

do not risk meeting there that Musgrove. You have made mischief enough, I should hope."

And Mrs. Swannington, with as much dignity as her small height and substantial figure was capable of, went out of the room, her high heels tapping on the floor and seeming to Beattie like the sound of hammers driving the words she had just heard into her heart.

She was sincerely sorry to have been a disappointment to her aunt, sorrier still to feel that it was no longer possible for her to do just as she was told with the simple obedience of her childhood. Her affectionate nature shrank from even the appearance of ingratitude, and remembering how much care had been bestowed upon her, how many luxuries she had been given, how smooth the way of her life had been made hitherto, she was genuinely grieved that she could not repay it by doing what was asked of her. But the sacrifice of her entire happiness was a large price to pay, and to marry a man for whom she had not even affection to gratify a mere whim on the part of Mrs. Swannington was impossible to her. The only other course apparently was to leave her home and her relations and earn her own living. When she had decided on the latter course she thought her of her old school-mistress as the most likely person to help her. She had a little money of her own and would have more when she came of age, so that she would not be quite dependent on her earnings and could, if necessary, pay for board and lodging in the house of some lady who would act as a chaperone.

At first Miss Williams would not take Beattie seriously, and as she could not very well explain matters more fully than she had done, and the reason for leaving home seemed exceedingly trivial, and as she could not say anything to blame her aunt, and Miss Williams would not believe that the latter could actually wish to get rid of her, she found it hard to convince her that she did not merely want to play at being independent. When, however, she had succeeded in persuading the schoolmistress that she was in earnest, Miss Williams was not five minutes in consideration of the subject before she had a plan ready.

"You can't expect much at first, you understand," she said regarding Beattie rather severely. "You somewhat neglected your opportunities at school, and you have had no proper training of any kind."

Beattie humbly admitted that such was the case.

"In addition to this, I much doubt if you have had any preparation for the perseverance, self-control and endur-

ance of monotony called for in any steady work."

Beattie said she was afraid she had not, but was willing to try and acquire them now.

"Then your good looks are against you. A pleasant face is all very well, but beauty is, I consider, a drawback to a working woman, except in the dramatic and musical professions, neither of which I suppose you are fitted to embrace."

Beattie shook her head. Her prospects certainly sounded gloomy.

"Then you are too young to do paid church work, in my estimation. I do not approve of girls listening to all the talk of the coarse women they visit in districts; or else by your sympathetic manners you might be useful in that way, though possibly you are neither serious enough nor steady enough for the responsibilities of such a life."

Beattie was silent.

"Fortunately," went on Miss Williams, "women, many of them of the type despised by young girls and laughed at by the fashionable and the frivolous have, during the last generation, by their zeal and steadfastness, opened out a variety of professions for their weaker sisters to follow into. It is no longer necessary for every girl situated as you are to become a crushed and selfless companion to a rich lady or an over-worked and under-paid nursery governess."

"I am fond of children," began Beattie, seeing a glimmer of light through the gloom of her disabilities.

Miss Williams silenced her by a wave of the arm.

"I might," she continued, "enumerate many more things for which you are unfit, but perhaps it is as well to turn to those for which you have some qualification. I am sure of this. You must have variety, human companionship, and association with those who will not crush your belief in the possibilities of love and faith and tenderness. Some women can stand this sort of thing. You cannot. You need love. It is a weakness. But one must take people as they are. I remember at school you were a great favourite with the children in the first class; I have often seen you play with them; you did it with zest and heartiness. I believe your work must lie among children."

Beattie's eyes shone. Why had she not thought of this herself? It was the very life of all others she would desire, to be with the children, to help them, minister to them, share in their little joys and sorrows.

"Most lovers of children," went on the governess, "go to the sick. They seek them out in slums, they nurse them in hospitals; but for you I should say your work should be with the healthy,

for various reasons, on both your side and theirs. Begin by learning how to play with and teach them. Qualify to be a kindergarten teacher. That will suffice for a beginning. Something else will follow."

Beattie was delighted. Here was a new world opening before her. She took it as an answer to her prayer that God would make use of her. Like every other gain it had come to her through loss; but she had learnt enough of life to know that that is one of its unchanging laws. The gain is gain notwithstanding. To spend her life with and for little children seemed something worth doing. The kindergarten teaching would be a beginning; but Miss Williams' words had opened a possible vista for the future; there was work for her among the neglected little ones in dark and narrow alleys, work among the waifs who were even more homeless than they, work among children who were crippled and suffering, work enough to employ all her time and strength and influence and love. She would learn what child life should be from the children of the rich, and then she would be better fitted to go on her mission to their dear little brothers and sisters, whose tender lives were opening to darkness and rough handling just when they needed most sunshine and sheltering care that they might blossom forth into beauty.

Mr. Swannington was very angry when he heard that the threatened change was going in reality to take place. It seemed to mar his dignity that his niece should go out into the world and earn her own living. Mrs. Swannington, too, who had not weighed her words and had scarcely believed that Beattie would act upon them, though they had been repeated more than once, was a good deal annoyed. But the more she saw her husband was bent on keeping Beattie the less was she disposed to do so. Mr. Swannington had a long argument with his wife which terminated in their first serious quarrel, because during the course of it he accused her of being in part to blame for the disagreements between her and his niece. He begged her pardon afterwards, and in the reconciliation which followed agreed that perhaps the cause of dissension had better be removed. As Beattie was also of this opinion they parted good friends, and the girl went to live with a sister of Miss Williams who sometimes took in pupils at the school whose parents lived in the country or abroad. The Swanningtons gave out to their friends that Beattie was tired of being at home, and they had given in to a fad of hers about teaching. But they soon expected her back.

(To be continued.)

