

With an intensity of interest, which he no longer sought to conceal, he leaned forward and drank in every word she uttered. When she had finished her brief account of Madge's proceedings, he leaned back in his chair with a sigh and drew his hand over his eyes. They were silent a moment, then he looked up and glanced round the room.

"he has been in here?" he asked questioningly.

"She has lived here over six months."

His eyes roved lingeringly round again; he might have been trying to picture her as she had looked at various times during those months.

"You must have been great friends," he remarked presently. "Did she tell you about herself?"

"Yes, everything. I feel to know you as if you were an old friend, we talked of you so often."

A sudden glad light shone in his eyes.

"And you think she has missed me?" he asked.

"Missed is not a strong enough word. She has not known how to endure your absence."

"I wish I could believe it," he said wearily, "but it's impossible. You don't know her as I did; I had no real hold on her whatever."

Elsie leaned forward.

"I know her better than you," she said firmly, "and it is absolutely true that she is longing to be with you again."

But he could not realise it. He had so used himself to thinking the contrary that he could not yet shake off the belief in it.

He looked round the room again, with hungry yearning in his eyes.

"Is there anything of hers here that I can take away?" he asked. "Something she has used often."

"Why take it away?" asked Elsie, "when you are going to her."

"Going to her!" he repeated quickly. "No, that is impossible; you don't understand."

"Surely you have come back to England on purpose?"

"No, nothing of the kind; I tell you it is impossible. I can't believe she really wants me, and besides, I am practically penniless. No, I only came just to see how she is. I wanted to make sure she is well and comfortable, and, if possible, just to see her again. When I am satisfied I mean to go back to America at once; I have a very fair berth there."

For some time Elsie continued to press her point, but he only shook his head sadly and remained unconvinced. He had never seen Madge as she was now. He only remembered her as of old.

Then for a few minutes poor Elsie was utterly at a loss how to proceed for the best, but finally decided to resort to stratagem.

"If you could call to-morrow evening," she said, "I could give you a new photograph of her that has only just been taken. I went for it to-day, but the photographer said it wouldn't be ready until to-morrow."

"Yes, I'll come," he said readily. "I should like to hear more about her, and if there's anything else I could have, you'll let me take it, won't you? I shall probably have to return this week for fear of losing my berth."

Elsie assented, and then he rose to go. "You will leave me your address?" she asked anxiously.

"I have no particular address, only the hotel," and he gave the address of that.

Then he thanked her for all she had told him, and went away with his now

habitual downcast expression and bent shoulders.

And Elsie, as soon as he was out of sight, hurried to the nearest post-office and sent a telegram to Madge.

CHAPTER XXVII. THE REUNION.

It was after dark when Guy bent his steps to the flat the following day, and slowly mounted the stairs to Mrs. Merton's floor.

Elsie herself opened the door to him, and, in spite of his usual indifference to external circumstances, even he noticed a half-mystical expression on her face.

"I have got what you wanted," she said, after giving him a warm greeting. "I left it in my room; if you will go into the drawing-room, I will fetch it," and she indicated the room to him.

He entered at once, and she quietly pulled the door to behind him. For one moment he was a little embarrassed to find the room was not, as he supposed, unoccupied, for in the dim light he saw the tall slender form of a woman, with a beautiful pale face and luminous dark eyes.

Then suddenly he was conscious of a delirious, rushing sensation in his head, while his heart beat almost to suffocation. He took a step forward and exclaimed hoarsely, "Madge!"

"Guy!" she answered, tremblingly, and held out her hands to him with a child-like, beseeching gesture.

That was all. The next moment she was folded in her husband's strong arms, and her night of weeping had passed. In after years, during which time only strengthened their love and knit them yet closer together, Guy would laughingly declare that that evening was his real wedding-day.

[THE END.]

IN THE TWILIGHT SIDE BY SIDE.

By RUTH LAMB.

PART VI. CONFIDENCES.

"The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy" (Proverbs xiv. 10).

SINCE we began our twilight talks, my dear girl-friends, many things have helped to bring us into closer union with each other. Not the least amongst these is the confidence which many of you have voluntarily placed in me. So to-night we will talk about one of the crying needs of our human nature—the longing for a friend in whom we can confide at all times.

Do you not agree with me that a full heart must overflow? A channel must be found through which its joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, its longings, anxieties, and forebodings, may find vent in sweet confidences. If we have a tried and faithful friend, whose willing ear is joined to a warm heart and a sympathetic nature, we are rich indeed. In such a case, confidences are not only sweet, but they are wise, and they leave us feeling the happier and richer for what we have imparted. Many high qualities go to forming the character of such a friend as I have mentioned. Unsel-

fishness, patience, sound judgment and freedom from prejudice, play no mean parts in combination with those I have already named.

Think what demands we make on both patience and unselfishness when we expect our friend to listen to long details which have no interest for her, personally. We are not often sparing of words when we speak of what concerns ourselves. Consequently, it can only be unselfish affection and a longing for our happiness which have made the listener equally patient and anxious to lighten our troubles and to rejoice with us in our joys.

But, oh! how much do the patient listening and unselfish sympathy mean to the over-full heart that has found relief in words.

She—for as I am talking to girls—I picture the speaker as a girl, exclaims in a glad tone, "I knew you would feel for me and that I might trust you. What a comfort it has been to me to open my heart to you. I feel ever so much happier and richer too for knowing that I have one true friend, who really cares for me and who would lift the burden from my shoulders if she could. It is specially sweet to think that, when opening my heart to you, I ran no risk of having its secrets laid bare to any other."

The friends part, but the memory of kindly words uttered, of the look of honest sympathy and of the warm hand-clasp which accompanied the farewell, remains with the anxious one to her lasting comfort.

The trouble is still there. Perhaps the prospect of its removal is but a distant one. But the bearer of the unseen load steps more lightly on the daily round of duty; the head is held more erect, the tears are dried, and hope repeats the old saying that "there is a silver lining to every cloud."

In the case of a great happiness, the heart that rejoices overflows with eagerness to claim sympathy.

Have you ever thought, dear girls, that you make a greater claim on the disinterestedness of your friends when you ask them to rejoice with you, than when you seek their sympathy in a time of sorrow? When we are happily placed ourselves, it is easy to say kind words to those who are less fortunate, and voluntarily to lift part of another's load.

There is often a sort of inward and selfish satisfaction, of which we are hardly conscious, in contrasting our own favoured lot with that of the friend who appeals to us for sympathy.

Does not the knowledge of her toilsome