

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN.

CHAPTER X.—IN THE FIRE-LIGHT.

Dorothy was sitting over the study fire alone that evening. She was beginning to realize how, when we are very young, we walk hand in hand along one path with many others round us, but as we grow older the path begins to branch out here and there, until at last we all, or most of us, journey separate ways. Tom had gone to business that morning for the first time in his life. He was nearly seventeen, and "it was time that he did something," his father had said to George Blakesley. The Woodwards made very few friends, but with the few they generally were very intimate, and they consulted Mr. Blakesley now on all their private affairs, and he had been instrumental in getting the sturdy Tom a junior clerkship in an insurance broker's. It was not much, he said, and at first he would get no salary at all, but it would lead to better things perhaps. Sally had evinced some crude talent for drawing, and had gone to the School of Art in Street. Caroline Barker, close by, went, and that was how Sally came to be a student; and Caroline, who was older by some eight years, took charge of the little girl to and fro. Will had not come home from school yet, though it was nearly four o'clock, and getting dark, for the December days were very short. Mrs. Woodward had gone to read her book in her husband's room at the office. It was "making-up day" for the paper, and they disliked being apart even on necessary occasions, so Dolly—how the old childish name sticks to her—was alone waiting for her brothers and sisters, and longing to know how Tom had got on during his first day at work. She expected Mr. Blakesley presently too. She was almost angry when she remembered how completely he was established on intimate relations with her people; it was such treachery to Adrian Fuller, in her estimation, and she, at any rate, had never let the interloper usurp his place, though she could not but own that he was very good and clever, and it had been kind of him to find a post for Tom.

Six months more, she was thinking, as the fire flickered and sent a pleasant glow round the cosy room, and Mr. Fuller would be home. How our imaginations turn and alter the current of our lives! and on how slight a foundation will they build up realities that form the histories of our lives! The quaint child had developed strangely since the morning Venus had been buried—how much she hardly knew herself. She only did know that Adrian Fuller's parting words haunted her strangely and sweetly, that his letter was hidden away, yet taken out secretly, and read again and again, and that she lived and waited simply to see the day that brought him home. It only wanted six months more to the time, she thought; when the leaves began to bud, and the swallows came to herald the summer, there would be only a little time longer to wait ere he came.

Then the door opened, and George Blakesley entered.

"I wanted to hear how Tom got on today," he said, "so I have come, and hope you'll give me some tea presently." He gave up his dinner many a day without a murmur, to come and see her, little though she appreciated the sacrifice.

"They are all out," she answered. She did not want to be interrupted in her reverie, but he came and sat down opposite to her, ready to talk or to be silent, as she pleased. He always fidgeted her, somehow, and she could not sit and think while he was there watching her. She looked

up almost angrily, though he did not know it.

"Well!" he said, as if in answer to some strange wonder expressed in her face.

"I was thinking that it is such a pity that we live *always*," she said; "if we could wake and be conscious on the happy days, and sleep through all the weary ones."

"Are you weary already?" he asked.

"No, not weary exactly, only time drags so. One can't feel an interest in everything."

"There is nothing so dangerous as the beginning of that idea," he answered. "It grows on us if we encourage it, till at last we care for nothing."

"The days are so long," she pleaded.

"Why don't you occupy yourself with work?"

"Work!" and she opened her sleepy brown eyes. "Why should I? and what is there I can do?"

"Why should you? Because work, be it what it may, is a noble occupation, and no men, and very few women, have a right to live without taking their share of it."

"But some are rich, and have no occasion."

"There is always occasion to work, but it does not always mean money-getting," he said; "nor does it mean that those who are rich should work for nothing, and so take the bread out of the mouths of those who have their living to get. There is plenty to do, to make life better for others, and those who do not want money can surely give some of their leisure and intellect for this purpose."

He stopped a minute, for the girl was looking up at him half afraid, half surprised. She hated work. And oh, how dreadful the world would be if George Blakesley governed it! He would make it full of galley-slaves.

"I think the conception of Mazzini's," he went on, "that we should regard the world as a great workshop, in which we have all to make something good and beautiful, is a very grand one, and our Master is not hard to please."

"But how can I, a woman, work?" she asked, and stopped at the sound of her own voice, and in surprise at her own words. She had never been called a woman before, even by herself.

"You can make those you know happy, and be useful to them, and you can gain knowledge, child, and help others through its means."

Then there was a long long silence, and George Blakesley looked into the fire again, and Dorothy sat watching his face by its flickering light, and thinking of the past summer days of indolence and lazy happiness into which these words of his seemed to have put a sting, yet there was something grateful in this idea of work, in theory at any rate.

"I should so like to make something good and beautiful," she said, wistfully, turning her face away from him, and looking on into the twilight, as if far away behind its shadows there was a new life awaiting for her.

"So you can," he answered, and he went over to the sofa on which she was sitting, and sat down by her; "so you can, my child," he said, gravely; "if you will, you can make my life more than beautiful for me."

"Your life!" she said, with her startled eyes wide open in surprise. "What has that to do with my work?"

"It has everything to do with mine," he answered, gently. "Don't you understand me, Dorothy," and he looked up at the low broad forehead, and into the grave

innocent eyes, and felt even then how capable she was of development into all that was great and noble in woman, or of utter shipwreck, if her character were formed by careless hands. "Don't you understand me, dear? I love you, and want you to marry me, my darling, and then we will work on together;" but she rose from her seat, and stood facing him.

"Oh no, no, no!" she said, shrinking away from the hand he stretched out as if to hold her.

Then suddenly there flashed upon her the meaning of it all—of what her day-dreams in the past had been, and for what she was waiting in the future, and sinking down on the sofa, she put her hands over her face, and burst into tears.

"Dorothy," he said, in a strange pained voice, "what is the matter, dear? Is the idea so dreadful to you, or is it only new and abrupt? Don't you think you will learn to love me a little better? You are all the world to me, my child."

"Oh, no, no, it is quite impossible!" she said, and then for a moment she thought of what her life might be with that clever matter-of-fact man, with all his notions of work, and want of sympathy with dreams and lazy happiness, and thought too of a letter hidden away in a dress. "Oh no!" she shuddered; "never, never!"

(To be continued.)

THE GOOD HUSBAND.

"Nothing," said a sweet, smiling, joyful woman, "adds so much to my happiness, as a kind word, a kind look, or a kind act from my husband. Oh, how charming, after a hard day's toil at the wash-tub, or in cooking over a hot fire for the harvest hands, or in the discharge of any other domestic duty, or after a sleepless night with a sick babe, is a kind word, a sweet kiss or a smile even, from the husband and father!"

Husbands, if you see in your wives defects, or things you wish were not so, try kindness, and see if that don't do them more good than all the unkind words and cross looks you ever gave them. "I often think," continued this happy wife, "I have the best husband in the world. He is good and kind to me in sickness and health, in joy and sorrow. We are happier than when we were married nearly twenty years ago. He never scolds me, nor brings a long catalogue of complaints against me; but comes in from his daily labour in good humor, with a smile on his lips and a sweet kiss for me and says, 'Now, Susie, dear, you have done enough to-day; put up your work.' Then he seizes little Nancy with a shower of kisses, and we sit down side by side, and chat in the cool evening breeze."

What woman in the world wouldn't make such a husband a good wife.

It is a glorious thing to see a spark in the midst of that ocean, and all the power of that ocean unable to extinguish it.

"Let us love one another out of a pure heart fervently," bearing and forbearing, dealing tenderly with one another.

PASTORS who wish to reach the masses should begin with their own people—heads of families with their own children.

PRAY that you may find time for prayer; for rest assured, that if you restrain prayer, you will never be restrained from sin.

In proportion as you have the love of Christ shed abroad in your heart, in that proportion shall ye have the heart of a weaned child.

To return to God is to come to him as a promising God, as a forgiving God, as a paternal God—as our God and Father in Jesus Christ.