

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN.

CHAPTER XXVI.—AN EVENTFUL EVENING.

It was indeed a happy day for the Woodwards on which they returned to the dear old house at Hampstead. The old sweet smile (which she had bestowed on Netta) came back to Mrs. Woodward's kind face, and Mr. Woodward recovered his health in the familiar study and in sight of the wild overgrown garden. Fortune smiled on them too, and Mr. Woodward was offered the editorship of a magazine, which he was only too glad to accept, and so things balanced themselves again, and the burden no longer fell upon Dorothy.

"I don't know what we should have done without you, my child," he said to her as they sat in the study one evening—the study which looked almost the same as in former days, for they found to their surprise that George Blakesley had bought in most of the things which had been in it, and had replaced them as a pleasant surprise on their return. "You have saved us all from ruin," he went on. "There would have been nothing but starvation or the workhouse for us if you had not kept the family together. I did not think there was so much in you, Dorothy."

And this was her reward, the knowledge that she had begun to live not only for herself but for others, that if she went from among those around her they would miss, not merely a face and form they loved because by kinship she belonged to them, but that they would miss also the work her hands had found to do and the thoughts her heart conceived. She had learnt to make herself necessary to the comfort and happiness of those within her reach, and in this satisfaction to find her own. They were very happy days, those of the first six months, spent in the old house. The garden had been untouched, and the sycamore-tree came into leaf, and all looked the same as in years past—

"The same, the same, yet not the same, Oh never, never more."

thought Dorothy as she wandered down the moss-grown pathway with Adrian Fuller, "just as of old."

"It is like the days of our youth returned," he said.

"Oh no," she answered. "It is changed altogether, and we most of all."

"No," he said, "not changed, only we are a little tired. You have worked too hard, and I have never felt satisfied with life."

"You never will," she said, simply.

"Yes I shall some day," he answered, looking down at the frank fearless face and the drooping contradictory eyes, "I shall be some day, when I have secured enough to buy ease, (I don't mean luxury), and can live quietly by the sea and dream away my life, and no longer have to work. Would you like that, Dorothy?" He was so certain she loved him still, as she had done in days gone by (and as he had learnt to love her in those that followed), that he did not think it necessary to trouble himself about any other possibility.

"No," she said, almost with a shudder. "I should be miserable, you cannot really mean it! you would not waste all your life and all your talents and let your energies lie dormant. Life was given us for something higher than that."

"For what was it given to us, you little Methodist?" he asked.

"To work and to help others, so that we in turn may be helped, and so that we may make the world, if only in the persons of the one or two around us, better than we found it; and for you, Adrian," for her reverence had vanished with her love for him, and she called him by his Christian name now, "you have talent, and can not

only help others with it, but can leave your work to delight them long after you are forgotten, or only your name is remembered. It is not one's self one wants remembered, only to know that one's works are. It is not many who can hope for this, but you can. Such as I can only try to make the passing time here and there a little pleasanter for others, but even this is no mean thing."

"What an odd child you are, Dorothy; but I don't care a jot for these things. I don't want fame, only to be lazy and enjoy myself, and dream away my life. Come in the house and play over some of your snatches to me," and they moved down the dim pathway.

"But you must care for these things," she said, "or you have no business to take up that place in the world which a better worker and a nobler nature might occupy; you bar up the way for him, and this is a crime. And day-dreams are things which we should only value as we try to fulfil them. We may have other dreams as well, and we want rest and quiet and all that, I know, but there can be no real rest unless we first tire ourselves with honest work; and I cannot think there will be any place hereafter in the Master's house for those who have not tried to do Him honor in the world." He let her hand slide from his arm. He was getting afraid of the girl—a quaint grave child still in look and years, who talked so strangely.

"Come into the house," he said, and drew her gently through the dark passage. Mr. and Mrs. Woodward were in the study. Tom was out, and Will and Sally had gone to look at men and women, so that the latter might carry them home in her memory, and draw new pictures. They went through the house and into the sitting-room, furnished with George Blakesley's "spider-legs and crockery," yet still bearing a vague likeness to former days in that it contained the old piano and the glass into which Dolly and the Beauty had looked one morning long ago. "Come and play," he said, and she, glad of the rest, sat down to the keys. He went to the other end of the room, and sat leaning back on an old uncomfortable sofa, while she sent old snatches of music, strange and sweet—like herself, Adrian Fuller thought—through the fast-darkening room.

"I wish you would sing," he said. Dorothy had taken to singing to herself lately, but at best it was a poor little voice, though always sweet and in time.

"I can't," she said.

"Yes you can," he contradicted, "and I like your queer little voice; so sing."

She gave a nervous laugh, that ended almost in a shudder. It was so like one of the lordly speeches he used to make long ago, when she and Tom and Will were all children, and Sally could only just toddle, and he was then their great friend and playfellow. It seemed like an echo from a dead summer. She waited a minute, and then began, and sang song after song, till she thought he must be tired or asleep, for he made no sign, not that she had been thinking of him, for her thoughts had been far away, and the tears were stealing slowly down her cheeks.

"What sad songs they are," he said.

"I like sad songs," she answered drearily.

"What was that one you were singing last night? I liked that," he said. She waited a moment or two and then began:—

"I made another garden, yes,
For my new love,
I left the dead rose where it lay
And set the new above.
Why did the summer not begin?
Why did my heart not haste?
My old love came and walked therein
And made my garden waste."

The symphony died away, but no second verse came or could come that night; the sounds from the piano ceased altogether, and the girl sat silently before it, hidden by the friendly darkness. He got up, and crossed the room quickly, and knelt beside her so as to be level with the face, which, he could dimly see, was buried in the two slender hands and bent forward over the keyboard.

"I understand you, you foolish child," he said, he said, soothingly. She looked up flushed and afraid; he could not surely dream of repeating the mistake of long ago, she thought. "But we understand each other now, and you know I love you at last," he said, gravely and earnestly, in calm assured tones such as Netta Woodward with all her fascination had never listened to from him. She looked at him blankly, hardly realising what he meant, and he, mistaking her, went on. "It is all right now, and we belong to each other, do we not, Dorothy? and if you only will promise not to preach any more sermons," he put in almost laughing, for he had no idea of any answer but one from her, "we shall lead such a happy life together and"—but she managed to find her voice at last, and spoke, with the tears still on her cheeks, and a voice that was firm enough, though its tone was sweet and gentle.

"You are mistaken, Adrian; you are altogether mistaken; and must never speak to me like this any more, for I should like us always to be friends."

"What do you mean, child?" he asked, aghast at her manner rather than her words, not that he thought it really meant anything but the only one he considered possible. "You know you belong to me, and you shall, you little goose."

"Oh no, no!" she answered. "It is all gone by, it is indeed. Friends, yes, but that is all, Adrian; never anything more."

"And why not?"

"We should never be happy, we think so differently. We used to be alike once perhaps, but it is all changed now, and if we lived our lives together we should still be far apart."

"But why is this?" he asked, his face looking grave and anxious. She could see it in the dark. It was such a handsome face, with large pleading eyes, that made her tremble and turn away, but only because a remembrance of old feelings came keenly back, and, for a moment, she "saw her soul in last year's glass," and wavered. "You cared for me once;" and feeling her wince, he added, "long ago when we all played in the garden together."

"Few things have a second summer, and then it is generally only a reflection of the first," she answered.

"It was Netta, I suppose. She spoilt everything," she said.

"No," Dorothy answered quickly, indignant that he should try to make a woman bear the blame. "You spoilt her life, she said so! If you had really cared for her as you pretended, she might have been different, but you were only fascinated, or if you loved her the feeling was not strong enough to move you from your love of ease."

"I say, are you going to finish your song, Doll?" said a voice that startled them to their feet. "We have been listening to your performance and want to know what you left off for? Are you two spooning in the dark, or what?" It was Tom's voice, of course. Dorothy rushed to the window, and opened it.

"Spooning," she began, indignantly, "we were talking"—the words died away on her lips. Tom was leaning against the outer wall of the house, and by his side was George Blakesley.