

Wesley, and in his eighty-eighth year the gates of the celestial city awaited his approach. The last letter that he wrote, on the day before he sank into a final lethargy, was a cry of indignation against human slavery.¹ It was addressed to Wilberforce, who was then commencing his difficult and almost hopeless assault upon the slave-trade and the slave-holder. "Oh! be not weary of well-doing," wrote the aged teacher of humanity. "Go on in the name of God, and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it." His last hours were full of joy. When he was dead his friends sang a hymn, and knelt in prayer. He was buried from the chapel in City Road at five o'clock in the morning, to avoid a crowd, yet a vast throng came to gaze for the last time upon his venerable features, and passed reverently before him.

To such a man it would seem profanation to apply the epithet of great. He was only the peace-maker, meek and lowly, and he has inherited the earth. He had no malice and no harshness. His venial faults escaped

the notice of his enemies; his virtues compelled their applause.¹ Bitterly as he denounced sin, he ever loved the sinner. He was the tenderest and most compassionate of his kind. His extensive learning, not unworthy of the age of Johnson and Gibbon; his ceaseless ardor in composition; his sermons, vigorous, clear, and powerful; his commanding eloquence, that never failed to win the interest of the cultivated and the rude; his rare conversational excellence;² the refinement of his manners, the ardor of his temperament, and the dignity of his thoughts—might well have won for him the orator's or the politician's fame; or he might readily have aspired to a bishop's chair, a rich prebend, or a deanery; but he who labored only for the glory of God must shrink from the paths of human greatness, and dedicate his varied talents to a higher purpose than the acquisition of temporary good. Among the saints and heroes who have reformed and cultivated their race his place must ever be with the first. To estimate his future influence upon the history of man exceeds the strength of reason or of fancy.

OLD KENSINGTON.

By MISS THACKERAY.

CHAPTER VI.

DOWN STAIRS IN THE DARK.

THERE are old houses in other places besides Kensington. Perhaps it is from early associations that Dolly has always had so great a liking for walls furnished with some upholstery of the past, and set up by strong hands that seem to have had their own secrets for making their work last on. Some of these old piles stand like rocks, defying our lives as they have defied the generations before us. We come upon them every where, set upon high hills, standing in wide country places, crowded into the narrow streets of a city. Perhaps it is the golden Tiber that flows past the old doorways, perhaps it is the Danube rushing by, or the gray Thames running to the marshes, or the Seine as it shines between the banks. There is an old house in the Champs Elysées at Paris where most English people have lived in turn, and to which Dolly's fate brought her when she was about twelve years old.

The prompter rings the bell, and the scene shifts to the Maison Valin, and to one night, twenty years ago, when the two little girls were tucked up in bed. The dim night-light

was put on the round marble table, the curtains were drawn, but all the same they could hear the noise of the horses trampling and the sabots clanking in the court-yard down below. Lady Sarah had sent her little niece to bed, and she now stood at the door and said, "Good-night, my dears." The second night-cap was only that of a little stray school-girl come to spend a holiday, from one of those vast and dreary establishments scattered all about the deserted suburbs of the great city: of which the lights were blazing from the uncurtained drawing-room windows, and its great semicircle of dark hills flashing.

Lady Sarah had come to Paris to meet Dolly's mamma, who had been married more than a year by this time, and who was expected home at last. She was coming *alone*, she wrote. She had at length received Captain Palmer's permission to visit her children;

¹ In this particular he was in advance of Whitefield, who defended slavery, and purchased slaves for his orphan-house at Savannah. Had Whitefield lived longer he might have yielded his rigorous fatalism, which had far outrun that of Calvin.

¹ The author of the "Spiritual Quixote" admits "the talents and the pious labors of Mr. Wesley," *ii.* p. 299. A writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, January, 1872, "can only call him a great man. . . . in a very qualified sense." He does not see that Wesley was above the common conception of greatness; that to compare him to Loyola or Benedict, as Southey does, is to liken cruelty with gentleness, spiritual pride with unfeigned humility.

² "Of John Wesley, he" (Dr. Johnson) "said, 'He can talk well on any subject.'" Boswell relates, "John Wesley's conversation is good." Johnson said, at another time, "But he is never at leisure." Bos., *John.*, 1778. They were often together.

but not even her wishes could induce him to quit his beloved frigate. She should, therefore, leave him cruising along the Coromandel coast, and start in January, for which month her passage was taken. She implored Lady Sarah to meet her in Paris, where some weeks' rest would be absolutely necessary, she said, to recruit her strength after the fatigue of her journey; and Lady Sarah, with some misgiving, yielded to Dolly's wistful entreaties, and wrote to her old friend the Rev. W. Lovejoy, of the Marmouton Chapel, to take rooms for her for a few weeks, during which Dolly might improve her French accent and her style of dancing (Dolly had been pronounced clumsy by Mrs. Morgan) in the companionship of little Rhoda, who had been sent some time before to be established for a year in a boarding-school near Paris, there to put on the armor of accomplishments that she would require some day in the dismal battle of life.

John Morgan had been loath that the little girl should go; he was afraid the child might feel lonely away from them all; but Rhoda said, very sensibly, that if she was to be a governess, she supposed she had better learn things. So Rhoda was sent off for a year to Madame Laplanche's, toward the end of which time Lady Sarah came to Paris with Dolly, and the faithful Marker in attendance.

Dolly did not trouble her head very much about her accent, but she was delighted to be with her friend again, to say nothing of seeing the world and the prospect of meeting her mother. She went twice a week to Rhoda's school to learn to point her bronze toes and play on the well-worn piano; and then every morning came Madame De St. Honoré, an old lady who instructed Mademoiselle Dolli in the grammar and literature of the country to which she belonged. French literature, according to Madame De St. Honoré, was in one snuffy volume which she happened to possess. Dolly asked no questions, and greatly preferred stray scenes out of "Athalie" and odd pages from "Paul and Virginia" to Noel and Chapsal, and l'abbé Gaultier's "Geography." The two would sit at the dining-room table with the windows open, and the cupboards full of French china, and with the head of Socrates staring at them from over the stove.

Mr. Lovejoy had selected for his old friend a large and dilapidated set of rooms, the chairs and tables of which had seen better days, and had been in their prime during the classic furniture period of the Great Napoleon.

The tall white marble clock on the chimney-piece had struck nine, and Lady Sarah was sitting alone in the carpetless drawing-room on one of the stiff-backed chairs. It was early times for two girls of eleven and

twelve to be popped away out of the world; but Lady Sarah was at that time a strict disciplinarian, and seemed to think that one of the grand objects of life was to go to bed and be up again an hour in advance of every body else.

"And so there is only dreaming till to-morrow morning," thought Dolly, with a dreary wide-awake sigh. Dolly and Henriette, her maid, had two beds side by side. Dolly used to lie wide awake in hers, watching the dawn as it streamed through the old flowered chintz curtains, and the shadows and pictures flying from the corners of the room; or, when the night-light burned dimly, and the darkness lay heaped against the walls, Dolly, still childish for her age, could paint pictures for herself upon them, bright phantasmagorias woven out of her brain, faces and flowers and glittering sights such as those she saw when she was out in the daytime. Dolly thought the room was enchanted, and that the fairies came into it as soon as Henriette was asleep and snoring. To-night little Rhoda was sleeping in the bed, and Henriette and Marker were sitting at work in the next room. They had left the door open; and presently, when they thought the children were asleep, began a low, mysterious conversation in French.

"She died on Tuesday," said Henriette, "and is to be buried to-morrow."

"She could not have been twenty," said Marker; "and a sweet, pretty lady. I can't think where it is I have seen such another as her."

"Pauvre dame!" said Henriette. "He feels her death very much. He is half distracted, Julie tells me."

"Serve him right, the brute! I should like to give it him!" cries the other.

"He looks such a handsome, smiling gentleman, that Mr. Rab—Rap— Who could have thought it possible?"

"Oh, they're all smiling enough," said Marker, who knew the world. "There was a young man in a grocer's shop—" And her voice sank into confidences still more mysterious.

"When they came to measure her for her coffin," said Henriette, who had a taste for the terrible, "they found she had grown since her death, poor thing. Julie tells me that she looks more beautiful than you can imagine. He comes and cries out, 'Emma! Emma!' as if he could wake her and bring her to life."

"Wake her and bring her to life to kill her again, the wretch!" said Marker, "with his neglect and cruelty."

"He is very young—a mere boy," said Henriette. "The concierge says there was no malice in him: and then he gave her such beautiful gowns! There was a *moiré* antique came home the day she died, with lace trimmings. Julie showed it me: she expects to

get all the things. They were going to a ball at the Tuileries. How beautiful she would have looked!"

"Poor child!" said Marker.

"To die without ever putting it on! Dame! I should not like that; but I should like to have a husband who would buy me such pretty things. I would not mind his being out of temper now and then, and leaving me to do as I liked for a month or two at a time. I should have amused myself, instead of crying all day as she did. Julie tells me she has tried on the black velvet, and it fits her perfectly."

"Julie ought to be ashamed of herself," growled Marker, "with the poor child lying there still."

"Not in the least," said Henriette; "Julie was very fond of her when she was alive: now she is dead—that is another thing. She says she would not stop in the room for worlds. She thought she saw her move yesterday, and she rushed away into the kitchen, and had an *attaque de nerfs* in consequence."

"But did she tell nobody—could it have been true?"

"Françoise told him, and they went in immediately, but it was all silent as before. I am glad I sleep up stairs; I should not like to be in the room over that one. It is underneath there where are *les petites*."

"She would do no one harm, now or when she was alive, poor thing," said Marker. "I should like to flay that man alive."

"That would be a pity, Mrs. Marker," said Henriette: "a fine young man like that! He liked her well enough, *allez!* She cried too much. It was her own fault that she was not happy."

"I would rather be her than him at this minute," said Marker. "Why, he scolded and sulked and sneered and complained of the bills when he was at home, and went away for days together without telling her where he was going. I know where he was: he was gambling, and spending her money on other people. I'd pickle him, I would!" said Marker; "and I don't care a snap for his looks; and her heart is as cold as his own now, poor little thing!"

"It's supper-time, isn't it?" yawned Henriette.

Then Dolly heard a little rustle, as they got up to go to their supper, and the light in the next room disappeared, and every thing seemed very silent. The night-light spluttered a little, the noises in the court-yard were hushed, the familiar chairs and tables looked queer and unknown in the darkness. Rhoda was fast asleep and breathing softly; Dolly was kicking about in her own bed, and thrilling with terror and excitement, and thinking of what she had heard of the poor pretty lady down stairs. She and Rhoda always used to rush to the window to see

her drive off in her smart little carriage, wrapped in her furs, but all alone. Poor little lady! Her unkind husband never went with her, and used to leave her for weeks at a time. Her eyes used to shine through the veil that she always wore when they met her on the stairs; but Aunt Sarah would hurry past her, and never would talk about her. And now she was dead. Dolly looked at Rhoda lying so still on her white pillow. How would Rhoda look when she was dead? thought Dolly.

"Being asleep is being dead.....I dare say people would be more afraid of dying if they were not so used to go to sleep. When I am dying—I dare say I shall die about seventeen—I shall send for John Morgan, and George will come from Eton, and Aunt Sarah will be crying, and, perhaps, mamma and Captain Palmer will be there; and I shall hold all their hands in mine and say, 'Now be friends, for my sake.' And then I shall urge George to exert himself more, and go to church on week-days; and then to Aunt Sarah I shall turn with a sad smile, and say, 'Adieu! dear aunt, you never understood me—you fancied me a child when I had the feelings of a woman, and you sneered at me, and sent me to bed at eight o'clock. Do not crush George and Rhoda as you have crushed me: be gentle with them;' and then I shall cross my hands over my chest and— and what then?" And a sort of shock came over the girl as, perhaps for the first time in her life, she realized the awful awakening. "Suppose they bury me alive? It is very common, I know—oh! no, no, no; that would be too horrible! Suppose that poor young lady is not dead down stairs—suppose she is alive, and they bury her to-morrow, and she wakes up, and it is all dark, and she chokes and cries out, and nobody hears.....Surely they will take precautions—they will make sure?.....Who will, I wonder? Not that wicked husband—not that horrid maid. But the poor lady underneath, I wonder who is sitting up with her? That wicked man has gone to gamble, I dare say; and Julie is trying on her dresses, and perhaps her eyes are opening now, and nobody to see—nobody to come! Ah, this is dreadful! I must go to sleep and forget it."

Little Rhoda turned and whispered something in her dreams; Dorothy curled herself up in her nest and shut her eyes, and did go to sleep for a couple of hours, and then woke up again with a start, and thought it must be morning. Had not somebody called her by name? did not somebody whisper Dolly in her ear? so loud that it woke her out of a strange dream: a sort of dream in which strange clanging sounds rung round and round in the air; in which Dolly herself lay powerless, gasping and desperate, on her bed. Vainly she tried to move, to call, to utter; no one came.

Julie, in white satin, was looking at herself in the glass; the wicked husband was standing in the door with a horrible scowl. Rhoda, somehow, was quietly asleep in her bed. Ah, no! she too was dead; she would never wake; she would not come and save her. And just then Dolly awoke, and started up in bed with wide-open childish eyes. What a still, quiet room! What a dim light from the lamp! Who had spoken? Was it a warning? was it a call? was this dream sent to her as a token, as the people in the Bible dreamed dreams and dared not disobey them? Was this what was going on in the room below? was it for her to go down and save the poor lady, who might be calling to her? Something within her said, "Go, go," and suddenly she found herself standing by the bedside, putting on her white dressing-gown, and then pattering out barefooted across the wooden floors, out into the dark dining-room, out into the anteroom, all dark and black, opening the front-door (the key was merely turned in the lock), walking down stairs with the dim lamps glimmering and the moonlight pouring in at the blindless window, and standing at the door of the apartment below. Her only thought was wonder at finding it so easy. Then she laid her hand softly on the key and turned it, and the door opened, and she found herself in an anteroom like their own, only carpeted and alight. The room was under her own; she knew her way well enough. Into the dark dining-room she passed with a beating heart, and so came to a door beneath which a ray of light was streaming. And then she stopped. Was this a dream? was this really herself? or was she asleep in bed up stairs? or was she, perhaps, dead in her coffin? A qualm of terror came over her—should she turn and go?—her knees were shaking, her heart was beating so that she could hardly breathe; but she would not turn back—that would be a thousand times too cowardly. Just then she thought she heard a footstep in the dining-room. With a shuddering effort she raised her hand, and in an instant she stood in the threshold of the chamber. What! was this a sacred chapel? Silence and light, many flowers, tall tapers burning. It seemed like an awful dream to the bewildered child: the coffin stood in the middle of the room; she smelled a faint odor of incense, of roses, of scented tapers; and then her heart stood still as she heard a sudden gasping sigh, and against the light an awful shrouded figure slowly rising and seeming to come toward her. It was more than she could bear; the room span round, once more the loud clanging sounded in her ears, and poor Dolly, with a shuddering scream, fell to the ground.

A jumble of whispers, of vinegar, of water trickling down her back, and of an officious

flapping wet handkerchief; of kind arms infolding her; of nurse saying, "Now she is coming to;" of Lady Sarah answering, "Poor little thing! she must have been walking in her sleep"—a strange new birth, new vitality pouring in at all her limbs, a dull identity coming flashing suddenly into life, and Dolly opened her eyes to find herself in the nurse's arms, with her aunt bending over her, in the warm drawing-room up stairs. Other people seemed standing about—Henriette, and a man whom she could scarcely see with her dim weary eyes, and Julie. Dolly hid her face on the nurse's shoulder.

"Oh, nurse, nurse! have you saved me?" was all she could say.

"What were you doing down stairs, you naughty child?" said Lady Sarah, in her brisk tones. "Marker heard a noise and luckily ran after you."

"Oh, Aunt Sarah, forgive me!" faltered Dolly. "I went to save the lady. I thought if she opened her eyes and there was no one there—and Julie trying on the dresses, and the wicked husband—I heard Henriette telling Marker— Oh, save me, save me!" and the poor little thing burst into tears and clung closer and closer.

"You are all safe, dear," said Marker, "and the young lady is at rest where nothing will frighten or disturb her. Hush! don't cry."

"Poor little thing!" said the man, taking her hand; "do not be afraid; she is a saint in heaven. The nuns must have frightened you; and yet they are good women, and will pray and watch all through the night. You must go to sleep. Good-night." And he raised the child's hand to his lips and kissed it, and then seemed to go away.

"I'm ashamed of myself, my lady," said Marker, "for having talked as I did with the chance of the children being awake to hear me. It was downright wicked, and I should like to bite my tongue out. Go to bed, Henriette. Be off, Mamzelle July, if you please."

"We are all going to bed; but Henriette will get Miss Dolly a cup of chocolate first and a little bit of galette out of the cupboard," said Lady Sarah.

Dolly was very fond of chocolate and galette; and this little impromptu supper by the drawing-room fire did more to quiet and reassure her than any thing else. But she was hardly herself as yet, and could only cling to Marker's arm and hide her face away from them all. Her aunt kissed her once more, saying, "Well, I won't scold you to-night; indeed, I am not sure but that you were quite right to go," and disappeared into her own room. Then Henriette carried the candle, and Marker carried great big Dolly and laid her down by Rhoda in her bed; and the wearied and tired little