

"I will take care of Sally, I will!" she cried passionately to herself.

"Dorothy!" called Mr. Woodward, out of the study window, "I want you;" and she went, half-trembling, and fearing to tell him the news.

CHAPTER XXVII.—DOROTHY ANSWERS HER OWN QUESTION.

"How generous it was; there never was any one half so kind," Dorothy said to herself, as she went to her own room at last.

She was thinking of George Blakesley. He had told Mr. Woodward that the engagement between them was over; but he had taken all the blame upon himself, saying that he was too grave and staid for Dorothy, and that she wanted to stay at home with her brothers and sisters a little longer. "They were not going to be strangers, though," he said, and he hoped he should still be allowed to come to the house.

"Poor little girl!" he said tenderly to himself, as he left the house; "I believe she has lost her heart to that Fuller, though I always thought that he was after the Beauty. I wish she would put a little more earnestness into her life, and think of something beyond the garden and her story and poetry books."

"How generous he is!" thought Dorothy again. And she sat down by the window, and looked vacantly out at the garden and the trees, and all she loved so well, and soon might have to leave. Presently she looked up at the clear hard grey sky, with the stars shining brightly down upon her. "I used to think they were little holes in the sky once, and the light of heaven shone through them. I should like to go to heaven," she thought; "It must be so beautiful there. I might just as well die. I'm sure I am of no use to any one." Then suddenly, almost with a start, the question came to her lips—"But should I get there if I did die?" and it was a long time before she answered it, with sad and bitter tears chasing each other down her cheeks. "Why, I never did anything good in my whole life, never! What right have I to heaven? I am very selfish, I have always lived to please myself, and thought of myself, and had dreams and hopes all for myself. Oh, what shall I do!" She went away from the window, and sat down beside the bed on which Sally was sleeping. She thought of all George Blakesley had said by the fire-light on the evening he had first told her he loved her; how some great man, she did not remember his name, had said that she should regard the world as a workshop, in which we should make something good and beautiful; and the longing she had felt at the time, and forgotten ever since, came back. He had said, too, that work was the noblest of all occupations, and that there was always plenty to do to make life better for others; and that if we did not make some one the happier or the better for our being in the world, we were only so much human lumber, taking up light and life and room to no purpose whatever. "I can't think what he ever loved me for," she thought; "he must have seen how selfish I was. I would give the world to be better, and to make something beautiful!" and then suddenly she heard Sally breathing, and remembered her father's wish that she should take care of her. "And I will," she said, firmly, to herself; "I will learn to work and to take care of her and of others too, and in trying to make their lives better I shall make my own so too. Oh, how wicked I have been!" and she burst into tears again, and, almost without knowing it, sank on her knees, and prayed that God would help her, and make her hands and heart strong to work.

"I believe that is the secret of it all—I

have not thought enough of God. George said half the teaching of Christ was summed up in working and in helping others." Suddenly it flashed upon her, "Perhaps this is what we live for—to make other lives beautiful, till in their reflected light our own become beautiful also. I believe I have found out the secret at last," she thought. It seemed to Dolly as if new feelings came to her in that long hour she sat alone and made these resolutions for a new life, and she looked back almost wonderingly at the past days, in which she had fretted because her mother had not loved her very much. "I never gave her any reason," she thought; and then a longing came to go to her before she went to sleep that night.

She knew that her father was still in his study, and her mother alone in her room, so she slipped softly along the short corridor, and listened for a moment at the door. There was a faint sound, as of some one sobbing.

"Mamma!" she said, opening the door gently.

"What is the matter?" Mrs. Woodward asked, surprised.

Her children had never been very demonstrative towards her, and she never dreamed of Dorothy's errand.

"Mamma! dear mamma! what is the matter?" and with all the pent-up longing for love which still was in the girl's heart, and the aching feeling of all the past still strong upon her, and all the disappointment it held, she went forward and flung herself down by her mother's side. "Oh, dear mamma, tell me what it is!"

"We are ruined, Dorothy, quite ruined! Your father has lost all the money, and will be in the bankruptcy court soon, and we shall have to go away from here. He has lost my money, and all—"

"But don't grieve so, dearest mother," she said, kissing her as in all her life she had never kissed her before. "We are all with you, and will work."

"Oh, what can you do, dear?" asked Mrs. Woodward, touched by the tenderness of the daughter whom she had always slighted for her prettier sister.

"I can work, and I will. I'll teach, or beg, or go to service, if you like. Mr. Blakesley says I write a nice hand; perhaps I can do something with that."

"But you are going to be married, you forget that," she said, sorrowfully, for she was beginning already to lean upon this girl who had only just resolved to bear the burden of other's sorrows besides her own.

"No, mamma, I am going to stay with you, and take care of you and Sally and papa."

Dorothy was right—she was no longer a child, but a woman. Then her mother turned to her, and caressed and thanked her for her kindness, and told her she had always neglected her for Netta, who had been quite angry when she found that ruin stared her parents in the face.

"But it will not hurt her," said Dorothy. "She is going to make a grand marriage, and going to India."

"Yes; but she is so ashamed that Sir George should know we are poor, and that she cannot have her friends here any longer, or have a grand wedding."

"But Netta has money of her own."

"Only the interest of a thousand pounds, and she has to buy her trousseau. You had better go now, dear, and I am so grateful for your kindness," and she put her arms around her daughter's neck, and kissed her. Then Dorothy went back to her own room and sat down, and though she cried again that night, they were not such bitter tears as before; and she woke in the morning with the keen sense of having found something new and strange—the

answer to her own long-weariful question, "What do we live for?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.—DOROTHY AND NETTA.

"Netta," said Dorothy, as she helped the beauty to look over her garments, a few days later, "are you happy?"

"Yes," she answered, shortly.

"Do you love Sir George?"

"Oh, I don't know, I suppose so; don't talk nonsense, Dorothy!" she answered; "I'm going to marry him, and that's enough."

"Should you have had him if he had been poor?"

"No, certainly not," and the tears came into the Beauty's blue eyes, though she tried to hide them from her sister. "But I can't bear poverty, and I am not fit for it—it would kill me."

"Netta, I want to tell you something. It was not my fault, but I once heard you talking to Mr. Fuller, and he called you 'darling.' Did you love him?"

"What right have you to ask?" Netta was trembling and pale, not angry, as Dorothy expected.

"Because I think I should like you better if you really did care for him," she answered in a low voice.

"Then I did—I do still, though I hate myself for it. I began to flirt with him, to tease you, Dorothy, and then I fell in love with him. I never meant to marry him, unless he got rich, and I soon saw he never would. He would have dreamt of his love for me forever, but he never would have found strength to work for me. I hate your dreamers," she flashed out, "who pass their time dreaming dreams they have not strength to realize, and who blend all their lives into their foolish musings until all realities that are not hard, and do not touch their sense of pain, become a part of them."

"Yet you loved him, Netta."

"Yes, I did. I took him from you, I know that, but it is a good thing. He would only have made you a dreamer like himself, until you woke to hard realities. I did love him, Dorothy, but I always despised him a little, too. I always shall. And I could not face poverty. I am very selfish, I know that, yet my selfishness did you good. He was very certain that you were in love with him, too, Dorothy, quite sure of it, and he has the worst kind of vanity, which prides itself on not being corrected."

"Oh, Netta, how can you speak so of a man you say you love?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I don't love him; not so much as I do myself, that is certain, for I could not give up luxury for any man living. I can't think how you can be content to stay at home and face poverty—it is such a terrible thing!" Then suddenly she got up. "You forgive me, don't you, Dorothy, and, see here, I will give you this ring."

It made Dorothy think of the bracelet she gave her nearly three years ago.

"No," she said, and refused to take it, but Netta made her, and afterwards Dorothy always wore it in remembrance of the day on which Netta had asked her forgiveness.

"Mr. Blakesley," said Dorothy, when, a week later, he paid them an awkward visit—he had so wanted to see her again—"I want you to help me in something." She felt so shy and hesitating in telling him what she had to say.

"Yes, what is it?"

"I want—I want to know, do you think I could earn money in any way. I want to work."

He gave her no approbation, which she had half expected he would—expressed no surprise, only answered, in his usually