THE NEW INMATE OF HILFONT

A THRILLING STORY OF OLD ENGLAND.

CHAPTER II.

Not very long after our great trouble—but about that time I lost dates—for the first week looked like so many years, and all the months following that were such a blank, that to turn back upon them, passionless and uneventful, they look as if they must have slid past like a single day—Derwent showed me a letter he had just received. It was from a cousin who was very ill—dying, indeed—at one of the German baths, whose illness had been so long taken for granted, that nobody could suppose it to be mortal. Mortal, however, it had suddenly turned out to her, and this Mr. Crofton wrote in sudden alarm and terror to the head of his house. He had an only daughter—a motherless and almost portionless, child. What was to become of her when he died?

"It is for you to decide, Clara," said Derwent, putting the letter in my hand.

Of course there was but one decision possible. "She must come here," said I; "but who is to bring her?—must you? Poor Child! I grudge you to go, Derwent; yet she must not come alone."

"I grudge to leave my pale Clara," said Derwent; "but poor Crofton still lives. He may be making twice as much of it as is necessary—he always did so—we'll write and see."

"I think the man was dying who wrote that letter," said I; and the hurried, unsteady hand, the words too earnest in their diction for anything less than the last appeal of nature, were witnesses indisputable. And so it proved; for even while we were discussing this letter, the writer of it was already, dead. The next post brought us the intimation. His daughter, a girl of eighteen, was totally alone; we were not even sure that she had a servant with her. Derwent rose up on the moment in one of his rare bursts of rapid action. Almost before I could say good-bye to himself or I had half realized his going, he was away. I was still heavy with the lassitude and dullness of great grief: weak in health, too, for my sorrow had told upon me; and exacting as lonely women are, I cannot justify it. I have never tried to justify myself: but the very suddenness with which Derwent set out upon this mission of mercy gave mean involountary pang. When he was gone, I went to my window to watch him, as I always did, and he never looked back. My mind was exhausted and irritable. I was not myself. I actually cried with a mortification and annoyance which amazed me. So that from the very first moment, one might say that I was prejudiced against Lucy Crofton, and had in connection with her coming a thrill of unaccustomed pain.

I shall not easily forget the night she came home. It was winter, a stormy night and snowing heavily. I expected them every evening, but was not sure that they were coming then. I was myself in the drawing-room. The drawing-room at Hilfont was a very large room, always bright and cheerful. It had been newly furnished at our marriage, furnished brightly, with a great deal of gilding, and as much white as Derwent could persuade his craftsmen into tolerating. Perhaps Mr. Crofton had rather a florid taste—certainly he liked, with a child's liking, all manner of pretty colors. The carpet had a white ground, with boquets of the brightest flowers on it. I remember how warm and velvety it looked under the glow from the low, bright fireplace, where all the polished steel and gilt ornaments reflected ruddy light. The curtains were drawn; the fire was bright; the unlighted warm-colored room looked the very picture of home and comfort. I sat by the fire in a low easy-chair, which was my usual seat. The clock ticked on the mantelpiece; the fire sparkled in the grate; the snow came with a muffled heavy fall upon the window. I was longing for Derwent. I was anxious lest he and his young charge should be traveling on such a night; but beneath all, I was sad in my own heart, which was closest to me, over my own trouble. Now and then a sadden remembrance struck upon me, sharp and unlooked for, like an arrow—remembrances of hopes I used to have when I sat here in this same fashion before that grief came—but for all that I must have looked, and no doubt did look, a very impersonation of domestic warmth and happiness. I had a book in my hand, though I doubt whether I got through a page of it in an hour. My mind was very busy with my own thoughts.

I heard no sound of wheels, though my ears were sufficiently keen—the snow had impeded the road and made it noiseless—but I heard suddenly a bustle in the hall, and felt, or supposed I felt, the cold sudden blast of air from the open door. I rose up to listen, wondering what it might be, when suddenly the door was thrown open, and Derwent appeared leading the stranger in his hand. He was glad to see me, and glad to come home; flushed by the cold and rapid journey, he looked exhilarated, bright, and cheered, more than seemed possible to me, and came in, in this sudden hurried way, rather to introduce his charge than to meet his wife, from whom, since our marriage, he had never been parted before. It was the most momentary pang in the world, but it was a pang which startled me out of my solitude. Then I went forward to meet them.

"This is Lucy, Clara," said Derwent, giving her over to me. I took her hand and kissed her, in an anxious revulsion of feeling, determined not to be unkind to the orphan; and strange to think of, she, looking more self-possessed than I was, kissed me. When I felt the firm light touch of her lips upon my cheek, I was more startled than I can describe, and involuntarily drew back a step to look at her. She was a fair haired and blue-eyed, a pretty girl. The journey and her grief, and her sudden entrance into a new home, had not not decomposed Lucy. She looked at me, but not as a timid girl looks at the elder woman in whose hands the comfort of her life is henceforth to be. There was nothing wistful, nothing downcast, nothing propitiatory in her face. She looked so entirely able to take care of herself that insensibly my compassion evaporated. Every unconscious movement she made, every detail of her appearance, helped to extinguish my sympathy. Her big shawl was thrown on firmly over her arm with not a shadow of drag in it. Her hair was so smooth on her forehead, her step so unhesitating, no one could help feeling sure that everything Lucy wanted was there, exact and in the most beautiful order in that bag which she carried in her hand, and that there was not the remotest necessity for untying her bonnet and loosening her cloak, and making her sit down by the fire, as I did instinctively. I said, "Welcome to Hilfont, my dear; are you very tired?"—mechanically. They were such words as I should have addressed to another girl in her circumstances. And Lucy said, "How do you do, aunt?" The girl quite disconcerted me with her composure and sensibleness. I did not know what to say next; while she sat looking up at me, quite brightly, as if she rather compassionated my unreadiness. It was the oddest change of position I ever knew.

"It is too late for dinner," said I. "Derwent, you must be content with a nondescript meal, such as ladies love, for I dare say Lucy will like some tea. I did not know you were coming to-night."

"I thought it better to push on than to waste time writing," said Derwent. "What a famous fire! It is almost worth a ten miles' drive through the snow to enjoy it, eh! You look quite bright to-night, Clara."

"Yes, said I, hurriedly, "we always look bright in this room, but I fear your rapid traveling may have been rather too much for Lucy. Are you very tired, my dear?"

"Not in the least, thank you, aunt," said that easy young lady, who sat upright in her chair, still holding the bag and shawl, and looking quite ready for action. "I was very glad when uncle proposed to come on without stopping. And we have got in in very good time after all."

"In capital time," said Derwent. "And now, Clara, for your nondescript meal."

"Immediately," said I; "but have patience, let Lucy rest for a moment; remember Hilfont is not so familiar to her as to you. Do not mind Mr. Crofton's rapidity, my dear. There is no haste. You must rest and be refreshed now."

"Then, please, I will go to my own room, aunt," said the prompt Lucy, "I will not keep you waiting; but I should like to leave my bag, and make sure that I am fit to sit at table with you who look so nice and neat. Will one of the servants show me the way?"

"I will show you the way," said I, as she ran and looked to the door, and I led her away accordingly. The room I had prepared for her was a very pretty room close to my own, closer than I should have chosen had I known how independent a young lady Lucy was. She looked round it with an approving glance as she put down her shawl and her bag.

"How kind of you to have taken so much trouble," she said. "Thank you, I shall be ready directly. But please, aunt, don't let me detain you. I can quite well find my way downstairs."

Thus dismissed, I succumbed with quiet wonder, and left her to herself. Derwent waited for me on the staircase to ask how I was, and to make up, if that was wanted, for the coolness of his first salutation. "I think my fair Clara looks brighter to-night," he said, "and, my love, you will have a companion now."

"I have you Derwent," said I.

"Who am not a companion, madame, if it please you," said my husband, "but the other portion of the same individual. Lucy is a nice little girl; no nonsense about her; don't you think so, Clara?"

"Why did you have so little consideration for her?" said I; "so rapid and breathless a journey might make her ill. Did that never occur to you?"

Derwent was only a man; with all his excellences, he never suspected me of disagreeing with him about the nice little girl, nor perceived what my evasion meant. "I thought it the kindest thing I could do—keep her from thinking," said Mr. Crofton; "besides that, I was very anxious for my own part to get home. Poor old Crofton was under the sod before I got there. She does not say much about him, and keeps up her spirits wonderfully for one so young, and has borne the journey like a hero. I made her quite easy by telling of you, Clara. She knew, before she came, that you'd be a mother to her."

"Ah! if she does not turn out older than me," I said to myself, under my breath. Derwent did not hear me, which was so much the better. We went into the dining-room, where the table had been spread for the travelers; and by and by Lucy joined us, as calm and easy as though she had lived here all her life. She was really quite a pretty girl. Somewhat dismayed as I was at her self-possession, I was disposed to think her blue eyes cold, and even her prettiness of a common kind; but Lucy Crofton was really, truly, unmistakably pretty, and her mourning did not harm her appearance, though she was totaly black from head to foot, dull, heavy, crapey, woolen black, which owned no sparkle, and enveloped her like a pall. She took her chair and her supper with perfect propriety, but no symptom of indifference. She talked without hesitation, quietly, I cannot say without feeling, but she was perfectly able to manage her sorrow. I, who could not divest myself of the idea that some chance word might wake her dormant grief, and that one ought to be specially tender in her circumstances to this orphan girl, was much more embarrassed than she. It seemed so odd and contrary to all established notions, that an orphan so young and so friendless should show herself so entirely mistress of her feelings the first night of her entry into a strange house and a new life; and I could not suppose any other explanation than that she was heroically subduing herself, and by and by, when she reached her own room would "give way." Once more I ascended the stairs with her when it was quite bed time. And then Lucy made a momentary pause of consideration, and spoke.

"I hope I may not trouble you, aunt," were her first words, said with a very becoming gentleness of tone—then a little pause. I expected she would cry, and took her hand in mine to comfort her, but Lucy did not cry. "But I have always been accustomed to be useful," she added, quietly; "uncle says you are a good deal alone, Aunt Clara. I should like to be of some use to you, and I hope you will let me try."

"Time enough to think of that Lucy," said I, withdrawing my hand; "in the meantime you must rest, and recover your strength. I fear you are exercising an unnatural self control, and if it is so, you will feel the reaction all the more severely. Have confidence in us, my dear, and do not think that anything is expected of you, just yet at least. I am almost afraid you are keeping up too well for your own peace."

"Oh no, Aunt Clara," said Lucy, with a tear in her eye—a tear which looked quite sincere, and really seemed to evidence the full extent of her emotion. "I am not restraining myself, I am not very tired, and I am sure I shall be all right to-morrow, but I will not keep you; good night."

So saying, she took my hand again and bent forward to kiss me, which farewell token I received in utter amaze and confusion, humbly withdrawing thereafter; yet I could not find the very least fault with with her, either. When I looked round from the door, I flattered myself I saw a half wistful, deprecatory look from Lucy, but she was busy opening her bag, and I had no encouragement to stay. And this was how Lucy Crofton came home.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CANADA DESERVING OF CONFIDENCE.

What a Great London Financier Says on the Prevailing Depression.

Mr. Thos. Skinner, the great London financier, who has been exploring the North-West as far as the coast, returned to Montreal on Tuesday. Speaking of his impressions, Mr. Skinner said:—"It is five years since I was through to the coast before, and the improvement I observed, both in country and town, has made a deep impression on me. Notwithstanding the prevailing depression, the improvement is very marked, particularly in Calgary and Vancouver. All branches of trade, such as lumber, mining, and other works, have increased in volume, and have become solidified. Of course, the general complaint is the depression, which affects that side of the mountains just as much as it does this. But the people are cheerful through it all, and have every appearance of being the kind to weather it, too." Regarding the present depression in business, Mr. Skinner said he did not anticipate any continued depression in Canada. "Panics, such as occurred in the States, are due to an active and money making community being surprised, and there is no doubt they were surprised. The worst, I think, is over, but I would not be to sanguine as to the period when the depression will finally disappear. A failure in the wheat crop in England or India would have a good effect here, because then India, which exports to us would want all her grain for herself, and then you would supply us with wheat. The mistake made the last time when a wheat failure was declared in Russia will not be repested. It was thought then that Russia would buy the world's surplus but that was wrong. If the Russian peasant cannot raise wheat to feed himself he has simply to starve. He cannot afford to buy it. It is where a failure or famine occurs in a well-to-do country like England that makes wheat go up. I believe that Canada is just as deserving of confidence as she ever was, and as good a place to invest now as ever. Depression is not an unmixed evil. The steady front shown by Canada to it, and the wholesome way in which the period of trouble is being met, is calculated to promote the confidence of distant investors."

SOME ENGLISH CHILDREN.

A Pathetic Picture of Some Children's Lives in England.

If the reader will imagine 102,000 children passing before him and observe each child as it goes by, he may form some adequate idea of the extent of the child suffering with which, within ten years, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has actually been engaged. The first 24,000 are sufferers from violence—from boots, crockery, pans, shovels, straps, ropes, thongs, papers, fire, boiling water—any weapon which came to reckless and vengeful hands, which bruised, cut, burned, scalded, plastered, bandaged them. Following these come 57,000 sufferers from neglect and starvation—miserable with irritations and filth—shivering, ragged, nigh naked, pale, limp, feeble, faint, dizzy, puny, sinking, famine-stricken, dying, many carried in arms of the nurses of infirmaries and hospitals. After these would come 450 funerals, where ill-treatment ended fatally. The society obtained its information too late to make their wicked parents cease from troubling, and its sole and miserable success was in punishment. Still following these come 12,000 little things exposed to suffering to draw the gaze and cruel charity of the street to those who were responsible for their pallor, emaciation, and cough—mostly, too, in arms—but of idle drunkards and vagrants. Then come 4,000 pitable girl-child victims of monsters who devote their victims to their terrible sensual pleasure. Next comes 3,000 little slaves of improper and hurtful employment and dangerous performances, and child monstrosities in traveling shows, acrobats at fairs, trapeze, tight-rope performers in circuses, and toilers with burdens too heavy. The procession is forty-five miles long, and would take twenty-four hours to pass by. A pathetic feature would be the smallness of its members. Whilst ranging from fourteen and sixteen years downwards the immense proportion would be under five years old, the relative number of these increasing as the ages reached naked and helpless babyhood. Could this method of teaching the public be really adopted what results would follow!

In the days of Sir Joshua Reynolds, many ugly women of the nobility thought his skill was so great that he could picture them on the canvas as beauties, and his studio was overrun with them, much to his annoyance. He frequently said, "If I paint them as they are, they will hate me; if I don't paint them as they are, I shall hate myself."

BICYCLE RIDING EXTRAORDINARY.

Thousands Watched the Feats Which Won the Championship of Europe.

"Professional Riding for the Championship of Europe in 1894." Under this title two of the most celebrated artistic bicycle riders competed in Albert Hall, Crystal Palace, Leipzig, recently. They were the American, N. C. Kaufmann, and the Frenchman, August Gouget. Kaufmann has often been in competition with Gouget, and has now won the championship. The competition was so arranged that the champion was to perform feats which were to be performed afterward by his adversary, and vice versa. There were two referees, who were to select a third. These three judges chose a jury consisting of five men, who were to fix the number of points to be given, the highest number of points to be given for one exercise being five. The two competitors put up a stake of 1,000 marks ($238), and besides this the victor received a gold medal worth 300 marks ($71). The contest lasted four hours, and was watched with the greatest interest by an audience of thousands. Each rider performed feats in his own way on cycles of all kinds. While the Frenchman excelled more in gymnastics and acrobatic feats than in balancing, Kaufmann surprised the audience by a number of tricks such as had never been seen before, which he performed with wonderful skill, surety and elegance. Kaufmann won by 284 4.5 points against 228 2-5 points for Gouget.

In the accompanying engraving we show a number of the exercises which were performed by the two men, Figs. 1 to 6 being feats performed by Kaufmann, some of which were well copied by Gouget, and others not as well; while Figs. 7 to 10 illustrate exercises in which Gouget far surpassed his opponent. The remarkable exercises on the steps and ladder were not attempted by Kaufmann. Gouget was not to be scorned as an opponent.

Sir Augustus Harris has engaged no less than fifty artists for the coming opera season at his theatre in London. Of this number there are sixteen sopranos, five contraltos, thirteen tenors, nine baritones, and seven basses.

AGRICULTURAL.

Work For Rainy Days.

A correspondent writes:—I wonder if all my brother farmers can find enough work to keep them and the hired men busy in the continued rainy weather. What do you do while the rain is falling and you can't work out of doors? We have a good shop to work in, and plenty of tools; so the carpenter, the harness repairer, the painter and the blacksmith can find plenty to do while the rain is falling. We found our harnesses needed oiling, and taking them apart for this purpose we found a great many places that, by the use of the needle, thread, awl, etc, we put in as good shape as a harness-maker could have done, and thereby saved a trip to town, found something to put in the time, and saved a few dimes besides.

We find, by looking around, that our drill and harrow need repairs, so the carpenter has a chance to show his skill. There is a board broken out of the gate; of course, any one could nail one on, but that would not make a neat looking job so the genius that can use the carpenter's tools takes one head off the gate, fits the board to the mortice and puts the gate together again, and then a little paint makes it look like a new gate. Perhaps some one of your farm tools would look better if they were to receive a new coat of paint.

Do you have timothy hay? We have been working several days now cleaning up the seed which falls from the hay as it is forked over in the barn. The mangers have a lattice work bottom, about one foot above the tight floor. We are very careful to save this seed, and by running it through our fanning mill twice the seed is clean enough to place on the market, and as this seed is quoted at $2,25 per bushel, we are making good wages these rainy days by cleaning timothy seed.

This is a good time to scrub out the cellar and whitewash the wall. When the rain lets up so we can get out to work we find the fences want repairing. As we have not yet adopted the soiling system, we cannot dispense with the fences.

We have been building, of late years, quite a lot of post and rail fence. I think we have an improved and rapid way of setting, or rather driving the posts. We have a sort of pile-driver placed upon a wagon; there is a heavy wooden block which drives the post; on a wagon we place a two-horse power gasoline engine; the wheel of which is connected to the windlass of the pile driver by a belt; the block is raised by means of a rope, which passes through a pulley at the top of frame, and then to the windlass, around which it is given a couple of turns. When the windlass is in motion the block is raised the desired height, and then dropped on the post. A team of horses draws the wagon to the next place where the post is to be driven. If you have not the engine to turn the windlass, two men can turn by having a crank placed on each end. We have the posts sawed four inches square and seven and one-half feet in length and drive them in the ground three feet. Two men can sharpen and drive about 225 posts in ten hours with this driver.

Treatment of the Dairy Cow.

The proper treatment of the heifer to develop her best milking quality is not always followed, and by such mistakes cows are injured by losing the capacity for doing their best. A writer says upon the subject, that it is his practice to leave calves with their mothers in a box stall about three days—or until the milk is suitable for the dairy; then the cow is returned to her accustomed place in the dairy stable, and the calf is tied by her side where it can receive its mother's caresses and learn to eat from her manger; but cannot reach her udder. When it is five days old, it has learned to drink readily from the pail set in the manger, and at ten days its diet is warm skim-milk and the ensilage, clover hay and meal shared with its mother. In winter, while the cows are confined in the barn, this is an excellent plan much better than to separate them and put the calves in a pen by themselves. The cows are more contented and happy, and the calves are more comfortable from the warmth of their mothers' bodies—they do look so cosy lying snugly between the cows. They sooner learn to eat and seem to grow up with better manners when thus under the eye and influence of their mothers, than when confined in a pen with others, where they acquire annoying habits which they are often long in overcoming or outgrowing. I would never think of leaving a calf four weeks with its mother, to take its fill of fresh milk at pleasure. The butter which the milk should make, would be worth double the amount the veal would bring, if sold. If to be raised for the dairy, the skim-milk calf is equal to any, while it is much better for the cow to be milked by hand than by calf.

My cows are thoroughbred Jerseys, and the heifers invariably drop their calves at seventeen to nineteen months of age, and are again bred when their calves are about five months old; they are thus twelve months in milk and dry two months before dropping the second calf. I prefer to milk them a full year which seems to better develop "the milking habit" than to dry them off at eight or nine months, as many do. A year is long enough, however, with the first calf, and after that they are allowed to breed as fast as they will. I have one cow, eight years old next November, which has dropped eight calves, in succession, and is now bred for the ninth; the calves were equally divided as to sex, all healthy and hearty and the heifers make excellent milkers. This cow has been dry, is in good flesh and has gained in milk with each succeeding calf.

Hypnotism and Insanity.

Prof. J. W. Sutherland, a mind-reader and hypnotist, made such strong representations to the authorities of the New Westminster (B. C.) Asylum as to his ability to cure insanity by hypnotic suggestion that he was permitted to experiment with several patients last week. He utterly failed to hypnotize any of the subjects.