

## IN THE TWILIGHT SIDE BY SIDE.

By RUTH LAMB.

## PART IV.

WHAT IS IT TO BE RICH?

"Labour not to be rich" (Proverbs xxiii. 4).



I WONDER if amongst us who are met together to-night, one could be found who has never said in her heart, "I wish I were rich. If I only had plenty of money, what great things I would do with it." Probably many of us have uttered the wish in the hearing of others, and have even enumerated the

uses to which we would put our wealth if we only had it.

I notice, dear girls, that very few people associate the idea of riches with anything but a purse filled to overflowing from an inexhaustible source. To be rich in the estimation of most persons, means the being able to indulge every wish without stint. To be freed from all anxiety about ways and means not only for to-morrow, but through the whole of their lives. To feel that they have only to stretch out their hands and to gather in all the things that are desirable in the eyes of mankind, but which are beyond the reach of most of us.

The craving after something more and better, at least in our own eyes, than we possess, is born with us. The babe that cannot speak grasps a rattle in his tiny fist with a sense of riches, and laughs at its jingle until he catches sight of another child with a more attractive toy. Then he stretches out his free hand and struggles till he nearly throes himself out of his nurse's arms in his eagerness to seize it. The toy may be given to him to hold for a while, because he is but a babe, and other children often show the best side of their natures in being willing to deny themselves in order that these little ones may be happy. But the babe, with both his own hands filled, cares not that others have both theirs empty. Truly in this respect he is only a miniature type of us children of larger growth.

We hug our treasures, and it is to be feared that many of us selfish children of an all-loving and bountiful Father from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, enjoy our blessings and comforts the more, because they are not common to all our neighbours.

I appeal to you who are listening to me. Is it not so with too many of us? Have not some amongst you derived special pleasure from the thought that the pretty material you had just bought for a frock was an "exclusive design?" Have you not rejoiced in the knowledge that only that single length of yours was obtainable, and, therefore, none of your companions could have a dress like yours?

Again; have you not been terribly annoyed that a style which you thought unknown and unseen in your own neighbourhood because you had chosen it in town, had been already appropriated by a girl companion who had far less to spend than yourself. Perhaps, too, she wore her less costly garment with a grace you could not imitate, or the hat, daintily trimmed by her own deft fingers, crowned a face which you were constrained to confess was fairer than your own. So with one thing and the other you could not bring yourself to find any pleasure in the thought that she, having little to spend, could look so well in her simpler clothing. The very sight of her smiling face and trim figure was an offence. It made you feel poorer and as though you had failed to get a fair return for your money; because, despite her comparative poverty, she was feeling richer than yourself.

I have wandered a little from my starting place to present, by the way, a familiar picture as an illustration of our subject—"What is it to be rich?" Can you not realise from what I have just said, that, to the selfish, riches consist not merely in what they have, but in the fact that others do not possess the same things.

I have a special object in view to-night. I know that our gathering of girls includes representatives of all classes. The high born and the lowly, the toilers for daily food and the daughters of parents so wealthy that their children have only to ask and to have the wherewithal to buy soft raiment of fine linen and silk, and costly lace and glittering jewels. I know that here meet alike, the fashioner and the wearer of the Court dress in which some fair young girl makes her first courtesy to our beloved Queen. The general servant in a busy house, the ill-paid seamstress, the young shopwoman, the earnest, loving worker amongst the neglected and downtrodden can all be found joining in our twilight talks. There are many amongst us who are not girls and who yet love to sit with us in the twilight. They left their girlhood behind them years ago, but, in looking back upon it, they realise the mistakes they made and are ready to avail themselves of our meetings, because, as many have told me, they find them helpful. I think our subject to-night will suit people of all ages. When our talk is ended, I trust the rich amongst us will feel richer still, and those who consider themselves poor will find that if they are not really rich, they have only themselves to blame.

Have not you and I lain awake many a time in order to indulge in visions of untold wealth and of the good use we would make of it if it were really ours? I frankly plead guilty to having done this at intervals all my life. We do not generally begin by wishing for vast sums. Our first ideas are comparatively modest, but, as we dream on, our desires increase.

Only a few days ago I was talking to a grey-haired man on the subject. He was poor, but he owned that if he happened to lie wakeful upon his bed, he generally occupied himself in disposing of visionary riches.

"I have a friend who owns to the same failing," he added, "but he goes far beyond me. He laughs and asks, 'Where is the use of troubling about trifles when one is only dreaming of wealth?' When I began I only set myself to consider what I would do with ten thousand pounds if I had it. Now I never stop short of imagining myself a millionaire."

*Imagination has no Boundary Walls.*—Those who begin to dream about wealth soon

find this out. Ever and always, those who have it and those who indulge in golden dreams have one thing in common. They consider that in order to feel rich, they must have something more than they already possess.

To all of you, my dear ones, who sigh over scantily-filled purses and say, "I wish I had plenty of money;" I say, "How much would plenty mean? and what would you do with it?"

I dare say most of you would begin modestly. You would name a sum which would sound trifling in the ears of those who already possess far more, and who yet say as you did a moment ago, "I wish I had plenty of money," for the more people have the more they want. Probably you, who would ask for little to-day, would find that your wants had increased in greater proportion than your means, and you would be sighing out the same old wish before the year had gone its round.

What would you do with wealth if you had it? I address this question to each one of you who, sitting with me this evening in the twilight, is longing for "plenty of money."

I do not expect your answers will reach my ears or come to me in writing, though many of you do put your thoughts on paper for me to read. I often deeply regret my inability to reply to you individually, although I can and do sympathise with and pray for each and all.

Many a girl's answer would come quickly enough if she were not ashamed to tell. Do I not know from the confession of some of our members, that self takes the first place with them? That they hate to think such is the case and that they fight against it, but find how stubborn is the foe and how hard to vanquish.

So with the selfish nature, the first thought which would come along with wealth would be, "How can I gain the most enjoyment out of my new possessions?" The lover of finery and show who has stood outside the shops, vainly coveting glittering jewels and costly raiment, would now enter confidently and strive, by lavish expenditure, to outshine those whom she had formerly almost hated for having the power to wear such costly things.

So too with the girl who was vain of her beauty and yet thought it needed rich apparel to render it irresistible. Personal adornment would be her first thought. A selfish one, for though she might wish to be pleasing to other eyes, her own gratification would come first of all.

Another who had a longing to travel would hasten to indulge her right and natural wish, only, if she placed its gratification first of all, she might ignore the fact that for the time being, her real duty lay at home.

Again, girls are like their elders in being ambitious; but ambition should be well directed. Sometimes it takes the form of striving to win admission to what is called "higher society." In such a case, riches would be used as a stepping-stone to attain this end, and then—I hardly like to utter the thought which, however, will not be silenced.

Have not you and I known some who have in their days of increased prosperity, turned their backs upon friends who had loved, helped and cared for them, despite their poverty. Riches had made them independent of such friends, and, though conscience told them it was mean and cowardly to do it, they would pass without appearing to see the former companion who wore a last year's jacket, or a cheap frock.

Vain and selfish people have generally