

turned round quickly. It was George Blakesley.

"I am so glad to see you again," he said; "I called at your house this afternoon to apologise for not coming last night, and I heard where you had gone, and that you should come and look at the flowers, so I told them I would try and find you, and bring you home again."

"No," she said, hesitatingly, for she had so wanted to be alone.

"Yes, do let me," he pleaded; and then she laughed a little, she could not help it, for he seemed to think it would be such a treat, and so she assented, and they went up the avenue once more, and he bought her a cluster of roses at one of the grand shops, though Dorothy protested against it; he seemed so pleased to see them in her hand, though he said little, and Dorothy could not help—it was not in woman's nature to help it—being a little flattered and pleased, and contrasting his manner and that of the others, who let her live among them unnoticed and uncared for. He came at a time, too, when she was so unconsciously longing for sympathy, or to be soothed, and raised from all to which the past few days had lowered her.

So they set out together on their way back. It was nearly half-past six when they left the centre avenue, and it was a long way to Hampstead, but they both liked walking.

"I was so glad when I saw you," he said; "I caught sight of that little funeral-like plume on the top of your hat, and thought you were beneath it. They had got a good way on their journey when he said this."

He was always quiet, and did not talk very much, even that evening, and Dorothy looked up at him, at his broad shoulders and faded straggling beard, and at his untidy dress—he was always careless in his personal appearance, and yet he could not be mistaken for anything but a gentleman. He talked to her, as Adrian Fuller never did now, of books, (but of books that were altogether of another type from those she had loved to linger over in the shady garden) and of his work and studies, and many things that were beyond Dorothy, until at last she wondered if after all he might not be able to understand her, and to answer that question which she was always vainly asking herself. They were nearly at Haverstock Hill before she found courage to ask him about it. He had been silently walking by her side for some minutes, as if almost forgetful of her presence, and yet he was thinking of her intensely.

"You are so fond of work," she said wonderingly; it seemed strange that any one should find happiness in what so many tried to shirk.

"Of course I am; and if I were not I would make myself so."

"Do you know, Mr. Blakesley," she said, at last, with a sigh, "I do so often wonder what we live for!"

"The old question, Dorothy, in another form," he said; "we live chiefly to be of use to others, to do some good which shall repay the world for its life and light and shelter."

"The old answer," she said, fretfully; "you think every one should work. Yet, for instance, what *could* I do?"

"You can help those around you, and try to make their lives better, if only in little things; and you can do a great deal."

"No, there is nothing I can do, excepting just reading and playing, and things like other girls."

"Do what you can do best, or learn something and strive to do it as best it can be done, and improve upon it and make it useful to others. There is always plenty of work for those whose hands are willing,

and, depend upon it, it is one of the keys to happiness. Everything must be paid for, Dorothy, and the good we do and the works we leave, are the means with which we pay for our place in the world. We cannot even rest till we have earned the right to enjoy it."

"But I do so hate work," she said; "and it isn't *wrong* to do nothing, is it?"

"I think it is," he answered; "certainly, from a religious point of view it is. Half the teaching of Christ may be summed up in helping those around us, and working. Nay, if we do these two things properly and thoroughly, we shall have accomplished half of our duty towards our fellow-men. We have no more right to squander away our lives in idleness than we have to squander away our own or even another person's money with which we are entrusted."

"I shall never be of any use," she said, hopelessly. They were near Hampstead now, and she was wondering if Adrian Fuller was there as usual. "Did you see Netta?" she asked, changing the conversation suddenly—"I mean this afternoon?"

"Yes, I went out into the garden to her," he answered; "she was sitting under the sycamore-tree with Mr. Fuller."

She turned away with a quick movement of impatience.

"There is a short cut this way," she said, presently, about to turn off.

"Let us go the long way," he answered, taking her hand, and drawing it tightly through his arm. "I want to talk to you," he said, awkwardly, but she only shrank away from him. "You know what it is about without my telling you. Don't you think you could give me a different answer from last time?"

"No, oh no! indeed!"

He did not reply, only still kept hold of the hand upon his arm. They were among the Hampstead lanes by this time, and no one could see them, so they went a little farther on their way; she thinking how different this was from the tone of those at home. They did not care for her; and here was George Blakesley by her side longing to spend his whole life with her. She turned round and looked at him, as if to see whether he was different from other people. He was not handsome like Mr. Fuller, that was certain, and she remembered that Tom had said he was "washed out," and she understood what he meant. No, he did not look like a hero, and yet there was something gentle about him that pleased her, especially then, when she longed so much for sympathy. He looked down into her face, and he had soft kind eyes. "Well, my dear little child," he said, softly, "what is it?" There was something so grateful to the girl in his manner, and he called her child, too, just as Adrian Fuller always did.

"I was wondering," she said, in a dazed manner, "if you—" but she stopped, and could not finish the sentence. He did for her.

"If I love you? was that it, Dorothy? I love you more than any one in the world," he said; "and the greatest desire I have in life is to marry you."

No one had ever loved her but he, this clever man beside her, who said he cared for her more than for any one in the world. She could not help being touched by it, and it soothed her pride too, which had been so wounded, and for a moment the thought shot through her, that if she married George Blakesley, Adrian Fuller could never again think and tell Netta (her cheeks burnt with shame as she remembered it) that she was in love with him. The tears came into her eyes, and rolled slowly down her cheeks, and he, seeing them, bent over her, saying tender things and soothing ones, begging her to care for

him as he did for her, his dear little innocent girl, whom he had not been able to forget.

"Try and care for me, dear," he said; "you shall not be married yet, or annoyed, and I will wait till you have learned to think I am not so dreadful as you do now."

"It isn't that," she said; "I don't think you dreadful, but I should never do, indeed, and I hate work!"

"Then you shall do nothing, my child, till some day you have learnt to hate *that*, and then we will plod on together. We cannot live our whole lives in day-dreams."

"And I should be so sorry to leave them"—she was thinking of home, but suddenly she stopped, for she knew how little they would miss her; she was nothing much to them, and though George Blakesley said she was the world to him—"I mean Will and Sally and Tom."

"They should come and see you and you them as often as you please."

She went on a little way farther. They had walked about so long; it was getting dark, and the shadows were clinging about the trees, and lingering low over the fields—the trees and fields among which she had walked with Adrian Fuller only three months ago.

"The same, the same, yet not the same. Oh never, never more!"

"Well?" he said; and he came to a standstill, and stood looking at her.

She looked back at him long and wearily. She was so tired of the world and of all in it, that she did not care much what became of her; but she thought it would be something great to have the power of making a whole life happy, as he said she could make his; she, a simple girl who knew nothing beyond her own fancies and dreams, and scraps of knowledge picked up in the wild weedy garden at home, and he, a clever man, sought for in society, and listened to with attention by the thoughtful and educated men of the day. She thought, too, of his words long ago, that in life we should all try to make something beautiful, and that she could make his life so.

"Would it make you so *very* happy?" she asked, slowly and sadly; for it was like taking yet a last farewell of the old life and the old dreams.

"My dear child," he said, gravely, holding down her hands and looking into her face, "it would make me more happy than any words can tell."

She made no reply, only let her head droop low down on her breast to hide the tears on her cheeks again.

"Very well," she said, faintly, at last; and then George Blakesley knew that he was accepted; and so Dorothy was engaged.

She almost tottered on, clinging to his arm, not that she repented yet, at any rate, only the feeling was so new and strange. Then suddenly, when they got to the gate, she began to realise all that had happened, and to feel afraid.

"Don't tell them," she said; "don't let any one know."

"Why not?" he answered. "They must be told, you know."

"Oh, but not to-night," she pleaded.

"You are not ashamed of me, Dorothy?"

"No, oh no; only they will all be in the garden," and she was almost thankful when she thought of how Netta and Adrian were probably together—for what she had done.

"Well, I am not going to stand up and make a speech, dear; you must leave things to me now," and he touched her hand.

And then, with a caged feeling, and a frightened step, she entered the house.

(To be Continued.)