

was looking back at the house, and saw that Netta and Adrian Fuller had entered the study, and were sitting by the window reading the German poet.

They came sauntering out into the garden an hour later, Netta with a shawl wrapped round her, and speaking in low tones to her companion. Dorothy did not hear what they were saying till they stopped in front of her.

"We are talking about the artist-folk, Dorothy," her sister said. "Why is it, I wonder, that as a rule, they have such beautiful wives? One seldom sees an artist with an ugly one."

"I can understand it," Adrian Fuller answered. "They have a greater love of beauty than the majority of other men; don't you remember Keats' celebrated line,

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever?"

"But human beauty soon fades," Dorothy said, gently. "There are a hundred things that have many summers—the simplest trees live and bloom, and are young with every year that comes; but human beings have only one youth, and then their beauty goes for ever." Netta shivered a little, and turned away with a touch of something vibrating through her that was almost feeling.

"It must be dreadful to outlive one's beauty in the eyes of those we love," she said.

"Love blinds our eyes," he answered; "besides, it is something to create a picture for the memory of others, as beauty does."

"Must your wife be beautiful?" she asked. She drew her shawl round her, and waited for his answer; and Dorothy stood still, her hands folded almost like one waiting to hear her fate.

He looked at the two girls before him for a moment—at Dorothy, with her black dress hard and grim, and her pale face set and grave, and at Netta, with the white clinging drapery she loved hiding her sombre attire, and twisted round about her graceful figure, and with the golden brown hair forming something that looked in the dim light almost like a halo round her shapely head.

"Yes," he answered, "above all things she must be beautiful!"

CHAPTER XVII.—"GOOD BYE."

Another six weeks, and only the beginning of August! What a long summer it seemed to Dorothy! and yet in all previous years she had so delighted in the sunshine, and missed and mourned for every flower when its day was over.

"How happy I was last year!" she said to herself; "and yet I was impatient, and wished the time away."

And they had been happy days too, though in them, as in all others, she felt as she felt now, waiting for something—for some life or some world she had not seen as yet, and the key to which she thought Adrian Fuller held.

Colonel Wade had been but little missed. Before the summer waned Netta filled the house with guests; and Sir George Finch and Major Henty, and all her admirers, came to her, bringing her books and flowers, and making water-parties and pic-nics; and elderly ladies, who like the *ecolat* of having a pretty girl under their wing, called to take her for drives, "and to brighten her up a little, for she has had a sad loss, you know." Netta was always ready, and pretty, and well-dressed; it seemed to Dorothy that if she were to put on a sack, or dress herself in a blanket, she would do it gracefully, and she did not wonder that she was admired. There was a grave side to Netta's character, too, there were many sides, in fact, that fascinated even Dorothy—a time when she could, gravely and sweetly, in a low, almost sad voice, talk of

her grandfather and by-gone days, or even of the poetry and the stories that Dorothy herself loved, and she would sing (in the twilight usually) wild weird songs generally, with some dreary refrain, or simple old ones, in a way that none who heard her could forget. There were days in which Dorothy almost loved her beautiful sister; there were others in which she tried hard not to hate her. Netta fascinated Adrian Fuller completely, and roused his sluggish nature as Dorothy never could have done. He was always by her side, reading or walking, or hanging over her chair while she flirted with her crowd of admirers at her mother's "at home," and when she sang he chose her songs, and pleaded for his favorite ones, and afterwards, on the clear summer nights, he would wrap her in one of her favourite wraps, lingering to put the folds in some way grateful to his artist eyes, and then they betook themselves to the garden.

"They might have left me the garden!" Dorothy sighed once.

Poor Dorothy! it was a dreary summer for her. She hated strange people and visitors, and when they came hid herself, or if she appeared, was shy and awkward, and so allowed to remain unnoticed. She hated the smart rooms, too, all loaded with gimeracks, and kept neat and tidy; and the only one in the house untouched—the study—Netta and Adrian Fuller occupied all the morning, for the Beauty was sitting to the artist, and in the evening Mr. Woodward; if at home, sat there busy with his writing.

Mrs. Woodward's money had all been risked in the paper, and Mr. Woodward was busy and anxious. He was almost angry at the difference made in the household. "We must be careful for a time," he said, "for remember we have to wait till the paper has had a little run before we can launch out;" but Netta and Mrs. Woodward laughed at him.

"We must keep up an appearance," Netta said, "and live in a well-bred manner."

"Of course we must," assented Mrs. Woodward, ready to agree to everything, provided she was not troubled.

"Mamma," said the Beauty, later in the day, "don't you think papa could manage to send Sally to a boarding-school for a year? Sir George was saying yesterday that my sisters were more picturesque than beautiful."

"And exceedingly rude and ungentlemanlike it was of Sir George then!" exclaimed Dorothy. "Papa can't afford to send Sally to school; and, besides, I should be miserable, and Sally learns at home and at the School of Art well enough. You have taken Mr. Fuller from me, and now you want to take Sally!"

"Mr. Fuller, I want you to go and talk to my little sister Dorothy," the Beauty said, when he came. "She says I have taken you from her."

He went over to his old playmate, but both their tongues seemed tied. The old footing had gone for ever.

"So you are jealous of Netta," he said.

The color rushed to her face.

"We never talk of books or anything now," she said; "you make Netta your friend."

"But she is sitting for me, remember."

"Yes, but not all day."

"And we are learning German together. You are such a foolish child," he added, his eyes turning restlessly in search of Netta. Her eyes filled with tears.

"I am not a child!" she said, passionately; "you always forget that."

"But, Dorothy, you *must* be a child," he answered; "I have always considered you one;" and he put his hand on hers.

The colour left her face, and then rushed back in a torrent. There seemed something terrible in his words, something that struck despair into her heart, while her cheeks burned with shame. Yet still she struggled against his words.

"But I am not a child," she repeated, helplessly. "Why, Netta does not think me one."

"Think you what?" asked the Beauty, coming to the rescue.

"A child."

"No, of course I don't. By the way, I have written to ask your dear Mr. Blakesley here this evening."

"Mr. Blakesley!"

"Yes; so cheer up Dorothy. He does not think you a child either, I dare say."

"Netta is always thinking of marrying," Dorothy said, without meaning it, as her sister went into the next room.

"So are most young ladies," and he tried to laugh. "We will come to your wedding, Dorothy," he added.

Then she burst fairly into tears.

"How can you say such things, Mr. Fuller! I shall never be married—never! and you want to get rid of me, I believe, and do not care for me any more than any one else does; for you know if I married we should never be friends again."

"Why shouldn't we?" he answered; "I hope we should, if I liked your husband and he me." Then he looked at her; she was trembling with excitement, and she tried to return his gaze, but her eyes drooped and fell, and her lips quivered. "My dear child," he said, kindly, and quietly taking her hands, "there is something the matter with you to-day; go and lie down a little while, and remember there is no reason why we should not always be friends, and you must not let any foolish notions get into your silly little head." He let go her hands, and they dropped nervously to her side.

"Yes, I will go and lie down for a little while," she said. "Good-bye."

He did not know how much there was in her "good-bye"; and she went. She met her mother on her way up-stairs, and she stopped and put her arms around her neck.

"Mamma," she said, "do kiss me. If you would only love me as you do Netta, and be proud of me!"

"Of course I love you," Mrs. Woodward answered; "but take away your arms, you crumple me so." The words were only said as a matter of course, and the girl felt it, and went up to her room. Once there, she locked the door, and threw herself, face downwards, on the bed; but she did not cry or grieve, or even feel very wretched—only thought, in a dazed sort of a way, of all the happy by-gone hours she had spent in the garden with Mr. Fuller, and of his words when he wished her good-bye, and those few cloudless days after his return. She could not believe that this was the end; through all the time that Netta had taken her place, she had yet thought he was true to her, and she could not believe that he meant what he had said, only that perhaps he was afraid of making Netta angry, as every one else was. How she hated Netta, and how she envied her—her beauty, and brightness, and self-possession, and everything else; and then she tried to remember his words again, and could not. But she remembered his look when he told her that she "*must* be a child," and her face burnt with shame.

Presently a knock came to the door—it was Netta.

"Let me in, Dorothy," she said. "I have come to tell you we all think you are lost; it is nearly seven o'clock;" this was all she had to say; and then Dorothy rose and smoothed her hair, and bathed her