THE NEW INMATE OF HILFONT.

A THRILLING STORY OF OLD ENGLAND.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Sedgewick came next day. So far as local society could confer it, Hugh Sedgewick was a man of fame, and of course the position of the two girls, one of whom held so interesting a relationship to him, was immediately improved. Somehow, the countenance of her future brother-in-law, whom she had known for a short time only, gave Alice Harley more confidence in herself than my loving and motherly affection; and I understood why, and did not blame her. While Clara, wanting no confidence in herself, was content to look up to him with a girlish, all-believing faith which touched everybody's heart. Perhaps she was too dutiful and obedient for an engaged young lady; but then she was so young, and so pretty, and he looked so entirely delighted with her blushing silence. I do not think anybody could have had the heart to vex Clara in her pretty happiness.

Mr. Sedgewick was to stay a week—a whole week—the third part of the time that they themselves were to stay at Hilfont; and he brought the prettiest Christmas presents for them, ornaments for his little Clara, such as she had never dreamed of before. Yet I was not entirely pleased with his manner toward her—though it was perfectly natural, and just what might have been expected—a tender, playful gallantry, always delicate, always considerate, and full of suppressed fondness, but still it was the behavior of a man who had taken to his bosom, for plaything and personal pleasure, a pretty child. What was she else? Yet I did not think it quite a safe foundation on which to build the sober superstructure of marriage.

On the first evening our party was increased by several neighbors, and a very cheerful-looking party it was, I could not but smile to myself when I remembered how I had half apologized to Lucy for our usual hospitalities. Lucy was the chief entertainer—the most pleased guest. She made no display, certainly of her accomplishments, and did not do anything to attract special attention; but she was so perfectly at her ease, so free from any kind of shyness, so ready to contribute to everybody's amusement. Everybody, in due return of gratitude, was delighted with her; anagain congratulations poured in upon her from all sides. In this company, where there were a good many pretty girls, she was not specially distinguished for her prettiness—but she was so "nice!"

The next morning we were by ourselves. When we came into the drawing-room after dinner, Lucy began to play. I am not much charmed myself by the cold voices of instruments; they say I don't understand fine music; at all events, I prefer it through human interpretation, and not through wood and ivory. But I was not ignorant enough to be unaware of the quality of Lucy's music; I had no inkling of it before. She practised, certainly; but her practising was of polkas, waltzes, and marches, like any other young lady, which she played well but without any extraordinary skill. It was quite different to-night, and we all listened with surprise. She was evidently a first-rate pianist. Another discovery. I said, "Lucy, I had no idea you were so accomplished," as I stood by the piano, where lay all those waltzes and polkas. "No?" said Lucy, with a smiling interrogatory, looking up into my face; and I went to the other end of the room and sat down, really wishing for the moment, that some servant would enter the room with some annoying message, to have a legitimate opportunity for the discharge of ill-humor. I am not a quarrelsome person in general; but I am human. I cannot keep at one level blank of pretty behavior; and my comfort was rather spoiled for that night.

When I looked toward the piano again, Hugh Sedgewick was standing behind Lucy's chair, turning the leaves of her music, his face quite glowing with interest and admiration, while all the people in the room were absolutely silent, listening, even the two Mrs. Croftons. No one was so pleased as Mr. Sedgewick. When Lucy had finished, he asked for something else and something else, till the surfeit of sweet sounds loosed everybody's tongue, and conversation was resumed again. Still in defiance of the conversation, in defiance of the rising displeasure of the two Mary Croftons, who naturally concluded that they also ought to be asked to exhibit their gifts, and gain a share of the applause, Mr. Sedgewick still kept Lucy at the piano. All this time Clara stood close by, with her eyes sometimes bent upon Lucy sometimes upon Sedgewick; on Lucy with the most genuine and simple admiration, and on Hugh Sedgewick with a sincere and candid delight in seeing his pleasure, which was enough to beautify the whole scene.

"Look!" said Mrs. Fortescue, directing my attention to Clara's face. "Look how pleased she is. But she won't be so pleased if it is repeated to-morrow."

"Hush, Mary!" said I "she is as unsuspicious as a child."

"She is a child, poor little thing," said Mary "But you need not speak so tragically either; there is nothing to be suspicious about."

And of course there was nothing. But when one finds out the tastes and requirements of one's companion by a series of sudden surprises one learns to be suspicious whether one will or no.

"How she plays!" cried Bertie. "That's what I call something like music—none of your school-girl stuff. There, Alice, now, Cousin Clara has a pretty little voice; but set her down to sing, and her hand tumbles on the keys like an old woman's. She can no more accompany herself than I can. There's no steadiness in most young ladies."

"When did you become a critic, Bertie?" asked I, not very much pleased by the comparison.

"Since I've been in town," said Bertie, honestly. "I've been at the opera, I can't tell how often. That's the sort of thing. Estcourt ought to go up bodily, for one night, just to hear what music is. Let's have charge of them! Wouldn't it be a lark?"

"Go and ask Lucy if she can sing," said Mary Fortescue. "You mustn't talk of larks to a couple of old ladies. Can she, Clare?"

"Really, I do not know; I was not aware she could play after this fashion," said I. "Go, Bertie."

So Bertie went. "Oh, no, no, we heard Lucy answer, with a laugh; "but Cousin Mary can. No more, please, Mr. Sedgewick, no more! I shall be delighted to play for you to-morrow. Aunt Clare likes the voice best, and you are absolutely crazy about Beethoven—no, please. I am sure we have been quite selfish, forgetting everything—no more."

And Lucy came tripping away, putting on her gloves and looking half surprised, half ashamed, as if only that moment she had become conscious of her long occupation. She looked at her watch with a pretty shrug of her shoulders. "Half-past ten! Indeed I must ask you to forgive me, aunt Clare, said Lucy. When I fairly sit down to the piano I always forget myself, and Mr. Sedgewick seems quite an enthusiast, too. Poor little Miss Harley! how quiet she looks! I am afraid we have bored her to death with Beethoven. I am sure I ought to make an apology all round for forgetting what I was about, and keeping everybody occupied so long."

"I was not at all bored," said Clara, for whom Mr. Sedgewick at last had found a seat. "I enjoyed the music very much."

"But she will not enjoy it so much another night," said Mary Fortescue in an aside.

"You have not kept everybody occupied, my dear; don't repoach yourself," said I, replying to Lucy. "We have been talking, and the two Mary's have exhausted the picture books. But how is it that you never told me that you were so fond of music?"

"It did not matter, aunt," said Lucy, quietly. "I never was troublesome all my life. I was quite willing to give it up. It did not matter."

"Give it up?" cried I, really moved beyond my patience; "why in the world should you give it up?"

"Nay, aunt, it is just as you please," said Lucy. "I should be very glad to play half the day."

And Lucy took out her crochet, and hooked up her thread with the most perfect equanimity—a girl of most wonderful sweetness and good-temper—never put out; but I really did not appreciate these miraculous qualities as other people did.

Hugh Sedgewick had found a chair for Clara, and was leaning over it. "Forgive me!" he said in an undertone, which only I, sitting close to them, could hear; "I am a great lover of music."

"Forgive you!" said Clara looking up in his with her innocent eyes. "I was very glad indeed!"

And so she was. A thought of envy or of jealousy had never entered that innocent young head. He muttered something more, which seemed to me to sound very like that worn-out "angel!" which I had hoped was only used by lovers in story-books. Clara was evidently surprised by it, as well as I.

"Have I done anything very good?" said Clara, with a momentary gleam of girlish humor; "but I wish I could play like Miss Crofton."

"By the bye, I have never heard you," said Mr. Sedgewick. "I have no doubt you do. I must hear you soon. It is too late to-night?"

Which meant, I fear, that, after Lucy's performance, Mr. Sedgewick did not care about the school girl playing of his little bride. I watched them both with some anxiety. He was fond of her, but he was only playing with her—very fond of her, ready to take her up in his arms, and run away with her any moment; but if it had not been for Lucy, this ridiculous suspiciousness certainly never could have entered into my head.

CHAPTER X.

Mary Fortescue was wrong in her prophecy. This music was repeated next night, and Clara was still pleased with it. Whatever other people might do, she never once compared herself with Lucy Crofton; and the tender quiet of her girlish love, which was not passion, was disturbed by no suspicions. She was pleased to see Mr. Sedgewick pleased, and admired to its fullest extent the superlative talent which produced that result; but she did not grumble that this talent was exercised by another than herself. Secure in her own true little heart, Clara sat working some little bits of embroidery, without agitation and without fear. I dare say it never occured to her that an accomplishment or a talent could wile one heart away from another. These were outside matters, and very independent of the love which bound this innocent child to the man of the world who stood beside her; and with a flash of womanly pride Clara would have shrunk from the ideal of "a rival." I, however, watched them with less confiding feelings. I became less and less pleased with Sedgewick, more and more concerned about Clara; and I think Alice, who had remained slightly misanthropical ever since our visit to Estcourt, looked on also with a troubled eye.

There was also music through the day. It is always captivating to a party of young people to spend idle hours round a piano—consulting. "Do you know this?" "Can you take a part in that?" "Is not this magnificent?" Then to find out whose voices are suitable, and what everybody can do. It is as good a fashion of that idleness which is prone to fall in love, and as fruitful of foolish young engagements, as any method which boys and girls left to themselves ever found out. But when in presence of the party which longs to have each a hand in the general pleasure, this business becomes a long musical monologue, I fear the finest music will not prevent the sitting from growing wearisome. The two Marys would rather have sung their own ballads, and made little runs into "tunes," and tempted Henry and Bertie to let loose the grumbling chorus of their adolescent voices, than listened hour after hour to Lucy's admirable playing. So they dropped off one by one to their own amusements, he who held out longest being generally Bertie, who displayed an interest in music for which I was quite unprepared. I confess I thought there was a great deal too much of it, for my own part, and by and bye came with the most hearty ill-will to dislike, not only Beethoven, but all his tuneful brethren. I would rather have listened to a German band outside the window than to the delicate inspirations which came sweetly to my ear from a room unused by us, where there was an organ and a number of other instruments, and which was called the music-room, so much so that I still hold in distaste from this circumstance, and always shall, some of the finest music in the world.

Clara, I suppose, was not present during that next day's music. The two had gone out to see some of my poor friends in the village—a kindly errand for which they both had a special vocation; but that night and the next night the music continued to be repeated. Mr. Sedgewick's engagement was known to, and not very highly approved by, the two Mrs. Croftons; but they both began to look at Lucy with disapproving looks, blaming her entirely, as is the wont of women; I suppose men are slow to notice anything of the kind. Derwent never found it out, could not perceive anything but comfort and satisfaction, and wondered audibly what the ladies were all so quiet about. To tell the truth, the ladies were watching a kind of domestic interlude. Was it that the rash lover who had betrothed himself to a child had found in that child's very presence a more fit companion? Was it that the innocent, hapless romance was to die at a blow, and a different story end the record? Was Lucy contriving to displace the simple little girl who was no match for her? And how long would it be before Clara took fright and found out the reality of her position? These questions occupied us all without any communication passing between us. I know we had all the same feeling in different manifestations. The two Mrs. Croftons still talked to each other, and Mary Fortescue and I still kept up our usual conversation, but it was abstracted and languid; while we all watched, with an interest involuntary and womanish, the climax of this drama, which might possibly be a tragedy for anything we could tell.

Yet not a tragedy. Surely even if Mr. Sedgewick was thus unworthy, my dear little Clara was too young for more than a passing heartbreak; but who could tell?

On the fourth evening there arose a further complication. I had resolved by this time to make myself one of Lucy's audience, that Sedgewick's fascination might at least be less apparent; and as I stood by listening, I saw him take up one of the pieces of music which lay on the piano. He read the name on it with an exclamation of surprise. It was that of a little out-of-the-way German town.

"Nobody ever goes there," said Mr. Sedgewick, repeating the name. "How is it possible I could have forgot? I met you there?"

"Met me. Oh, very likely," said Lucy quietly, having come to the end of her sonata. "We used to wander about everywhere while poor papa was alive; he was an invalid and fanciful. I dare say every Englishman who has traveled on the Continent must have seen me one time or another, and so I am never surprised when I see a face which I remember again. I have thought I must have seen you somewhere since ever you came to Hilfont; your face was quite familar to me."

"It is five years since I was there," said Mr. Sedgewick; "could it be you? You must have been a child then."

"I was a little old woman. I never was a child," said Lucy; "I always had to take care of papa. Oh, I have some drawings of his you should see; but I dare say you are an artist yourself. And they are chiefly of that dear old place. We did so enjoy the time we were there."

"No English!" said Mr. Sedgewick, significantly.

"No English!" said Lucy clapping her hands at the joke. "Oh, it was delightful. I remember it as if it were yesterday. Have you ever been in Bavaria, Mr. Nugent?" she said breaking off to address Bertie.

"Never anywhere but in Paris," said Bertie, who was a little discouraged by having his homekeeping held up to the general observation, but who, notwithstanding, like all the rest of the young fools, thought it very grand and superior to be able to congratulate one's self on living in a place where there was "no English." I fear Bertie would not have enjoyed that felicity, however, for the poor boy had no gift of tongues.

"Oh, I must show you papa's drawings! I will run and get them; it is so pleasant to talk to some one who knows the place," cried Lucy, turning to Mr. Sedgewick once more. "And, besides, I quite make a monopoly of the music, and Cousin Mary sings so sweetly. I am going to get papa's drawings, Aunt Clare."

She went away immediately, and returned in a few minutes with the portfolio. Mary Crofton, after a little pause, half affronted, yet half pleased, took her place, and dashed off into some noisy piece of soulless music, under the influence of which everybody began to talk as if for a wager, and which was loud enough to cover a dozen secret conversations. Not that Lucy condescended to any such thing; on the contrary, she took her portfolio to a little table at Mrs. Robert Crofton's elbow, and spread it out there as though inviting anybody who pleased to come; and Mr. Sedgewick, passing by Clara with an affectionate nod and whispered word, went to join her in the sight of everybody. And there they remained talking and looking over the drawings, animated, interested, and evidently pleased with each other, till the party broke up for the night. There was nothing whatever clandestine in the whole affair; sometimes Derwent looked over Sedgewick's shoulder, sometimes Mrs. Robert asked to see one of the sketches; but Hugh Sedgewick turned over all, bending over them, recognizing the scenes, pointing out the particular beauties; while Lucy, on her part, explained and expounded—asking, "Don't you remember this?" "Did you not go there?" with the liveliest interest. I think I never saw her so animated.

It was a second scene to our little drama, and insensibly every woman in the room kept casting dubious looks at Lucy and her companion. The action threatened to become more rapid every moment, and the interest deeper; while for the first time Clara, lifting her pretty head from her embroidery, grew a little pale, and wondered in her tender little heart. One cloud see the shade of that surprise growing upon her—surprise with a little involuntary pain in it—nothing as yet worth thinking of—and I, who knew her face so well, could read there how she reproached herself immediately for that momentary pain, and explained to herself how natural it was that he should look at Lucy's drawings as well as listen to her music. And how bad, and unkind, and ungrateful it was of her, little Clara, to feel pained! Yet she did glance towards them to-night with a changed look. It was no longer admiration for Lucy and pleasure in seeing Mr. Sedgewick pleased. In spite of herself she still wondered over it, and was a little, just a very little, chilled at her heart. I think, perhaps, if Hugh Sedgewick had said, "Forgive me!" that night, as he did the first night, he might have got a different answer; but I do not think he tried the experiment. I went in, as was my custom, to the bed-chamber of my two girls to bid them good-night. I found them both very quiet; not exchanging confidences or anticipations, scarcely talking at all, preparing to go to sleep, and I went to my own bed with a sore heart.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

COLD PLACES AND COLD DAYS.

Icicle Jottings From the Dominion Weather Book.

By far the coldest place in the Dominion at which meteorological records are kept is Fort Churchill. The next coldest is Fort Chipewayan, but its mean temperature is more than eleven degrees above that of Churchill. Churchill is on Hudson's Bay, at the mouth of the Churchill river, in latitude 59 degrees north.

The annual report of the Dominion Meteorological service contains a set of statistics showing its temperatures in 1889. February was the coldest, August the warmest month. The former gave a mean temperature of 17.2) below zero, the latter one of 53.5, or nearly equal to that of May (54.4) at Montreal. August appears to be the only month exempt from night frosts its lowest mean temperature having been forty-two degrees (on the 18th). As late as July 27 and as early as September 5 the mean temperature hovered dangerously near the frost line. On July 10 it was but two degrees above freezing, on September 21 it dropped to freezing. Only four months, June, July, August and September recorded means above freezing, while April, May, October and November had to be content with means above zero. December, January, February and March having means below zero. November had fifteen days with means below zero. December had only one day (the 4th) with a mean above zero. January had twenty-three days with means below zero, February, twenty-five; March fifteen and April two.

The days of lowest mean temperatures in the various months were: August, 42 degrees, on 18th; July, 34.9 on 10th; June, 31.5 on 6th; September, 26.8 on 30th; May, 23.1 on 8th; October, 4.1 on 31st; April, 5.5 below zero on 1st; November, 13.8 on 25th; March, 24.4 below on 14th; December, 27.6 below on 29th; January, 35.5 below on 24th and February 37.1 below on 21st. These mean temperatures will be better understood when it is explained that the mean temperature of the coldest day at Montreal during the seven years (1885-91) was 17.6 below zero and the mean temperature of its hottest day during the same period (July 4, 1887) 79.3.

Fort Churchill's mean temperature for the year was eighteen above zero. Its highest temperature 78.5, its lowest 43.4 (below zero). Its mean winter temperature was 9.1 below zero; its mean spring temperature 30.2 (two below freezing) its mean summer temperature 46.4 and its mean autumn temperature 4.6 above zero.

One Way to Keep Cool.

"I suppose you would like to know how to keep cool these hot days," said a man the other day. "Well, I have an unfailing recipe which can be guaranteed to effect the desired result. I use it myself, and know the system is a specific for the woes which mankind suffers in such dog-days weather as we are now experiencing. It is simple and easy—don't eat any meat until the sun goes down. I have made this an inviolable rule during hot weather, and as a consequence I am never bothered about or by the condition of the atmosphere, no matter how high the thermometer may soar. This morning for my breakfast I ate a piece of strawberry shortcake and drank a cup of coffee. For luncheon I partook of some lettuce and tomato salad and a cup of tea. I will go in to dinner in a few moments and very probably will order a thick, rare steak, and pay pretty generous attention to it. Then I will come out and for an hour or two will be probably uncomfortably warm for the first time during the day.

"I was led to adopt this system from observing the immunity from suffering on account of the heat which the workmen in hot countries enjoy. This was particularly the case in Spain and Italy, and when I inquired the reason I was told that a Spanish or Italian workman would rather eat kerosene with a wick in it than meat of any kind during the hot weather. I am not a vegetarian in any sense of the word, but I have proven to my own satisfaction that a diet such as I have suggested during the summer will preserve anyone who follows it from suffering in hot weather."

The average density of population per acre in London is 577, and the average death rate is 23.2 per thousand. In some parts of Whitechapel, in the tenement region, the density of population is about 3,000 per acre, and the death rate is 41.4 per thousand.

HUDDART IN MONTREAL

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE STEAMSHIP PROMOTER.

The Financial Outlook in Great Britain Shows Decided Improvement—The Fast Atlantic Service and the Canadian Australian Line Gaining Friends in the Old Land.

Mr. James Huddart reached Montreal the other morning from New York, having come over to take part in conference at Ottawa, and to watch the passage of the fast steamship subsidy bill through the House of Commons. Before coming to the matter so dear to his heart the gentleman in question spoke a word or two as to the financial condition of Great Britain, and his tone was in a most encouraging strain. "The financial outlook," said Mr. Huddart to a reporter, "has greatly improved since my arrival in the old country a few months since. Confidence is slowly yet surely returning, and investors are on the lookout for sure and safe projects, of which the Atlantic and Pacific steamship service will undoubtedly be one."

This led to the all-important question as to the success of Mr. Huddart's negotiations amongst English capitalists, and the energetic promoter spoke as follows: "Since I left Canada three months ago an educational campaign has been constantly carried on, and with the very best results. In my opinion the very first thing to do was to bring public opinion in Great Britain, where the bulk of the capital has to be raised, to realize the untold advantages that will accrue in the empire from this undertaking, and I am glad to say that our efforts in this direction have been crowned with the greatest possible success. From week to week and from east to west public opinion has developed in favor of the scheme."

"Did you meet with much opposition?" asked the correspondent.

"No, there is scarcely any serious opposition to the project in the British mind, and what little feeble dissent that one meets with is plainly traceable to vested interests. Canada, of course, must lead," added Mr. Huddart, "as practical organization cannot be entered upon until the Canadian Subsidy Bill becomes law. As I have just intimated, the promoters have not in the meantime been idle."

With reference to public opinion in Canada Mr. Huddart has given the question most careful study, and is of the opinion that a vast majority of the business men of the Dominion favor the establishment of such a line of steamers as soon as possible. "I have also," he said "given the question of traffic close attention all through and I do not hesitate to say that the company will be a profitable one to its bondholders. As the cable, no doubt, informed you, we have after two months of very careful preparation sent out the specifications, and I may add that we expect the tenders in at Ottawa within the next fortnight. These, however, are not considered as final, for the promoters feel that they must take advantage of every hour's experience in the designing of ocean steamships so that the proposed boats may be equal to any now on the Atlantic and far ahead of most of them. I am very strong on this point," said the fast line promoter, "and will have nothing to do with any project that does not offer Canada a service of the first rank. These boats in fact must be made to advertise themselves. The specifications likewise provide that the American law relating to steamships be complied with and no doubt we will have a very large number of Americans from Chicago, Minneapolis and other western cities using this line to and from Europe, besides the anticipated stream of travel by our through route from Great Britain to Australia, which now goes via the Suez canal."

The correspondent here referred Mr. Huddart to a statment in a Canadian paper to the effect that he had about given up hope of receiving imperial aid.

"On the contrary," he quickly replied, "there is already a strong party in the British Parliament, as well as in financial circles, in favor of what is called the imperial route, and there can be little doubt that the scheme will be supported by imperial subsidy and the same increased by our Australian mail subsidy."

With regard to the terminal ports, Mr. Huddart stated that as far as this side was concerned the matter was settled in favor of Halifax and Quebec. On the other side statistics were being taken, and the port will be chosen that gives evidence of the largest earning power. Mr. Huddart also discussed the probable attitude of Canada's public men, stating that it was a question away above party and should have the support of all lovers of their country, both in Canada and Australia. The press of Great Britain and Aurtralia had already committed itself to make Canada the alternative highway for passengers and mails. Mr. Huddart will remain in Canada about three or four weeks.

TORRENTS OF ELECTRICITY.

They Descend From a Stormless Sky and Shock all Plainfield.

A Plainfield. N. J., despatch says;—An electric phenomenon terrified the residents of this place on Tuesday evening. There were no storm clouds in the sky. The air suddenly was filled with flashes, which snapped and cracked around wires, trees, and persons on the street. They felt a tingling, pricking sensation all through their bodies. Then there came a terrific crash, followed by a booming noise, like the roar of gigantic cannon. Everybody not already on the streets rushed from their houses, many screaming in fright. The phenomenon appeared to be all over the city. Some people declared that bolts flashed from the sky into the solid pavement. One bolt seemed to pass into the flagging in front of the First Presbyterian church, which has been twice struck by lightning, and another into the walk in front of a drug store. No damage was done, except to the nerves of the citizens. No rain followed the discharge, and the heat continues oppressive.