

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."

"Then perhaps we had better not wait," said Rhoda, whose dark eyes were never more wakeful. "Ring the bell, Miss Rougemont."

So Rhoda and her guests sat down with a very good appetite to dinner; she charmed them all by her grace as a hostess. Miss Rougemont, who was not a guest, discreetly retired as soon as the meal was over.

Robert passed a very disturbed night. It was near twelve o'clock next morning when he rang at the door of his aunt's apartment. Dolly had been expecting him for a long time. The baker, the water-carrier with his clanking wooden pails, Mr. Anley's familiar tones, inquiring whether Miss Vanborough was "engagé"—every ring, every voice, had made her heart beat. Robert found Mr. Anley still sitting with Dolly. They were by an open window full of spring flowers. The cheerful rattle of the street below, the cries of itinerant vendors, the noisy song of a bird in the sunshine, and the bright morning light itself poured into the room in a great stream of dazzling notes and gold, through which the girl came blushing to meet her kinsman.

"I am afraid your long sleep has not rested you," he said, looking at her hard as she stood in the slanting stream, all illuminated for an instant—her rough hair radiant, her black gown changed to a purple primrose mist; then she came out of the light into every-day, and again he thought how changed she was.

"I have brought you some violets," and he gave her a bunch that he held in his hand. Robert thought Dolly changed. How shall I describe her at this time of her life? The dominant radiance of early youth was gone; a whole lifetime had come into the last few months. But if the brightest radiance was no longer there, a less self-absorbed person than Robert Henley might have been touched by the tender sweetness of that pale face. Its peaceful serenity did not affect him in the same way as Rhoda's appealing glances: it seemed to tell of a whole experience far away, in which he was not, and which in his present frame of mind only seemed to reproach him.

Dorothea had no thought of reproach. She was a generous girl, unselfish, able to forgive, as it is not given to many to forgive. She might remember, but malice was not in her. Malice and uncharitableness as often consist in the vivid remembrance of the pang inflicted as in that of the blow which caused it. Dolly never dwelt long upon the pain she had suffered, and so, when the time came to forgive, she could forgive. She had all along been curiously blind to Robert's short-comings; she had taken it for granted that she was in fault when he asserted the fact with quiet conviction; and now in the morning light she had been telling herself

(all the time Squire Anley had been talking of his plans and benevolent schemes for a dinner at a café, presents for half the county, etc., etc.) that perhaps she herself had been surprised and embarrassed the night before, that Rhoda was looking on, that Robert was never very expansive or quick to say all that he really felt, that this would be their real meeting.

The kind squire soon went off, pleased at the idea of a happy lovers' meeting. He knew that there had been some misunderstanding. He looked back as he left the room, but the stream of light was dazzling between them, and he could not see their faces for it.

He might have staid; his presence would have been a relief, so Dolly thought afterward, to that sad sunshine half hour through which her heart ached so bitterly. She grasped the poor little bunch of violets tight in her fingers, clinching the bitter disappointment. It was nothing that she had to complain of, only every thing. Had sorrow opened her eyes—had her own remorse opened her eyes?

"I did not think," Robert was saying, "I should see you so soon again, Dora. Poor Lady Sarah, of course, one could not expect. I remember driving away," he added, hastily, as her eyes filled, "and wondering when I should get back; and then—yes, Marker called the cab back. I was afraid of being delayed at first, but I was glad of it afterward. I had just time to come in and say good-by again. Do you remember?" And he tried to get up a little sentiment.

Dolly looked up suddenly. "Why did she call you back, Robert?" she asked, in a curious voice.

"I had forgotten my great-coat," said Robert. "One wants all one's wraps in the sunny Mediterranean. How pleasant this is! Is it possible I have ever been away?" And then he sat down in an affectionate attitude by Dolly on the green velvet sofa. He would not scold her yet; he would try kindness, he thought. He asked her about herself, tried to reproach her playfully for her recklessness in money matters, spoke of his own prospects, and the scheme which had brought him home. Martindale had resumed his old post at the college for six months. It is not necessary here to enter into all Robert's details. He spoke of a growing spirit of disaffection in the East, and suddenly he discovered that Dolly was no longer listening.

"Why do you tell me all this, Robert?" she said, hoarsely, forgetting the rôle of passive acquiescence she had promised to play.

It hurt Dolly somehow, and wearied her to talk to Robert upon indifferent subjects. The hour had come—the great hour that she had dreaded and longed for—and was this all that it had brought? Sometimes in a tone of his voice, in a well-known look, it

would seem to her that reconciliation was at hand; but a word more, but a look more, and all separation was over forever—all reproach; but neither look nor word came. The key-note to all these variations of feeling never sounded. Poor Dolly hated and loved alternately during this cruel hour; loved the man she had loved so long, hated this strange perversion of her heart's dream. We love and we hate—not the face, nor the voice, nor the actions of this one or that one, but an intangible essence of all. And there sat Henley, talking very pleasantly, and changed somehow. Was that Robert? Was this herself? Was Robert dead too, or was it her own heart that was so cold?

Rhoda met her leaving the room some few minutes after.

"I have come to fetch you to luncheon," said Miss Parnell. "Is Mr. Henley there? I see you have got your violets, Dolly. Miss Rougemont and I showed him the way to the flower-market. We met at the door. I am afraid she kept him too long. It was very wicked of her."

Mrs. Palmer joined them at luncheon. Miss Rougemont carved and attended to their wants. Dolly was grateful for a Benjamin-like portion that she found heaped upon her plate, but she could not eat it. Every thing tasted bitter somehow. Miss Rougemont was an odd, battered woman, with an inexpressive face; but she was not so insensible as Rhoda imagined. More than once during luncheon Dolly found her black rolling eyes fixed upon her face. Once, watching her opportunity, the companion came close up to Dolly and said, in a low voice, "I wished to say to you that I hope you do not think that it was I who detained Mr. Henley this morning. Miss Parnell, who rarely considers other people's feelings, told me that she had told you that I—" Dolly blushed up.

"He came in very fair time," she said, gently. Miss Rougemont did not seem satisfied. "Forgive me," she said. "I am old and you are young. It is well to be upon one's guard. It was not I who detained Mr. Henley." She meant well, poor woman; but Dolly started away impatiently, blushing up with annoyance. How dared Miss Rougemont hint and thrust her impertinent suspicions before her!

Squire Anley, with his loose clothes flying, with a parcel under each arm, with bonbons enough in his pockets for all the children in Pebblesthwaite, a list of names and addresses in his hand, was inquiring his way to a dress-maker, Mademoiselle Hays, whose bill he had promised Mrs. Boswarrick to pay. (Squire Anley often paid Mrs. Boswarrick's bills, and was repaid or not, as the case might be. At all events, he had the satisfaction of seeing the little lady in her pretty Paris dresses.) All day long the

sunshine has been twinkling; carriages are rattling cheerfully over the stones; sight-seers are sight-seeing; the shops are full of pretty things.

Lord Cowley has just driven out of the great gates of the British Embassy, and the soldier has presented arms. Flash goes the bayonet in the sunshine. Squire Anley looking about, suddenly sees Dorothea on the other side of the street, and crosses to meet her.

"Alone?" says he. "This is very wrong. What are you doing? Where is every body?"

"I am not alone," said Dolly; "they are in that shop. Rhoda went in to buy something, and she called Robert to give his advice."

The squire opened his eyes.

"It was very exemplary of Robert Henley to go when he was called," he said, laughing. "And where are you all going to?"

"I have to take some money from Mrs. Fane to a sick man in the English Hospital," Dolly said. "It is a long way off, I'm afraid. Mamma thought it too far, but they are coming with me."

Here Robert came out of the shop to look for Dolly.

"I did not know you had staid outside," he said, in his old affectionately dictatorial way, drawing her hand through his arm. "I should have scolded you, but I see you have done us good service." And he shook hands with the squire.

"I was on my way to try and find you," said the squire. "I have ordered dinner at the 'Trois Frères' at six. Don't be late. I am the most punctual of men, as Miss Dolly knows by sad experience."

"Punctuality always seems to me a struggle between myself and all eternity," said Dolly, smiling.

"I quite agree with the squire," said Robert, looking at his watch, and then back at the shop. "There is nothing more necessary. I promised Rhoda to come for her again in twenty minutes. She is divided between blue and sea-green. I am afraid we shall be almost too late for the hospital to-day. Can't you come back, Dolly, and help her in her choice?"

Dolly's face fell.

"I can't wait; I must go," she said. "I promised Mrs. Fane to go at once: the man is expecting his money to get home, and Mrs. Fane is expecting him."

"To-morrow will do just as well, my dear Dolly. You are as impetuous as ever, I see," said Robert. "We can't leave Rhoda alone, now that we have brought her out."

"To-morrow won't do," cried Dolly, and she suddenly let go his arm. "I will go alone. I am used to it. Mr. Anley will come with me if I ask him," she said. "I must go," she insisted, with a nervous ve-

hemence which surprised Mr. Anley. It was very unlike Dolly to be vexed about small matters.

But here Rhoda, smiling, came in turn from the door of the shop. She was dressed in violet and lilac and bright spring colors; in her hand she held a little bunch of flowers, not unlike that one which Robert had given Dolly at her suggestion.

"What is all this? Now we are going to the hospital?" she said. "I should have had my pony-carriage to-morrow; that was my only reason for wishing to put off the expedition."

A large open carriage with four places was passing by. Robert stopped it, and they all three got in. Mr. Anley watched them as they drove away. He did not quite like the aspect of affairs. He had thought Dolly looking very sad when he met her standing at the shop door. What was Rhoda being so amiable about? He saw the lilac bonnet bending forward, and Dolly's crape veil falling as the carriage drove round the corner.

CHAPTER LII.

AN ANDANTE OF HAYDN'S.

THE carriage drove through the Place de la Concorde. The fountains were tossing and splashing sunlight; the shadow of the Obelisk was traveling across the pavement. The old palace still stood in its place, with its high crowding roofs and shadows and twinkling vanes. The early green was in every tree, lying bright upon avenues and slopes. It was all familiar—every dazzle and echo brought back Dolly's youthful remembrance. The merry-go-rounds were whirling under the trees. "Tirez rirez," cried the ladies of the rouge-et-noir tables. "For a penny the lemonade," sang an Assyrian-looking figure, with a very hoarse voice, and a great tin box on his back. Then came Guignol's distant shriek, the steady roll of the carriages, and a distant sound of music as a regiment came marching across the bridge. The tune that they were playing sounded like a dirge to poor Dolly's heart, and she sank back silently and let down her crape veil.

Meanwhile Rhoda and Robert were talking very happily together. They did not see that Dolly was crying behind her veil.

The hospital is a tranquil little place at the end of long avenues of plane-trees that run their dreary lengths for miles out of the gates of Paris. A blouse, a heap of stones, a market-cart—there is nothing else to break the dreary monotone of straight pavement and shivering plane-tree repeated many hundred times. Sometimes you reach a cross-road: it is the same thing again. They came to the iron gates of the hospital at

last, and crossed the front garden, and looked up at the open windows while they waited for admission. A nurse let them in without difficulty, and opened the door of a great airy, tranquil ward, where three or four invalids in cotton night-caps were resting. The windows opened each way into silent gardens. It was all still and hushed and fresh. It must have seemed a strange contrast to some of the inmates. A rough, battered-looking man was lying on his back on his bed, listlessly tracing the lines of the ceiling with his finger. It was to him that the nurse led Dolly. "This is Smith," she said; "he is very anxious to go home to England."

The man, hearing his name, sat up, and turned a thin and stubbly bearded face toward Dolly, and as he looked at her he half rose to his feet and stared at her hard. While she spoke to him he still stared with an odd, frightened look that was not rude, but which Dolly found embarrassing.

She hastily gave him the money and the message from Mrs. Fane. He was to come back to the home in — Street. The nurse who had nursed him in the Crimea had procured his admission. He had been badly wounded; he was better, and his one longing was to get to England again. He had a little money, he said. He wanted to see his boy and give him the money. It was prize-money—the nurse had it to take care of; and still he went on staring at Dolly.

Dolly could not shake off the impression of that curious, frightened look. She told the squire about it when they met at the café that evening, as they sat after dinner in the starlight at little tables with coffee and ices before them, and cheerful crowds wandering round and round the arcades—some staring at the glittering shops, others, more sentimentally inclined, gazing at the stars overhead. Mrs. Palmer was absorbed in an ice.

Voices seem to change in the twilight as colors do, and it seemed to Dolly that all their voices had the cadence of the night, as they sat there talking of one thing and another. Every now and then came little bursts of revelry, toned down and softened by the darkness. How clear the night was! What a great peaceful star was pausing over the gable of the old palace!

The squire was giving extracts from his Yorkshire correspondence. "Miss Bell said nothing of a certain report which had got about, to the effect that she was going to be married to Mr. Stock." ("Pray, pray spare us," from Mrs. Palmer.) "But Bell did say something of expecting to have some news for the squire on his return, if Norah did not forestall her with it. Mr. Raban is always coming. He is out riding now with papa and Norah; and we all think it an aw-

fully jolly arrangement, and every body is making remarks already."

"One would really think Joanna had brought up her girls in the stables," said Mrs. Palmer. "I am sure I am very glad that Norah is likely to do so well, though I must say I always thought Mr. Raban a poor creature, and so did you, Dolly."

"I think he is one of the best and kindest friends I ever had," said Dolly, abruptly.

"Nonsense, dearest," said her mother.

"And so you really leave us," continued Mrs. Palmer, sipping the pink and green ice, with her head on one side.

"I promised Miss Bell that I would ride with her on Thursday," said the squire.

"It is not every one who has your high sense of honor," said Mrs. Palmer, bitterly. "Some promises—those made before the altar, for instance—seem only made to be broken."

"Those I have never pledged myself to, madam," said the squire, rubbing his hands.

"If some people only had the frankness to promise to neglect, to rob, and to ill-use their wives, one could better understand their present conduct," Mrs. Palmer continued.

"A promise—what is a promise?" Rhoda asked, in her clear soft flute; "surely people change their minds sometimes, and then no one would wish to keep another person bound."

"That is a very strange doctrine, my dear young lady," said Mr. Anley, abruptly. "Forgive me if I say it is a ladies' doctrine. I hope I should not find any price too dear for my honor to pay. I am sure Henley agrees with me."

Robert felt the squire's eyes upon him: he twirled his watch-chain. "I don't think it is a subject for discussion," he said, impatiently. "A gentleman keeps his word, of course, at a—every inconvenience."

"Surely a mosquito!" exclaimed Mrs. Palmer. As she spoke a sudden flash of zigzag light from some passage overhead suddenly lighted up the table and the faces of the little party assembled round it; it lit up one face and another, and flickered for an instant upon Rhoda's dark head: it flashed into Robert's face, and vanished.

And in that instant Dolly, looking up, had seen Rhoda, as she had never seen her before, leaning forward breathless, with one hand out, with beautiful gloomy eyes dilating and fixed upon Robert; but the light disappeared, and all was dark again.

They were all silent. Robert was recovering his ruffled temper. Mr. Anley was calling for the bill. Dolly was still following that zigzag ray of light in the darkness. Had it flashed into her dreams? had it revealed their emptiness, and that of my poor Dolly's shrine? She need not have disquieted herself, as far as Raban was concerned. She wanted him to be happy.

A painful incident came to disturb them all as they were still sitting there. The noise in the room overhead had been getting louder and louder. Mr. Anley suggested moving, and went to hurry the bill. Presently this noisy window was flung open wide, with a sudden loud burst of shrieks and laughter, and remonstrance, and streams of light—in the midst of which a pistol-shot went off, followed by a loud scream and a moment's silence. Mrs. Palmer shrieked. Robert started up, exclaiming. Then came quick confusion, rising, as confusion rises, no one knows how nor from whence: people rushed struggling out of the café, hurrying up from the four sides of the quadrangle: a table was overturned. Rhoda flung herself upon Robert's arm, clinging to him for protection. Dolly caught hold of her mother's hand. "Hush, mamma, don't be frightened," she said, and she held her fingers tight. In all the noise and flurry and anxiety of that moment she had again seen Robert turn to Rhoda with undisguised concern. He seemed to have forgotten that there was any one else in all that crowd to think of. The squire, who had been but a few steps away, came hurrying back, and it was he who now drew Dolly and her mother safe into the shelter of an archway.

The silence of the summer night was broken, the placid beam of the stars overhead put out by flaring lights—and anxious, eager voices, that were rung on every side. "He has killed himself," "He wounded her," said some. "Wounded three," said others. "She shot the pistol," cried others. Then came a man pushing through the crowd—a doctor. "Let him pass, let him pass!" said the people, surging back to make way. Squire Anley looked very grave as he stood between the two ladies and the crowd: every minute it grew more dense and more confused. Robert and Rhoda had been swept off in a different direction.

Afterward they learned that some unhappy wretch, tired of life and ashamed of his miserable existence, had drawn out a pistol and attempted to shoot himself that night, as they were sitting under the window. His companions had thought he was in fun, and only laughed, until he had drawn the trigger. They were thankful to escape from the crowd, and to walk home through the cheerful streets, rattling and flaring among these unnumbered tragedies.

The pistol-shot was still in Dolly's ears, and the ray of light still dazzling in her eyes, as she walked home, following her mother and the squire.

As she threaded her way step by step, she seemed to be in a sort of nightmare, struggling alone against the overwhelming rush of circumstance, the remorseless partings and histories of life—threading her way alone through the crowds. The people

seemed to her absorbed and hurrying by. Were those people alone in the world? Had that woman passing by been deceived in her trust? Was that man cold and heartless? Dolly was surprised at the throb in her heart, at the curious rush of emotions in her mind. They were unlike those to which she was used. "Let them be. Your part is played," said some voice dinning in her ears. "For him the brand of faithless coldness of heart; for him the discredit; for him the shame of owing to his desertion. You are not to blame. You have kept your word; you have been faithful. He has failed. Explanations can not change the truth of facts. Even strangers remark and see it all. Mr. Anley sees it. Now at last you are convinced."

Dolly followed her mother and Mr. Anley up stairs. Rhoda and Robert were not come in. Mr. Anley, looking very grave, said he would go and look for them. Philippa flung herself wearily upon the drawing-room sofa: the fire was burning, and the little log of wood crumbling in embers. Dolly raked the embers together, and then came and stood by her mother. "Good-night, mamma," she said. "I am tired; I am going to bed," she said, in a sort of fixed, heavy way.

"It is your own fault," answered her mother, bursting out in vague answer to her own thoughts. "Mr. Anley says that Robert is behaving very strangely. If you think he is too attentive to Rhoda, you should tell him so, instead of looking at me in that heavy, disagreeable way. You know as well as I do that he means nothing; and you are really so depressed, dearest, that it is no wonder a young man prefers joking and flirting with an agreeable girl;" and Mrs. Palmer thumped the cushions. "Give me a kiss, Dolly," she said. To do her justice, she was only scolding her daughter out of sympathy, and because she did not know what other tone to take.

Dolly did not answer. She felt hard and fierce; a sort of scorn had come over her. There seemed no one to go to now—no, not one. If George had been there, all would have been so different, she thought; and then his warning words came back to her once more.

Dolly put her hand to her heart and stood silent until her mother had finished. There was pain and love and fire in a heart like poor Dolly's, humble and passionate, faithful and impressionable, and sadly tried just now by one of the bitter trials that come to young lives—blows that seem to jar away the music forever. Later comes the peaceful possession of life, which is as a revelation when the first flare of youth has passed away; but for Dorothea that peaceful time was not yet. Every thing was sad. She was not blind. She could understand what was passing before her eyes. She seemed to

read Robert's secret set plainly before her. She had stopped Miss Rougemont more than once when she had begun some mysterious word of warning; but she knew well enough what she would have said.

"A man must keep his word, at every inconvenience," said Robert.

Perhaps if Frank had never spoken, never revealed his story, Dolly might still have been unconscious of the meaning of the signs and words and symbols that express the truth.

Marker asked no questions. She brushed Dolly's long tawny mane, and left her at last in her white wrapper sitting by the bed.

"Are you well, my dearie?" said the old woman, coming back and stroking her hair with her hand.

Dolly smiled, and answered by holding up her face to be kissed, and Marker went away more happy.

Whatever she felt, whatever her secret determination may have been, Dolly said not one word neither to her mother nor to Rhoda. She avoided Miss Rougemont's advances with a sort of horror. To Robert and Rhoda she scarcely spoke, although she did not avoid them. Robert thought himself justified in remonstrating with her for her changed manner.

"I am waiting until I know what my manner should be, Robert," said Dolly, bitterly.

Robert thought Dolly very much altered indeed. As Dolly shrunk back more and more into herself, Rhoda seemed to bloom and brighten—she thought of every body and every thing, she tried in a hundred ways to please her friend. Dolly, coming home lonely and neglected, would find, perhaps, fresh roses on her toilet. "Miss Rhoda put them there," Marker would say, grimly, and Dolly would laugh a hard sort of laugh. But all this time she said no word, gave no sign. "For them should be the shame of confessing their treachery," said this angry sullen demon that seemed to have possessed the poor child. And all the while Robert, serene in his ultimate intentions and honorable sentiments, came and went, and Rhoda put all disagreeable thoughts of the future away. She had never deliberately set herself to supplant her friend, but she had deliberately set herself to win over Henley, and, if possible, to gain his support to her claims. It had seemed an impossible task. Rhoda was surprised, flattered, and bewildered to find how easily she had gained her wish, how soon her dream had come true. There it stood solid and complacent before her, laughing at one of her sallies; there she was, sitting in her silk gown. The soft touch of its folds seemed to give reality to the fairy dream, and Rhoda began to realize that this was, of all dreams, the one she be-

lieved in most. It was something for Rhoda to have found a faith of any sort. At all events, there was now one other person besides herself in Rhoda's world. As for Dolly, if she was cross it was her own fault. Miss Rougemont, too, had been disagreeable and prying of late—she must go. And as for Uncle John, if he wrote any more letters like that last one which had come, she should burn them unread.

No one ever knew the struggle that went on in Dolly's mind all through these bright spring days, while Rhoda was dreaming her tranquil little visions, while Robert was agreeably occupied flirting with Rhoda, while they were all coming and going from one pleasant scene to another, and the roses were blooming once more in the garden at All-Saints, while Signor Pappaforte was warbling to Mrs. Palmer's accompaniment, and Frank Raban, riding across the moors, was hard at work upon one scheme and another.

What would he not have given to be sitting in that empty place by Miss Vanborough! Her cousin is next her, but for the last few minutes he has been whispering to Rhoda, and he has almost forgotten Dolly's existence.

It was a crowded hall, a thousand people sitting in silent and breathless circles. An *andante* of Haydn's was in the air. It was a sweet and delicate music, both merry and melancholy, tripping to a sunshiny measure that set every body's heart beating in time. There was a childish grace about the music that charmed all the listeners to a tender enthusiasm. It made them cry and laugh at once; and though many sat motionless and stolid, you might see eyes shining and dilating, as mothers' eyes dilate sometimes when they watch their children at play. The childless were no longer childless while that gentle, irresistible music shook from the delicate strings of the instruments; the lonely and silent had found a voice; the hard of heart and indifferent were moved and carried away; pent-up longings were set free. Other strings were sounding with the music; and it was not music, though it was harmony, that struck and shook those mysterious fibres that bind men and women to life. The hopelessness of the lonely, the mad longings of the parted, the storm of life, all seemed appeased. To Dolly it was George's voice that was speaking once again. "Peace, be still," said the music, and a divine serenity was in the great hall where the little tune was thrilling.

In former times men and women assembled in conclave to see wild beasts tearing their prey; to-day it was to listen to a song of Haydn's—a little song, that did not last five minutes.

It had not ended when Rhoda whispered something into Robert's ear.

While the music was lasting Dolly was

transported; as it ended her mind seemed clear. She was at peace; she understood it all; all malice and uncharitableness seemed dissolved—I know no better word—pangs of wounded pride, bitterness of disappointed trust, shame of unfulfilled promise—such things were; but other things, such as truth, honest intention, were beyond them, and Dolly felt at that moment as if she could rise above her fate, above her own faults, beyond her own failures. She would confess the truth to Robert. She had meant to be faithful to him—she had failed. She would take what blame there was upon herself, and that should be her punishment. She was too keen-sighted not to understand all that had been passing before her eyes. At first wounded and offended and not unjustly pained, she had determined to wait in silence, to let Henley explain his own intentions, acknowledge his own short-comings.

But something more generous, more truthful, impelled her now to speak. Rhoda and Robert were whispering. "Hush," Dolly said, and she laid her hand upon Robert's arm. He started a little uncomfortably, and then began suddenly to nod his head and to twirl his umbrella in time. Rhoda buttoned her long gloves and leaned back in a pensive attitude. Dolly sat staring at the violins, of which the bows were flowing like the waves of a spring-tide on either side of the circle. Beyond the violins were the wind-instruments and the great violoncellos throbbing their full hearts. Haydn's music ceased. There was instant silence, then a clapping of hands, and a sort of murmur and sigh coming from a hundred breasts. As it all died away Dolly stood up and turned to Robert. An impulse came to her to do now what was in her heart, to wait no longer.

"Robert"—her voice sounded so oddly that he started and half rose, looking down at her upturned face—"Robert, I want you to listen to me," said Dolly. "I must tell you now when I can speak. I see it all. You were right to doubt me. I have not been true to you. You must marry Rhoda," she said, nervously; then stopping short, "I'm not jealous, only I am bewildered. I am going home. Don't come with me. But you forgive me, don't you, Robert?"

There was a sudden burst from some overture—the music was beginning again. Before Robert could stop her or disentangle his legs, Dolly was gone. She had started up, she had left her seat, her gloves were lying on the ground, her veil was lying on the bench; but it was too late to follow or to call her back. The people, thinking she was ill, had made way for her, and closed in round the door.

"What has happened?" said Rhoda. "Is she ill, or angry? Is she gone? Oh, what has happened? Don't leave me here alone—let me come too."

Robert flushed up. "The eyes of the whole place are upon us," he muttered. Then came something like an oath.

"Hush! silence!" said the people behind.

Robert bit his lip and sat staring at the conductor's rod. Every now and then he gave a little impatient jerk of the head.

Rhoda waited her time. He had not followed Dolly, he had remained with her—it was something. The music went on—not one note did she hear—the time seemed interminable. But Robert, hearing a low sigh, turned at last. He did not speak, but he looked at her.

"You are angry?" whispered Rhoda.

"Why should I be angry with you?" he answered, more gently.



CHAPTER LIII.

THAT THOU ART BLAMED SHALL NOT BE THY DEFECT.

ONCE, as Dolly was hurrying away through the passages to the great front entrance, she looked back, for she thought she heard Robert's step coming after her. It was only Casimir, the servant, who had been loitering by a staircase, and had seen her pass. She came to the great wide doors of the music-hall, where the people were congregated, the servants carrying their mistresses' carriage cloaks over their arms, the touters and vendors of programmes. The music was still in her ears; she felt very calm, very strange. Casimir would have darted off for the carriage if she had not stopped him.

"Is Mademoiselle indisposed? Shall I accompany her?" he asked.

But although Dolly looked very pale, she said she was not ill; she would go home alone; and when she was safely seated in the little open carriage he called for her, the color came back into her cheeks. She leaned back, for she was very tired. As she drove along she

tried to remember what had happened, to think what more would happen, but she could not do so. It was a feeling, not an event, that had moved her so; and the outward events that relate these great unseen histories to others are to the actors themselves of little consequence. As for the future, Dolly could scarcely believe in a future. Was any thing left to her now? Her life seemed over, and she was scarcely twenty: she was sorry for herself. She did not regret what she had done, for he did not love her. It was Rhoda whom he loved—Rhoda who seemed to have absorbed every thing, little by little. There was nothing that she had spared. Dolly wondered what they would say at the Court. She thought of Frank Raban, too. If the squire's news was true, Frank Raban would be thinking no more of her, but absorbed in other interests. Even Frank—was any one faithful in life? Then she thought of George: he had not failed: he had been true to the end, and this comforted her.

Every thing seemed to have failed with her, and yet—how shall I explain it?—Dolly was at peace with herself. In her heart she knew that she had tried, always tried, to do her best. No pangs of conscience assailed her as she drove home through this strange chaos of regrets and forgetfulness. Her hands fell into her lap as she leaned back in the little carriage: it was bringing her away through the dull rattle of the streets to a new home, a new life, swept and garnished, so it seemed to Dolly, where every thing was strange and bare—one in which, perhaps, little honor was to be found, little credit. What did she care! She was too true a lady to trouble herself about resentments and petty slights and difficulties. They had both meant to do right. As for Rhoda, Dolly would not think of Rhoda just then: it hurt her. For George's sake she must try to think kindly of her; was it for her to cast a stone? Dolly came up stairs slowly and steadily, opened the door, which was on the latch, and came in, looking for her mother. Miss Vanborough had never, not even in the days of her happy love, looked more beautiful than she did as she came into the little sitting-room at home. A light was in her face; it was the self-forgetful look of some one who has passed for a moment beyond the common state of life, escaping the assaults of selfish passion, into a state where feeling is not destroyed but multiplied beyond itself. In these moods sacrifice scarcely exists. The vanities of the world glitter in vain, discord can not jar, and in the midst of tumult and sorrow souls are at peace.

Mrs. Palmer was not alone; the squire was there. He had brought news. He had been detained by a peremptory telegram from Norah—"Jonah arrives Paris to-morrow; mamma says, remain; bring Jonah home"—and Jonah, who had come almost at the same

time as the telegram, had accompanied the squire, and was waiting impatiently enough, hoping to see Dolly. He had been somewhat bored by the little elderly flirtation which had been going on for the last half hour between his aunt and his godfather (which sort of *pot-pourri*, retaining a certain faint perfume of by-gone roses, is not uncommon); but he did not move, except to go and stand out upon the balcony and stare up and down the street; he was leaning over the slender railing when Dolly came in, and so it happened that at first she only saw the squire sitting by her mother's easy-chair. She gave him her hand. He stood holding it in his, and looking at her, for he saw that something had happened.

"Alone!" said Mrs. Palmer. "Is Robert with you? I have some news for you; guess, Dolly;" and Philippa looked archly toward the window.

Dolly looked at her mother. "I left them at the concert," she said, not asking what the news was.

"What made you leave them? Why do you stare at me like that?" cried Mrs. Palmer, forgetting her news. "Have you had another quarrel? Dolly, I have only just been saying so to Mr. Anley; under the circumstances you really should not—you really should—"

"It has all been a mistake, mamma," said Dolly, looking up, though she did not see much before her. "Every thing is over. Robert and I have parted, quite parted," she repeated, sadly.

"Parted!" exclaimed the squire. "Has it come to this?"

"Parted!" cried poor exasperated Philippa. "I warned you. It is your own fault, Dolly; you have been possessed all along. Mr. Anley, what is to be done?" cried the poor lady, turning from one to the other. "Is it your doing or Robert's? Dolly, what is it all about?"

Dolly did not answer for an instant, for she could not speak.

The squire began muttering something between his teeth, as he strode up and down the room with his hands in his pockets.

"Take care! you will knock over the jardinière," cried Mrs. Palmer.

Dolly's eyes were all full of tears by this time. As he turned she laid her hand upon the old man's arm. "It is my doing, not his," she said. "You must not be hard upon him; indeed, it is all my doing."

"It is your doing now, and most properly," said the squire, very gravely, and not in the least in his usual half-joking manner. "I can only congratulate you upon having got rid of that abominable prig; but you must not take it all upon yourself, my poor child."

Dolly blushed up. "You think it is not my fault," she said, and the glow spread and

deepened. "He was not bound when he left me, only I had promised to wait." Then, with sudden courage, "You will not blame him when I tell you this," she said: "I have not been true to him, not quite true; I told him so: it was a pity, all a pity," she said, with a sigh. She stood with hanging hands and a sweet, wistful, tender face; her voice was like a song in its unconscious rhythms, for deep feeling gives a note to people's voices that is very affecting sometimes.

"You told him so! What will people say?" shrieked poor Mrs. Palmer. "And here is Jonah, whom we have quite forgotten."

Jonah was standing listening with all his honest ears. It seemed to the young soldier that he also had been listening to music, to some sweet sobbing air played with tender touch. It seemed to fill the room even after Dolly had left it; for when she turned and suddenly saw her cousin it was the climax of that day's agitation. She came up and kissed him with a little sob of surprise and emotion, tried to speak in welcome, and then shook her head and quickly went away, shutting the door behind her. As Dolly left the room the two men looked at one another. They were almost too indignant with Henley to care to say what they thought of his conduct. "Had not we better go?" said Jonah, awkwardly, after a pause.

But Mrs. Palmer could not possibly dispense with an audience on such an occasion as this: she made Jonah promise to return to dinner; she detained the squire altogether to detail to him the inmost feelings of a mother's heart; she sent for cups of tea. "Is Miss Dolly in her room, Julie?" she asked.

"Yes, madame; she has locked the door," said Julie.

"Go and knock, then, immediately, Julie; and come and tell me what she says, poor dear."

Then Mrs. Palmer stirs her own tea, and describes all that she has felt ever since first convinced of Robert's change of feeling. Her experience had long ago taught her to discover those signs of indifference which..... The poor squire listens in some impatience.

While Robert and Rhoda are driving home together from the concert, flattered, dazzled, each pursuing their own selfish schemes, each seeing the fulfillment of small ambitions at hand, Dolly, sitting at the foot of her bed, is saying good-by again and again. The person she had loved and longed to see, and thought of day after day and hour after hour, was not Henley, but some other quite different man, with his face, perhaps, but with another soul and nature..... That Robert who had been so dear to her at one time, so vivid, so close a friend, so wise, so sympathetic, so strong, and so tender, was nothing—no one—he had never existed. The death of this familiar friend, the dispersion of this familiar ghost, seemed, for a few hours,