evening at a York ball, where she had danced down a whole regiment of officers. The captain himself was a small and languid man, and he admired energy in others. If Sir Thomas was fond of thundering out the debates, Captain Boswarrick had a pretty turn for amateur acting and reciting to select audiences. Some one once suggested private theatricals.

"Never while I live," said Lady Henley, "shall there be such mummeries in this house. If Alfred chooses to make a fool of himself and repeat verses to the girls, I have no objection, so long as he don't ask me to sit by."

"I never should have thought of asking you to sit by, Lady Henley," drawled Alfred.

When Frank was announced he found the young ladies in fits of laughter, Captain Boswarrick declaiming in the middle of the room, with Squire Anley and Mr. Redmayne for audience. Every body turned round, and the performance suddenly ceased when he entered. The squire nodded without getting up.

"How d'ye do?" said Mrs. Boswarrick, holding out half a dozen bracelets. "Mr. Raban forgets me, I can see. Sit down. Alfred hates being interrupted. Go on, Alfred!"

Captain Boswarrick's manner would quite change when he began to recite. He would stamp, start, gesticulate, and throw himself into the part with more spirit than could have been reasonably expected.

And now, with a glance at his wife, he began again with a stamp, and suddenly pointing—

> "That morn owd York wor all alive
> Wi' leal an' merry hearts;
> For t' country foalks com' i' full drive
> I' gigs an' market-carts,
> An' girt lang trains wi' whistlin' din,
> Com' w-w-whirrlin' up."

The little captain, suiting the action to the word, raised his arm with some action to represent the train. It was caught from behind by a firm grasp. Frank had not seen that he had been followed into the room by a stout little man in brand-new clothes, who joined the circle.

"Take care," said the stranger—he spoke with a slight Yorkshire accent. "What are you about, yo'ng man? What is all this? Very fascinating, very brilliant, very seductive, very much so, but leading to—what?" with a sudden drop of the voice and the hand he held. Bell went off into a shriek of laughter.

Captain Boswarrick flushed up. He might have resented the interruption still more if he had not been somewhat mollified by the string of compliments.

"Leading to— You would have heard all about it, Mr. Stock, if you had not stopped him," said Mr. Anley.

"Shall I make my meaning plainer?" said the little man, not heeding the interruption. "Shall I tell you what I mean? Social intercourse, music, poetry—dazzling, I own. I, too, have experienced the charm; I, too, have studied to please; but I have also discovered the vanity of vanities; so will you one day. A fact, though you don't believe me."

"But in the mean while, Mr. Stock, don't grudge us our fun," said Bessie Boswarrick, coming to the rescue.

"I don't grudge it; far from it," said the stranger. "I was just like you all once; now—I am not afraid of ridicule—I can give you something better than that, better than that, better than that. You can choose between us: *his* poetry, *my* plain speaking. I'm a plain man—a very plain man; he, brilliant, highly educated."

Captain Boswarrick scarcely knew how to accept all these compliments, and in what sense to take them. Mr. Anley listened with the profoundest gravity. Bell giggled and stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth; but every body was glad when the door opened and Lady Henley came in, making a diversion. The scene was getting embarrassing.

"After dinner, dear Mr. Stock," said Joanna, courteously, "we shall be glad to hear *any thing* you may have to say. Let us leave them to their folly, Mr. Raban. Do you know your neighbor, our excellent friend and minister?"

Frank was quite prepared to make Mr. Stock's acquaintance—he was an amateur preacher, a retired cavalry officer, living not far from Ravensrick—but he found himself carried off by Sir Thomas. The baronet had been in town that week, and was in a communicative mood. He had seen the ladies at Church House, who had asked after Raban. The Admiral had been heard of from Gibraltar.

"He has been writing in the most ill-judged way to know the exact state of affairs between Dolly and my nephew Robert," Sir Thomas said, confidentially. Sir Thomas always reflected the people with whom he had been living. "I found my sister greatly overcome—hers is a nervous susceptibility, almost amounting to genius, but *not* under control." And then, dropping his oratorical tone of voice, he went on to say that they all seemed much disturbed and greatly in want of cheering; that he had promised to run up again. "Lady Sarah still lingering, poor thing," he added. "She has a most devoted nurse in my young niece."

Frank asked as indifferently as he could how Miss Vanborough was looking.

"Not so blooming as I could wish," said Sir Thomas. "Far from it. My wife is anxious that our friend Mr. Stock should impart some of his admirable ministration to her, but we can not expect her to leave home at present."

Mr. Stock's ministration seemed to have won over the simple baronet, whose conversation was deeply interesting to Frank, for he went on alternately praising Mr. Stock and talking about Dolly—Sir Thomas was not the discreetest of men. "I had a—some painful explanation with my niece," he continued, lowering his voice (people seem to think that a sort of charm against indiscretion). "To you, who are such an old friend, I may safely say that I do *not* like this vagueness and uncertainty in a matter which so closely concerns Dolly's happiness. The engagement seems to be neither on nor off. ......She tells me that Robert is free, but she seems to consider herself bound......I have thought it best to write to him plainly on the subject......My wife, as you know, wishes the engagement entirely broken—at least I think so."

The baronet suddenly stopped short, and, looking rather foolish and confounded, began to talk of Mr. Stock again.

Lady Henley was not so absorbed in her conversation that she had not overheard Sir Thomas's too candid confidences. She was shaking her head at her husband over her shoulder.

Frank moved away, and went and stared through one of the windows. Once more hope came to dazzle him. In some moods people grasp at faintest dreams. There was every thing smiling, shining; every ridge seemed illuminated; there lay the happy valley flooded with sunlight, life, brightness. Children's voices reached him, and meanwhile the recitation had begun again. "Yan morn in May," the captain was saying. But a loud dinner-bell brought it all to a close.

The sun had set; they had all done dinner. Norah used to feed the cows of an evening with oat-cake prepared for Sir Thomas, and she now came out into the twilight, calling to her favorites, who stood expectant, with their horns rearing against a golden streak. One bolder than the rest was making a hissing noise to attract attention as Norah came out with her oat-cake. She called her favorites by name, and softly stroked their long noses over the railings. Mr. Redmayne followed soon after, advancing with some precaution.

"Miss Norah," he said, "Mr. Stock is putting the drawing-room chairs in order—he evidently expects a large congregation. A Miss M'Grudder has come. Is it absolutely necessary that one should be present, or may one stop here and feed the cows?"

"I must go in," said Norah, demurely. "Here is the oat-cake, Mr. Redmayne;" and so saying she put the remains into his hand and tripped hastily away.

Mr. Redmayne, however, preferred to follow Miss Norah. Frank came out as the two went in together; he did not want to be present at the oration. He was distracted, and thinking of many things.

Those few words of Sir Thomas had given him a strange longing to go back, if only for a day, to see Dolly again. He thought of his old friend also lying stricken. He had been strangely forgetful all these days past, and his conscience reproached him, and his inclination spoke too. There was an early train from Smokethwaite—he had business in town: why should he not go? Cruel girl! was she sad, and could he do nothing to help her?

As Frank walked up and down in the twilight he would hear the boom of Mr. Stock's voice through the open drawing-room windows. When they started a hymn, the cows, who are fond of music, all crowded up to listen. As for Frank, he was in charity with all men, and prepared to believe that all that people did was good. If Mr. Stock liked to give a peculiar expression to the faith which was in him, Raban, for one, had no mind to quarrel with it. His own was a silent belief: it seemed growing with happier emotions that were overflooding his heart, but it found its best expression in silence. He took leave of his hosts that evening when he went up stairs to bed.

The servant had put Frank into Jonah's room. It was a mistake, and Lady Henley did not know of it. There were the poor boy's pistols, his whips; on the wall boxing-gloves and foils. He had somehow got hold of one of those photographs of Dolly of which mention has been made, and hung it up over his chimney. There were a few books on the shelf, Captain Mayne Reid, "Ivanhoe," a few old school-books and poetry books, and Frank took one down. Frank thought very kindly of poor Jonah as he looked about at his possessions. He was a long time before he could get to sleep, and he got up and lighted his candle and read one of the books—it was a classical poem of Kingsley's—till he fell asleep. Then it was only to dream a confused dream: Jonah fighting desperately with some finny monster, like that one on Lady Sarah's tiles; Dolly chained to a rock, and calling for help, while Mrs. Palmer and the Admiral stood wringing their hands on the shore. Was this George coming to their help? The monster changed to mist, out of which came lightning and thunder—the lightning was the gleam of a sword; the thunder shook the air, the mists parted; George, pale and wounded, stretched out his hand and gave Raban the sword; he looked weary with the fight; Frank started forward and struck wildly; the monster gave a horrible scream. Frank started up wide awake. He had left his window open, the morning mist had filled the room, but the scream was a real one; it was in his ears still. It came from the room below. There was a stir of voices, then all was silent again.

When Frank came down to an early breakfast in the big dining-room he asked the butler if any one had been ill in the night. "I heard a scream," he said.

"It is my lady in her sleep," the man answered. "She often do scream at night since Mr. Jonah left."

"I want my man called," said Frank; "I am going to town by the early train."

As Frank was changing carriages at one of the stations, the London train went by, and he thought he saw a glimpse of a familiar face; a gray kid glove was waved. Surely it was Mrs. Palmer, on her way to Henley Court!

From Dorothea Vanborough *to* Robert Henley, Esq., *Calcutta.*

"I have been hoping for a chance letter, but none has come since that last one from Alexandria. Aunt Sarah is asleep, the house is empty, and I am writing to you in the oak-room by the window. Dear Robert, what shall I say in answer to your letter? That I *do* trust you, that I do know how to love you, and that you in turn must trust me. I could almost scold you for what you say about Mr. Raban if I did not think that you are only unfair because you love me. I never see him now. He is in Yorkshire; so is mamma—she is gone for a couple of days. As for me, I can not leave Aunt Sarah, who depends upon me more and more. I had a long talk with my uncle before he left. He asked me a great many questions about you. He tells me he has written. I do not know what he has written; but please send him a nice letter. Dear Robert, it is so painful to me to be cross-questioned about your affection for me. I must speak honestly and without disguise to you of all people in the whole world, and so I will confess that if I had known all—"

Dolly, who had written thus far, looked up, for old Sam came into the room with a card.

"It's Mr. Raban, miss," said he.

Dolly blushed up crimson. "I—I can't see him, Sam," she answered. "Aunt Sarah is asleep. Say I am engaged."

Sam came back with Frank's card. "Mr. Raban is in town till Monday, miss."

"Put down the card, Sam," said Dolly; and she bent her head over her letter and went on writing.

Frank walked away disappointed. "She might have spared five minutes to a friend who had come a hundred miles to see her," he said to John Morgan that evening, as they walked back together to Frank's hotel. The waiter met Frank with a note, which had been left during his absence.

Raban suddenly brightened up; he read a few words, very stiff, very shy. "Lady Sarah heard he had called, and wanted to see him: would he come the following day at five o'clock." It was signed, "Yours truly, Dorothea Vanborough."

"Well," said John Morgan, "that is Dolly's writing, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Frank. "Lady Sarah wants to see me. As for Miss Vanborough, she seems to be studying the art of keeping old friends at a distance."

"Nonsense," said Morgan, "since she asks you to go. What is the matter with you?"

The second time old Sam let Frank in at once, and showed him into the drawing-room. "My lady will be ready directly," he said.

Frank waited his summons; when he was tired of waiting he stepped out upon

the terrace, attracted by the beauty of the autumnal evening, and wondering what inexpressible charm the old home had for him. Ravensrick, with all the graces of possession, did not seem to him so much like home as this silent old house where he had no right, no single stake; where the mistress lay stricken, and parting from this world, where Dolly lived, but where her heart's interest was not. Already strangers were speculating upon the fate of the old house, and wondering who would come there after Lady Sarah's death. All the same, Frank Raban, as he paced the terrace, felt a tranquil satisfaction and sense of completeness that existed for him in no other place.

Dolly came into Lady Sarah's room to tell her Frank was there. Marker, who had been sitting in a corner, got up gently and left the room. Lady Sarah was not asleep; she was sitting up on her sofa by the window, of which the sash was half raised to let in the air. Her gray hair was hanging loose: gray though it was, it fell in shining silver curls about the withered face.

"Is that you, Dolly? I have had a dream," she said, a little wildly. "Your father was standing by me, and we were looking at a river, and George was a child again, and I held him in my arms, and when I looked into his face it was like the face of that Raphael child at Dresden. Look out," she said, beginning to wander again, "and tell me if the river is there."

Dolly unconsciously obeyed, and looked out at the garden in its shifting, changing lights and tremulous tones of radiance and golden sombres. She could almost have imagined her aunt's dream to be true if Frank Raban had not been walking on the terrace. She looked back.

"Dear Aunt Sarah, it is the sunset that made you dream."

"It was a dream," said Lady Sarah, "but I think I have sometimes seen that river before, Dolly. Christian and Christiana and all the company have crossed it. Not one of us would like to be left behind and alone upon this arid coast among all the thorns and the briers." Then, smiling, "I am afraid I have been a tiresome old Pilgrim at times." She pushed back her gray hair, and lay looking into the girl's face. "It is nearly over now," she said.

Dolly tried to speak, but some sudden tears seemed to choke her, and Lady Sarah stroked her hand.

"Try to be a thankful woman, Dolly," she said. "God has blessed you and given you love and trust in others. I see now where I failed." Then, in her usual tone, she said, "I should like to see Frank Raban again."

Dolly was beginning to say that she would go for him, when Lady Sarah suddenly cried, "Open the window wide! Open! let the river come in."

Dolly, frightened, threw open the pane, and as she did so some evening bell began to ring from a distant chapel, and a great flight of birds passed across the sky.

The next minute Frank from the terrace below heard a cry. It was Dolly calling for help.

"I am here," he answered; and, without waiting to think, he sprang up the old oak staircase, and hurried along the passage to the door of Lady Sarah's room.

It was all dark in the passage, but the sun was in the room. Dolly was holding up her aunt in her arms; her strength seemed to be failing. Frank sprang to help her, and together they raised her up. A little soft breeze came in at the window, and Lady Sarah opened her eyes. She was still wandering.

"Is this George?" she said. "I have been waiting for you, dear."

Then she seemed to recognize Frank, and she let her hand fall upon his sleeve.

"Ah! he will take care of Dolly," she whispered, "for this is—"

A quick silent brightness came into her face: it may have been some change in the sunset lights. She was dead, lying in a serene and royal peace.

CHAPTER XLV.

WHAT AUNT SARAH LEFT FOR DOLLY.

For an hour Frank kept watch alone in the empty rooms below. The doctor had come and gone. He said, as they knew he would, that all was over; there was nothing more to be done for Sarah Francis.

Frank had been for the doctor. He had sent a telegram to Mrs. Palmer; then he came back and waited below in the twilight room, out of which the mistress was gone forever.

When death enters a house there is a moment's silence; then comes the silent tumult that follows death: every body scared and bustling to the door, acquaintances leave their own names on bits of pasteboard, friends write notes, relations encamp in the dining-room, the pale faces of the living come and look at the place out of which a life has passed away. Servants come and go, busy with the fussy paraphernalia. It means kindness and honor to the dead, but it seems all contrived to make sorrow grotesque and horrible instead of only sorrowful.

When the rush of strangers and of neighbors came, it pushed in between Frank and the solemn silence up above. "How had he come there?" they asked him. "What had the doctor said?" "How old was Lady Sarah?" "Was it known how things were left?" Then Frank heard Mrs. Morgan sending out for black-edged paper in a whisper, and he started up and left them, for it all jarred upon him, and he could bear it no longer.

He went up and stood for a minute at the door of the room where he had left Dolly in her first burst of grief. At the moment the door opened softly, and Marker came out. Frank turned away, but in that instant he saw it all again. The light had passed away, but some stars were shining through a mist, and Dolly was kneeling in the silver shadow, with a pale, upturned face.

There was no sound. As Frank walked away he thought of two peaceful faces in that upper chamber. Death might be in that room, but sorrow waited abashed for a time in the presence of the Peace of Peace.

Alas! though Dolly's friend was faithful and strong, and would gladly have saved her from all sorrow and wiped all tears from her eyes, it was in vain he wished her good wishes; poor Dolly's cup that day was filled to the very brim with a draught more bitter than she knew of as she knelt in that silent room.

The sun had set upon a day long to be remembered, when a great victory was won. Since mid-day the guns had been thundering along the heights, the waters of the Alma were crimson in the sunset. The long day was over now, the heights were won, the dreadful guns were silent; but all that night men were awake and at work upon the battle-field, sailors from the fleet and others bringing help to the wounded, carrying them to the shore, and burying the dead.

* * * * * * *

They laid Lady Sarah in her grave one quiet autumn day, and came away silently. The blinds were drawn up when they got back to Church House, all the windows were open, the people who had not loved her came and went freely now; it struck Dolly strangely to hear Mrs. Palmer calling Julie over the stairs. There was a little water-color of Lady Sarah in her youth, with a dislocated arm and a harp, that George and Dolly had often laughed over together. Now, as she took it down from the niche by the window in the oak room, a sudden burst of longing tears came raining over her hands and the glass, dimming the simpering lady in water-colors. Dolly felt at that minute how much she would have given to have had a fuller explanation with her aunt. A complete clearing up between them had never come in words, and yet the look of Lady Sarah's tender eyes following her about the room, the clasp of that silent hand seemed to say, "I understand, I trust you," more plainly than words. "I have done as you wished," she had said. Was George forgiven too?

And now at least there were no more hidden things between them, and all was peace in that troubled life. It seemed hard to Dolly at this parting time to be separated from the two she most loved—from Robert and from George—who would have shared her grief. Her long watch had told upon her strength and spirits, every sound made her start, and seemed the harbinger of bad news. She had a longing fancy, of which John Morgan told Frank one day: she wanted to go off to the East, to be allowed to nurse her brother on the spot, and she would learn as others had done if need be. John Morgan spoke of a friend, Mrs. Fane, who had a home for training nurses—would he not take her there one day? John Morgan agreed to take Dolly to Mrs. Fane's if she wished it. He was glad to do any thing she told him, but as for her scheme, they were all opposed to it. She was not strong enough to bear much fatigue. And so, as the kindest people do, they condemned her to ease, to rest of body, to wearing trouble of mind.

"We should have her laid up, Sir, if we let her go," said John Morgan; "and she is a good girl, and has promised to wait patiently until she hears from George. Robert, I am sure, would greatly disapprove of such a plan."

"I have been thinking of going to the East myself," said Frank, who had made up his mind in about two seconds. "Some men I know are taking out stores in a yacht, and want me to join them. If you see Miss Vanborough—I never see her—will you tell her I am going, and will find out her brother—"

"You had better tell her yourself," said John Morgan. "I am sure she would like to know it from you."

Frank only shook his head.

Frank Raban used to come to Church House every day; he saw Sir Thomas, who had come up; he saw Mrs. Palmer; but, except once, he never saw Dolly. Sometimes he could hear her step turn at the door; once he saw her black dress as she walked away. One day, having gone up stairs, summoned by Mrs. Palmer, he looked through a window, and caught sight of Dolly in the distance, sitting wrapped in a shawl, on the bench at the garden end alone by the pond where she and George used to go together. She knew Raban was in the house. She waited there until he was gone.

What strange feeling was it that made her avoid Frank Raban of all the people that came to the house? Was she not generous enough to forget what had passed that day by the fountain?

"You are quite cold, my dear child," said her mother, when Dolly came in pale and shivering. "Why did you not come in before?"

She had asked herself that very question that day. It was one she could not answer. It was no want of trust in him, no want of gratitude for his kindness, that made her unkind. This much she told herself. She acted by an instinct, and she was right to follow it. She belonged to Robert. She had deliberately given him her word, her love, her trust. It was not a half fidelity, a half love, that she had promised, and she would be true to her word and to herself. Only it seemed to be her fate, and to come round again and again in her life, short as it was, that what she loved should be at variance with what she felt; that, loving truth, and longing for one simple and uncomplicated response and sympathy, she found herself hesitating, fearing to look forward, living from day to day with a secret consciousness of something that she would not face.

This was the saddest time of Dolly's life. Brighter days were to come; hours that she had not yet dreamed of were in store for her; but the present was cold and drear: and though chill winds of spring help to ripen a heart for happiness in later life as well as the warm summer rays, Dolly could not know this yet.

One thing remained to be done. It interested no one less than those principally concerned. Lady Sarah's will was to be read; and Frank received a note from Mr. Tapeall inviting him to come to Church House at a certain time. To-day, thanks to the lawyer's letter, he met Dolly at last. She was coming down stairs as he was crossing the hall. Her black dress made her look older, more stately. She seemed to him to change every time he met her now, and yet when she spoke she was herself again. She smiled a little, gave him her hand. She seemed inclined to say something, but she stopped short, and walked on into the drawing-room, where the others were already waiting. The Morgans were there, and Rhoda, all sitting silently round the room.

It was a dull and dismal afternoon: the rain splashed, the sky came down in gray, vaporous glooms; the red tape was the most cheerful thing in the room. Mr. Tapeall sat untying his parcels at the table; Sir Thomas, with a silver pencil-case and crossed legs, was prepared to listen attentively, and make notes if necessary.

Mr. Tapeall looked round. "We are all here," he said, drawing in his chair. "It is unfortunate that Admiral Palmer should not have been able to arrive in time."

As Mr. Tapeall looked round, Mrs. Palmer replied, with a languid shrug, "We are used to do without him, Mr. Tapeall. I had proposed that he should meet me at Paris, but of course he makes his usual difficulties. What a climate!" she said. "Just look at the atmosphere! And yet the Admiral wishes to keep us in this dreadful country!"

"Dear Philippa, this is not the moment. If you will kindly listen to our excellent—to Mr. Tapeall," Sir Thomas began, in his oratorical voice.

Mrs. Palmer put on the resigned air, and murmured something about the climate, with an expressive glance at the window; Dolly sat listening, looking down, and quite silent; Frank thought of the first time he had seen her sitting by the fire; Mr. Tapeall began. "Lady Sarah had intended to execute a more formal document, which I have had prepared from the memorandum in my possession," said he, "of which I will, with your permission, at once proceed to read the contents."

And so in the silence, by Mr. Tapeall's voice, Sarah Francis spoke for the last time, in a strange jargon that in her lifetime she had never used. All her tenements, messuages, all her personal properties, moneys invested in government securities; her house at Kensington, in the county of Middlesex; her house in Yorkshire, in the parish of Pebblesthwaite; all her landed securities, her foreign bonds and scrip, etc., etc., she left to her nephew, George Francis Vanborough, of All-Saints College, Cambridge, for himself and his heirs and assignees. If he should die without heirs or a will, it was to revert to Dorothea Jane Vanborough, of Church House, in the parish of Kensington, to whom she left her blessing, and, at the said Dorothea's own wish, nothing but the picture in the dining-room, as a token of affection, confidence, and most loving remembrance, and her trinkets. There were also legacies—£250 to the Rev. John Morgan; £275 to Frank Raban, Esq.; and, to Philippa's utter amazement and surprise, the sum of £5000 to Philippa, the wife of Admiral Hawtrey Palmer, which was to revert to Dolly at her mother's death. There were legacies to Marker and old Sam. Mr. Tapeall and Frank Raban were appointed trustees and executors.

"But the will is not signed," said Sir Thomas, making a note.

"The memorandum is signed and attested," said Mr. Tapeall. "Lady Sarah had proposed making me sole trustee, but to that I objected; she then suggested Mr. Raban. Each person present seemed going on with a separate train of thought, as I ventured to point out to her ladyship."

"I *quite* understand," said Dolly, starting up and looking suddenly bright and beaming. "I am so glad," she said, and her eyes filled with tears.

"My dear child, we deeply feel for you," said Mrs. Morgan, stepping forward with a heavy foot.

Raban, too, glanced rather anxiously; but he was reassured: there was no mistaking the look of relief and content in the girl's face. It was as if her aunt had spoken; a sign to Dolly that she had forgiven the past; and George must come home now, he must be happy now; all was as she wished, his long disgrace was over; she clasped her two hands together.

Mr. Tapeall continued: "The whole thing has been complicated by previous trusts and claims, making it desirable that the estate should be administered by a business man. This was Lady Sarah's reason for making me trustee," said Mr. Tapeall. "For the present my co-trustee's presence will not be necessary," and he politely bowed to Frank Raban.

"Thomas, did you hear? £5000!" cried Mrs. Palmer. "The poor dear extraordinary old thing must have lost her head. Why, we *detested* each other. However, it is quite right; yes, it would have been a thousand pities to dwell upon trifles. As for my poor Dolly, I must say I do not at all see why George is to have all those things and Dolly nothing at all. Dolly, what *will* Robert say? Poor fellow! *how* disappointing! Come here, dearest, and let me give you a kiss."

Dolly smiled as she bent over her mother. "I did not want it, mamma; you will let me live with you;" and then, as she raised her head, her eyes met Raban's anxious glance with a frank, smiling answer.

Rhoda sat perfectly bewildered and amazed. Was George heir, after all? Was this a part that Dolly was acting? Every thing to George. Rhoda began to think vaguely that there was George's chair, his carpet, his four walls; and there might have been her carpet, her chair. It might have been hers. Her head seemed going round; she was in a rage with herself, with her aunt Morgan, with every body. As for Dolly, she did not know about poverty. How admiringly Mr. Raban had looked at her! How strangely Dolly was behaving! After all, thought Rhoda, enviously, hearing Mrs. Palmer chatter on to Mr. Tapeall, Dolly would be cared for.

"Certainly, winter abroad," Mrs. Palmer was saying; "I require change and rest and a warmer clime, Mr. Raban! You must bring George back to us at Paris. So you really go to-morrow? What a curious sum she has left you! Really the poor dear seems peculiar to the last. How much did you say, Mr. Tapeall—£5000—is it only £200 a year?"

"Mr. Vanborough should be communicated with at once," said Mr. Tapeall. "I presume he has left no instructions."

Mrs. Palmer here began shaking her head emphatically. "He had nothing to leave," she cried. "Nonsense, Dolly; that paper you have is nothing at all. Yes, Mr. Raban, we must meet at Paris," she continued, changing the subject, "when you come back, as you say, to see to poor Sarah's affairs. It is, however, quite enough that I should be attached to any one or any thing."

"Philippa," said Sir Thomas, coming up with a note he had just made, "Tapeall wishes to know something more about this paper of George's. Do you know any thing of it?"

"Oh, you may tell Tapeall to burn it," said Mrs. Palmer, indifferently. "It is nothing."

"I think it is a will, mamma," said Dolly, steadily. "I will give it to Mr. Tapeall, and he can judge." And she left the room to fetch the paper.

"You know nothing of business, my dear Philippa," said the baronet, with a grim smile. "Tapeall must not burn wills that are sent to him to keep."

"Shall I ask him to give it back to me?" said Mrs. Palmer, rapidly, in a low voice. "It is only some whim of the boy's. He could not know of poor Sarah's extraordinary arrangements, putting every thing out. How childish of Dolly to have spoken of the paper to Tapeall! Pray don't make so much noise with your fingers;" for the baronet, who had many restless tricks, was drubbing the table energetically.

Frank came up to take leave, and no more was said at the time. He was to be away for two months, and meanwhile Mr. Tapeall had promised to act for him.

Mrs. Palmer was very much annoyed with Dolly. She treated her with great coldness, and, to show her displeasure, invited Rhoda to come out with her for a drive every day. As they went along she used to ask Rhoda a great many inconsistent questions, which Rhoda could not in the least understand. Rhoda wondered what she meant.

One day they drove to Gray's Inn. Mrs. Palmer said she liked to explore old nooks. Then she had a chance idea, and stopped the carriage at Mr. Tapeall's office, and went up

to see him. She came down smiling, flushed, and yet almost affectionate in her manner to the grim, bald-headed lawyer, who followed her to the door.

"Do as you like, dear Mr. Tapeall. As a mother, I should have treasured the memorandum. Of course your scruples do you the greatest credit. Good-morning."

"A complete fool, my dear," said she, with a sudden change of manner to Rhoda, as the carriage drove off; "and as for your friend Dolly, she has not common-sense."

"Would he not do what you wanted?" said Rhoda, wonderingly. "What a stupid, tiresome man! But oh, Mrs. Palmer, I'm afraid he heard what you said."

"I do not care if he did. He would do nothing but bob his vulgar bald head," cried Mrs. Palmer, more and more irate. "Coachman, drive to Hyde Park Gardens; coachman, go to Marshall and Snellgrove's. I suppose, Rhoda, you would not know your way home from here on foot?" said Mrs. Palmer, very crossly. "Of course I must take you back, but it is quite out of the way. What is that they are crying in the street? It ought to be forbidden! Those wretched creatures make one quite nervous."

As Rhoda waited at the shop door she heard them still crying the news; but two people passing by said, "It is nothing. There is no news," and she paid no more heed to the voices. But this time there was truth in the lying voices. News had come, and the terrible details of the battle were all in the paper next day.

Sir Thomas came to the house early, before any one was up, and carried off the papers, desiring the servants to let no one in until his return. He came back in a couple of hours, looking fagged and wearied. He heard with dismay that Dolly had gone out. Mrs. Palmer was still in her room. Terrible news had come, and words failed him to tell it.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE SORROWFUL MESSAGE.

Dolly was with John Morgan. At that minute they were coming up the steps at the end of a narrow street near the Temple. The steps led up from the river, and came from under an archway. The morning was fine, and the walk had brought some color into Dolly's pale cheeks as she came up, emerging from the gloom of the arch. John thought he had not seen her look so like herself for a long time past. Dolly liked the quaint old street, the steps, the river beyond, the alternate life and sleep of these old city places.

As they came along John Morgan had been telling Dolly something that had touched her and made her forget for a time the sad preoccupations from which she found it so difficult to escape. He had been confiding in her—George had known the story he told her—no one else. It was a melancholy, middle-aged episode of Mrs. Carbury's faithlessness. "She had waited so long," said poor John, "and with so much goodness, that it has, I confess, been a blow to me to find that her patience could ever come to an end. I can't wonder at it, but it has been a disappointment. She is Mrs. Philcox now. Philcox is a doctor at Brighton......It is all over now," said John, slowly, "but I was glad to leave Kensington at the time."

"I am so sorry and so glad, too, for she could not have been at all worthy of you," cried Dolly, sympathizing. "Of course she ought to have waited. People who love don't count time."

"Hush, my dear girl," said John. "She was far too good for me, and I was a selfish fool to hope to keep her. How could I expect her to wait for me? What man has a right to waste a woman's life in uncertainty?"

"Why, I am waiting for Robert," said Dolly.

John muttered uncomfortably that that was different. "Robert is a very different person to me," said John. "This is the house."

"What a nice old house!" said Dolly. "I should like to live here for a little."

John rang at the bell. It was a door with a handsomely carved lintel, over which a few odd bow-windows were built out to get gleams of the river. There was a blank wall, too, leading to the arch; the steady stream of traffic dinned in the distance of the misty street end.

Mrs. Fane lived in one of the streets that lead out of the Strand. At one time she had worked for the Sisters of St. James, who lived not far off; but when, for various reasons, she ceased to become an active member of the community, she set up a little house of refuge, to which the Sisters often sent their convalescents. She had a sick-kitchen for people who were leaving the hospitals; weak still and unfit for their work, mutton-chops and words of encouragement were dealt out to them; a ground-floor room had been fitted up as a reading-room, in which she gave weekly banquets of strong congo and dripping cake, such as her guests approved. She was a clever, original-minded woman; she had once thought of being a Sister, but life by rule had become intolerable to her, and she had gone her own way, and set to work to discover a clew of her own in the labyrinth in which people go wandering in pursuit of the good intentions which are said to lead to a dreary terminus. London itself may be paved with good intentions for all we know. Who shall say what her stones might cry

out if they had voices? But there they lie, cold and hard and silent, except for the monotonous roll of the wheels passing on from suburbs to markets, to docks and to warehouses, those cities within a city.

Charlotte Fane's clew in the labyrinth was a gift for other people's happiness, and a sympathy that no sorrow could ever overdarken. She had not been beautiful in her youth, but now in her middle age all her life seemed written in her kind face, in the clear brown eyes, in the gentle rectitude of her understanding sympathy. Some human beings speak to us unconsciously of trust and hope, as others, in their inner discordance, seem to jar and live out before our very eyes our own secret doubts and failings, and half-acknowledged fears.

I have a friend, a philosopher, who thinks more justly than most philosophers. The other day when he said, "To be good is such a tremendous piece of luck," we all laughed; but there was truth in his words, and I fear this luck of being born good does not belong to all the people in my little history. John Morgan is good. His soul and his big body are at peace, and evenly balanced. Every thing is intensely clear to him. The present is present, the past is past. Present the troubles and the hopes of the people among whom he is living, past the injuries and disappointments, the failures and grievances of his lot; once over they are immediately put away and forgotten. Charlotte Fane's instincts were higher and keener, perhaps, than the curate's, but she, too, was born in harmony with sweet and noble things.

"Yes," said Morgan, "I come here whenever I want help and good advice. There are a few sick people up stairs that I visit. Mrs. Fane will show you her little hospital. Two of her nurses have just gone out to the East. She has been nursing some cholera patients with great success. I sent a letter to the *Times* on the subject; I don't know if they have put it in; I have not seen the paper to-day." As he spoke there came a sudden, deep, melodious sound.

"That is Big Ben," said John. "Three-quarters. We are late." The strokes fell one by one, and filled the air and echoed down the street; they seemed to sound above the noise and the hurry of the day.

Dolly remembered afterward how a man with an organ had come to the end of the street and had begun playing that tune of Queen Hortense's as they went into the house. The door was opened by a smiling-looking girl in a blue dress, with some stiff white coiffe and a big apron.

"Mrs. Fane expected them; she would be down directly; would Mr. Morgan go up and speak to her first? Mrs. Connor was dying, they feared. Would the lady wait in the nurses' sitting-room?" The little maid opened the door into a back-room looking on to a terrace, beyond which the river flowed. There was a book-case in the room, some green plants were growing in the window, a photograph hung over the chimney of one of Mr. Royal's pictures. Dolly knew it again, that silent figure, that angel that ruled the world; she had come face to face with the solemn face since she had looked at the picture two years ago in the painter's studio. Seeing it brought back that day very vividly—the young men's talk in the green walk, how Rhoda startled her when she came from behind the tree. The clocks were still going on tolling out the hour one by one, and ringing it out with prosy reiteration; some barges were sailing up the river, some children were at play, and the drone of that organ reached her occasionally; so did the dull sound of voices in the room overhead. She saw two more white caps pass the window. She had waited some minutes, when she saw a paper lying on a chair, and Dolly, remembering John's letter to the *Times*, took it up and looked to see if it had been inserted. The letter was almost the first thing she saw, and she read it through quietly. It was signed "Clericus," and advocated a certain treatment for cholera. Long afterward she talked it over quite calmly; then she turned the page. A quarter of an hour had passed by, for the clock in the room had begun to strike twelve. Did it strike into her brain—did the fatal words come with a shriek from the paper? What was this? For a minute she sat stunned, staring at the printed words; then she knew that she had known it all along, that she never had had hope not for one instant since he left them. For one minute only she could not believe that harm had happened to him, and that was the minute when she read a list printed in pitiless order: "Killed on the 20th of September; wounded at the battle of the Alma; died on the following day of wounds received in action—Captain Errington Daubigney, Lieutenant Alexander Thorpe, —th Regiment, Ensign George Francis Vanborough......." There were other names following, but she could read no more. No one heard her cry, "My George! oh, my George!" but when the door opened and two nurses came in quietly in their white coiffes and blue dresses, they found a poor black heap lying upon the floor in the sunlight.

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I heard a sailor only the other day telling some women of his watch on the night of the Alma, and how he had worked on with some of the men from his ship, and as they went he searched for the face of a comrade who came from his own native town. "His friends lived next door to us," said Captain B——, "and I had promised his mother to look after him. I could hear nothing of the