

# THE NEW INMATE OF HILFONT.

A THRILLING STORY OF OLD ENGLAND.

## CHAPTER VII.

"I want to have a peep at old Estcourt, Cousin Clara, before I leave," said Bertie; "can't you drive over some day?—it is not so very far."

"Fifteen miles," said I, "and back again; and do you think I could take a dangerous fellow like you among so many girls?"

"Dangerous! I am their brother," said Bertie, with a laugh and a blush, and a look of ingenious gratitude and thanks. "We're all in the same boat, and have a right to be friends. Here's to-day as bright as June, and nothing particular to do with it—let us all go!"

"With the greatest of pleasure. I should like above all things to go over to Estcourt and see your arrangements, Clara. I am told they are quite admirable," said Mrs. Robert Crofton.

"And no one is admitted! It will be quite a privilege," cried Mrs. Crofton of Stoke.

"May I be of the party, aunt?" said Lucy, quietly—so quietly, as if this gentle girl had no will of her own, but lived only at my pleasure, that it would have been barbarous to say no. I gave in at last against my will. We set out, the whole party of us, except the elder gentlemen, the three Mr. Croftons, who had no particular mind to follow their wives over the country on such an errand. Harry and Bertie were to ride. We elder ladies and the children filled two carriages, while Mary Crofton of Stoke, who was the least thing of a hoyden, proposed riding with "the boys," as she was pleased to call them.

"And I can mount you, Lucy," said Derwent; "are you up to fifteen miles? Rather a long stretch for a lady. I expect you'll both give in long before you reach Estcourt."

"Does Lucy ride?" asked I, in surprise. "The best horseman I know," said Derwent, laughing while she with the rest went to get ready. I was surprised—perhaps something more than surprised—for all Lucy's attainments came upon me unexpectedly. Modesty perhaps, and humbleness of mind, a desire not to boast; but it was somewhat annoying to find out the gift of one's inmate and companion so suddenly. Virtue so superior and out of the way somehow never gets the appreciation which it is supposed to deserve.

Alice, the other Mary Crofton, and the little Fortescues were in the other carriage. Alice was no horsewoman, and I saw with a momentary regret the young people cantering before us, Bertie keeping close by Lucy's rein. That, of course, was a mere accident; but still I should have preferred that Alice had been there. Lucy seemed to manage her horse with as much quietness, and ease, and propriety as she did everything else, not exuberant like the Stoke Mary, who was wild with simple spirits and girlish gaiety. But then I was vexed and put out by discovering again, for the fifth or sixth time, that I knew nothing about Lucy, and that she did not choose to bestow any of her confidence on me. I could not help thinking over it as we drove along. Was it my fault? Yet why should she have hesitated to tell me that she rode and liked riding? To be sure she did not hesitate, she only said nothing about it. It was her way.

It was past noon when we reached Estcourt. There was no lesson going on then. The teachers had gone home, and half of the children, the other half, in that holiday time were doing their own pleasure. This pleasure consisted in some secret and mysterious work, about which I, dropping in by chance and alone, my old morning-room, found them clustering their heads as busy as possible. They were rather disturbed at my sudden entrance, and plunged the work into a mighty work-table of Miss Austin's, one and all exclaiming in dismay, "If Alice should see it!" Then the secret was confided to me after I had taken an oath of strict silence. It was a wedding present for Clara—a magnificent table-worked in twelve squares, one by every girl in Estcourt—a mystery which the sisterhood were bound under grievous penalties not to divulge till the completion of the work. "But Mrs. Crofton will not tell!" said the least of the little embroiderers, looking doubtfully in my face. I repeated my vow with the greatest seriousness. "And oh, please, don't let Alice come here!" cried another. I could not promise that, but remained till Miss Austin's work-table was carefully locked up; then surely, the secret was safe.

After this little adventure I returned to the drawing-room, where Miss Austin had received the party, and where the young people waited for luncheon with agreeable impatience. The two Mrs. Croftons and the two Miss Croftons looked about them with considerable amazement, especially the elder ladies, and Lucy cast quiet investigating looks at the door. But there was only plain, homely, iron-gray Miss Austin who was now so confirmed and established in her authority as to be half-resentful of the intrusion of visitors upon her quiet. Nothing to be seen! The astonishment burst forth at last.

"But this is not the establishment; we see none of Mrs. Crofton's arrangements here," said, in a tone of disappointment, my namesake of Stoke.

"Indeed, I do not think I promised to show you any," said I. "I brought you to see Estcourt, which is a very cozy old house, and has a little picture gallery and chamber of state, which strangers often seek to see; for otherwise we have no arrangements here."

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Robert; "but the institution—the asylum—"

"Mrs. Crofton means the rooms for the orphans, aunt," explained Lucy.

By this time Alice, blushing, yet looking somewhat indignant, had withdrawn behind Miss Austin's chair; and Bertie, generously troubled and uneasy for her, followed her there with a book in his hand, fondly calling her attention to it.

"Look here, Alice," cried Bertie, "here's a mark of old times: here's where you scribbled in the days of your youth, and spoiled the title-page, and caught a blowing up. Look here! and your name written in my own admirable hand-writing as it was in those days; yet you leave such a valuable autograph lying about anywhere—for shame!"

Bertie's speech restored my good humor.

"Do you call Estcourt anywhere, you saucy boy?" said I. "Leave the memorial where it is; I like to see it. Come, luncheon is ready. The children are somewhere about; it is holiday time, and there is nothing to do. But as we are going to share their roast mutton, we shall see them at table. Come; but I am afraid there is only simple fare."

With amazed faces, my visitors followed to the dining-room.

"I don't understand it at all," said Mrs. Robert Crofton to Mrs. Crofton of Stoke, in an audible whisper, which I could not help overhearing. "The arrangements here are those of a gentleman's house; where are the children kept, do you suppose?"

The other lady shook her head; she was as much in the dark as my respectable sister-in-law.

"If this is charity, I only wish my children were as well off," continued Mrs. Robert, who was a lawyers wife, and lived, in Russell Square, and they did not at all know how to treat the six little girls, who, though shy, were as frank in their speech, so far as I was concerned, as though they had been Croftons. Mrs. Robert looked round the room, and held up her hands in telegraphic horror. She was shocked to think that my orphans were so well off and in virtuous indignation was quite ready to suggest that scores of poor children might have been educated and clothed in blue frocks and white tippets for the sum which supported in this luxury my unjustly favored twelve. It might have been sold for so much, and given to the poor. I could read that ancient sentiment in my sister-in-law's face; but I fear she was thinking, not of the poor, but of her own Harry and Mary, Frank and Edward, who had no such gardens as those of Estcourt to luxuriate in. As for Lucy, she began to enter into conversation with the little girl next her, and asked how she liked to be here, and said how kind Mrs. Crofton was, till the child was stricken mute with amazement, not knowing, till it was suggested to her, that there was anything so very remarkable in her lot. At all this Alice Harley looked on with a thoughtful face; she had ceased to speak to any of our party, and sat by herself among the little girls, with a certain air of pride and resentment which I never remember to have seen on her face before. And Bertie was not now by her side to speak of old times, and she could hear at the other side of the table Lucy quietly informing Mrs. Crofton of Stoke that she was an orphan, and "no better" than these children, and once thought she should have been very glad to be admitted to Estcourt.

"Where, I suppose, aunt qualifies them all for governesses," said Lucy. "So good of her! I thought I should have had to be a governess too."

It was an odd scene in its way, and not a very pleasant one, though I am very sure there was nothing in the roast mutton and rice pudding, which my honest Bertie demolished to such alarming extent, to make anybody envious. Yet I found the two Mrs. Croftons quite without interest in the picture gallery and the chamber of state. Lucy desired to be left behind to make acquaintance with the little girls whom she was so eager to show herself on an equality with; but of all the other incidents of that visit, I was most concerned by the sudden cloud which covered Alice Harley's face.

## CHAPTER VIII.

The morning after this expedition, I found Clara and Alice together in very close conversation in their own room. The rest of the party were all down-stairs, discussing their plans for the day; but the two sisters had contrived to steal away immediately after breakfast. Alice was seated on the ottoman at the foot of the bed, while Clara half knelt, half sat on the floor before her, leaning on her sister's knee. Alice was the speaker, and Clara's earnest little face was gazing up to her with wistful wonder and distress. They both started and looked a little confused as I entered.

"Why are you here, children?" said I. "Have you no opinions or inclinations to add to the general council as to what is to be done to-day?"

"Oh, please, we would rather not go down: we would rather not go anywhere, Mrs. Crofton," said Alice. "Nobody will ever miss us: we will stay here."

"And how do you know nobody will miss you?" said I. "Am I nobody, and Mr. Crofton, and Bertie, and the children? Is Alice cross to-day, Clara, tell me?"

"Alice is never cross, said my godchild, with some spirit; "but, oh, please speak to her; she says such dreadful things. She has been so low and dull ever since yesterday."

"Low and dull? I do not understand that. Has any one vexed you Alice?"

"No," said Alice, with a certain youthful dignity; "only I have been thinking, if you please, Mrs. Crofton, I think I ought to go out as a governess."

"Oh, godmamma, listen to her!" cried Clara, with a sudden burst of tears; "she has been going on so all the morning, and just when this has happened to me, and we were all to be so happy. Speak to her, godmamma!"

"A governess?" said I; "indeed I do not please, Alice. What does the child mean?"

"Ah, we are not children now," said Alice, pathetically. "When we were children it did not matter. We had no experience, we did not understand anything; but now!" and Alice ended with a profound sigh, and shook her head sorrowfully, as though all the troubles of existence were

hanging heavy upon that pretty white brow.

I was sorry for the poor child, yet I could scarcely help laughing. "Do, you know, that one is always the better for telling one's troubles!" said I. "Come, open your hearts and let me know what they are."

"Mrs. Crofton," said Alice, solemnly, after a little pause, "I ought to go out as a governess; I know I ought. Clara is going to be married, and to be rich, and I hope she will be very, very happy; but I have read in books how gentlemen feel to their wives' families, and I will not go with her to fret her husband; so Clara has no cause to be angry, nor grieved either, and that is one part of it quite settled and clear."

"Very well; now for the other," said I. I rather think Alice was half offended that I received her "settled and clear" so quietly, and consented to it with so much readiness. She looked as if she would like to cry, but after another little pause proceeded again.

"And, then, mamma has not very much for the rest at home. I could not go to make them poorer. I will go and be a governess, please!"

"Let us go into it quietly," said I, showing no sympathy for the sudden break-down which accompanied this exclamation. "Is it because mamma has told you she has very little, or because you have seen the other ones suffering from your presence, that you have come to this sudden resolution, Alice?"

"Mamma would do anything rather than let me think myself a burden," said Alice, with indignation.

"It was some of the little ones, then," said I.

"Oh, godmamma!" cried Clara, "you do not think so; you know better. It was what someone said yesterday, when you were at Estcourt, about the girls."

"And I don't mean to be ungrateful," cried poor Alice through her tears; "but if mamma was too poor to bring us up at home, I ought to work for her, and help her now. I know it is all true. I should never have learned anything but for your kindness. I have no right to be proud, and say they were cruel to tell me so. I did not know indeed we were all brought up for governesses; but I must not be dependent on mamma, who is poor. I must do my duty now, I know."

"I trust you will," said I; "but do you think, Alice, Mrs. Robert Crofton is a much better judge than I am, and than mamma, what your duty is?"

"Oh, it was not Mrs. Robert Crofton; it was every one," said Alice, turning away her face.

"Alice is naughty, Clara," said I, "and ill-tempered. She is punishing you and me for other people's faults; never mind! We are good, and don't deserve it. Now listen to me, you foolish little girl. Young ladies in novels go out as governesses when there is no necessity for it, to show that they are high-minded, and of an independent spirit, and to exhibit the cruelty of all those unfortunate people who employ governesses; but I had much rather my Alice did not do that. I had rather—now don't look astonished; you are a gentlewoman; you can't help being a gentlewoman, whatever you may do. I had rather, for my own part, see my Alice the housemaid at home."

"The housemaid!" They both looked at me with pale faces and dilated eyes.

"To be sure, the housemaid! Don't you think it would be delightful to be able to do everything all with your own hands and head and nobody helping you, for mamma and the children at home?"

At which saying Alice suddenly got up and kissed me, and a bright blush of surprise and pleasure, shame and satisfaction, flew over her face. She perceived what I meant, but so did not Clara, whose little head was running on her own future grandeur, and who repeated that terrible name of housemaid with dismay.

"Yes, my dear child," said I, delivering a little speech for the occasion (which was an indulgence, however, which I rarely permitted myself.) "I don't agree with the working-women idea very much. I don't think any lady does an unbecoming office when she sweeps her own hearth and serves her own table. Serving one's own, even in menial offices, is a privilege, and does not lower in all ranks. I think they are happy who can do it; but everything that is not necessary is unbecoming. Your mamma's income is a certain one, if it is not very large, and you can do your duty a great deal better by remaining at home. Look me up that text which speaks of voluntary humility and will worship, Alice, for a punishment. When I take to preach, I shall take that and harp upon it; but I hope my dear little girl has had her share of the lesson, and will not require any more."

Alice rose with a blush to do as I told her; but paused when she had taken a step or two towards the table.

"Did mamma ask you to take us, Mrs. Crofton?" she said, with a little timidity. "I remember long ago something Lady Greenfield said about an orphan asylum, and it all came back again yesterday. Did mamma ask you take us?"

"No," said I; "I took you because I wanted something which you had to give."

"And what was that? Oh, what was that? Tell us," they cried both together with the greatest eagerness.

"I was very solitary then," said I; "it was love!"

In a moment they were both clinging round me, twining their soft arms about my neck and my waist. My heart warmed. I felt the dull pain that was always there ceased and relieved with a sudden sensation of happiness. I had children; I was not a dry tree.

"I think I got a little of it," said I, "and comforted myself. So now, children, when Mrs. Robert Crofton, or anybody else, says anything stupid about Estcourt, tell them they do not know."

I left after awhile looking even brighter than usual, and with all the cloud blown over; but still I was uneasy about the children. It was not Mrs. Robert; it was every one. They were tender little hearts, and they were at the most sensitive age. I should have been very glad to have sent them away from Hilfont, to be out of trouble; but that was impossible. Then I could say to Mrs. Robert, "Do not say anything about an orphan asylum, please; Estcourt is not an orphan asylum, and the little Harleys are more highly connected than I am." But I could not condescend so far as to make any such request to Lucy. I know by instinct how obligingly she would consent, and what care she would take to "save the feelings" of Aunt Clara's young friends. But

it was just this, I fear, which provoked me in anticipation, and made me perfectly silent on the subject as far as she was concerned. However, Lucy was fully occupied at present with her relations, the other Croftons, amongst all of whom she was very popular, and who one and all congratulated me on possessing her. It was delightful to see her unselfishness, her consideration for others, Mrs. Crofton of Stoke assured me that very night, and how she watched my every movement, and tried to anticipate my wishes. I said "Yes," and I dare say my excellent kinswoman thought me very ungrateful.

However the conclusion of my thoughts about Alice and Clara was twofold. First, that they must hear something of the kind sooner or later, and had better get it over now; and second, that Mr. Sedgewick was coming to-morrow; Derwent had invited him to join our Christmas party. I was a little curious to see how he behaved to his little fiancee, and felt that his arrival would at least effect a diversion in any little schemes of annoyance toward my two girls.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## COAL IN BAGS.

A Cleanly and Convenient Way of Delivering Fuel.

In the European countries the custom of delivering coal in bags is universal. These are filled at the yard—so many to the ton—and these are carried on the back of the



DELIVERING THE COAL.

driver, or his assistant, to their place in the house, where they are emptied, a cleanly and simple operation, that offers no obstruction to traffic, and that should commend itself to every one as the only sensible plan of doing the job.

## CONTAGIOUS DISEASES.

A Great Plague Raging in China—Identical With the London Plague of the Seventeenth Century.

Reports that have thus far this year reached us regarding the existence of contagious diseases have not been startling although in several places a diminutive epidemic has been announced. Chicago has had several hundred cases of smallpox; Brooklyn had 778 cases of measles in May and 106 in the first four days of the present month; and cholera is said to have broken out in the sacred city of Mecca, in St. Nazaire on the western coast of France in several districts in Russia and Prussia, and in Lisbon. These outbreaks, however, have not been alarming but from China comes a story that is, in Hong Kong, Canton and other cities a great plague has been raging since March. The scourge carries off whole families during a night and the terrified Chinese, who are the principal victims, spend their time in parading the streets, night and day, praying to their Josses. The mortality is said to be fearful, reaching eighty per cent. in some localities, and the disease is spreading despite the efforts of the authorities to check its growth. Attending physicians say it is almost identical with the great London plague of the seventeenth century, and is traceable to the filthy habits of the Chinese, and the wretchedly inadequate system of drainage. There is little or no reason for Christians to fear a visitation of such a kind.

## PREFERRED WHITE MEAT.

A Lion Disregards a Kaffir and Takes an Englishman.

"Though lions are timid enough in the daytime," said a well-seasoned African hunter, "when the sun has set and darkness comes on they become bold and fearless, and often when urged by hunger reckless and daring. It is by no means unusual for oxen to be seized at the yoke or horses to be killed inside a stable, or when tied to the wheel of a wagon; while in Mashonaland alone four men were carried off and eaten by lions during the first two years of the occupation of that country. One of these unfortunates was a young man who was about to start a market garden in the neighborhood of Umtali settlement. He had gone away with a cart and four oxen to buy some native meal at one of the Kaffir kraals, and had outspanned for the night at a spot about six miles distant from the little township. The oxen were tied up to the yokes, and Mr. Toole was lying asleep under the cart, alongside of a native, when a lion walked up and seizing him by the shoulder carried him off and killed and ate him. This lion, he it is noted, showed a refined taste in disregarding the Kaffir and seizing the European."

Manitoba protests against the influx of undesirable immigrants.

The city of Banias, in Great Bucharia, is out in the side of a mountain. There are 12,000 artificial caves some very large, and two statues, one ninety, the other twenty feet high, each hewn from a single stone.

## PURELY CANADIAN NEWS.

INTERESTING ITEMS ABOUT OUR OWN COUNTRY.

Gathered from Various Points from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Dugald, Manitoba, wants a doctor. West Selkirk is to have a bicycle club. Aug. 15th will be Kingston's Civic holiday.

Stratford's rate of taxation may be 23 mills.

August 6th is the date for Guelph's civic holiday.

The Lutheran Synod will meet next year in Elmira.

The Kalmars station on the C.P.R. has been burned.

The Methodist church of Princeton is being repaired.

A cheese factory is to be established on Simcoe Island.

Diphtheria is prevalent in some parts of New Brunswick.

Chairman Skene, of the Galt Public School Board, has resigned.

Rev. James Ballantyne, London, Ont., has moved to Ottawa.

A lodge of the [Knights of Pythias is being formed at Rat Portage.

Mrs. Hannah Sparr, one of Stratford's oldest residents, is dead.

Two artillery men have deserted from "A" battery Kingston.

The Hudson Bay Company's store at Rat Portage is to be enlarged.

It is reported that a barge line will run from Owen Sound to Duluth.

A lodge of I. O. F. is to be established at Massey Station, Manitoulin.

Canada has now 8,477 post offices, an increase of 189 since last year.

Patrick O'Grady, a very old resident of Paris, is dead at the age of 70.

Dundas is opposed to converting the H. & D. Railway into a trolley line.

Rev. Mr. Prosser, Baptist, has moved from Leamington to Bidgetown.

Andrew A. Wylie, customs appraiser, died at Hamilton at the age of 68.

A four-foot live snake is on exhibition in a Dundas street window, London.

A large party of Scandinavian immigrants will go into the Edmonton district.

Sweet potatoes are being grown this season on Cedar Island, Chippewa Bay.

Canada has thirty-eight divisions of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

A new school building is to be erected at Fort William, the cost of which will be \$18,900.

London has issued 1,111 dog tags and about 300 untagged dogs yet roam the streets.

The county of Wentworth has a net balance on hand of \$12,528.23 over all liabilities.

The Baptist Convention for Manitoba and the North-West will convene at Winnipeg July 9th.

The corner-stone of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran church in Illice township has just been laid.

The Hobbs Hardware Company of London pays \$1,000 every week in wages to its employees.

Rat Portage is swarming with commercials, prospectors and capitalists from all points of the compass.

A consignment of orchids and amaryllis from British India has just been received at St. Thomas.

Col. C. S. Jones and Major T. Harry Jones, of the Dufferin Rifles of Brantford, have resigned.

Joseph D. Johnston, of Lower Fort Garry, died recently. He was formerly of Montreal and London.

Peter Barnett, a retired farmer living near Fergus, attempted suicide by cutting his throat with a razor.

The Beckett Mountain Park Company, (Limited), with a capital stock of \$40,000, has been incorporated.

Custom receipts in Halifax last month were \$71,867.36, a decrease of \$2,703.23 compared with May, 1893.

Miss A. Laven, of the Welland High School has been appointed entrance examiner by the Separate School Board.

The St. John, N. B., Board of Trade has decided to send a delegation to Ottawa to oppose the fast Atlantic subsidy.

The Maritime Grand Council of the Royal Templars of Temperance will be held on July 9, 10 and 11 at Woodstock, N. B.

A company of rich Winnipeg gentlemen will develop the new found coals at Buffalo Point, Lake of the Woods.

The cotton factory at Moncton, N. B., resumed operations, the workmen having accepted a cut of 10 per cent. in wages.

The London Y.M.C.A. has a new building on the old Durand street. The Free Library Board will have the corner of the lot.

A four hundred and fifty pound bear, slain the other day in Antigonish county, N.S., had killed twenty-five sheep of different farmers.

At a recent meeting of the Watford and Zion Congregational churches it was decided to extend a call to the Rev. Mr. Madill, of Alton.

Judges and lawyers in Kent County are agitating the appointment of a shorthand reporter to record the evidence and judgments in important cases.

Mr. Ephraim Lumley, of Ridgeway, is suing the Wabash Railway for \$20,000, for injuries sustained in a switching accident on that road some four years ago.

## Large Fee.

It is always refreshing to learn of lawyers who will not undertake an unjust cause.

Of Judge Ira Perley the biographer says: He believed in the justice of his client's cause; he would not enlist in it otherwise.

At one time a sharper tried to retain him, and was smothering over his crooked conduct, as well as he knew how, when the judge astonished him by exclaiming:

"I think you have acted like an infernal scoundrel, sir!"

"Is there any charge for that opinion?"

"Yes, sir; five dollars."