XXXI

ALL well at Bence's; and all well at home.

It was pleasant to her, returning from her work on summer evenings, to see the white gates and long wall speed towards her: as if coming once again out of the land of dreams into the realm of facts, because she called them to her. She had wished for them, and they were hers. While her car glided from the gates to the porch, she enjoyed the full sight of the things that, seen in glimpses, soothed her eyes so many years ago—the comfortable eaves and latticed windows, the dark masses of foliage casting restful shadows on the sun-lit lawns, the steps and brickwork of the terraced garden giving value and form to the gay exuberance of the summer flowers.

"Are the ladies in?"

When the footman said that the ladies were out, she gave a little sigh. It was only a moment's disappointment. By the time that the butler had come forward and was telling her where the ladies had gone, the faint sense of emptiness and disillusionment had vanished. Really she liked the ladies to be out and about as much as possible. There was a big motor-car to take them far from home, and there were horses and carriages to take them on quiet little journeys; for, pleasant as home might be, they must not be allowed to feel themselves prisoners in it. All this side of her life belonged to them: they ruled the world that lay outside her work.

When the footman told her that the ladies were to be found somewhere beneath the eaves or within the walls of the garden, she sprang out of the car as lightly as a girl.

"I think Miss Jane is in the music-room, ma'am."

Her face lit up; she smiled contentedly, and hurried through the porch to search for Miss Jane.

The house was bigger in fact than it had been in the dream. She had tacked on a new wing at each end of it; and her architect had so cleverly preserved the external style that no one outside the building could guess which was the old part and which the new. Inside, you might guess by the size of the rooms. In one wing there was a large dining-room, and in the other wing there was Miss Jane's school-room, play-room, or music-room.

This was an unexpectedly noble hall, containing an organ, a minstrel gallery, and a raised stage for dramatic entertainment; here the young lady had obtained much instruction and amusement; here she learned to sing and dance, to fence and do Swedish exercises, to know the kings of England and to spin tops, to talk French and to play badminton.

Her grandmother, bustling to it, sometimes heard and always loved to hear the music of organ or piano; sometimes all she heard was a young voice talking or laughing —but that was the music that she loved best.

"Granny dear!"

"Mother dear!"

The double welcome was her daily reward, the handsome payment that made her think the long day's toil so light.

A certain pomp was maintained in their manner of living: meals were served with adequate ceremony; butler and footmen instead of parlourmaids waited at table; the family wore rich dresses of an evening—but all this was to please Enid. Everything that Enid once had seemed to care for must be provided now—the stateliness of liveried men, the grandeur of formal dinner-parties, the small or big extravagances that come with complete immunity from any thought of cost. And on the little girl's account too. It was essential that Enid should be able to bring up her child in the midst of fitting, proper, even fashionable surroundings.

Enid took all these benefits placidly and naturally: very much as of old, when she had been an unmarried girl receiving benefits from the same source in St. Saviour's Court. Indeed she had insensibly dropped back into her old way. Except for the one great permanent change that sprang from a dual cause—her deepened affection for her mother and her idolising devotion to her daughter,—she was strikingly similar to the graceful long-nosed Miss Thompson who went with a smile to meet her fate at Mr. Young's riding-school.

She looked scarcely a day older. She was neither thinner nor fatter; her face, after being pinched by misfortune, had exactly filled out again to the elegant oval of careless youth. The bad time with all its hard lessons was almost obliterated by present ease and comfort: certainly it did not seem to have left indelible marks. She could speak of it—did often speak of it—without wincing, and in the even, unemotional tone that she habitually used.

Only when Jane was ill, she altogether burst through the smooth outer surface of calm propriety, and showed that, if they could be reached, there were some really strong feelings underneath. When Jane was ill, no matter how slightly, Mrs. Kenion became almost demented.

To some juvenile ailments the most jealously guarded child must submit sooner or later. Jane has a sore throat and a cold in the head; Jane slept badly last night; and, oh—merciful powers,—Jane exhibits red spots on her little white chest.

Dr. Eldridge says—now, don't be frightened by a word; —Dr. Eldridge says he believes that, well, ah, yes—it is measles. But there is nothing in that to distress or alarm; rather one might say it is a very good thing. One cannot reasonably hope that Miss Jane will escape measles all her life; and one may be glad that she has this propitious chance to do her measling under practically ideal conditions.

Yet, late in the afternoon, when wise Eldridge has gone, here is Enid with fear-distended eyes and grief-stricken face, white, shaking, absolutely frantic, as she clings to her mother's arm.

"Mother, don't let her die. Oh, don't let her die."

"She shall not die."

In these emergencies Mrs. Marsden-Thompson is solid as her clock-tower.

"But Dr. Eldridge mayn't be right—perhaps it's something a thousand times worse than measles. . . . Oh, oh! What *can* we do? It may be some virulent fever —and when she drops off to sleep, she may never wake."

What Mrs. Marsden-Thompson can do to allay Enid's anxiety, she does do, and at once. She telephones to London, to the most famous physician of the period.

"There, my darling," she says presently; "now keep calm. Sir John is coming—by the evening express."

"Mother dear, how can I thank you enough?"

"My own Enid, there's nothing to thank me for. It will relieve all our minds to have the very highest opinion. . . . And Sir John will spend the night here—that will be nice for you, to know that he is remaining on the spot."

Then in due course the illustrious Sir John arrives, and confirms the diagnosis of Dr. Eldridge. It *is* measles—and a very mild case of it.

Jane grew up strong and hearty, none the worse for childish ailments, and uninjured by the idolatry of her two nearest female relatives. As Yates said, it was a miracle that Jane didn't get absolutely spoilt by so much fussing care and loving worship. But Yates stoutly declared that the young lady was not spoilt up to now; and attributed her escape from spoiling to the fortunate circumstance that she took after her grandmother.

Outwardly she was like her mother, but perhaps inwardly she did somewhat resemble her granny. At fourteen she was certainly more enthusiastic, vivacious, and expansive than Enid had been at that age. And, unlike the young Enid, she could not readily take the impress of other people's minds and manners. Governesses said she was *very* clever, but too much disposed to rely on conclusions reached by trains of thought set in motion by herself and running on lines of her own construction. Governesses would not say she was obstinate—oh, no, far from it,—but perhaps guilty now and then of a certain intellectual arrogance that was unbecoming in one so young.

Fourteen—fifteen—past her sixteenth birthday! Jane is really growing up; and nearer and nearer draws the time when mother and grandmother will be confronted with the awful problem of finding her a suitable husband —a *good* husband, if such a thing exists on the broad surface of the earth. It is appalling to think about; but it cannot be blinked or evaded. The fiery chain of life must have its new link of flame: Jane must carry the torch, and give it safely to the small hands that are waiting somewhere in immeasurable darkness to grasp it and bear it still onward.

Once when Enid lightly hinted at this terrifying matter, Jane caught the hint that was not intended for her ears, and replied very shrewdly.

"It strikes me, mummy, that most likely you'll be married before I shall."

Mrs. Kenion laughed and flushed, and seemed rather gratified by this compliment; but she promised never to introduce Jane to a stepfather. No, she will never marry again—has no faintest inclination for further experiments of that sort. Once bit, twice shy. She will act on the adage; although, when she speaks so blandly of the bad ungrateful dog that bit her, one might almost suppose that she had forgotten nearly all the pain of the bite.

"Mother dear, isn't it wonderful? He is riding again;" and Enid looks up from the morning newspaper, sips her breakfast coffee, and speaks with calm admiration. She always reads the sporting news, and never misses an entry of Charlie's name in minor steeplechase meetings.

Here it is:—Mrs. Charles Kenion's Dreadnought; Trainer, private; Jockey, Mr. Kenion.

"And Charles is over forty-five. Really, I do think it's wonderful," says Enid calmly and admiringly. "But he shouldn't go on riding races. She oughtn't to let him.

It can only end"—and Enid says this with unruffled calm —"in his breaking his neck."

But it seems that Charlie's neck is charmed: that it cannot be broken over the sticks, or—sinister thought!—that it is being preserved for another and more formal method of dislocation.

Nearer than the necessity of discovering a worthy mate for Jane, there looms the smaller necessity of presenting her at Court, giving her a London season, and so forth. As to the presentation, a very obliging offer has been tendered by the great lady of the county—wife of that local potentate who lives in the sheltered magnificence behind the awe-inspiring iron gates. Her ladyship has voluntarily suggested that she should take Miss Kenion, when properly feathered and betrained, into the effulgent presence of her sovereign.

Naturally, since those tremendous iron gates have opened to Mrs. Marsden-Thompson, no lesser entrances are closed against her. Success, if it is big enough, condones most offences; and the prejudiced objection to retail trade, under which Enid once suffered, has been generously waived. What she used artlessly to call county people make much of her and her daughter.

They are bidden to the very best houses; they may consort on equal terms with the highest quality; there is no one so fine that he or she will resent an invitation to dinner.

"Oh yes, Mrs. Marsden-Thompson is an old dear. And her daughter is quite charming. I don't know what to make of the girl—but of course you know, she is going to be an immense heiress."

Mrs. Marsden-Thompson, presiding at a banquet to the county, perhaps was pleased to think that this too she had at last been able to give her Enid. Really tip-top society—social concert-pitch, if compared with the flat tinkling that Enid used to hear at Colonel Salter's.

Gold plate on the table; liveried home-retainers, with soberly-clad aids from Bence's refreshment department; a white waistcoat or silver buttons behind every chair; and, seated on the chairs, a most select and notable company of guests; gracious smiling ladies and grandiosely urbane lords; pink and white faces of candid young girls and sunburnt faces of gallant young soldiers; shimmer of pearls, glitter of diamonds, flash of bright eyes, and a polite murmur of well-bred voices—surely this is all that Enid could possibly desire.

But it was not the society that the hostess really cared about. The dinner-parties that she enjoyed were far different from this. She gave this sort of feast to please Enid; but at certain seasons—at Christmas especially—she gave a feast to please herself.

Then the old friends came. The two motor-cars and the large landau went to fetch some of the guests. Few of them were carriage-folk. Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Bence had their own brougham of course; Mr. and Mrs. Prentice used one of Young's flies; but most of the others were very glad to accept a lift out and home. By special request they all came early, and in morning-dress.

"We dine at seven," wrote the hostess in her invitations; "but please come early, so that we can have a chat before dinner. And as it is to be just a friendly unceremonious gathering, do you mind wearing morning-dress?"

Did they mind? What a thoughtless question, when she might have known that some of them had nothing but morning-dress! Mr. Mears, in spite of his rise in the world, rigidly adhered to the frock-coat, as the garment most suitable to his years and his figure. Cousin Thompson—the ex-grocer of Haggart's Cross—considered swallow-tails and white chokers to be fanciful nonsense: he would not make a merry-andrew of himself to please anybody. Neither of the two Miss Prices had ever possessed a low-cut bodice—old Mrs. Price would probably have whipped her for her immodesty if she had ever been caught in one.

Then buttoned coats and no spreading shirt fronts, high-necked blouses and no bare shoulders; but in other respects full pomp for this humbler banquet: home-servants and Bence-servants; the electric light blazing on the splendid epergnes, the exquisite Bohemian glass, and the piled fruit in the Wedgwood china; the long table stretched to its last leaf; more than thirty people eating, drinking, talking, laughing, shining with satisfaction—and Mrs. Marsden-Thompson at the head of the sumptuous board, shedding quick glances, kind smiles, friendly nods, making the wine taste better and the lamps glow brighter, gladdening and cheering every man and woman there.

"Cousin Jenny!" It is our farmer cousin shouting from the end of the table. "You're so far off that I shall have to whistle to you. You haven't forgotten my whistle?"

"No, that I haven't, cousin Gordon."

And radiant cousin Gordon turns to tell Miss Jane the story of the Welshman, the Irishman, and the Scotsman who met on London Bridge; and Miss Jane is good enough to be amused.

"Lord, how often I've told that story to your grandmother! I'll tell it her again when we get back into the music-room. 'Tis a favourite of hers."

Jane and Enid are both very sweet on these occasions, loyally assisting the hostess, and winning the hearts of the humblest guests. There is perhaps a just perceptible effort in Enid's pretty manner; but with Jane it is all entirely natural.

"Mr. Prentice," says Jane impudently, "you mayn't know it, but you are going to sing us a comic song after dinner."

Mr. Prentice is delighted yet coy.

"No, no—certainly not."

"Oh yes, you will. Won't he, Mrs. Prentice?"

"I'm sure he will, if you wish it, Miss Jane."

Mr. Archibald Bence, looking rather wizened and wan, is just off to the South of France for the remainder of the winter; and Mr. Fentiman, talking across the table, urges him to see the falls of the Rhine on his return journey.

"When I was touring in Switzerland last autumn," says Fentiman sententiously, "I gave one whole day to Schaffhausen, and it amply repaid me for the time and trouble."

Wherever the hostess turns her kind eyes, she can see someone looking at her gratefully and affectionately. There is our grumbling cousin who once was a poor little grocer. She has done so much for him that he has almost entirely ceased to grumble. There is noisy, would-be-facetious cousin Gordon, once a little struggling tenant, now a landlord successfully farming his own land. There is corpulent Greig, on the retired list, but jovial and contented, with his pride unwounded, revelling in highly paid tranquillity. There are the cackling, stupid Miss

Prices and their greedy old mother. They have looked at workhouse doors and shivered apprehensively; but now they chide the maid when she fails to make up the drawing-room fire, and bully the butcher if he sends them a scraggy joint for Sunday. There is faithful Mears in his newest frock-coat, close beside her, as of right, very close to her heart. And there, behind her chair, is faithful Yates—in rustling black silk, with kerchief of real point lace. She does not of course appear when the county dines with us; but to-night Yates stands as honorary major-domo at the Christmas dinner, because she exactly understands the spirit of the feast, and knows how her mistress wishes things to be done.

"And now," says Mr. Prentice, "I'm not going to break the rule. No speeches. But just one toast. . . . Our hostess!"

The faces of the guests all turn towards her; and the lamp-light, flashing here and there, shows her gleams of gold. The golden shower that falls so freely has left some drops on each of them. Her small gifts are visible—the rings on their fingers, the brooches at their necks; but the lamp-light cannot reach her greater gifts—the soft beds, the warm fires, the money in their banks, the comfort in their breasts.

XXXII

OF course she had sent her husband money. Only Mears knew how much. Mears acted as intermediary, conducted the correspondence; and in despatching the doles, whether much or little, he rarely failed to reiterate the proviso that the recipient was not to set foot in England. That was the irrepealable condition under which aid from time to time was granted.

But of late it had become plain that no attempt would be made to set the prohibition at defiance: Mr. Marsden would never revisit his native land. During the last year his wife had written to him twice or thrice, supplementing the communications of Mears with extra bounties and some hopeful, cheering words. Mr. Marsden was begged to employ these additional drafts in defraying the expenses of illness, to take care of himself, and to fight against desponding thoughts.

Now, one summer morning, when she entered her room at Bence's, Mr. Mears stood by a window waiting for her arrival.

"Good morning, Mr. Mears;" and she looked at his solemn face. "Anything out of the way?"

"Yes. Some news from California."

"Ah!" And she pointed to the letter in his hand. "Is it the news that we had reason to expect?"

"Yes. . . . It's all over;" and Mr. Mears placed a chair for her, near the newspaper table.

She sat down, took the letter, spread it open on the table; and, shading her eyes with a hand, began to read it.

"Mr. Mears!" She spoke without looking up. "I shall do no work to-day. Tell them all that I cannot see them."

In the lofty corridor the doors of the managers' rooms were opening; the chieftains were bringing their reports; secretaries and clerks were silently assembling.

Mr. Mears left the room, whisperingly dismissed everybody; and, with closed lips and noiseless footsteps, the little crowd dispersed.

When he returned to the room she spoke to him again, still without raising her eyes.

"The car has gone home, of course. Please telephone to the house, and tell them to send it back for me at once."

He transmitted her order, and then went to a window and looked down into the court-yard.

"Mr. Mears!"

She had finished the letter, and was carefully folding it. "There. You had better keep it—with the other papers. . . . Sit down, please. Stay with me till the car comes."

Mr. Mears sat down, put the folded letter in his pocket, but did not speak. He noticed that her eyes were free from moisture, and her quiet voice betrayed no emotion of any sort.

"Ah, well;" and she gave a little sigh. "He wanted for nothing. His friend says so explicitly. . . . Mr. Mears, she cannot have been a bad woman—according to her lights. You see, she has stuck to him faithfully."

Then, after a long pause, she spoke very kindly of the dead man; and Mears noticed the pitying tenderness that had come into her voice. But it could not have been called emotion: it was a benign, comprehensive pity, a ready sympathy for weakness and misfortune, and no deep disturbance of personal feeling. Mears had heard her talk in just such a tone when she had been told about the sad end of a total stranger.

"Poor fellow! A wasted life, Mr. Mears! . . . And he had many good points. He was naturally a *worker*. Considerable capacity—he seemed to promise great things in the beginning. . . . You know, *you* thought well of him at first."

"At first," said Mears. "I admit it. He was a good salesman."

"He was a *grand* salesman, Mr. Mears. . . . I have never met a better one."

Enid was waiting for her at the white gates, when the car brought her home.

"Mother dear, is anything wrong? Are you ill?"

The car had stopped; and Enid, clambering on the step, showed a white, scared face.

"No, my dear. I am quite all right. I'll get out here, and stroll in the garden with you. . . . My sweet Enid, did the message frighten you?"

"Yes, dreadfully."

"It was inconsiderate of me not to say I wasn't ill. . . I am taking the day off. That is all."

"But what has happened? Something has upset you. I can see it in your face."

Then, as they walked slowly to and fro along a terrace between bright and perfumed flowers, Mrs. Marsden-Thompson quietly told her daughter the news.

"I am a widow, Enid dear. . . . No, it did not upset me. Mr. Mears and I were both prepared to hear it. . . . But of course it takes one back into the past; it sets one thinking—and I felt at once that I ought not to attend to ordinary business, that it would be only proper to take the day off. . . .

"And I think, Enid, that henceforth I shall call myself Mrs. Thompson—plain Mrs. Thompson, dropping the other name altogether." . . . She had paused on the path, to pick a sprig of verbena; and she gently crushed a thin leaf, and inhaled its perfume. "Yes, dear. I always liked the old name best. But I felt that while he was living, it might seem unkind, and in bad taste, if I altogether refused to bear his name. Now, however, it cannot matter;" and she opened her hand and let the crushed leaf fall. "He has gone. And he is quite forgotten. There is nobody who can think it unkind if his name dies too."

XXXIII

THE pleasant years were slipping away, and Mrs. Thompson was just as busy as she had ever been. She had long ago ceased to speak of retiring, and now she did not even think of it. The success of Bence's had continued to swell larger and larger; its trade grew steadily and surely; its financial position was so strong that nothing could shake it.

Prentice and Archibald Bence often advised the proprietress to turn herself into a company, and she was more or less disposed to adopt their suggestion. Some day or other she might do it. But it would be a big job —the promotion of a company on the grandest scale, with enormous capital involved, wants careful consideration. Perhaps she was a little inclined to shirk the preliminary labours of the scheme—and in any event the flotation could not bring her more leisure, because she would certainly be obliged to remain at Bence's as managing director.

In these years Jane had made her bow at the Court of St. James's, and had experienced the excitements of a London season; but as yet her guardians had found her no suitable sweetheart. They were difficult to please; and she herself appeared to be in no hurry. However, Jane at twenty-two was so good-looking, so vivaciously amiable, so altogether charming, that Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Kenion knew well that they would not be able to put off the heavy day much longer. The right man, though still unseen, must have drawn very near by now.

On Thursday afternoons, weather permitting, Mrs. Thompson liked to drive in the carriage; and it was always an especial treat when the social engagements of her ladies allowed them to accompany her. As the big bay horses trotted along the smooth roads she leaned back in her seat with luxurious contentment and beamed at Jane, at Enid, at all the world.

"Now is not this much nicer—the air, the quiet enjoyment, the gentle motion—than if we were being whirled past everything in a motor-car?"

"Yes, granny, it *is* very nice."

"I fear that you would have preferred the car, Enid?"

"Oh no, mother dear. I think horses are delightful when you don't want to go far, and time is no object."

"That's just it," said Mrs. Thompson. "Time is no object. The horses help me to remember that; and I like to remember it—because it gives one the holiday feeling."

"Poor granny!" Jane had taken one of grandmamma's hands, and was squeezing it affectionately. "And it's only a *half*-holiday. You don't get enough of the holiday feeling. . . . Oh, where's my Kodak? I must snap those children."

The carriage was stopped; Jane sprang out, and ran back to photograph three little girls in a cottage garden.

"There," said Mrs. Thompson triumphantly. "If we had been in the car, she wouldn't have seen them. We should have passed too quickly."

Jane stopped the carriage again, when they came to a point where the road turns abruptly to cross a high bridge above the railway.

"Here we are, granny. Here's your favourite view."

Mrs. Thompson had always been fond of this view of Mallingbridge; and though it was much too large for a snap-shot photograph, Jane liked it too.

Looking down from the bridge, you have Mallingbridge stretched as a map at your feet. Once the clustered roofs made a large spot four miles away in the middle of the plain. Now the roofs had encroached until very little plain was left. The town and its suburbs had rolled out in all directions, burying green meadows beneath warehouses and factories, stifling the copses with red-brick villas, planting the flowery slopes with tram-lines and iron standards. To-day the light was bad; the sun only here and there could pierce the drab clouds of smoke that rose from countless chimneys, and drifted and hung over the central part of the town; but the three big towers showed plainly enough—the square tower of St. Saviour's, the steeple of Holy Trinity, and the pinnacled monument of Bence's clock. And very plainly, with the sunshine striking it, one saw the huge dome of Bence.

A changed view, a widely extended map, since Mrs. Thompson first looked at it. But there at her feet lay the world that she had conquered and held.

Perhaps, while the horses stood champing their bits and the coachman and footman stifled yawns of ennui, Mrs. Thompson extracted from the wide view a warm and comfortable sensation of happiness and pride. She was quite happy, with every fierce passion burnt out, with the disturbing energy of the emotions nearly all gone; but with the full and satisfying work still left to her, and the zest for the work growing always keener, keeping her young of spirit, defying the years. And she was proud—very proud in her undiminished power of protecting those she loved. She had never failed to protect. Her mother,—her dull old husband,—her daughter,—her daughter's daughter: all who had touched the orbit of her strength with love had found security. And she had been able to break as well as to make. All who had served her were guarded and safe: all who had opposed her were crushed and done for.

"Shall I drive on, ma'am?"

"Yes, drive on."

The coachman and footman in their black liveries and white gloves had a grand air; the bay horses were large highly-bred beasts; the carriage was one of those four-seated victorias which are much affected by royal persons —the whole equipage offered a majestic appearance. If the route of the excursion led them by the avenues of new villas and through some of the crowded streets of the town, Mrs. Thompson's weekly outing became exactly like a queen's procession.

Hats off on either side; continuous bowing to right and left; men and women staring from open doors, running to upper windows, bumping into one another on the pavement.

"Who is it?"

"Mrs. Thompson."

"Oh!"

"What is it? I couldn't see. Was it the fire-engine?"

"No. Mrs. Thompson—taking her Thursday drive. Just gone round the corner to Bridge Street."

In Bridge Street, people on the top of trams stood up to stare at her; and if it chanced that there rode on the car some stranger to Mallingbridge, the conductor and all the passengers volubly instructed him.

"Who did you say it was?"

"Mrs. Thompson! . . . She's *Bence's*, she is. . . . Mrs. Thompson, don't I tell you? But Bence's is all hers. . . . She built that tower what you're looking at now.

. . . She gave the money to build the new hospital that we're coming to presently. . . . Mrs. Thompson! They say she's rich enough to buy the blooming town."

When she got home she thanked her companions for giving her the treat.

"It is sweet of you both—and I hope you haven't been bored. It has been the greatest treat to me."

Another of her great treats—enjoyed more rarely than the carriage drive—was on a Sunday night, when she and her granddaughter went in to Mallingbridge for the evening service at St. Saviour's Church.

"We won't ask your mother to come, because I fancy she is a little tired. But if you feel up to it?"

"*Rather*," said Jane. "I shall love it, granny."

She sat in the old pew, with Jane by her side. She had retained the places, although she could so infrequently use them; and the card in the metal frame once again read, "Mrs. Thompson, two seats."

The dim light fell softly on her white hair and pale face, on her ermine fur and the purple velvet of her mantle; and the congregation, sparse rows of vague, meaningless figures, sent shadowy glances at her back and at her sides. There was no one here now who had seen her as a bride, with her pretty hair and fresh, vividly coloured complexion; but all knew who she was, and everybody seemed to be stirred by her dignified presence. At her entrance a whisper and a movement had run along the pews. "Look! Mrs. Thompson!"

A young curate conducted the service with a kind of languid hurry. The old broad church vicar was dead, and a low church vicar had obtained the living. So there was less singing and chanting than of past days;

and the choir boys, standing or sitting in the brightly illuminated chancel, had not so much work to do. It was all one to Mrs. Thompson—the old way or the new way. The sensible view, the *business* view of the matter remained unaltered. Given a consecrated house of prayer, anyone who isn't a faddist ought to be able to pray in it.

The congregation had stood up, to recite the evening psalms in alternate verses with the curate; and Mrs. Thompson, standing very erect, looked from the darkness towards the light.

. . . "The Lord is with them that uphold my soul;" and then the congregation recited their verse.

Jane glanced at granny's face—so fine, so strong, so brave; and listened to her firm, resolute voice.

"He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: destroy thou them in thy truth."

While the curate read the next verse, Jane was still watching her granny's face.

"For," answered Mrs. Thompson, "he hath delivered me out of all my trouble; and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies."

"Glory be to the Father," said the curate, in a perfunctory tone, "and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost;"

"As it was in the beginning," said Mrs. Thompson, firmly and fervently, "is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen."