

As the girl was talking to Old Roger in "The Green" on that hot July evening, her father was driving homewards, and wondering what new tale Eleanor would have to tell him over the dinner-table.

The girl had been so much interested in Roger's condition that she had hardly noticed how quickly the time passed. She knew now that she ought to be hastening homewards. The fruit and roses had to be left on the way, for some children. Yet she could not bear to leave her new acquaintance without a few more words.

"Have you no one who can take your work for to-morrow?" she asked anxiously. "A son or——"

"Nobody, Miss. I have no son. I never had one. Besides, I couldn't tell about my round and the ways of my customers to another man in the business. It's a pity to have to say it, but if I did, I might as well make the round over to him at once. There's so many fightin' for a bare livin', that when you've made a little trade you have to try your hardest to keep it. I must be at the end of my barrow every mornin', and sling my basket on my arm every afternoon."

"Every day?"

"Not Sundays. Oh, no! I couldn't part with them. What a grand thing Sunday is for those that have to work hard! *It took God to contrive Sunday and give it to such-like as me that want it badly.*"

What a ring there was in the man's voice as he said this! Then once more he rose to begin his homeward journey.

"Can you not ride? Do you live far from here? Surely some tram would take you near home! And the fares are so low!"

"I shall manage now. I feel rested, and the rain has cooled the air a bit."

He would not tell her that a penny was so much to him that it could not be lightly expended.

The girl noticed again the threadbare clothing, the patched boots, the old hat, browned by sun and battered by rain. Yet there had been something so dignified in this old man's poverty that, whilst longing to help him, she was half afraid to offer him money.

"I hope you have some one waiting for you at home," she said, after a moment's hesitation.

"Indeed, and I have. Not a wife or a child of my own, but just a boy I took. His mother left him to me, and he's the very pride of my life. No, he couldn't take my work, if that is what you were goin' to ask me. I must hurry now, or he'll be wonderin' what's got me. Thank you kindly for all favours. I hope I shall see you again, Miss."

"To be sure you will. We seem quite like old friends already, do we not?"

"You make me very proud to hear you use such a word. They say friends soon forget one another, but I'll not soon forget you, Miss."

"True friends do not, and true friends are not ashamed to help and be helped by one another. It's a privilege and a pleasure on both sides; only sometimes pride comes in the way. It must not, between you and me."

With a little, quick movement she slipped something into Roger's hand, and saying, "Mind you take a tram home, and, if you can, rest in 'The Green' again on Friday afternoon, so that I may hear how you are," before the old man had time to answer, or even to realise what she had given him, the girl was gone.

"It's a penny for my tram fare," he thought; for the coin was a substantial one, he knew, though it had slipped from his hand and dropped to the bottom of his basket. "Well, God bless her. I'll not be too proud to use the penny for a ride home, and thank her too. A penny given in such a fashion is better than a bank-note or a sovereign flung in your face."

Roger's trembling fingers drew the coin from its nest of strawberry-leaves; and lo! instead of a penny it was a crown piece.

What a big, handsome coin it looked! The very sight of it acted like a tonic at first. Then Roger felt that it had been given him by mistake.

"She just meant to drop a penny in my hand, so as I might ride instead of walkin' home," he thought. "I'll use the penny, and I'll keep the rest and give it her back. I'm glad she told me where I could meet her again."

Second thoughts convinced him that the five-shilling piece was really intended for him.