

IN THE TWILIGHT SIDE BY SIDE.

By RUTH LAMB.



PART XII.
TWO YEARS'
HARVESTS.
"For ye
are our glory
and joy" (1 Thess. ii. 20.)

THIS evening is a very interesting one to me, my dear girl friends. It marks the completion of a second year, during which you and I have sat together "In the Twilight Side by Side," and talked on many different subjects. Different, yet all of them important in reference to our temporal and eternal welfare. We met at first as strangers, in a sense. Now we are close friends, even though parted by distance and many differences of nationality, and even of faith in numberless cases.

You, my dear ones, far and near, have been very good to the old friend who delights to give rein to happy fancies, and pictures you, all round and about her, during these talks.

Yes, it is quite true that I indulge in day-dreams which even go beyond this present life. You have been very kind and sweet in opening your hearts to me, and letting me know assuredly that our gatherings have been helpful, and more than helpful to so many. Our talks have sown seeds of thought, which have brought longings after higher and better things. Blessings have followed in hearts and homes; for those little seeds have fructified there, and produced greater happiness.

Thanks be to God for all. Our meetings would have been vain, our talks unfruitful, but for His blessing.

You, who read and love your Bibles, will call to mind that text where St. Paul writes, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together" (or fellow-workers) "with God."

It seems to me that however weak the instruments, however limited may be the field in which we work for God's glory and our neighbour's good, the same spirit should be in us that animated the Great Apostle in his wider sphere. There should be true spiritual unity amongst all who take part in it. No longing after chief places or greater meed of praise. No seeking after that field only, which gives promise of the richest harvest, or can be worked with the greatest pleasure to ourselves. No wish to see our names heading

ing, watering, cherishing the growth of all that is worth keeping, the doing our part faithfully and humbly, yet doing all in simple dependence on our God to "give the increase" and the joy of harvest.

Dear ones, in looking back on our two happy years together, I would humbly and thankfully appropriate for you and for me—the teaching of the words I have quoted.

We met together, two years ago, in the hope that from our meetings blessings would come to ourselves, and through us to others.

I say "we," for I cannot imagine that mere curiosity induced you to listen, month by month, to the messages I had to deliver. I would fain believe that many of you came as prayerfully as I did from the first, and that, knowing our meetings and conversations must produce results of some kind, we asked and hoped for blessed ones.

As time went on, many of our members realised their spiritual needs; saw themselves and their lives in a different light; learned to shrink from and dislike what they had once desired, and to love that "better part" to which they had been more than indifferent. What had once satisfied their hearts' desires was found insufficient. They had new longings after holiness and Christ-likeness, and desired to be the servants and children of their Father-God.

Hearts that had been narrowed by selfishness began to expand under the blessed influence of Christian love. Some that had seldom prayed, even for themselves, began to offer earnest petitions for each and all of us who met "In the Twilight Side by Side."

With such results to rejoice over, surely you and I may enter into the spirit of those words of St. Paul, which I have just quoted to you, because, in our little way, we may humbly claim the glorious title of "labourers (or fellow workers) together with God."

If any little seeds, sown by me, have fallen upon good ground and brought forth fruit, it is because He, who gave the good seed for His human servants to sow, and to water, has also given the increase.

So, dear girl friends, I call upon you to join me in thanking God with hearts and voices for every good that has come through our twilight gatherings. For every right thought; for every unselfish act; for every holy desire; for every opportunity to do good to others; for the spirit of sisterly love that inspired the act; for every step that we have been enabled to take on the heavenward way; for every conquered temptation and besetting sin subdued, let us join together in praising God.

I thank Him, with all my heart, for having stirred so many of you to open your minds to

the list of labourers, or thinking, that because our share in the work differs from the portion undertaken by another, therefore it is the more important.

Many operations must precede the feast of ingathering. The ploughing, the clearing away of stones and weeds, the harrowing, sow-

ing. How you have cheered me by letting me be quite sure that God has given such a blessed increase! And it is so delightful to note that, whilst acknowledging the help and comfort which have come to yourselves, many manifest a longing to be of use to others and to pass on a share of the good received.

One writes, "I have often wondered what I could do for Christ's sake after one of the twilight talks." She adds, "I have been visiting one cripple for weeks, and visiting her has made me long to do something for others." So she is trying to enlist the help of friends, and has induced three to dress dolls. She lends what books she has, but not having many, is begging old books and toys for her helpless friends whom she regards as her Master's representative, quoting "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

Here is another practical outcome of our meetings. "I wonder whether you know of any girl who would like the comfort of a correspondent, one who would write oftener than once a month? It is work for the Master that I would love to do, if I could. I am but a girl, not yet twenty, and not very old in the Christian life, but I am very happy, except sometimes, and I wondered if I could help one that is not so happy. I am hoping to be a missionary in a few years, and I long to help others."

We have many missionaries in our ranks already, for though not openly known as such, they are giving their prayers, their sympathy and the best powers they have on behalf of those whose needs lie nearest to their hands.

I have been specially touched by the interest which some dear correspondents have manifested in my girl friend who signed herself "One who is Miserable." Not knowing her real address, I could not pass on their letters and kind expressions of sympathy or wishes to be of use. I cannot help hoping—even believing that she must be happier now, because of prayers offered on her behalf and the loving interest manifested in her by so many.

One of my greatest pleasures during these two past years has been owing to the sweet letters which you have sent me in such numbers and bringing such precious tidings. On the other hand, my greatest regret in connection with our happy intercourse is due to the fact that I have been utterly unable to respond as I longed to do. Yet I should like each dear writer to know that I have rejoiced with her in her joys, sympathised with her in sorrow, longed to help where help was needed, and where I was unable to render it, I have at least besought Our Father in heaven to give and to do what I could not, and to bless, each and all, as He, in equal love and wisdom should see best.

I little thought, when we began to sit "In the Twilight Side by Side," that our meetings would be continued beyond a year. Now a second is closing, and still it seems we have not wearied of each other. Strangers at first, then acquaintances, next friends and confidants, now claiming each other as—what shall I say? An old mother with countless daughters scattered over many lands, yet all claiming and receiving a share of love, all finding a corner in a heart which warms towards all girls? More than this. The affection must needs go beyond girls, and the heart expand to welcome older tenants, for wives and mothers sit with us and sympathise in all our aspirations. May this fact be the