

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN.

CHAPTER XXIX.—DOROTHY REFLECTS.

"It is such a lovely morning!" sighed Dorothy; "no one would think it was the end of October; and I should so like to go and sit a little while in the garden, with a cloak round me. I am so tired of trying to work, and getting nothing to do. And, after all, I never shall like work, and I cannot see its wonderful virtue, unless I gain money by it to help poor papa. Somehow," she said, with a sigh, "I think Mr. Fuller's idea of happiness was the right one—just enough to live on, and nothing to do."

She gathered a shawl round her, and looked out at the sunshiny garden, and then struggled against her longing to go and be quiet, and the feeling that she ought to find other things to do.

"I am very selfish," she said, presently—"very! I wish I could cure myself. I wonder what George Blakesley saw in me to love! It is so odd, too," she thought; "but since I have tried to work and to do better, I don't think he has cared so much for me. His love seems to be dying out, and I do not wonder at it. I am very, very selfish."

"Dorothy, will you come into my study?" called Mr. Woodward. "I want to speak to you, my dear! I am not well."

So she laid down the book she had taken up, and threw aside her shawl, and went.

"Come here," he said, as she entered, "and sit down. You have been such a good girl lately, dear; I don't know what we should have done without you!"

And Dorothy's heart gave a throb of satisfaction.

"I want to talk to you, you know, about how things have gone lately at the office; I fear they are worse even than we imagined. Hunter, the manager, in whom we trusted thoroughly, has been playing us false, and the paper has gone altogether to smash. I thought perhaps something might be saved, but I see now it is impossible. I shall be in the *Gazette* next week, I suppose, and these things will have to be sold."

"Sold?"

"Yes, dear; I have been thinking that perhaps you and your mother had better go into some cheap lodgings before the crash comes. You must comfort her as well as you can, dear, and manage everything, for there is no money. The lease of this house will be sold, of course."

"And shall we never come back here?"

"I suppose not," he said, and turned sadly away; and she saw that there were tears in her father's eyes. "I wish I had settled your mother's money on her, and never risked it in this business. I shall never forgive myself as long as I live, but I did it for the best, and of course I have my children to think of, and I wanted to make some provision for you."

The words fell on Dorothy's heart like a reproach. He had ruined himself, hoping to provide for his children, and she had been dreaming her life away, and Tom had been spending his money in pleasure. She would make no promises, she thought, but things should be different in future, and she gave a long sigh, and thought how different her life might have been.

"I could never separate my dreams from my realities," she thought, "and sufficiently realise the latter."

"Do you think you could find some cheap lodgings, dear?" Mr. Woodward asked. "I want your mother to be out of this place by Saturday. It would distress her so to see all our things sold. You must get some furnished rooms for us, as cheaply as possible, and get all your clothes away,

and you and your mother and Sally and the boys must get there as quickly as possible. I wish Will could go on with his school a little longer. There, that is all, dear. I am very unwell; I wish I was not obliged to go out!" he sighed.

Then Dorothy kissed her father tenderly, and went to think about how she should manage all he wished.

"And while he was in all this sorrow," she thought, "I was thinking of going to read my book and idle about in the garden. I wish I could see Mr. Blakesley, he would help me. Oh, to think we must leave this house!" and she tried vainly to keep back her tears. "It will seem like the end of a life to us all; for we shall never have such happy days again!" And she thought of the early summer days, and all the happy hours she had spent with Mr. Fuller. "Those were the happiest days of my life," she thought, "and they are all gone for ever."

CHAPTER XXX.—DOROTHY IN THE WORKSHOP.

Dorothy went out an hour later, and, after a long search, found some furnished rooms which she thought would do, and took them, subject to her mother's approval. They were shabby dreary-looking rooms, near to St. John's Wood, but the best she could get at the price.

"I wonder if Mr. Blakesley will come and see us this evening," she thought again. "He promised to try and get me something—among his friends, too."

It was strange how she was learning to lean on the man she did not love. Suddenly, as she passed a shop, she saw, written on a card displayed in the window, "Wanted, a governess. A young lady required to teach three children English, French, and Music; inquire," etc.

"I wonder if I should do for that," she thought. And, after a long deliberation, she determined to go and try. The address given was only a little way off, and so it was not far to go. "I don't know what to say," she thought; and her hand shook as she knocked at the door, and her feet lagged painfully as she ascended the stairs to the little showy drawing-room to which the servant conducted her. Then she remembered how often George Blakesley had said that work was always honourable and noble, and all her courage came back, and with it a thought that almost made her joyful—she, going to try and work in earnest now, and help her poor weary father! She had found something to live for!

There was something in the manner and the face of the quiet brown-eyed girl that interested the lady of the house, when she appeared. Dorothy was no longer the frightened dreamy child, as she sat and told what she could do, and explained that she had never been out before, but that circumstances had arisen which made her wish to work, and she was ready to do so.

"But I should only want you to come for three hours in the morning, and I only thought of giving twenty pounds a year," Mrs. Gibson said, half afraid that the dignified lady-like girl would scarcely condescend to teach the three children of a poor doctor's wife, who had a struggle to make things look better than they were. But Dorothy said she would willingly undertake the office, and so, when she left, after playing some snatches on the piano to the mother of her future pupils, it was with the knowledge that if, on enquiry, Mrs. Gibson found that all Dorothy said was true, she was forthwith to be installed, for three hours daily, as the governess of the small Gibsons. One thing she had stipulated—*i. e.*, that she should be paid weekly.

"It will be a comfort to me," she said, frankly, feeling it neither shame nor a sin

to confess what so many try to hide—poverty; "for I am very poor, and this money will be a great help."

How she walked home that afternoon Dorothy never knew. It seemed as if she trod on air, as if her heart danced so wildly that her feet could scarcely help keeping time, and walking was a trial, when she longed to run, as she would have done a year ago, reckless of all appearances.

"I am so thankful," she cried to herself, "I am going to work. I am no longer human lumber, as Mr. Blakesley said. I am going to work, and to be of use."

This was the burden of her thoughts. She had a right now to the light of the sun, and to watch the falling leaves, and to breathe the fresh air of that glorious autumn day, and to walk over the world's pleasant paths; for was she not one of the world's workers, a part of its great machinery, necessary to others, and entering into their views, and making them, or having now the power of making them, better? "And I will!" she thought, while the tears came into her eyes; "and if I cannot make one thing good and beautiful, I may make many others just a little better, and doing this, I shall be satisfied."

Yes, Dorothy had found something to live for at last, and, unconsciously, she was beginning already in the world's great workshop to make one thing beautiful, and that one her own life. She caught sight of her home, and all the light died out of her heart, for she remembered the shabby lodgings to which they were to remove. Her father was out when she entered, and her mother was sitting sadly alone, grieving, as was her wont.

"Do you know we are going to leave here next week, Dorothy?" she asked.

"Yes, dear mamma!" and she told her of the rooms she had taken, and Mrs. Woodward's tears began to flow.

"I am sure it will kill me!" she sobbed, "and your poor father too. It is such a pity he was so thoughtless, and he is not well either. It is breaking his heart as well as mine. He is so scrupulous, too; he will give up every stick we have, and won't let me keep a thing back, excepting our clothes."

"He is quite right, dear mamma."

"Yes, but I don't know what will become of us," her mother said, sadly. "We shall be starving when the winter comes."

"Oh no, mamma; oh no! we will all help. And, oh, dear mamma, I have got work already," and she threw herself down on her knees, and put her head down on Mrs. Woodward's shoulder, and told her about her pupils.

"And so I will help papa, and we all will, and take care of you dear, dear mamma!" and the pent-up feeling in her heart gave way, and the tears rained down her cheeks, as she felt her mother clinging to her; but yet it seemed as if the old self whispered and reproached her with all the past idle years.

"How could I be so selfish! oh, how could I!" she thought, bitterly. "Oh, if I could only become better!" she longed, till, in her eagerness, the words became almost a prayer.

"Oh, Dorothy dear!" said Mrs. Woodward, an hour later, "I forgot to tell you that Mr. Fuller came while you were out. He has been in the West of England, but is going abroad soon, and came to say good-bye. He said he should write to you."

CHAPTER XXXI.—TOM DECLARES HIMSELF.

It was a chilly evening, but they had wrapped themselves up well, and stood for the last time under the sycamore-tree, Dorothy in the midst, striving hard to keep back her tears. Sally made no effort to hide hers, but let them fall freely. It was their last evening at Hampstead.