

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 over-darken. 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.

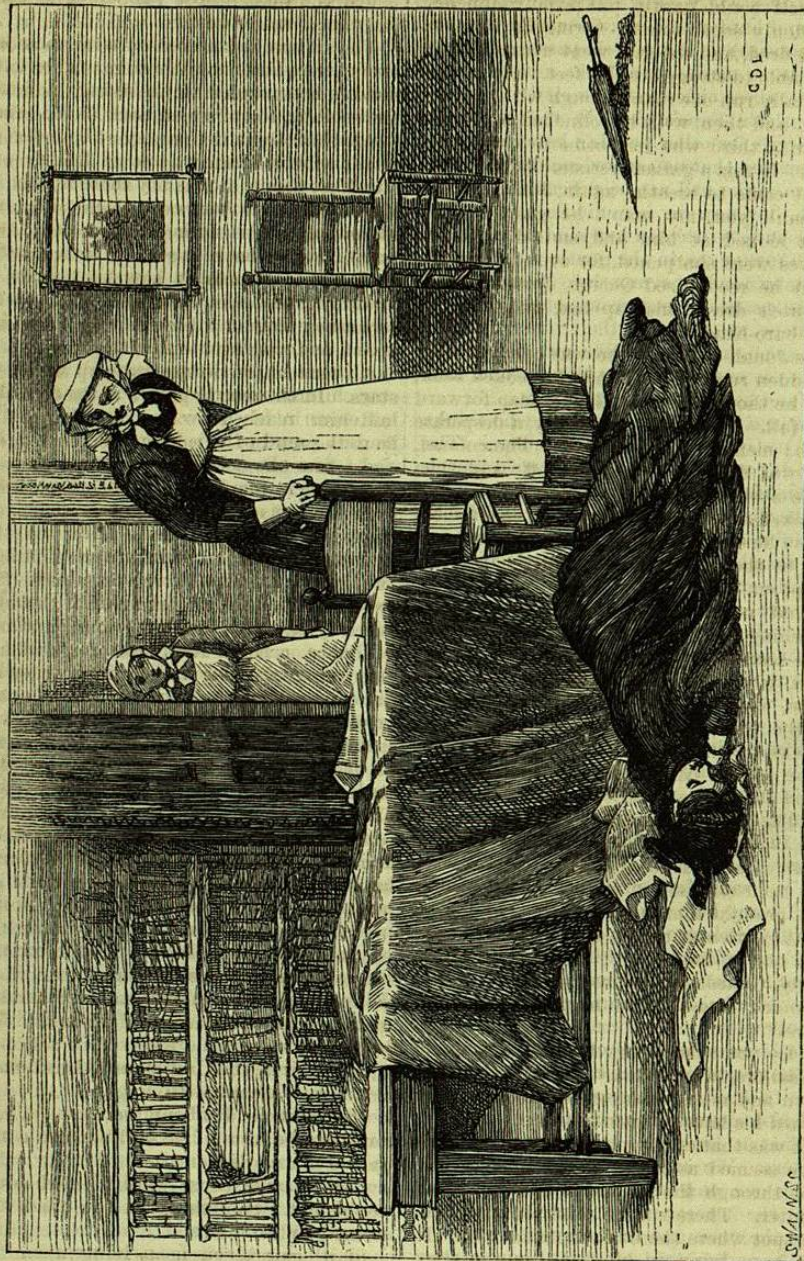
"That is Big Ben," said John. "Three-quarters. We are late." The strokes fell one by one, and filled the air and echoed down the street; they seemed to sound above the noise and the hurry of the day.

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 Daubigny, 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.

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



poor fellow. They said he was dead, and his name was in the papers; and they were all in mourning for him at home, when he walked in one day long after. They found it harder to tell his mother that he was alive than that he was dead." Alas! many a tender heart at home had been struck that day by a deadly aim from those fatal heights for whom no such happy shock was in store.

"If it had not been for George," Jonah

afterward wrote to his mother, "you would never have seen me again."

On that deadly slope, as they struggled up through the deadly storm of which "the hail lashed the waters below into foam," Jonah fell, wounded in the leg; and as he fell the bugles sounded, and he was left alone and surrounded. A Russian came up to cut him down. He had time to see the muzzle of a gun deliberately aimed. Jonah

himself could hardly tell what happened. Suddenly some soldier springing from behind fired, and the gun went up, and Jonah was able to struggle to his feet. He saw his new ally run one man through with his bayonet, and then, with his clinched fist, strike down a third who had come to close quarters. It was a gallant rescue. When a moment came to breathe again, Jonah turned. "Thank you, my man," he gasped. The man looked at him and smiled. Jonah's nerves were sharpened, for even in that instant he recognized George, dressed in his private's dress; his cap had gone, and he was bare-headed.

As Jonah exclaimed he was carried on by a sudden rush from behind; he looked back, and he thought he saw George leap forward and fall. It was a sudden rally, a desperate push; men fell right and left. The colonel, too, was down a few paces off; and then came a blinding crash. Jonah himself was knocked over a second time by a spent shell. When he came to himself, he was being carried to the rear, and the tide of battle had swept on.

That night, while Dolly was at home watching in the mourning house, two men were searching along a slope beyond a vineyard, where a fierce encounter had taken place. A village not far off had been burned to the ground. There were shreds and wrecks of the encounter lying all about. Some sailors came up with lanterns, and asked the men what they were doing.

"They were looking for a man of their own corps. The colonel had been making inquiry," said the two soldiers. "A reward had been offered—it was to be doubled if they brought him alive."

"A gentleman run away from his friends," said one of the men. "There is an officer in the Guards has offered the money; he's wounded himself, and been carried to the shore."

"Do you take money for it?" said one of the sailors, turning away; and then he knelt down and raised some one in his arms, and turned his lantern upon the face.

It was that of a young fellow, who might have seemed asleep at first. He had been shot through the temple in some close encounter. There was no mark except a dull red spot where the bullet had entered. He had been lying on his back on the slope, with his feet toward the sea; his brows were knit, but his mouth was smiling.

"Why, that's him, poor fellow!" said Corporal Smith, kneeling down and speaking below his breath. "So he's dead: so much the worse for him, and for us too—twenty pound is twenty pound."

"Here is a letter to his sweetheart," said one of the sailors, laying the head gently down, and holding out a letter that had fallen from the dead man's belt.

"Miss Vanbor—Miss Vanborough; that's the name," said Smith.

The sailors had moved on with their lanterns: they had but little time to give to the dead in their search for the living; and then the soldiers, too, trudged back to the camp.

All that night George lay still under the stars, with a strange look of Dolly's own steadfast face that was not there in life. It was nobler than hers now, tear-stained and sorrowing, in the old house at home. Afterward, looking back, it seemed some comfort to Dolly to remember how that night of mourning had been spent, not discordantly separated from her George whom she had loved, but with him in spirit.

All that night George lay still under the stars. In the morning, just at sunrise, they laid him in his grave. A breeze blew up from the sea in the soldiers' faces, and they could hear the echo of some music that the French were playing on the heights. Some regiment was changing quarters, and the band was playing "Partant pour la Syrie," and the music from the heights swelled over the valley. Then the armies passed on to fresh battle, leaving the soldiers who had fallen lying along the valley and by the sea.

Jonah, on board ship, heard a rumor that George had been found desperately wounded, but alive. When he came back to the camp he found, to his bitter disappointment, that it was but a vain hope. George's name was on the list of the officers who had died of their wounds on the day after the battle. That unlucky reward had made nothing but confusion. Smith and his companion declared they had found him alive and sent him to the shore to be taken on board. He must have died on the way, they said. Jonah paid the twenty pounds without demur when the men came to claim it. The letter they brought made their story seem true. Jonah asked them a few questions. "Did he send me this letter for his sister?" he said. "Was he able to speak?"

Jonah was choking something down as he tried to speak quietly.

"He sent his duty, Sir," said Smith, "and gave me the letter. He said we should meet in a better world."

"Did he use those words?" said Jonah, doubtfully. Something in the man's tone seemed odd to him.

Smith gained courage as he went on. "He couldn't speak much, poor gentleman. Joe can tell you as well as me. He said, 'Smith, you are a good fellow,' says he—didn't he, Joe?"

Joe did not like being appealed to, and stopped Smith short. "Come along," he said, gruffly; "the captain don't want you now."

Jonah let them go; he was giddy and weak from illness, and overcome. He began to cry, poor fellow, and he did not want

them to see it. He walked up and down, struggling with his grief. His was a simple, grateful heart.

Colonel Fane, too, saw the men, who had gained confidence, and whose story seemed probable. They said nothing of the money that Jonah had offered. Poor George's commission had come only the day before the battle. Colonel Fane sent his name home with the list of the officers who had fallen. He thought of the sweet-looking girl, his old friend's daughter, and remembered their talk together. His heart ached for her as he wrote her a few words of remembrance and feeling for her sorrow. His praise of George was Dolly's best comfort at that miserable time, and the few words he inclosed written by her brother on the very morning of the battle.

#### CHAPTER XLVII.

##### FROM HEART OF VERY HEART.

It was as well, perhaps, that the cruel news should have come to Dolly as it did—suddenly, without the torture of apprehension, of sympathy. She knew the worst now; she had seen it printed for all the world to read; she knew the worst even while they carried her up stairs half-conscious; some one said, "Higher up," and then came another flight, and she was laid on a bed, and a window was opened, and a flapping handkerchief that she seemed to remember came dabbing on her face. It was evening when she awoke, sinking into life. She was lying on a little bed like her own, but it was not her own room. It was a room with a curious cross corner and a window with white curtains, through which the evening lights were still shining. There was a shaded green lamp in a closet opening out of the room, in the corner of which a figure was sitting at work with a coiffe like that one she had seen pass the window as she waited in the room down below.

A low sob brought the watcher to Dolly's side. She came up carrying the little shaded lamp. Dolly saw in its light the face of a sweet-looking woman, that seemed strangely familiar. She said, "Lie still, my dear child. I will get you some food;" and in a few minutes she came back with a cup of broth, which she held to her lips, for, to her surprise, Dolly found that her hands were trembling so that she could not hold the cup herself.

"You must use my hands," said the lady, smiling. "I am Mrs. Fane. You know my brother David. I am a nurse by trade."

And nursed by these gentle hands, watched by these kind eyes, the days went by. "Dolly had narrowly escaped a nervous fever," the doctor said. "She must be kept

perfectly quiet; she could not have come to a better place to be taken care of."

Mrs. Fane reminded Dolly one day of their first meeting in Mr. Royal's studio. "I have been expecting you," she said, with a smile. "We seem to belong to each other."

Marker came, and was installed in the inner closet. One day Mrs. Palmer came bursting in, with much agitation and many tears. She had one grand piece of news. "The Admiral was come," she said; "he should come and see Dolly before long." But Mrs. Palmer's visit did the girl no good, and at a hint from Mrs. Fane the Admiral also kept away. He left many parcels and friendly messages. They were all full of sympathy and kindness, and came many times a day to the door of the nurse's home. But Mrs. Fane was firm, and after that one visit from Mrs. Palmer she kept every one out, otherwise they would all have wished to sit by Dolly's bed all day long. The kindness of leaving people alone is one which warm-hearted people find least easy to practice; and, in truth, the best quiet and completest rest come with a sense of kindness waiting, of friends at hand when the time is come for them.

One evening, when Dolly was lying half asleep, dreaming of a dream of her waking hours, a heavy step came to the door; some one knocked; and when Marker opened with a hush, a gruff voice asked how Dolly was, and grumbled something else, and then the step went stumping down to the sitting-room below. When Dolly asked who had knocked, Marker said, "It was only an old man with a parcel, my dear. I soon sent him off," she added, complacently.

Dolly was disappointed when Mrs. Fane, coming in in the morning, told her that the Admiral had called the night before. He had left a message. He would not disturb the invalid. He had come to say that he was ordered off to Ireland on a special mission. He had brought some more guava jelly and tins of turtle soup, also a parcel of tracts, called "The Sinners' Cabinet." He told Mrs. Fane that he was taking Mrs. Palmer into Yorkshire, for he did not like leaving her alone. He also brought a note for Dolly. It was a hurried scrawl from Philippa.

"CHURCH HOUSE, October 30.  
"DARLING,—My heart is torn. I am off to-morrow morning by cock-crow, of course traveling in the same train, but in a different carriage, with my husband. This is his arrangement, not mine, for he knows that I can not and will not submit to those odious fumes of tobacco. Dearest, how gladly would I have watched by your pillow for hours had Mrs. Fane permitted the mother that one sad privilege; but she is trained in a sterner school than I. And since I must not be with you, come to me without delay. They expect you—your room is prepared. My brother will come for you at a moment's notice. You will find Thomas a far pleasanter traveling companion than Joanna (with whom you are threatened). Do not hesitate between them. As for the Admiral, he, as usual, wishes to arrange every thing for every body. Opposition is

useless until he is gone. And Heaven knows I have little strength wherewith to resist just now."

There was a P.S.

"You may as well get that memorandum back from Tapeall, if you can."

Dolly was not used to expect very much from her mother. Mrs. Fane was relieved to find that she was not hurt by Mrs. Palmer's departure; but this seemed to her, perhaps, saddest of all, and telling the saddest story.

Her mother had sent Dolly baskets of flowers; Mrs. Morgan called constantly with prescriptions of the greatest value. Mrs. Fane had more faith in her own beef tea than in other people's prescriptions. She used to come in to see her patient several times a day. Sometimes she was on her way to the hospital in her long cloak and veiled bonnet. She would tell Dolly many stories of the poor people in their own homes. At certain hours of the day there would be voices and a trampling of feet on the stairs outside.

"It is some more of them nurses," said Marker, peeping out cautiously. "White caps and aprons—that's what this institution seems to be kep' for."

Marker had an objection to institutions. "Let people keep themselves to themselves," she used to say. She could not bear to have Dolly ill in this strange house, with its silence and stiff, orderly ways. She would gladly have carried her home if she could; but it was better for Dolly to be away from all the sad scenes of the last few months. Here she was resting with her grief—it seemed to lie still for a while. So the hours passed. She would listen with a vague curiosity to the murmur of voices, to the tramp of the feet outside, bells struck from the steeples round about, high in the air, and melodiously ringing; Big Ben would come swelling over the house-tops; the river brought the sound to Dolly's open window.

Clouds are in the sky; a great heavy bank is rising westward. Yellow lights fall fitfully upon the water, upon the barges floating past, the steamers, the boats; the great spanning bridge and the distant towers are confused and softened by a silver autumnal haze; a few yellow leaves drop from the creeper round the window; the water flows cool and dim; the far-distant sound of the wheels drones on continually. Dolly looks at it all. It does not seem to concern her, as she sits there sadly and wearily. Who does not know these hours, tranquil but sad beyond words, when the pain not only of one's own grief, but of the sorrow of life itself, seems to enter into the soul? It was a pain new to Dolly, and it frightened her. Some one coming in saw Dolly's terrified look, and came and sat down beside her. It was Mrs. Fane, with her kind face, who

took her hand, and seemed to know it all as she talked to her of her own life—talked to her of those whom she had loved and who were gone. Each word she spoke had a meaning, for she had lived her words and wept them out one by one.

She had seen it all go by. Love and friendship had passed her along the way; some had hurried on before; some had lagged behind or strayed away from her grasp, and then late in life had come happiness, and to her warm heart tenderest dreams of motherhood, and then the final cry of parting love and of utter anguish and desolation, and that too had passed away. "But the love is mine still," she said; "and love is life."

To each one of us comes the thought of those who live most again when we hear of a generous deed, of a truthful word spoken; of those who hated evil and loved the truth, for the truth was in them, and common to all; of those whose eyes were wise to see the angels in the field at work among the devils. ....The blessing is ours of their love for great and noble things. We may not all be gifted with the divinest fires of their nobler insight and wider imagination, but we may learn to live as they did, and to seek a deeper grasp of life, a more generous sympathy. Overwhelmed we may be with self-tortures and wants and remorse, swayed by many winds, sometimes utterly indifferent from very weariness, but we may still return thanks for the steadfast power of the noble dead. It reigns unmoved through the raving of the storm; it speaks of a bond beyond death and beyond life. Something of all this Mrs. Fane taught Dolly by words in this miserable hour of loneliness, but still more by her simple daily actions. ....The girl, hearing her friend speak, seemed no longer alone. She took Mrs. Fane's hand and looked at her, and asked whether she might not come and live there some day, and try to help her with her sick people.

"Did I ever tell you that, long ago, Colonel Fane told me I was to come?" said Dolly, smiling.

"You shall come whenever you like," said Mrs. Fane, smiling; "but you will have other things to do, my dear, and you must ask your cousin's leave."

"Robert! I don't think he would approve," said Dolly, looking at a letter which had come from him only that morning. "There are many things, I fear—" She stopped short and blushed painfully as one of the nurses came to the door. Only that day Dolly had done something of which she feared he might disapprove. She had written to Mr. Tapeall, in reply to a letter from him, and asked him to lose no time in acting upon George's will. She had a feverish longing that what he had wished should be done without delay.

There is a big van at the door of the house in Old Street: great packing-cases have been hoisted in; a few disconsolate chairs and tables are standing on the pavement; the one looking-glass of the establishment comes out sideways and stuffed with straw; the creepers hang for sole curtains to the windows; George's plants are growing already into tangle in the garden; John's study is no longer crammed with reports—the very flavor of his tobacco-smoke in it is gone, and the wind comes blowing freshly through the open window. Cassie and Zoe are away in the country on a visit; the boys are away; Rhoda and Mrs. Morgan are going back to join John in the city. The expense of the double household is more than the family purse can conveniently meet. The gifts the rector has to bestow are not those of gold or of silver.

They have been working hard all the morning, packing, directing, Rhoda showing great cleverness and aptitude, for she was always good at an emergency; and now, tired out, with dusty hands and soiled apron, she is resting on the one chair which remains in the drawing-room, while Mrs. Morgan, down stairs, is giving some last directions. Rhoda is glad to go—to leave the old, tiresome house; and yet, as she told Dolly, it is but the old grind over again, which is to recommence, and she hates it more and more. Vague schemes cross her mind—vague and indirect regrets. Is she sorry for George? Yes, Rhoda is as sorry as it is in her nature to be. She put on a black dress when she heard he was dead; but again and again the thought came to her how different things might have been. If she had only known all, thought Rhoda, naïvely, how differently she would have acted! As they sat in the empty room where they used to make music once, she thought it all over. How dull they had all been! She felt ill and aggrieved. There was Raban, who never came near her now. It was all a mistake from the beginning.....Then she began to think about her future. She had heard of a situation in Yorkshire—Mrs. Boswarick wanted a governess for her children. Should she offer herself? Was it near Ravensrick? she wondered. This was not the moment for such reflections. One of the men came for the chair on which she was sitting. Rhoda then went into the garden and looked about for the last time, walking once more round the old gravel-walk. George's strawberry plants had spread all over the bed; the verbena was green and sprouting; the vine wall was draped with falling sprays and tendrils. She pulled a great bunch down and came away, tearing the leaves one by one from the stem. Yes, she would write to Mrs. Boswarick, she thought.

Old Betty was standing at the garden

door. "T' missus was putten her bonnet an," she said; "t' cab was at door; and t' poastman wanted to knaw whar to send t' letters: he had brought one;" and Betty held out a thick envelope addressed to Miss Parnell.

It was a long letter, and written in a stiff, round hand on very thick paper. Rhoda understood not one word of it at first, then she looked again more closely.

As she stood there reading it, absorbed, with flushed cheeks, with a beating heart, Mrs. Morgan called her hastily. "Come, child," she said, "we shall have to give the cabman another sixpence for waiting!" But Rhoda read on, and Mrs. Morgan came up, vexed and impatient, and tapped her on the shoulder.

"Don't," said Rhoda, impatiently, reading still; and she moved away a step.

"Are you going to keep me all day, Rhoda?" said Mrs. Morgan, indignant and surprised.

"Aunt Morgan," said Rhoda, looking up at last, "something has happened." Her eyes were glittering, her lips were set tight, her cheeks were burning bright. "It is all mine, they say."

"What do you mean?" said the old lady. "Were the keys in the box, Betty?"

Rhoda laid her hand upon her aunt's arm.

"George Vanborough has left me all his money!" she said, in a low voice.

For a moment her aunt looked at her in amazement.

"But you mustn't take it, my dear!" said Mrs. Morgan, quite breathless.

"Poor George! it was his last wish," said Rhoda, gazing fixedly before her.

Mr. Tapeall was a very stupid old man, weaving his red tape into ungracious loops and meshes, acting with due deliberation. If an address was to be found in the red-book, he would send a clerk to certify it before dispatching a letter by post. When Dolly some time before had sent him George's will, he put it carefully away in his strong-box; now when she wrote him a note begging him to do at once what was necessary, he deliberated greatly, and determined to write letters to the whole family on the subject.

Mrs. Palmer replied by return of post. She was not a little indignant when the old lawyer had announced to her that he could not answer for the turn which circumstances might take, nor for the result of an appeal to the law. He was bound to observe that George's will was perfectly valid. It consisted of a simple gift, in formal language, of all his property, real and personal, to Rhoda. By the late "Wills Act" of 1837 this gift would pass all the property as it stood at his death; or, as Mr. Tapeall clear-

ly expressed it, "would speak as from his death as to the property comprised therein." Mr. Tapeall recommended that his clients should do nothing for the present. The onus of proof lay with the opposite side. Mr. Raban had promised to ascertain all particulars, as far as might be; on his return from the Crimea they would be in a better position to judge.

Mrs. Palmer wrote back furious. Mr. Tapeall had reasons of his own. He knew perfectly well that it was a robbery, that every one would agree in this. It was a plot, she would not say by whom concocted. She was so immoderate in her abuse that Mr. Tapeall was seriously offended. Mrs. Palmer must do him the justice to withdraw her most uncalculated assertions. Miss Vanborough herself had requested him to prove her brother's will and carry out his intentions as trustee to her property. He considered it his duty to acquaint Miss Parnell with the present state of affairs.

Mr. Tapeall happened to catch cold and to be confined to his room for some days. He had a younger partner, Mr. Parch, a man of a more energetic and fiery temperament; and when, in Mr. Tapeall's absence, a letter arrived signed Philippa Palmer, presenting her compliments, desiring them *at once* to destroy that will of her son's, to which, for their own purposes, no doubt, they were pretending to attach importance, Mr. Parch, irritated and indignant, sat down then and there, and wrote off to Mrs. Palmer and to Miss Rhoda Parnell by that same post.

The letter to Mrs. Palmer was short and to the purpose. She was at liberty to consult any other member of the profession in whom she placed more confidence. To Miss Parnell Mr. Parch related the contents of his late client's will.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### AN EXPLANATION.

LADY SARAH had left much more than any body expected. She had invested her savings in houses. Some had sold lately at very high prices. A builder had offered a large sum for Church House itself and the garden. It was as Mr. Tapeall said—the chief difficulty lay in the proof of George's death. Alas for human nature! after an enterprising visit from Rhoda to Gray's Inn (she had been there before with Mrs. Palmer), after a not very long interview, in which Rhoda opened her heart and her beautiful eyes, and in the usual formula expressed her helpless confidence in Mr. Tapeall's manly protection, the old lawyer was suddenly far more convinced than he had been before of the justice of Miss Parnell's claims. Her friend and benefactor had died on the 21st.

He was lady Sarah's heir; he had *wished* her to have this last token of his love; but she would give every thing up, she said, rather than go to law with those whom she must ever revere, as belonging to him.

Mr. Tapeall was very much touched by her generosity.

"Really, you young ladies are outvying each other," said he. "When you know a little more of the world and money's use—"

Rhoda started to go.

"I must not stay now, but then I shall trust to you *entirely*, Mr. Tapeall," she said. "You will always tell me what to do? Promise me that you will?"

"Perhaps, under the circumstances," said Mr. Tapeall, hesitating, "it might be better if you were to take some other opinion."

"No, no," said the girl, "there is no division between us. All I wish is to do what is *right*, and to carry out dear George's wishes."

It is not the place here to enter into details which Mr. Tapeall alone could properly explain. It was after an interview with him that Dolly wrote to Rhoda:

"Mr. Tapeall tells me of your generous offer, dear Rhoda, and that you are ready to give every thing up sooner than go to law. Do not think that I am not glad that you should have what would have been yours if you had married my brother. I must always wish what he wished, and I write this to tell you that you must not think of me: my best happiness now is doing what he would have liked."

To Dolly it seemed, in her present morbid and overwrought state, as if this was a sort of expiation for her hardness to Rhoda, whom George had loved, and indeed money seemed to her at that time but a very small thing, and the thought of Church House so sad that she could never wish to go back to it. And Robert's letters seemed to grow colder and colder, and every thing was sad together.

Frank came to see her one day before she left London; he had been and come back, and was going again with fresh supplies to the East; he brought her a handful of dried grass from the slope where George had fallen. Corporal Smith had shown him the place where he had found the poor young fellow lying. Frank had also seen Colonel Fane, who had made all inquiries at the time. The date of the boy's death seemed established without doubt.

When Frank said something of business, and of disputing the will, Dolly said,

"Please, please let it be. There seems to be only one pain left for me now, that of not doing as he wished." People blamed Raban very much afterward for having so easily agreed to give up Miss Vanborough's rights.

The storm of indignation, consternation, is over. The shower of lawyers' letters is dribbling and dropping more slowly. Mrs. Palmer had done all in her power, sat up all night, retired for several days to bed, risen by daybreak, gone on her knees to Sir Thom-