

accustomed to surroundings as unlike Valesworthy as it was possible to conceive. His sister, who had formerly shared those surroundings, listened to his tales of men and manners with a smile of superior pity, and hugged herself in the satisfaction of her pretty peaceful home and the calm stillness amid which her married lot was cast. But to Dorothy, with all her pent-up energy and the spirit which had remained so youthful from sheer lack of use, his tales of suffering and work and want, and the vacant spaces for more and more active workers in the great field of human need, sounded like the trumpet-call to action. There were times when she clenched her little hands and stamped her foot in passionate impatience at her own uselessness and the impossibility of escaping from the cramped sphere in which her lines had fallen.

Yes, it was quite impossible. Let the temptation be never so great, how could Dorothy be spared to leave her sisters when she herself (thanks to a timely legacy from her godmother, just when their need was sorest) contributed the lion's share to the modest housekeeping of Leighcombe Cottage?

"No, it can't be—it can't be!" she said almost angrily, as, a week before the time fixed for his departure from Valesworthy, Ashford Conway came to her, with his honest manly avowal of love, and an entreaty that she would return with him to share his home and his work.

"Why cannot it be, Dorothy? You are fighting against your own heart, and you know it. Think of all the good you may be the means of achieving if we work together—a woman's heart and a woman's tact can do so much—and it is not as if you were needed here. You have not room for your energy and you know it; life here belongs to a bygone age; it may suit those whose best days are past, those who need rest after the turmoil of life, but you are fitted for space and freedom: you are wasting your best energies. Come to me, Dorothy, and be free! Surely your sisters—"

"Oh, can't you see—won't you understand?" she cried almost piteously, looking up at him through the mist of tears that dimmed her sight; "don't you see that it is like the bundle of sticks in the fable? So long as we keep together we can rub on—it is poverty of course, but only genteel poverty of the bearable kind. No! I know what you are going to say, but I would never come to you to be a drag and a hindrance in your work. No, no! we must go on as we are, and you must forget this summer, or look back on it only as I mean to do, as a season of pleasant friendship and greater variety than I have met with for many years—nothing more," and the little impulsive woman rushed away

before the slower masculine mind could put into words the thoughts he longed to express.

"Something ails the child," said Miss Charlotte that afternoon. To those quiet, middle-aged women their younger sister was still "the child" they had mothered and watched over since the days when she wore short frocks and hair floating on her shoulders.

"It may be only the heat," Miss Clara responded, but she was more observant than her elder sister, and the flushed cheeks and unwontedly petulant tones of Dorothy's voice revealed more than she chose to put into words.

The weather certainly was unusually hot, a thunder-storm seemed impending, and the little pupils had never appeared so hopelessly stupid as on the morning following Mr. Conway's luckless proposal.

"Go out into the air, little one," said Miss Clara, as Dorothy after reducing two of her pupils to tears and working herself nearly into a fever, began for the third time to explain the working of a long-division sum to a stolid, hopelessly indifferent child of eight. "I'll finish the arithmetic lesson, or rather we will put it aside for to-day, and Mary shall have a quarter of an hour's extra music instead, she will like that, and really it is too hot to plod over sums to-day."

"Are you sure you can manage it? You have a headache, too," said Dorothy wistfully.

"Never mind—I am more used to them than you are. Run away, child!"

And Dorothy did run away—thankfully—to the very farthest corner of the tiny flower-garden, where with the help of a village protégé she had contrived a rustic seat, flanked by rose-bushes and with a fragrant bower of sweet-peas climbing over the back and arms.

It was not far enough, however, to escape the sound of Cramer's exercises, and the repetition of the ten strumming fingers irritated her nerves almost to madness.

In despair at last she stopped her ears with both hands, and tried to fix her attention on all that was pleasantest to her other senses—the sweet freshness of the flowers in the sunshine—the deep blue of the sky over the trees which shut out the village street, beyond which rose the grey tower of the church—and far beyond that again the distant purple hills which seemed like the boundary of another world.

Suddenly Dorothy sprang to her feet, for another and most unwonted sight was before her.

Through her closed ears she had not detected the sudden cessation of the music, or heard the frightened cry of the children, who now came hastily running to her across the garden.

"Miss Dorothy, Miss Dorothy, please come, Miss Clara is so funny—I think she has gone to sleep all of a sudden!"

An exclamation of dismay burst from Dorothy's lips. Clara had all her life been subject to fainting fits, but they seldom came on without more warning than this. The intense heat, however, always tried her, and Dorothy bitterly reproached herself with having allowed the one who was usually her first consideration to suffer from her own pre-occupation.

"Lottie! Lottie!" she called hurrying into the house, and lifting the unconscious form from where it had fallen almost prone against the piano; "run, children, you, Mary, will go quickest—and find Miss Charlotte."

"It is no use," said little Mary West, the Rector's daughter. "Miss Charlotte has gone to see that poor woman that mother told her about; she came in a little while ago with her hat on and said she should not be back for an hour."

"Never mind! I'll manage. Run home, all of you children, it must be a half-holiday, as Miss Clara's ill;" and Dorothy turned all her attention to the sufferer, whose beautiful face was fixed in a stony whiteness, while she was quite unable to swallow the water her sister held to her lips.

Dorothy sprinkled her face and hands, fanned her with the newspaper, and opened door and window to their fullest extent.

Miss Clara always dressed in black, and had her gowns made in a fashion severely plain, with high stiff linen collar and cuffs. Somehow the stern simplicity suited her stately figure, and set off the well-formed throat, and the small head with its crown of grey hair.

But the stiff collar and tight hooks were very bad assistants in the recovery of a fainting patient, and it was with resolute, though rather trembling fingers that Dorothy proceeded to unfasten the latter.

Suddenly her hands fell to her sides with a cry of astonishment, suppressed the next instant, as the fainting fit gave signs of yielding to her treatment.

Hidden under Miss Clara's dress was something which shone in the sunlight—a small fine chain of gold on which hung—a locket? No! something still stranger—and Dorothy, looking again, even yet could hardly believe her eyes—surely it was a wedding ring!

The girl trembled from head to foot, as she stood, convicted in her own eyes of what seemed like dishonourable espionage of a secret, evidently guarded—probably for many years—with such jealous care.

What could it mean? And how should she act in the future? Would it be right to conceal this discovery, so unwittingly made, and let Clara believe her secret still in her own keeping?

(To be continued.)

TO CYCLISTS: AMENITIES OF THE ROAD.

BE very careful to avoid giving offence to any one. Cyclists at the best are bound to be a nuisance to a good many people; and while they themselves have a good deal to put up with, it is not to be denied that they are often less careful to avoid causing annoyance to others than they might be. This is bad policy as well as bad manners. It makes the drivers of vehicles reckless of the safety of a mere cyclist, and it might even lead to legal restrictions on the speed of riding being imposed by Parliament. Every rider may at least be expected to do his little, by courtesy and consideration for others, towards removing the prejudice against his class which unfortunately does exist in some quarters. It is just as well to be always ready with a word

of thanks or apology, as occasion requires. Never scorch in the streets of a town. Give warning at a considerable distance before overtaking passengers; and if your warning is not heeded, repeat it. People are sometimes deaf, or dreaming, or making love. Dismount if there is not plenty of room to pass. If horses are frightened at the sight of a cycle (which is not now often the case), go slowly, and be ready to dismount instantly if the driver signifies his desire for you to do so. But, as a rule, a sudden dismount will add more to a horse's alarm than passing slowly on the remote side of the road and speaking quietly to the animal as you pass. Be specially careful and considerate when meeting, and still more so when overtaking, ladies

on horseback or driving; and when passing lady cyclists in rational dress, avoid even a look that is calculated to add to their feeling of being objectionably conspicuous. If you run into any one, don't be a coward and ride off as hard as you can, but stop and see if the party is hurt. Remember that not every cyclist with whom you fall in desires to chum up with you, and don't force yourself on another rider unless the desire for company and conversation is evidently mutual. Keep to your proper side of the road, and always touch your gong before overtaking another cyclist.

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