CHAPTER VI. "WANTED, A YOUNG PERSON."

THEEE was much diligent searching of the advertising columns of the daily papers for several weeks after this. Advertisements, in fact, became the staple literature, and Dolly's zeal in the perusal of them was only to be equalled by her readiness to snatch at the opportunities they presented. No weather was too grewsome for her to confront, and no representation too unpromising for her to be allured by. In the morning she was at Bayswater calling upon the chilling mother of six (four of them boys) whose moral nature needed judicious attention, and who required to be taught the rudiments of French, German, and Latin; in the afternoon she was at the general post-office applying to Q. Y. Z., who had the education of two interesting orphans to negotiate for, and who was naturally desirous of doing it as economically as possible; and at night she was at home, writing modest, business-like epistles to every letter in the alphabet in every conceivable or inconceivable part of the country.

"If I had only been born 'a stout youth,' or 'a likely young man,' or 'a respectable middle-aged person,' I should have been 'wanted' a dozen times a day," she would remark; "but as it is, I suppose I I must wait until something 'presents itself,' as the Rev. Marmaduke puts it."

And in defiance of various discouraging and dispiriting influences, she waited with a tolerable degree of tranquillity until, in the course of time, her patience was rewarded. Sitting by the fire one morning with

Tod and a newspaper, her eye was caught by an advertisement which, though it did not hold out any extra inducements, still attracted her attention, so she read it aloud to Aimée and 'Toinette.

"Wanted, a young person to act as companion to an elderly lady. Apply at the printers."

"There, Aimée," she commented, "there is another. I suppose I might call myself 'a young person,' Don't you think I had better 'apply at the printer's'?"

"They don't mention terms," said Aimée.

"You would have to leave home," said 'Toinette.

Dolly folded up the paper and tossed it on to the table with a half sigh. She had thought of that the moment she read the paragraph, and then, very naturally, she had thought of Griffith. It would not be feasible to include him in her arrangements, even if she made any. Elderly ladies who engage "young persons" as companions were not in the habit of taking kindly to miscellaneous young men, consequently the prospect was not a very bright one.

There would only be letter-writing left to them, and letters seemed such cold comfort contrasted with every-day meetings. She remembered, too, a certain six months she had spent with her Bilberry charges in

Switzerland, when Griffith had nearly been driven frantic by her absence and his restless dissatisfaction, and when their letters had only seemed new aids to troublous though unintentional games at cross-purposes. There might be just the same thing to undergo again, but, then, how was it to be avoided? It was impossible to remain idle just at this juncture.

"So it cannot be helped," she said, aloud. "I must take it if I can get it, and I must stay in it until I can find something more pleasant, though I cannot help wishing that matters did not look so unpromising. Tod, you will have to go down, Aunt Dolly is going to put on her hat and present herself at the printer's in the character of a young person in search of an elderly lady."

Delays were dangerous, she had been taught by experience, so she ran up-stairs at once for her out-door attire, and came down in a few minutes, drawing on her gloves and looking a trifle ruefully at them.

"They are getting discouragingly white at the seams," she said, "and it seems almost impossible to keep them sewed up. I shall have to borrow Aimée's muff. What a blessing it is that the weather is so cold!"

At the bottom of the staircase she met Mollie.

"Phemie is in the parlor, Dolly," she announced, "and she wants to see you. I don't believe Lady Augusta knows she is here, either, she looks

so dreadfully fluttered."

And when she entered the room, surely enough Phemie jumped up with a nervous bound from a chair immediately behind the door, and, dropping her muff and umbrella and two or three other small articles, caught her in a tremulous embrace, and at once proceeded to bedew her with tears.

"Oh, Dolly!" she lamented, pathetically; "I have come to say good-by; and, oh! what shall I do without you?"

"Good-by!" said Dolly. "Why, Phemie?"

"Switzerland!" sobbed Phemie. "The--the select seminary at Geneva, Dolly, where th-that professor of m-music with the lumpy face was."

"Dear me!" Dolly ejaculated. "You don't mean to say you are going there, Phemie?"

"Yes, I do," answered Euphemia. "Next week, too. And, oh dear, Dolly!" trying to recover her handkerchief, "if it had been anywhere else I could have borne it, but that," resignedly, "was the reason mamma settled on it. She found out how I loathed the very thought of it, and then she decided immediately. And don't you remember those mournful girls, Dolly, who used to walk out like a funeral procession, and how we used to make fun--at least, how you used to make fun of the lady principal's best bonnet?"

It will be observed by this that Miss Dorothea Crewe's intercourse with her pupils had not been as strictly in accordance with her position as instructress as it had been friendly. She had even gone so far as to set decorum at defiance, by being at once entertaining and jocular, though to her credit it must be said that she had worked hard enough for her modest salary, and had not neglected even the most trivial of her numerous duties.

She began to console poor Euphemia to the best of her ability, but Euphemia refused to be comforted.

"I shall have to take lessons from that lumpy professor, Dolly," she said. "And you know how I used to hate him when he would make love to you. And that was mamma's fault, too, because she would patronize him and call him 'a worthy person.' He was the only man who admired you I ever knew her to encourage, and she would n't have encouraged him if he had n't been so detestable."

It was very evident that the eldest Miss Bilberry was in a highly rebellious and desperate state of mind. Dolly's daily visits, educational though they were, had been the brightest gleams of sunlight in her sternly regulated existence. No one had ever dared to joke in the Bilberry mansion but Dolly, and no one but Dolly, had ever made the clan gatherings bearable to Euphemia; and now that Dolly was cut off from them all, and there were to be no more jokes and no more small

adventures, life seemed a desert indeed. And then with the calamitous prospect of Switzerland and the lumpy professor before her, Phemie was crushed indeed.

"Mamma doesn't know I came," she confessed, tearfully, at last; "but I could n't help it, Dolly, I could n't go away without asking you to write to me and to let me write to you. You will write to me, won't you?"

Dolly promised at once, feeling a trifle affected herself. She had always been fond of Phemie, and inclined to sympathize with her, and now she exerted herself to her utmost to cheer her. She persuaded her to sit down, and after picking up the muff and umbrella and parcels, took a seat by her, and managed to induce her to dry her tears and enter into particulars.

"It will never do for Lady Augusta to see that you have been crying," she said. "Dry your eyes, and tell me all about it, and--wait a minute, I have a box of chocolates here, and I know you like chocolates."

It was a childish consolation, perhaps, but Dolly knew what she was doing and whom she was dealing with, and this comforting with confections was not without its kindly girlish tact. Chocolates were one of Phemie's numerous school-girl weaknesses, and a weakness so rarely indulged in that she perceptibly brightened when her friend produced the gay-colored, much-gilded box. And thus stimulated, she poured forth her

sorrows with more coherence and calmness. She was to go to Switzerland, that was settled, and the others were to be placed in various other highly select educational establishments. They were becoming too old now, Lady Augusta had decided, to remain under Dolly's care.

"And then," added Euphemia, half timidly, "you won't be vexed if I tell you, will you?"

"Certainly not," answered Dolly, who knew very well what was coming, though poor Phemie evidently thought she was going to impart an extremely novel and unexpected piece of intelligence. "What is it, Phemie?"

"Well, somehow or other, I don't believe mamma exactly likes you, Dolly."

Now, considering circumstances, this innocent speech amounted to a rich sort of thing to say, but Dolly did not laugh; she might caricature Lady Augusta for the benefit of her own select circle of friends, but she never made jokes about her before Phemie, however sorely she might be tempted. So, now she helped herself to a chocolate with perfect sobriety of demeanor.

"Perhaps not," she admitted. "I have thought so myself, Phemie." And then, as soon as possible, changed the subject.

At length Phemie rose to go. As Lady Augusta was under the impression that she was merely taking the dismal daily constitutional, which was one of her unavoidable penances, it would not do to stay too long.

"So I must go," lamented Phemie; "but, Dolly, if you would n't mind, I should so like to see the baby. I have never seen him since the day we called with mamma,--and I am so fond of babies, and he was so pretty."

Dolly laughed, in spite of herself. She remembered the visit so well, and Lady Augusta's loftily resigned air of discovering, in the passively degenerate new arrival, the culminating point of the family depravity.

"It is much to be regretted," she had said, disapprovingly; "but it is exactly what I foresaw from the first, and you will have to make the best of it."

And then, on Dolly's modestly suggesting that they intended to do so, and were not altogether borne down to the earth by the heavy nature of their calamity, she had openly shuddered.

But Phemie had quite clung to the small bundle of lawn and flannel, and though she had never seen Tod since, she had by no means forgotten him.

"He will be quite a big boy when I come back," she added. "And I should so like to see him once again while he is a baby."

"Oh, you shall see him," said Dolly. "Tod is the one individual in this house who always feels himself prepared to receive visitors. He is n't fastidious about his personal appearance. If you will come into the next room, I dare say we shall find him."

And they did find him. Being desirous of employing, to the greatest advantage, the time spent in his retirement within the bosom of his family, he was concentrating his energies upon the mastication of the toe of his slipper, upon which task he was bestowing the strictest and most undivided attention, as he sat in the centre of the hearth-rug.

"He has got another tooth, Aunt Dolly," announced 'Toinette, triumphantly, as soon as the greetings were over. "Show Aunt Dolly his tooth." And, being laid upon his back on the maternal knee, in the most uncomfortable and objectionable of positions, the tooth was exhibited, as a matter calling forth public rejoicings.

Phemie knelt on the carpet before him, the humblest of his devotees.

"He is prettier than ever," she said. "Do you think he would come to me, Mrs. Crewe?"

And, though the object of her admiration at once asserted his prerogatives by openly rejecting her overtures with scorn, she rejoiced over him as ecstatically as if he had shown himself the most amiable of infant prodigies, which he most emphatically had not, probably having

been rendered irascible by the rash and inconsiderately displayed interest in his dental developments. Whatever more exacting people might have thought, Phemie was quite satisfied.

"I wish I was in your place, Dolly," she said, as she was going away. "You seem so happy together here, somehow or other. Oh, dear! You don't know how dreadful our house seems by contrast. If things would break or upset, or look a little untidy,--or if mamma's caps and dresses just would n't look so solid and heavy--"

"Ah!" laughed Dolly, "you have n't seen our worst side, Phemie,--the shabby side, which means worn shoes and old dresses and bills. We don't get our whistle for nothing in Vagabondia, though, to be sure,"--and I won't say a memory of the shabby coat-sleeve did not suggest the amendment,--"I don't think we pay too dearly for it; and I believe there is not one of us who would not rather pay for it than live without it."

And when she gave the girl her farewell kiss, it was a very warm one, with a touch of pity in it. It was impossible for her to help feeling sympathy for any one who was without the Griffith element in existence.

After this she went out herself to apply at the printer's, and was sent from there to Brabazon Lodge, which was a suburban establishment, in a chilly aristocratic quarter. An imposing edifice, Brabazon Lodge, built of stone, and most uncompromisingly devoid of superfluous ornament. No mock minarets or unstable towers at Brabazon Lodge,--a substantial

mansion in a substantial garden behind substantial iron gates, and so solid in its appointments that it was quite a task for Dolly to raise the substantial lion's head which formed the front-door knocker.

"Wanted, a young person," she was saying to herself, meekly, when her summons was answered by a man-servant, and she barely escaped announcing herself as "the young person, sir."

Once inside the house, she was not kept waiting. She was ushered into a well-appointed side-room, where a bright fire burned in the grate. The man retired to make known her arrival to his mistress, and Dolly settled herself in a chair by the hearth.

"I wonder how many 'young persons' have been sent away sorrowing this morning," she said, "and I wonder how Griffith will like the idea of my filling the position of companion to an elderly lady, or any other order of lady, for the matter of that? Poor old fellow!" and she gave vent to an unmistakable sigh.

But the appearance of the elderly lady put an end to her regrets. The door opened and she entered, and Dolly rose to receive her. The next instant, however, she gave a little start. She had seen the elderly lady before, and confronting her now recognized her at once,--Miss Berenice MacDowlas. And that Miss MacDowlas recognized her also was quite evident, for she advanced with the air of one who was not at all at a

loss.

"How do you do?" she remarked, succinctly, and gave Dolly her hand.

That young person took it modestly.

"I believe I have had the pleasure--" she was beginning, when Miss MacDowlas interrupted her.

"You met me at the Bilberrys'," she said. "I remember seeing you very well. You are Dorothea Crewe."

Dolly bowed in her most insinuatingly graceful manner.

"Take a seat," said Miss MacDowlas.

Dolly did so at once.

Miss MacDowlas looked at her with the air of an elderly lady who was not displeased.

"I remember you very well," she repeated. "You were governess there. Why did you leave?"

Dolly did not know very definitely, and told her so.

The notice given her had been unexpected. Lady Augusta had said it was because her pupils were old enough to be sent from home.

"Oh!" said Miss MacDowlas, and looked at her again from her hat to her shoes.

"You are fond of reading?" she asked next

"Yes," answered Dolly.

"You read French well?"

"Yes," said Dolly. She knew she need not hesitate to say that, at least.

"You are good company and are fond of society?"

"I am fond of society," said Dolly, "and I hope I am 'good company,'"

"You don't easily lose patience?"

"It depends upon circumstances," said Dolly.

"You can play and sing?"

"I did both the night I met you," returned the young person.

"So you did," said Miss MacDowlas, and examined her again.

It was rather an odd interview, upon the whole, but it did not end unfortunately. Miss MacDowlas wanted a companion who was quick-witted and amusing, and, having seen that Dolly was both on the evening of the Bilberry clan gathering, she had taken a fancy to her. So after a little sharp questioning, she announced her decision. She would employ her to fill the vacant situation at the same rate of salary she had enjoyed in her position of governess to the youthful Bilberrys, and she would employ her at once.

"I want somebody to amuse me," she said, "and I think you can do it. I am often an invalid, and my medical man says the society of a young person will benefit me."

So it was settled that the following week Dolly should take up her abode at Brabazon Lodge and enter upon the fulfilment of her duties. She was to read, play, sing, assist in the entertainment of visitors, and otherwise make herself generally useful, and, above all, she was to be amusing.

She left the house and proceeded homeward in a peculiar frame of mind. She could have laughed, but she was compelled to admit to herself that she could also have cried with equal readiness. She had met with an adventure indeed. She was a young person at large no longer; henceforth she was the property of the elderly dragon she had so often laughed at

with Griffith. And yet the dragon had not been so objectionable, after all. She had been abrupt and unceremonious, but she had been better than Lady Augusta, and she had not shown herself illiberal. But there would be no more daily visits from Griffith, no more téte-à-têtes in the shabby parlor, no more sitting by the fire when the rest had left the room, no more tender and inconsistently long farewells at the front door. It was not pleasant to think about. She found herself catching her breath quickly, with a sound like a little sob.

"He will miss it awfully," she said to herself, holding her muff closely with her small, cold hands, and shutting her eyes to work away a tear; "but he won't miss it more than I shall. He might live without me perhaps, but I could n't live without him. I wonder if ever two people cared for each other as we do before? And I wonder if the time will ever come--" And there she broke off again, and ended as she so often did. "Poor old fellow!" she said. "Poor, dear, patient, faithful fellow! how I love you!"

She hurried on briskly after this, but she was wondering all the time what he would say when he found out that they were really to be separated. He would rebel, she knew, and anathematize fate vehemently. But she knew the rest of them would regard it as rather a rich joke that chance should have thrown her into the hands of Miss MacDowlas. They had all so often laughed at Griffith's descriptions of her and her letters, given generally when he had been galled into a caustic mood by the

arrival of one of the latter.

Beaching Bloomsbury Place, Dolly found her lover there. He had dropped in on his way to his lodgings, and was awaiting her in a fever of expectation, having heard the news from Aimée.

"What is this Aimée has been telling me?" he cried, the moment she entered the room. "You can't be in earnest, Doll! You can't leave home altogether, you know."

She tossed her muff on the table and sat down on one of the low chairs, with her feet on the fender.

"I thought so until this morning," she said, a trifle mournfully; "but it can't be helped. The fact is, it is all settled now. I am an engaged young person."

"Settled!" exclaimed Griffith, indignantly. "Engaged! Dolly, I did n't think you would have done it."

"I could n't help doing it," said Dolly, her spirits by no means rising as she spoke. "How could I?"

But he would not be consoled by any such cold comfort. He had regarded the possibility of her leaving the house altogether as something not likely to be thought of. Very naturally, he was of the opinion that

Dolly was as absolute a necessity to every one else as she was to himself. What should he do without her? How could he exist? It was an unreasoning insanity to talk about it. He was so roused by his subject indeed, that, neither of them being absolutely angelic in temperament, they wandered off into something very like a little quarrel about it,--he, goaded to lover-like madness by the idea that she could live without him; she, finding her low spirits culminate in a touch of anger at his hotheaded, affectionate obstinacy.

"But it is not to be expected," he broke out at last, without any reason whatever,--"it is not to be expected that you can contend against everything. You are tired of disappointment, and I don't blame you. I should be a selfish dolt if I did. If Gowan had been in my place he could have married you, and have given you a home of your own. I never shall be able to do that. But," with great weakness and evidence of tribulation at the thought, "I didn't think you would be so cool about it, Dolly."

"Cool!" cried Dolly, waxing wroth and penitent both at once, as usual. "Who is cool? Not I, that is certain. I shall miss you every hour of my life, Griffith." And the sad little shadow on her face was so real that he was pacified at once.

"I am an unreasonable simpleton!" was his next remorseful outburst.

"You have said that before," said Dolly, rather hard-heartedly; but in

spite of it she did not refuse to let him be as affectionate as he chose when he knelt down by her chair, as he did the next minute.

"It would be a great deal better for me," she half whispered, breaking the suspicious silence that followed,--"it would be a great deal better for me if I did not care for you half so much;" and yet at the same time she leaned a trifle more toward him in the most traitorous of half-coaxing, half-reproachful ways.

"It would be the death of me," said Griffith; and he at once plunged into an eloquently persuasive dissertation upon the height and depth and breadth and force of his love for her. He was prone to such dissertations, and always ready with one to improve any occasion; and I am compelled to admit that, far from checking him, Dolly rather liked them, and was given to encourage and incite him to their delivery. When this one was ended, he was quite in the frame of mind to listen to reason, and let her enter into particulars concerning her morning's efforts, which she did, at length, only adding a flavor of the mysterious up to the introduction of Miss MacDowlas.

"What!" cried out Griffith, when she let out the secret. "Confound it! No! Not Aunt MacDowlas in the flesh, Dolly? You are joking."

"No," answered Dolly, shaking her head at the amazed faces of the girls, who had come in during the recital, and who had been guilty of the impropriety of all exclaiming at once when the climax was reached. "I

am in earnest. I am engaged as companion to no less a person than Miss Berenice MacDowlas."

"Why, it is like something out of a three-volumed novel," said Mollie.

"It is a good joke," said 'Toinette.

"It is very awkward," commented Aimée. "If she finds out you are engaged to Griffith, she will think it so indiscreet of you both that she will cut him off with a shilling."

"Indiscreet!" echoed Dolly. "So we are indiscreet, my sage young friend,--but indiscretion is like variety, it is the spice of life."

And by this brisk speech she managed to sweep away the shadow which had touched Griffith's face, at the unconscious hint at their lack of wisdom.

"Don't say such a thing again," she said to Aimée afterward, when they were talking the matter over, as they always talked things over together, "or he will fancy that you share his own belief that he has something to reproach himself with. Better to be indiscreet than to love one another less."

"A great deal better," commented the wise one of the family, oracularly. She was not nineteen yet, this wise one, but she was a great comfort

and help to Dolly, and indeed to all of them. "And it is n't my way to blame you, either, Dolly, though things do look so entangled. I never advised you to give it up, you know."

"Give it up," cried Dolly, a soft, pathetic warmth and color rising to her face and eyes. "Give it up! There would be too much of what has past and what is to come to give up with it. Give it up! I wouldn't if I could, and I could n't if I would."