

ed to her ridiculous things for many years. This winter, however, had changed the little wooden woman and brought her grief and anxiety, and revealed secrets to her that she had never guessed before. Often the very commonest facts of life are not facts, only sounds, until they have been lived. One can't listen to happiness, or love, or sorrow—one must have been some things in order to understand others. Lady Henley married somewhat late in life—soberly, without romance. Until then her horse, her dog, her partner at the last ball, had been objects of about equal interest. She had always scouted all expressions of feeling. She had but little experience; and coldness of heart comes more often from ignorance than from want of kindness or will to sympathize.

Sometimes the fire of adversity warms a cold heart, and then the story is not all sorrowful. The saddest story is that of some ice-bound souls, whom the very fires of adversity can not reach. Poor Dolly sometimes felt the chill when Philippa, unconscious of the stab, would say something, do some little thing, that brought a flush of pain into poor Dolly's cheek.

The girl would not own it to herself, but there is a whole life reluctant as well as a life consenting. The involuntary words, the thoughts we would not think, the things we would not do, and those that we do not love, are among the strongest influences of our lives. Dolly at this time found herself thinking many things she would gladly have left unthought, hoping things sometimes that she hated herself for hoping, indifferent to others that all those round about her seemed to imagine of most consequence, and that she tried in vain to care for too. When Philippa began to recover from her first burst of hysteric grief, her spirits seemed to revive. They were enough to overwhelm poor Dolly at times, for she had inherited her mother's impressionability, and at the same time her father's somewhat morbid fidelity.

Lady Henley's dislike to her sister-in-law made her clear-sighted as to what was going on, and she tried in many ways to shield Dolly from her mother's displeasure and incessant worry of recrimination. With a view to Jonah's possible interest, she had regretted Dolly's decision not to dispute the will as much as Mrs. Palmer herself, but she could not see the girl worried.

"Philippa is really too bad," she said one day. "Thomas, can't you do something—send for some one—suggest something?"

Sir Thomas meekly suggested Robert Henley.

"The very last person I should wish to see!" cried Lady Henley, sharply. "Bell, did you ever know your father understand any thing one said to him?"

Lady Henley's concern was relieved with-

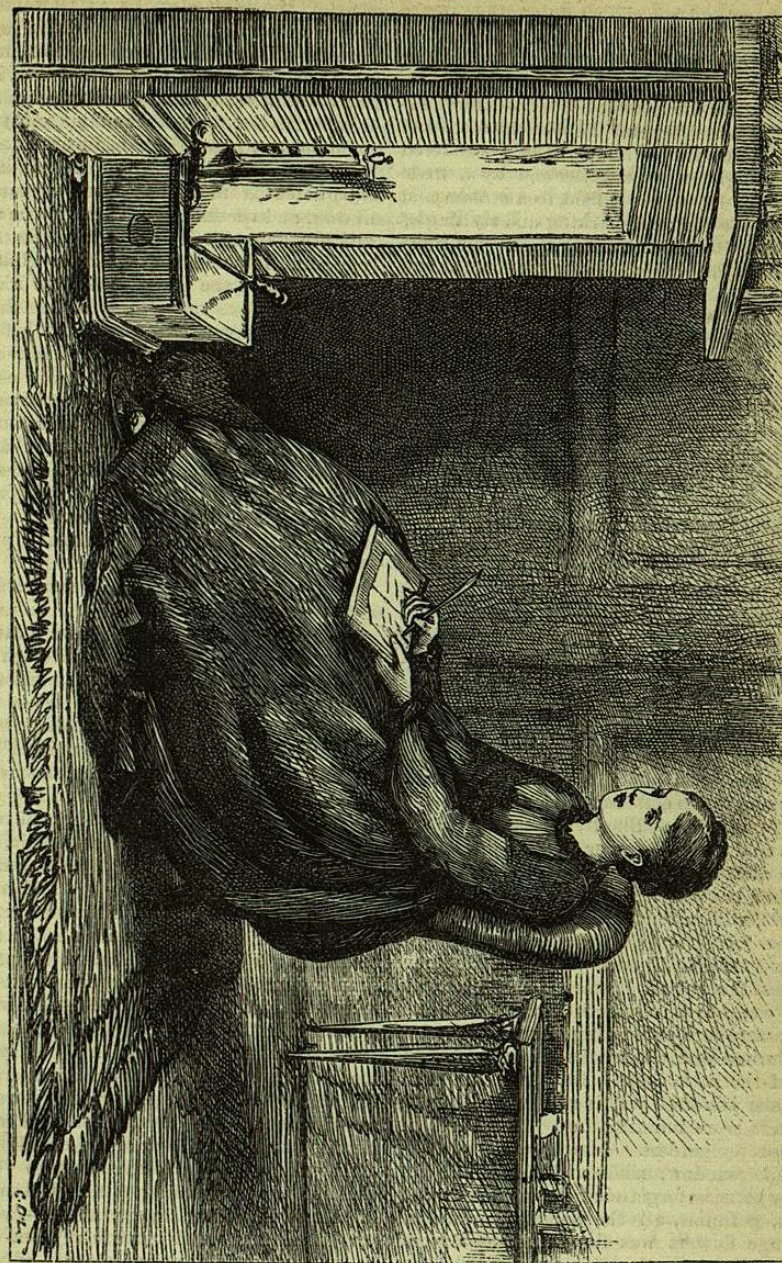
out Sir Thomas's assistance. Before the end of the winter Mrs. Palmer had left Henley Court and firmly established herself at Paris. Dolly remained behind. It was Philippa's arrangement, and Dolly had been glad to agree to her cousins' eager proposal that she should stay on at Henley for a time. Nobody quite knew how it had happened, except, indeed, that Philippa had intended it all along; and she now wrote in raptures with the climate, so different from what they had been enduring in Yorkshire. But Joanna did not care for climate—her Palmer constitution was not susceptible to the influence of atmosphere.

All through that sad winter Dolly staid on in Yorkshire. Their kindness was unwearied. Then, when the snow began to melt at last, the heavy clouds of winter to lighten, when the spring began to dawn, and the summer sun and the sweet tones of natural things to thrill and stir the world to life, Dolly, too, began to breathe again; she could not enjoy all this beauty, but it comforted her, nevertheless.

The silence of the country was very tranquillizing and quieting. She had come like a tired child, sad and overwearied. Mother Nature was hushing her off to sleep at last. She spent long mornings in the meadows down by the river; sometimes her cousins took her for walks across the moors, but to Dolly her cousins seemed more like birds than human beings, and she had not strength for their ten-mile flights.

"You know what our life is," she wrote to her cousin, "and I need not describe it. I try to help my uncle a little of a morning. I go out driving with my aunt, or into the village of an afternoon with Norah; the wind comes cutting through the trees by the lodge-gate—all the roads are heavy with snow. Every thing seems very cold and sad—every thing except their kindness, which I shall never forget. Yesterday Aunt Joanna kissed me, and looked at me so kindly that I found myself crying suddenly. Dear Robert, she showed me the letter you wrote her. I can not help saying one word about that one word in it in which you speak of your doubting that I wish for your return. Why do you say such things or think such unjust thoughts of me? Your return is the one bright spot in my life just now. Did I not tell you so when you went away? If I have ever failed, ever loved you less than you wished, scold me, dear Robert, as I am scolding you now, and I will love you the more for it. You and I can understand, but it is hard to explain, even to my aunt, how things stand between us. I trust you utterly, and I am quite content to leave my fate to you."

She sat writing by the fire, on her knee, as she warmed herself by the embers. She paused once or twice and looked into the flame with her sweet, dreamy eyes. Where



"DOES HE CALL HER HIS RACHEL?"

do people travel to as they sit quietly dreaming and warming their toes at the fire? What long, aimless journeys into other countries, into other hearts! What strange starts and returns! Dolly finds herself by the little well in Kensington Gardens, and some one is there, who says things in a strange voice that thrills as Robert's never did. Does he call her his Rachel? Is love a chord? It had seemed to her one single

note until Frank Raban had spoken. Is this Robert who is saying that she is the one only woman in all the world for him? Dolly blushes a burning blush of shame all alone as she sits in the twilight when she discovers of what she had been thinking.

"What are you burning, Dolly?" said her aunt, coming in.

It was her letter that Dolly had thrown into the fire. It had seemed to her false,



somehow, and yet she wrote another to the same effect next day.

Mr. Anley was going to Paris, and Dolly was to go with him. On the last day before she left, her uncle took her for a drive. He had business beyond Pebblethwaite, and while he went into a house Dolly wandered on through an open gate, and by a little path that led across a field to a stream and a great bleating and barking and rushing of waters. It was early spring. As she came round by the bridge she saw a penned crowd of sheep; a stout farmer in gaiters was flinging them one by one into the river; they splashed and struggled in vain; a man stood up to his waist in the midst of the stream dousing the poor gentle creatures one by one as they swam past. The stream dashed along the narrow gully. The dogs were barking in great excitement. The sheep went in black, and came out white and fleecy and flurried, scrambling to land. Young Farmer Rhodes stood watching the process mounted on his beautiful mare; James Brand, with the lurcher in a leash, had also stopped for a moment. He looked up with his kind blue eyes at Dolly as she crossed the bridge, and stood watching the rural scene. The hedges and the river-banks were quivering with coming spring, purple buds and green leaves and life suddenly rising out of silent moors. James Brand came up to where Dolly was standing. He stood silent for an instant, then he spoke in his soft Yorkshire tones.

"T' ship doan't like it," he said. "T' water's cold and deep, poor things. 'Tis not t' ship aloan has to be dipped oftentimes and washed in t' waters of affliction," moralized James, who attended at the chapel sometimes.

Just then Sir Thomas came up. He knew James Brand and Farmer Tanner too; he had come to buy some of these very sheep that were now struggling in the water; and he turned and walked on with Tanner toward the little farm. Dolly would not go in; she preferred waiting outside. All the flowers were bursting into blaze again in the pretty garden. Geraniums coming out in the window, ribes and lilies, dandies, early pansies, forget-me-nots, bachelor's-buttons, petunias, all the homely garland of cottage flowers was flung there. Beyond the walls were the chimneys of a house showing among the trees. Some men were working and chopping wood. The red leaves of last winter's frost still hung to the branches. Brand was coming and going with his dog at his heels, and he stopped again, seeing Dolly standing alone; she had some curious interest for him. She had rallied that day from a long season of silent depression. The spring birds seemed to be singing to her, the grass seemed to spread green and soft for her feet, the incense to be

scenting the high air; it was a sweet and fresh and voiceful stillness coming after noise and sorrow and confusion of heart. The farmer's garden was half flower, half kitchen garden; against one wall, rainbowed with moss and weather stains, clustered the blossom of a great crop of future autumn fruits; the cabbages stood in rows marshaled and glistening too. The moors were also shining, and the birds whistling in the air.

"Dolly," said Sir Thomas, coming out fussily, "I find Raban is expected immediately. I will go up to the house and leave a note for him."

"I thought you had been here before," said Sir Thomas, as Dolly opened her eyes. This, then, was Ravensrick.

The worthy baronet was not above a condescending gossip with James Brand as they walked up to the house. The number of men employed, the cottages, the school-master's increase of salary. "Nice old place," Sir Thomas said, looking round.

"'Tis shut up ha-alf the year," said James. "Mr. Frank should stay wi' us longer."

"We must have a lady at Ravensrick some of these days," said Sir Thomas.

"Wa'al," said old Brand, "he were caught in t' net once, Sir Thomas; 'tis well-nigh eno' to make a yong man wary. They laid their toils for others, as ye know, but others were sharper than he—"

"Yes, yes; what a very pretty view!" said Sir Thomas, hastily pointing to a moor upon which a great boulder of rock was lying.

"That is t' crag," said Brand; "there's a watter-fo' beyond; I ca' that ro-mantic. Mr. Frank were nigh killed as a boy fallin' fra t' side. I have know'n him boy and man," the old fellow went on, with unusual expansion, striking his gun against a felled tree; "none could be more fair and honorable than my ma-aster. People slandered him and lied to t' squire, but Mr. Fra-ank scorned to take mean adva-antage o' silly women, and they made prey of him....." They had reached the garden by this time, where old Mrs. Raban used to take her daily yards of walking exercise, and where the old squire used to sun himself hour after hour.

The ragged green leaves of the young chestnuts were coming out, and the red blossoms of the sycamore, and the valley was full of light and blending green. But the house looked dark and closed; only one window was open. It was the library window, and Sir Thomas walked in to write his note.

And Dolly followed, looking round and about; she thought to herself that she was glad to have come—glad to have heard the old keeper's kindly praise of his young master. Frank must be her friend always, even though she never saw him again. The manner of his life and the place of it could never be indifferent to her. But she must never

see him again, never think of him if she could help it.

The door opened suddenly, and Dolly started from the place where she had been standing: it was only Becky of the beacon-head, who had come in to ask if any thing was wanted.

"We must be off," said Sir Thomas. "My compliments to Mr. Raban and this note. Tell him we hope to see him as soon as he can conveniently come over.—Your poor aunt is very anxious always," he said to Dolly, in an explanatory voice; and then he stepped out through the window again, where Brand was still waiting.

Dolly looked back once as she left the room. "Good-by," she said, in her most secret heart. "Good-by. Forgive me if I have ever wronged you." As she went out her dress caught in the window, and with an impatient hurried movement she stooped and disentangled it.

"There is the new school window," said Sir Thomas; "those works at Medemere don't seem to have answered very well, Brand—too precipitate. I always said so." As they were driving off again, Sir Thomas again repeated that the works at Medemere were certainly a failure. "One would not think so from his manner; but Raban is a most incautious man. We must come again when you come back to us, Dolly. Perhaps a certain traveler will be home by then," he added, good-naturedly.

"I shall be gone before Mr. Raban comes back," said Dolly.

"Robert—Robert. I was speaking of Robert, of course," said Sir Thomas, pulling at the reins.

Dolly blushed crimson as she stooped to look for a glove that she had dropped. That night again she awoke suddenly in a strange agony of shame for her involuntary slip. It seemed to reveal her own secret heart, from which she fain would fly; she had promised to be true, and she was not false; but was this being true?

What is it that belongs to a woman of a right, inalienably, as to a man probity, or a high-minded sense of honor—is it for women, womanliness and the secret rectitude of self-respect? My poor Dolly felt suddenly as if even this last anchor had failed, and for a cruel dark hour she lay sobbing on her pillow. Then in the dawn she fell asleep.

## CHAPTER L.

### TEMPERED WINDS.

FRANK RABAN arrived that evening. The fires were burning a cheerful greeting; the table was laid in the library; his one plate, his one knife and fork, were ready. After all, it was home, though there was no one to

greet him except the two grinning maidens. The dogs were both up at the lodge. As Frank was sitting down to dinner he saw something black lying in one of the windows. He picked it up. It was a glove. Becky roared with laughter when Frank asked her if it was hers; she was setting down a huge dish with her honest red hands. Her gloves! "They were made o' cotton," she said; "blue, wi' red stitchens." She suggested that "this might be t' young lady's; t' gentleman and t' young lady had come, and had walked about t' house wi' James Brand."

"What gentleman?—what young lady?" asked Raban.

"A pale-faced young lady in bla-ack clothes," said Becky. "T' gentleman were called Sir Tummas. James Brand, he know-ed."

"Sir Thomas! A pale young lady in black!"

Frank stuck the little glove up on the tall chimney. It seemed a welcoming hand put out to greet him on his return. He had guessed to whom the glove belonged even before he saw a little inky D marked in the wrist.

"So she had been there!" While he had been away life in its fiercest phases had met him, and at such times people's own feelings and histories seem to lose in meaning, in vividness, and importance, when whole nations are concerned, and the life of thousands is the stake by which the game is played; then each private story seems lost, for a time, in the great rush of fate. Frank had been twice to the East during that winter. He had seen Jonah; he had disposed of his stores. The little yacht had done her work bravely, and was now cruising in summer seas, and Raban had come home to his sheep and his furrows—to his old furrows of thought. How curiously the sight of that little glove brought it all back once more!

As Frank rode along the lanes it was difficult to believe that all was tranquil as it seemed. That no ambush was lurking behind the hedges; that the rumble of carts traveling along with their load from the quarry was no echo of distant guns; that no secret danger was to be dreaded. This was the second morning after his arrival. The sunshine which Dolly had liked seemed to him also of good omen. The lilacs were coming into flower; the banks were sparkling with flowers, primroses, and early hyacinths; summer green and summer light were brightening along the road. Frank rode quietly along on his way to the Court, sure of a welcome from Lady Henley—for had he not seen Jonah? Bloom, little flowers along the path; sing, little birds from overarching boughs; beat, honest heart along the road that leads to the goal of thy life's journey!



Lady Henley was the first person he saw when he rode into the park. Sunshiny though it was, she was tucked up in some warm furs and sitting on the lawn in front of the house.

"How do you do?" said Lady Henley. "My husband told me you were expected back. I hoped you might come. Well, have you brought me any news?"

When Lady Henley heard that Jonah was looking well, that Frank had seen him ten days before, had dined with him in his hut, she could not make enough of the messenger of good tidings. He must stay to luncheon; he must come to dinner; he must see the girls. The luncheon bell rang double-loud in Frank's honor, and Frank was ushered in; Norah and Bell bounced in almost immediately: an extra plate was set for Frank. The butler appeared, and the page, with some smoking dishes on a tray. That was all. Frank looked up in vain, hoping to see the door open once more.

"I am so sorry Sir Thomas is gone up to town with Mr. Anley," said Lady Henley. "It is some tiresome business of my sister-in-law's. My niece started with them this morning. We have had her all the winter, poor thing. It is really most provoking about the property; and how Philippa can have made it up with that Parnell girl I can not imagine. They are inseparable, I hear. Just like Philippa. Dolly is going on to Paris immediately with the squire to join her mother—quite unnecessary. Have you heard that Robert Henley is expected back? It seems to me every one is going mad," said Lady Henley. "He has only been out six months."

Frank asked how Miss Vanborough was looking.

Bell immediately volunteered a most dismal account.

"I am sure Dolly will go into a decline if some one does not cheer her up. Norah and I have done our best. We wanted to take her to the York ball, and we wanted to take her to Lynn Gill, and across the moor to Keithburn, and we tried to get her to come out huntin' one day. What she wants is stirring up, and so I told papa; and for my part, I'm not at all sorry Robert is to come home," says Bell.

Mamma was evidently very much annoyed. "What is the use talking nonsense, Bell? Robert would have done much better if he had staid where he was, and Dolly too," said Lady Henley. "Every body seems to have lost their head. Here is a letter from the Admiral. He is in town, on his way to America. He wants to meet Dolly; he will just miss her. As for Hawtrey, I think he is possessed. Not that I am at all surprised, poor fellow," said Lady Henley, expressively. "We know what he finds at home."

Frank went back very much dispirited

after his luncheon. It was later in the day, and the flowers and the sunshine seemed to have lost their brightness; but when he got home the little glove was still on the chimney-piece, with limp fingers extended.

The Hôtel Molleville stands in one of the back streets, near the English Embassy, at Paris. One or two silent streets run out of the Faubourg St. Honoré, and cross and re-cross each other in a sort of minuet, with a certain stately propriety that belongs to tall houses, to closed gates, inclosed court-yards, and high roofs. There is a certain false air of the Faubourg St. Germain about this special quarter. Some of the houses appear to have drifted over by mistake to the wrong side of the Seine. They have seen many a dynasty go by, heard many a shriek of liberty; they stand a little on one side of the march of events that seem to prefer the main thoroughfares.

The Hôtel Molleville is somewhat less stately than its companions. The gates are not quite so lofty; the windows have seen less of life, and have not been so often broken by eager patriotism. It belongs to a noble family that is somewhat come down in the world. The present marquis, a stout, good-humored man, had been in the navy in his youth, and there made friends with the excellent Admiral Pallmere, at whose suggestion he had consented to let a little apartment on the first floor to his lady, who had elected to reside in Paris during her husband's absence.

Paris comes with a cheerful flash of light, a sudden multitudinous chorus. The paved streets rattle, the voices chatter, the note is not so deep as the hollow London echo that we all know, that slow chord of a great city.

Dolly and the squire come driving along from the station with many jingles and jolts. Little carriages rattle past. It is evening play-time for those in the street. The shops are not yet closed; there is a lady sitting in every little brilliant shrine along the way. They drive on; they see long rivers of lamps twinkling into far vistas; they cross a great confluence of streams of light, of cries of people.

"Here we are at the Madeleine," says Mr. Anley, looking out.

In another ten minutes they have driven on and reached the English Embassy. Then, with a sudden turn that sends old Marker with her parcels tumbling into Dolly's lap, they drive up a side street, and stop at the door of the house where Mrs. Palmer is living.

"I shall call and see how you are in the morning," says Mr. Anley, helping Dolly out. He would have accompanied her up stairs, but she begged him to go on.

The door of the house opens; Dolly and Marker come into a *porte cochère* pervaded

with a smell of dinner that issues from an open door that leads into a great lighted kitchen, where brazen covers and dials are shining upon the wall, where a dinner is being prepared, not without some excitement and clanking of saucepans; the cook comes to the door to see Dolly go by. A *concierge* comes forward, and Dolly runs up the polished stairs. It all returns to her with strange vividness.

Dolly rang at the bell, and waited on the first landing, as she had been desired. A man in a striped waistcoat opened the door, and stared in some surprise at the young lady with her parcels and wraps, and at the worthy Marker, also laden with many bags, who stood behind her young mistress.

"Does Mrs. Palmer live here?" Dolly said, speaking English.

The man in stripes, for all answer, turned, drew a curtain that hid an inner hall, and stood back to let them pass. The hall was carpeted, curtained, lighted with hanging lamps. Dolly had not expected any thing so luxurious. Her early recollections did not reach beyond the bare wooden floors and the china stoves in the old house in the Champs Elysées. She looked round wondering, and she was still more surprised when the servant flung open two folding-doors and signed to her to pass.

She entered, silently treading on the heavy carpet. The place was dim, warm with a fragrant perfume of flowers, a soft lamp-light was every where, a fragrant warmth. There was a sense of utter comfort and luxury; tall doors fast closed, draperies shining with dim gold gleams, pictures on the walls, couches, lace cushions; some tall glasses in beautiful old frames repeated it all—the dim light, the flowers' golden atmosphere. In the middle of the room a lamp hung over a flower-table, of which the tall pointed leaves were crimsoning in the soft light, the ferns glittering, a white camellia head opening to this alabaster moon.

The practical Dolly stopped short. It must be some mistake. A lady in a white dress was standing by the chimney, leaning against the heavy velvet top; a gentleman also standing there was listening with bent head to something she was saying. The two were absorbed. They did not notice her, they were so taken up with one another. Dolly had expected to find her mother and the Admiral. She had come to some wrong place. For an instant she vaguely thought of strangers. She stopped short. Then her heart gave a warning thump before she had put words to her thoughts. She was standing under the lamp by the great spiked leaves, and she suddenly caught hold of the marble table, for the room seemed to shake.

"Who is it, Casimir?" said the lady, impatiently, as the servant came up to her.

The tall gentleman also looked up.

Dolly's dazzled eyes were gazing at him in bewildered amazement. He had quickly stepped back when the man approached, and he now turned his full face and looked at Dolly, who could not speak. She could only stand silent, holding out her trembling hands, half happy, half incredulous. It was Robert—Robert, whom she had thought miles away—Robert, whose letter had come only the day before—Robert, who had been there with Rhoda, so absorbed that even now he scarcely seemed to recognize Dolly in her travel-worn black clothes, looking like a blot upon all this splendor.

This, then, was the moment for which she had waited, and thought to wait so long. He had come back to her. "Robert!" she cried at last.

Perhaps if they had been alone the course of their whole lives might have been changed—if their meeting had been unwitnessed, if Casimir had not been there, if Rhoda had not come up with many an exclamation of surprise, if all those looking-glasses and chairs and tables had not been in the way. Robert stood looking down from the length of his six feet. He held a cold hand in his. He did not kiss Dolly, as he had done when he went away. He spoke to her, but with a slight constraint. He seemed to have lost his usual fluency and presence of mind. He was shocked at the change he saw. Those few months had worn her radiant beauty. She was tired by the journey, changed in manner. All her sweet faith and readiness to believe, and all her belief in Henley, had not made this meeting, to which she had looked forward as "her one bright spot," any thing like that which she had expected. Something in Robert's voice, his slight embarrassment, something in the attitude of the two as she had seen them when she first came in and thought them strangers, something indefinite, but very present, made her shy and strange, and the hand that held her cold fingers let go as Rhoda flung her arms affectionately round her. Then with gentle violence Dolly was led to the fire and pushed down into a satin chair.

"I only came last night," said Henley. "I was afraid of missing you, or I should have gone to meet you."

"We expected you to-morrow, Dolly," interrupted Rhoda, in her sweet voice. "We were so surprised to see *him* walk in," and she quietly indicated Henley with a little motion of the head.

"Every body seems to have been running after every body else. I am ashamed of myself for startling you all," said Robert, jerking his watch-chain. "It is a whole series of changes. I will tell you all about it, Dolly, when you are rested. I found I could get leave at the very last instant, and I came off by the steamer. I wrote from Marseilles, but you must have missed my



letter. This is altogether a most fortunate, unexpected meeting," he added, turning to Rhoda.

Henley's utter want of tact stood him in good service, and made it possible for him to go on talking. Dolly seemed frozen. Rhoda was very much agitated. There seemed to be a curious understanding and sympathy between Robert and Miss Parnell.

"Have you seen your mother?" said Rhoda, putting her white hand upon Dolly's shoulder. "How cold and tired you must be! Who did you come with, after all?"

"I came with—I forget," said Dolly. "Where is mamma?" and she started up, looking still bewildered.

"Your mother lives next door. I myself made the same mistake last night," said Robert; and he picked up Dolly's bags and shawls from the floor where she had dropped them. Rhoda started up to lead the way.

"You may as well come through my room," she said, opening a door into a great dim room scented with verbena, and all shining with lace frills and satin folds. A middle-aged lady in a very smart cap, who was reading the paper by the light of a small lamp, looked up as they passed. Rhoda carelessly introduced her as Miss Rougemont.

"My companion," she said, in a low voice, as she opened another door. "She is very good-natured, and is never put out by any thing."

Dolly followed straight on over the soft carpets, on through another dark room, and then another, to a door from whence came a gleam of light.

As Rhoda opened the door there came the sudden jingling of music and a sound of voices; a man met them carrying a tray of refreshments; a distant voice was singing to the accompaniment of a piano. Julie stood at a table pouring out coffee; she put down the pot with an exclamation: "Good Heavens, Mademoiselle! Who ever would have thought—" Some one came up to ask for coffee, and Julie took up her pot again.

"How stupid of me to forget!" said Rhoda. "It is your mother's day at home, Dolly. I will send her to you. Wait one minute."

Poor Dolly, it was a lesson to her not to come unexpectedly.

"Madame will be distressed," said Julie, coming forward, "to receive Mademoiselle in such a confusion! The gentlemen all came; they brought music; they want coffee at every instant, or *thé à l'Anglaise*."

As she spoke a little fat man came up to the table, and Julie darted back to her post. Meanwhile the music went on.

"Petits, petits, petits oiseaux!" sang a tenor voice.

"Jolis, jolis, jolis, petits!" sang a bass.

"Jolis, petits, chéris!" sang the two together.

But at that instant, with a rush, with a flutter, with her hair dressed in some strange new style, Mrs. Palmer at last appeared and clasped Dolly, with many reproaches.

"You naughty child, who ever expected you to-day? And the Admiral started off to meet you! How provoking! A wreck! utterly tired out! Come to your room directly, dearest. It is quite ready, only full of cloaks and hats. Here, Rhoda, can not you take her in?"

"Never mind the cloaks and hats, mamma," said Dolly, with a smile. "I had rather stay here, and Julie will give me and Marker some coffee."

"Marker! Good gracious! I had forgotten all about Marker," exclaimed Mrs. Palmer.

#### CHAPTER LI.

"SING HOARSE WITH TEARS BETWEEN."

ROBERT had come back from India prepared to fight Dolly's battle. Although expressing much annoyance that this disagreeable task should have been left to him, he remembered Rhoda as an inoffensive little thing, and he had no doubt but that she would hear reason, if things were clearly put before her. She was too much in her right to be expected to give up every thing, but Robert had but little doubt that he should be able to effect a compromise; he had lived long enough to realize how much weight one definite, clearly expressed opinion may have in the balance. It was most fortunate that his official duties should have brought him home at this juncture. Dolly must consent to be guided by him. He was in some sense her natural protector still, although he felt at times that there was not that singleness of purpose about his cousin which he should have wished to find in the woman whom he looked upon as his future wife. At this time he had no intention of breaking with her. He wished to keep her in suspense. She deserved it: she had not once thought of him; she had behaved most childishly—yielded where she should have been firm, sacrificed every thing to a passing whim; she had been greatly tried, of course, but even all this might have been partly avoided if she had done as he recommended. So thought Robert as he was tying his white neckcloth in the glass at his hotel. The gilt frame reflected back a serious young man and a neatly tied cravat, and he was satisfied with both. He came back to a late dinner with Rhoda after Mrs. Palmer's Thursday Afternoon had departed, taking away its cloaks and hats. Signor Pappaforte was the last to go. M. de Molleville took leave. Mrs. Palmer, needless to say, was charmed with the Molleville family—counts, marquises, dukes. They all

lived in the house, overhead, underfoot. Madame la Comtesse was a most delightful person. M. le Comte was the only one of the family she did not take to, M. le Comte being a sensible man, and somewhat abruptly cutting short Mrs. Palmer's many questions and confidences.

The table was prettily laid in the big dining-room; the lamp-light twinkled upon the firmament of plates and silver spoons, and the flowers that Rhoda had herself arranged. She was waiting for her guests. Robert having, as in duty bound, first rung at his aunt's door, and learned from Julie that mademoiselle was resting and that madame was dressing still, came across to the other apartment, where all was in order and ready to make him comfortable. Rhoda was sitting in her usual place on the little low chair by the fire. She had taken off her white dress—she had put on a velvet gown; in her dark hair were two diamond stars; they shone in the fire-light as she sat thoughtfully watching the little flame.

"Have you brought them?" she said, without looking round. "Are you alone? Come and sit down here and be warmed while you wait."

Rhoda's voice was like a bell, it rang so clear; when she was excited it seemed to rise and fall and vibrate. At other times she would sit silent; but though she sat silent, she held her own. Some people have this gift of voiceless emotion, of silent expression. Rhoda was never unnoticed; in her corner, crossing a street, or passing a stranger in a crowded room, she would mark her way as she passed along. It was this influence which had haunted poor George all his life, which made itself felt now as it had never done before. Rhoda now seemed suddenly to have bloomed into the sweetness and delicate brightness which belong to some flowers, such as cyclamen and others I could name. She had been transplanted into clear air, into ease of mind and of body; she suddenly seemed to have expanded into her new life, and her nature had kindled to all sorts of new and wonderful things. Many of these were to be bought with silver and gold; it was not for affection, nor for the highest emotions, that little Rhoda had pinned: hers was the enthusiasm of commonplace: it was toward bright things of every kind that this little flame spirit turned so eagerly. Sometimes A gets credit for saying what B may have thought and felt, what C has lived for years with courage and self-denial; then comes a Rhoda, who looks it all without an effort or a single word; and no wonder that Robert and many others were struck by her strange beauty and touched by her gentle magnetism of expression and of grace.

Henley came up, and without any hesitation established himself in the warm corner

she indicated. The stiffness he had undoubtedly felt when they first met had worn off since that "business talk"—so Rhoda called it; and now he did not know whether it was business or pleasure as he listened to Rhoda's low song of explanation, and watched her white fingers opening to the fire. Signor Pappaforte's tenor was not to compare to Rhoda's soft performance. Perhaps I am wrong to use such a word; for, after all, she was as genuine as Dolly; herself in her way—as Dolly who had fallen asleep, and was far away in spirit, dreaming a little dream of all that had happened that day.

Rhoda resumed their conversation quite naturally. "We may be interrupted," she said, earnestly, "and there is one more thing I want to say to you. You know better than I do; you must judge for me. I always hoped that when you came all would be arranged. I know nothing of business," she said, smiling. "I only know that I like my pretty things, and that it makes me happy to live here, and to have my flowers and my pretty dresses and fresh air. Is it wrong? It seems a sort of new life to me;" and a wistful face was gently upraised. "If Dolly wishes it I will give it all back," Rhoda continued: "every thing," said Rhoda, who knew that she was pretty safe in making this generous offer; and she smoothed the soft velvet fold wistfully with her fingers, as if she felt it was no longer her own. "Dolly refused, when I begged her to take it all long ago," she added. "Now I wish she had agreed before I became accustomed to this new life. I confess that I do not like to look back. Serge and smoke and omnibuses all seem more horrid than ever. I think I am not very strong."

Robert scarcely knew how to answer the poor little thing. "Did you offer to give it all up?" he said, starting up, and walking up and down with long strides to hide his embarrassment. "I was never told of it, or I should certainly have asked—Dolly should have told me," he said, quickly, all his embarrassment turning into wrath against Dolly.

"Don't blame her," said Rhoda, in a low voice; "she is so generous, so noble. I can understand her refusing for herself; though I think if I had loved any one as—as Dolly must love—I should have thought of his interest first of all, and not of my own impulse. I know people might say it is very foolish of me and weak-minded," she said, faltering.

"They could only say that you were a true woman, and respect you for your generous devotion," said Robert, taking her hand. He dropped it rather awkwardly as Miss Rougemont came into the room, followed almost immediately by Mrs. Palmer.

"That tired child of mine is still asleep," said Mrs. Palmer. "Marker wouldn't let me awaken her."