

ENGLISH HOMES IN INDIA.

PART I.—THE THREE LOVES.

PART II.—THE WRONG TURNING.

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CHAPTER XIX.

SHE had left it all behind now,—that blood-stained land, with its traitors, and its martyrs, and the awful majesty of vengeance, hallowed into justice, that was now upraising its head above the struggle.

Far away from it all, she stood on English ground again.

Her new home was to be Sir Ralph's family mansion, "Everard's Keep," of which he had told her the history.

His grandfather had died deeply in debt, and the estate had passed out of his father's hands.

All Sir Ralph's savings through life, and some prize-money, that had fallen to his share, had gone to redeem this house; and here, his mother and only sister, both widows, resided; almost entirely supported by him.

It must be their home through life, he wrote to Mary, but he had no doubt that his wife's presence there, would be as agreeable to them, as it would be pleasant to him to think that all those dear ones were safe and happy together.

Mary's first visit in England, was to her nurse. She found the old lady, and Mr. Carter, both well and comfortable, and much overjoyed to see her.

There all her New Zealand letters, (except that last one,) were discussed, and Harry's and Lotty's budding prosperity rejoiced over; nurse especially exulting in the news that the last baby was a boy, and a very fine child.

If Mary had cherished any angry thought towards her absent sister, it must have vanished now; especially, when the sight of Rose so vividly recalled their mother; but she had, long ago, freely forgiven Lotty, and had written to tell her so.

Rose had, after Mary's marriage, been placed with a clergyman's widow, near London, where Lady Everard visited her, and was in every way satisfied with the little girl's home; but, as Sir Ralph had said she might please herself as to taking Rose to live with her, she decided to do so.

The need of some one to love, was greater now than ever, for a cruel disappointment had awaited her in the letters which she had received from her husband, when she reached Bombay. At first, she searched among them, in vain, for the answer to that fervid outpouring of her whole confidence. At last she found it; words so few and cold, though always kind, that they froze up her heart towards him, henceforth.

It was as follows: "I have just received yours of the 15th, and one of a later date, at the same time. As to what you tell me in the former,—do not vex yourself any more about the matter. You and I have other things to think of just now.

"Of course it is not pleasant to find out one has been deceived, but as it can't be helped now, it is of no use to worry yourself about it.

"I have no doubt your account of the matter is the correct one."

Then he went on to talk of her journey.

And this was all.

Little wonder that it was with a sad heart Lady Everard again trod her native soil.

She did not, at first, take Rose with her to Everard's Keep.