

of my people here," he said, "and I was just longing for a talk about home and my dear old father and mother. You see, we are all very fond of each other, and when I am absent from home, I just get brim full of longing to talk about them, especially the old folks, to someone who understands. I saw you and your husband together, and I said to myself, 'I will have a talk to that lady if I can manage it. She will understand.' I waylaid you this morning on purpose."

I am not going to repeat the talk which followed, but many a time since have I pictured that dear lad's bright, honest face and the loyal affection and reverence with

which he spoke of his parents and his home. I was proud that he had chosen me to be his listener, believing that I could enter into his feelings, and I often think of his words, "One can only talk of the old folks and home to those who understand."

Is it not so with you, dear girl-friends, who have learned to say of God, "He is my Father," and of the home above, "I am distant from it, but I have a share in it; not on account of any deservings of my own, but because I believe in Jesus, and He bought for me a place in His Father's house of many mansions, when He hung on the cross for my sake."

Do not you and I want to talk together about our new-born hopes, our fears of failure, our difficulties and the stumbling-blocks which lie thick on the narrow way? Of efforts which have proved vain, of triumphs too, I trust, for I am sure that many are in earnest and seek the strength from God of which they are in hourly need. I have your written words before me, and at our next meeting I hope to touch upon several subjects that will have a common interest for us all. Ask God, my dear ones, that a special blessing may attend the effort to be helpful to each other.

(To be continued.)

DICK HARTWELL'S FORTUNE.

CHAPTER IV.

"Of course it's very painful, Dick; the worry of it has made me quite ill," said Minnie, in a weak voice. "But I've never got over something which happened several weeks ago. My trust in you was shaken. If you had really, really loved me, you could not have thrown away five pounds on a strange girl. It is best for us to say good-bye."

She held out her hand, and at that moment the bells began to ring for the eleven o'clock service. It was time to go. Never more would he walk to church with Minnie; there was not another word to be said. She had expected, perhaps, that this parting scene would have a different ending. A look of surprise crossed her face when he held her hand for a second, and then left the room without uttering even a farewell.

He walked away from the house, and on and on, till he came to some wide fields where the corn was gathered into sheaves. Then he followed a narrow path, just under the hedge, where the sweet little pink blossoms of the wild convolvulus grew close to his feet. Overhead was the great pure sky. Beyond the corn-fields lay the broad sheet of blue water, glittering and heaving under the morning sun. The fields changed to waste land and coarse grass, and then to shingle, strewn with seaweed and shells and bits of driftwood. At last he came to an old wherry, drawn up high on the beach, and sat down in its shadow to think and rest.

The waves came rolling in with a quiet rush, but they only told him what he knew already. He had got to go on living; the waves had to come plashing in upon the shore; everything had to keep on at its life-work. This was what the sea said to Dick to-day; and he sat there listening to its voice until he grew strong and calm again.

On Monday Minnie sent a little packet containing the money for the piano fund. In the evening of the same day Dick handed it over to the hospital. It had been saved up to minister to someone's pleasure; it should be used to alleviate some one's pain.

His gift brought him into contact with the hospital workers, and showed him where to find the sorest need. Self-denial was nothing new; Minnie's unsparring demands had first taught him to practice it. So he continued to live frugally, and helped the needy in a quiet way, becoming all the richer for that silent outgiving.

He did not meet his false love again. His heart warned him that he must avoid her if he would win peace.

At the beginning of October she became Mrs. Dobb, and went away with her husband to London. By this time the man who had loved her was growing accustomed to the sense of loss; and yet there were many days when he was lonely and sad.

One gloomy evening in November, when he had just finished tea, a heavy foot came slowly up the stair. The door opened, and there stood Minnie's father, looking very old and careworn. Dick rose at once to greet him.

"I suppose you're surprised to see me," Mr. Brace began. "I don't wonder that you keep away from us, Dick; but we've missed you. And now my poor boy has sent me here!"

"Tom? Is anything the matter with him?" Dick asked.

"Yes—a good deal. He caught cold last month, and keeps on getting worse. Seems to me he's sinking, Dick—sinking fast. He wants you to come and see him."

"Of course I'll come, directly," Dick was getting into his overcoat while poor old Brace looked round the comfortable little room.

"You must be very lonely, Dick," he said. "But there are worse troubles than loneliness."

"A hundred times worse," Dick answered, as they went downstairs together.

They had only half a mile to go, and the faithful heart of one of them beat faster as they approached the well-known house. Tom was in the front room, which had looked so gay when Minnie was at home. It did not look gay now; the presence of an invalid had wrought changes. There were medicine-bottles on the mantelpiece, and a shrunken figure in an easy chair. The tinpot piano was gone—Minnie had sold it before she went away—and Mrs. Brace had put a shabby work-table in its place. And yet, in spite of the medicine-bottles and the shabbiness, the little room was more home-like than it had ever been before. The mother soon slipped out, giving Tom the opportunity of being alone with his visitor.

"You're such a good fellow, Dick," said the sick boy. "I was sure you'd come like a shot. You used to say I knew too much for my age; and Minnie always vowed I was a listener and a spy. But I wasn't. Seems to me I heard things without listening, and saw things without spying. That's how I was built. All the time that you went on loving, I knew what was coming. And you were a rare one to love!"

Dick did not care much to listen to this talk, but he was too kind to stop it now.

"At first I thought you were silly. If I'd been a big, strong fellow, I said, I shouldn't have been so easily taken in. And then I began to see that it wasn't such a fine thing to be cute. If you had been different, you'd have escaped a lot of pain—that was clear enough. But you'd have had a colder sort of life, and—I shouldn't have asked you to come here."

"I'm very glad to come," Dick said; "and I'd like to do something for you, Tom, if I knew how."

"You are doing something for me all the time. You stopped me when I wanted to say things against Minnie. She had used you very badly, but you forgave her, and just went

your way in silence. Well, she hadn't been kind to me; but what were my wrongs when I compared them with yours? You didn't preach; you lived!"

Dick was mute with astonishment. He had never dreamt of being a pattern to anyone. But the lad must not go on over-estimating him, he thought.

"Tom," he said gravely, conquering his natural reserve, "I'm not as good as you fancy. Don't make any mistake, there's a dear chap. I did get into a downright fury when Minnie threw me over. And then I remembered that she had some reason for being angry about the five-pound note."

"Oh, that was only an excuse!" Tom broke in.

"I don't know. She had really something against me. The money had been saved and set aside for her, and she had a right to have it. If a man is engaged to a girl she ought to be the first in his thoughts—always. Mind this when you get older, Tom."

"I shall never get much older," Tom answered; "and if I did, I shouldn't get engaged. Living with Minnie has set me against girls. She was awfully pretty, and I would have got fond of her if she had let me. But I was always 'that horrid boy.' Nothing that I did was right. She never gave me a kind word, and she won't care when I'm dead!"

It was the sadly common story of family discord. The sister, with her power to bless, might have been the angel in the house. But Minnie had never wanted to be an angel.

"We won't talk about dying," Dick said hastily. "We shall soon have the spring here again, and you'll get out into the sunshine. Now cheer up, lad; I'll come in the evenings and help you through the winter."

Dick was not the man to forget a promise. The long winter days, so dreaded by the Braces, turned out to be some of the happiest they had ever known. Minnie was no longer there to monopolise Dick; they had him all to themselves; he was a son to the old couple, and a brother to Tom. All that had been lacking in the home-life they found in him. He too had dreaded the winter, but it proved to be a time of usefulness and peace.

The spring came, but its sunshine only visited Tom in the little garden. He sat out there among the early flowers for a few minutes every day. But before the lilacs were in bloom he had given up the invalid chair and taken to his bed. Dick was with him to the very last.

A great loneliness fell upon him after Tom was gone. He did his best to comfort the father and mother, conscious all the time that his own life was empty and bleak. In the fair, sweet evenings he took to strolling down to the quay again and holding silent communion with the sea. When his thoughts went straying away to Denmark he did not call them back. He felt that he would have