THE NEW INMATE OF HILFONT.

A THRILLING STORY OF OLD ENGLAND.

CHAPTER XV.

Bertie was the last to leave us of our Christmas party. He lingered on, going up to town for a day, and returning again, for nearly a fortnight after our other guests were gone. He was a very welcome visitor—perhaps the most welcome of all, for Derwent liked his frank young nature almost as much as I did, and had consented quite heartily that he should be my heir. Under Bertie's influence, I was drawn to many places where I seldom thought of going. He was not much of a drawing-room boy. He loved open air and much locomotion; and being at the same time most honestly attached to me, always managed, since he could consent to my habits, to win me over to a mild travesty of his. Whatever I might be to Lucy, I was really "a mother" to Bertie; and I dare say the very fact that I was not old enough to be his mother made us like each other all the better, interfusing something of an elderly sisterhood into the graver relationship. Bertie would have been glad to drive us about all day long if we could have submitted to that doubtful pleasure. He was perpetually persuading me that I had occasion to go to Simonburgh, and I fear recently suggested necessities which did not exist, to the uninventive brain of the housekeeper, who wanted a great many more domestic articles only obtainable in the town, than was at all usual with her. And Lucy always formed one of our party, sometimes not to my very great content, but I could not help it.

"Cousin Clare," said Bertie, one morning, let me drive you over to the cottage; look here, such a morning! sunshine like July, and air as clear as any Italian atmosphere that ever was invented. It's disgraceful to lounge in the chimney-corner on such a day."

"Sunshine like July, and icicles on all the trees," said I. "My boy, the chimney-corner is the best place for me; I am growing old."

"Oh, yes, I know," said Bertie—"very old; but let us go. Why I want to see them: Clara, before she is married, and—Mrs. Harley—I must be off the day after to-morrow. Come, Cousin Clare!"

And—Mrs. Harley—a suspicion that Bertie meant somebody else than Mrs. Harley softened me at once.

"But, Bertie, if I go, Lucy must go. I cannot leave her by herself," said I, doubtfully.

At which Bertie's face grew rather red. I thought most likely he did not care to have Lucy's quick eyes upon his visit to his old play-fellows; but he was too kind-hearted to express any reluctance.

"Why not?" he said. "All the better! pray ask her to get ready, and send me down no end of cloaks to wrap you all up with. We'll astonish the girls. Mr. Crofton, Cousin Clare is going to the cottage; will you come? but I am charioteer."

"Not I," said Derwent. "I have got something else to do than fly about the country with young fellows like you. Don't upset them, and I'll give you my blessing; but, upon my honor, Clare, I wish this guardsman would take himself away."

"The day after to-morrow," cried Bertie, laughing. "Cousin Clare would have no fresh air, I believe, but for me."

"I am an ill-used wife; my husband will not go out with me," said I. "That novel again! Derwent, I am ashamed of you! you grow idler every day!"

"I am very sorry," said my husband; "but I wish you'd go about your business, all of you. I'm booked for Quarter Sessions, and some pleasant poaching cases to-day. Let us have a quiet half hour before we get into harness. Lucy, do you take charge of this roving boy?"

Lucy had just entered the room with her bonnet on, prepared for a walk, as she said, which was oddly opportune at the moment, and she went out with Bertie to stroll about the garden till I should be ready. In about half an hour we started, Derwent, after all his grumbling, riding half-way by our side. It was a very fine day, though very cold; and I do not recollect anything more pleasant as a wintery sensation than our rapid progress down the hill, with a little wind, fresh, but not violent, in our faces, and the sunshine gleaming over all the bare country, warming the fields, which were all a-chill with hoar-frost an hour ago, into a fresh green like the green of spring, melting off the ice till it dropped in great heavy drops from trees and housetops, and unsealing little pools through all the marshy flat below, which were opaque enough this morning, but now reflected back the merry light, and crisped under the wind, till night and frost should bind them fast again. We had a long drive; but Bertie's pleasant society, and the still more pleasant thought that his desire to visit the cottage showed well for the success of my own solitary project of match-making, made it a very agreeable one to me. Bertie was in great spirits. He was continually pointing out to Lucy the best aspects of the landscape, and challenging her to confess that England, in its most English aspect, was not to be equalled by any of the boasted beauties of the further world. He once carried his argument so far that I checked him gently, thinking she might feel it a little. But Lucy, I am bound to confess, made herself very pleasant, and bore the assault with extreme good humor. Thus we came pleasantly to Mrs. Harley's little house. I was somewhat disturbed in anticipation about the welcome they would give Lucy; but when we came in sight of the pretty little lane, with its trim, low holly-hedge and white paling, and the pretty little cottage shining in the sunshine, from which Alice, and all the children pursuing her, came running out to welcome us, I no longer thought of Lucy. Alice could not tell why I looked so unusually glad to see her. Her eyes returned to me after her first greeting with a gleam of mingled surprise and expectation, as if they inquired, what had I to tell? which gleam recalled me to the consciousness that I had no clew either to Bertie's heart or hers; and had to be careful lest I should startle either of them before their time. In the pretty drawing-room, which was not large, but yet was very "nice," and as bright as a country sitting-room should be, we found Mrs. Harley and Clara. The widow gave me a tremulous, almost tearful embrace. She had not seen me since Clara's engagement; and had, of course, a hundred things to say. Presently, under pretense of showing me something, I was led away to Mrs. Harley's own room, while the little bride came gliding up after us, to learn what I thought of the pretty things which were beginning to accumulate. Sitting in Mrs. Harley's easy-chair, with Clara lounging about me, and her mother, now bringing something to show me, now pausing to talk, now sitting down to enter into one of those consultations, often gone over and never exhausted which women love, I had almost forgotten, for the moment, that other match which would have interested me even more than Clara's; but started with considerable disappointment when Alice, too, came upstairs, and lingered, evidently preferring our little private committee to the society below. This was a great damper to my hopes. Poor Bertie! was he to be disappointed? I became quite unhappy and anxious about him; while my poor innocent Alice, unaware of the harm she was doing, wavered by the door, unwilling to go away.

"Alice, Miss Crofton will think us very rude. My love, you must go down-stairs," said Mrs. Harley. "Of course you want to be with Mrs. Crofton, but you must not leave Miss Crofton and Mr. Nugent by themselves. Run, my love, down-stairs."

"They are not alone, mamma, all the children are with them," said Alice, rather discontentedly; and as Clara volunteered to take her place, the perverse girl established herself at my elbow, and would not move. I immediately lost my relish for the gossip, and by and by we went down to luncheon, to my great content. I was quite overcast in my pleasure. I had been rather too secure in my calculations as far as Alice was concerned, assuring myself that she had seen nobody else, and that she must like Bertie; but how could I tell? I never heard, until I heard of their engagement, that little Clara Harley had ever seen Hugh Sedgewick. Another Hugh Sedgewick might, for aught I knew, be hovering about the cottage now.

"Why did you leave them, Alice?" I asked as we went downstairs. "Poor Bertie came over on purpose to say good-bye. It was ungrateful to come away."

When, to my surprise, Alice not only blushed a little, but looked the least thing angry. "Mr. Nugent was occupied—he did not miss me," she said, with a great deal of dignity, but would not add a word of explanation. What did she mean; I was completely puzzled. Certainly Bertie was not anxious to see Mrs. Harley, and if it was not Alice he came for, who else could it be?

Bertie was very merry among the children when we went into the dining-room. They were all very familiar with him, and called him by his Christian name, a friendly practice which Alice and Clara, in the reserve of their opening womanhood, had almost given up. Lucy sat smiling and pretty by Mrs. Harley. I could hear that she was making in person her offer of service, that the widow took it very kindly, but that Clara, on being appealed to, said nothing, at which Lucy smiled with an air of superiority and protection. Then Lucy began to be confidential with Mrs. Harley. I could hear something about so young—so very young! with a glance at Clara, as if she herself were as old as Clara's mother, which, however, Mrs. Harley took as mothers do, with great pretended dismay, but much secret pride; while Alice and Clara both looked on, sometimes exchanging glances, and keeping up an unwavering and jealous watch upon the movements of the enemy. But it was evident that they had not told their mother a piece of reserve which somewhat astonished me; for though Mrs. Harley was rather a wavering, doubtful, and undecided person, she had a true mother's place in her children's hearts.

But when we returned home, my sanguine satisfaction was gone. I can not say I found an unrevealed love on Alice's part, but she parted with Bertie with a mixture of pique and indifference which surprised me. It did not trouble Bertie—he was just as gay, just as eager to entangle Lucy in fresh arguments. The evening was as fine as the morning had been, and the winter sunset, red and splendid, emblazoned all the sky before us as we went home. Yet I went home languidly, growing silent, returning, as I always did at any discouragement, to that one familiar grief which needed little invitation to come back to my thoughts. Yet I could not tell what disturbed me—the vague disappointment of a vague expectation—nothing more.

CHAPTER XVI.

Next day Bertie and I had a long conversation in the library. He began by confiding to me his determination to exchange into a marching regiment, and if possible, to get to India. I was much surprised by this unlooked-for fancy, perversely opposite as it seemed to his former thoughts.

"You used to dislike the thought of India, and Indian service. Have you forgotten how you spoke to me at Estcourt," said I, "when your father wished you to go to Addiscombe?"

"Yes, to be sure. I was only a boy then; but you know a fellow must live," said Bertie, energetically.

"A fellow does live, and very much to the purpose, it appears to me," said I, looking with pleasure at my young kinsman, who was a handsome young Nugent, and most worthy representative of the name.

"It's very kind of you to say so, Cousin Clare," said Bertie, blushing red; "but you know, but for your allowance, I couldn't, and you mustn't keep it up. Now I'm in earnest; you mustn't; I'm not a boy now; I must get on by myself."

"What has stimulated you to such valorous resolutions, Bertie?" said I.

At which question Bertie hesitated a long time. "You know, Cousin Clare," he said at last, "I have always taken your money as heartily as if you had a right to give it me. You have always been so kind." And the good fellow stammered and blushed over his thanks and did not know what to say. "But by this time I ought to be sufficient for myself; and then suppose a fellow should marry, Cousin Clare?"

"Of course it is quite natural to suppose that, in such a case, he could live upon half of his usual income," said I.

"It's not that," said Bertie, with another blush. "I can't explain myself; but just look here. It occurs natural somehow, to start upon one's friends; I don't know whether it's right or not, but it's natural. But to go right into life, and set up a house of one's own, upon somebody else's money, that is what I can't stand on any consideration. And I know a fellow can't live on his pay here. If I went to India I'd have a chance; so that's what I've made up my mind to do."

"For the sake of somebody?" said I. Bertie laughed, and blushed, and nodded his head, but did not seem disposed to communicate further information.

"May I not hear who it is?" asked I; "or must I guess! I half think I could find you out."

"Not yet, Cousin Clare," cried Bertie And I respected the delicacy which would not make me the first listener to his love tale. But I felt entirely satisfied, and lighter at heart than I had been for a long time; for who but Alice could be Bertie's somebody? They were so like each other—so good, so handsome, and so young; and this love was but the ripening touch to the kindness of years. Bertie had always been "fond" of Alice; indeed, had been less demonstrative of his regard on this occasion than on any former one; I supposed it must be the perverse shyness of a deeper feeling; and in spite of my little disappointment yesterday, was glad at my heart.

"Sit down, Bertie," said I, "and hear what I have got to say to you. My boy, I do not need to tell you that I have no heir."

Bertie looked at me with a great many emotions mingled in his face—sympathy, distress, eagerness to assure me that any contingency of the kind had never entered into his thoughts. Yet this last less than the others; for it was me my good Bertie thought of—not himself.

"A year ago," said I, "I might not have thought myself justified in saying this; but it consoles me to feel how heartily I can trust the inheritance of your fathers in your hands. Bertie of all the Nugents, you are the only one whom I have any pleasure in thinking of as the heir."

Bertie's face grew red, grew white, grew ashamed. He wanted to say something, and dared not. "Not me," he cried at last with a plunge. "Not me! you must not think of it; there will be other heirs."

"Hush," said I, gravely. "I mean and have meant for a long time, that you should have Estcourt, Bertie. I should not have sanctioned the position in which you now are but for that. Now do not misunderstand me, I have thought of this since I first knew you. You have been the heir of Estcourt in my eyes for many years."

"That was before you were married, Cousin Clare," said Bertie quickly.

"Being married has not made any difference," said I; "and as you are at a crisis of your life, it is best you should know. I will not give you Estcourt when you marry, for you know what Estcourt is, and I must not give up my responsibilities; but you shall have the half of the yearly income and the house at Eastborne, near the rectory, and shall manage the estate for me, Bertie, and be acknowledged publicly as my heir, and successor the same"—and I confess I said this with a falter—"the same as if you were my son."

I do not know why it was; but looking in my face, which was full of emotion, and perhaps seeing there some traces of that secret sorrow which nobody thought of nowadays, Bertie seized my hands, and actually shed tears over them, saying I cannot tell what incoherent things in his excitement, and I fear I cried too. And somehow, out of his young joy and hope, both of us fell back, with a sharp pang of contrast, to the shadow of my life, his gratitude and affectionate regard springing up for a moment in such a young gush of impatient regret that I had not all I wanted to make me happy, that I dare say Bertie would have shouted with joy to hear that, instead of being heirless, I had a dozen children, and Estcourt was lost to him forever. But that, of course was only for a moment. Then came his honest delight, his reluctance, his amazement; for I believe, indeed, the boy had never thought of it before; and above all, that deepest and most pervading qualification, that I thought him the most worthy representative of the Nugents. It is no small matter to be raised at once to the head of one's house; and perhaps Bertie thought, with a sensation of triumph, what all the uncles and cousins would say to this most unlooked for promotion. "I'm not even the eldest son of our family," cried Bertie with an involuntary outburst of wondering exultation and after he had exhausted himself of words, which was not hard to do, he went off out of doors and left me, to exhaust, if he could, the wonder and triumph which were still too great to bear speaking of. The second son of a lieutenant-colonel in India, whom Providence had blessed with sixteen children, it was no very wonderful thing if Bertie was a little out of his wits when he was first made aware that Estcourt was to be his.

After he was gone, I sat pondering over this future so suddenly opened to my imagination. No child of mine should ever fill my father's place; but when I thought of Estcourt restored at my death to the Nugents, and of Alice Harley's dear face shining there in the same rooms which had sheltered her childhood, my heart warmed to the thought. Perhaps the two would cherish my recollection more dearly, and hold my likings in greater reverence than even my own children might have done; for they were nearer to me in age, and had been my companions on a greater equality than can by nature exist between mother and child. I scarcely think even Alice's mother could love her better than I did; and Bertie had no mother to share his affections with me. So the more I pondered the more I was satisfied; and being a practical person, even in imagination, as I rather think most women are, I had already glanced over the courtship, the marriage, the fair youthful life of the young couple, and the preparations which as I grew old, I meant to make at Estcourt for their reception, before the entrance of Derwent startled me from my dreams. My husband came in smiling, yet looking surprised, which surprise increased still more when he perceived that there were tears in my eyes.

"I met Bertie just now, half crazy with pleasure, You have been telling him your intentions, Clare," said Derwent; "but, my love, what are these tears about? Are you not pleased now that you have had your will?"

"Perfectly pleased," said I; "tears come through very different channels; they thrust themselves into every argument, you know, with us poor women."

"Hum!" said Derwent, "you have been thinking. I can not have you think, Clare. After all, we have a great many blessings. Why should you and I grumble? I had rather have thee, my pale Clare, than seven sons!"

"Don't, Derwent!" I cried out. "Don't! I can not bear it!" and therewithal, surprised into a sudden weakness, my grief siezed upon me as he had never seen it before. He was very much troubled and perplexed; he did not understand it; he comforted me saying that he did not know I had taken it so much to heart, and said something in his innocence about the baby, which, God help me, the familiar name I never dared mention to myself, struck me with a pang which was beyond bearing. It dried my tears. I could not cry any longer with that sudden stroke tingling through my heart.

And my good Derwent caressed and soothed me. He though he had done me good by speaking. I must not let you keep all this to yourself any longer," he said "Open your heart to me, Clare, and it will do you good. Is not this my grief as well as yours?"

And so it was; but no man in the world could hearken patiently to the iterations of a mother who has lost her child. I felt that, and said no more.

And you are pleased that I have spoken to Bertie?" said I.

"Quite pleased that you have done your will," said Derwent, with a smile, "and heartily desirous you should find pleasure in it, my love, still I must say, Clare, I think it rather harsh. Who can tell what may happen in these years?"

I was vexed by the suggestion, and went away, leaving him to go to a little retirement I had—a little room I only entered when I had to compose myself, and wanted the calm that only comes from the presence of God.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE QUEEN'S NEW RELATIVE.

An Heir-Apparent to the Throne at the Third Remove.

The London Daily News makes the following interesting remarks on the birth of a son to the Duchess of York: The Queen's relationship to the newly born child is one that would be notable in any family. The remotest and nearest links of a chain of four generations are always family heroines and heroes. The story of the great grandmother hurrying up from the north of Scotland to be near the scene of her great grandchild's birth, and to be the first to send her greeting, would not have been known to all the world had she not been a queen.

There is also, however, in the birth at White Lodge a special element of interest that is entirely supplied by the rank of the little stranger. It will probably tax the delvers into history to find another sovereign who, like our Queen, has lived to see the heir-apparent to her throne at the third remove. As events proved the three successors af George III. were all alive in his lifetime, but he could not have regarded them as his successors. George II. in 1750, might have supposed he saw in his son, Frederick, Prince of Wales, and in his grandson, his probable two successors, though the death of his son in the following year was to disappoint that expectation. George I before his death in 1727 could look upon George II and one who was then likely to become George III. Queen Victoria has the much more remarkable privilege of looking at the same time upon three descendants in the direct line. This is not the only respect in which her position is probably unique among the sovereigns of history. As her country has been called the mother of parliaments, so she may be called the mother of sovereigns. Her children and her children's children are becoming the kings and princes of Europe. Her grandson is the German Emperor, and the ramifications of her family throughout the foreign dynasties can now hardly be traced, except by the patience of the professional genealogist. It is interesting to remember that the babe born on Saturday will be able to trace his descent from George III. by a double line. He is even nearer to that King on his mother's side than on his father's the Duke of York being fourth in descent, while the Princess May is only third. The Princess of Wales, and the Queen's cousin, the other grandmother to the baby at White Lodge, as well as both grandfathers, will assuredly not be forgotten in the popular congratulations of the hour.

The Male Seal and its Family.

"Among the many singular traits of character possessed by seals," said a retired sea captain, "none is more striking than the devotion of the male to its offspring, contrasted with the apathetic attention paid by the mother. The latter will at th least alarm bolt away into the sea and leave her babies behind her, but the bulls mount guard over the swarming herds of young and nothing can exceed their devotion and courage when called upon as protectors. The sense of smell possessed by the seals is very strong and will invariably wake them out of a sound sleep, even if you come upon them ever so quietly to the windward, and you will alarm them in this way much more thoroughly, though you be half a mile distant, than if you came up carelessly from the leeward and even walked in among them, they seeming to feel that you are not different from one of their own species untill they smell you."

DEATHS BY VIOLENCE.

HOW EUROPEAN COUNTRIES COMPARE WITH AMERICA.

Suicides, Homicides, Accidents and Executions Figured in the Comparison—Annual Rates of Foreign States—Denmark's High Figures—Inventions of Machinery Increase the Number of Killings—Electricity a Great Record Maker.

Various texts are accepted among students and thinkers in proof of high civilization, some favoring the ratio of illiteracy some the high average of the rate of wages some the surplus savings appliable to purchases of luxury, some the national expenditures for education, some the volume of mercantile transactions, and others, again, the artistic development of the various countries. But one uniform, supreme, and unchangeable test of civilization is furnished in the estimate put upon human life, and probably there is, after all, no better, fairer, and more satisfactory test.

One may take in their order, suicides, homicides, accidents, and executions to arrive at an accurate conclusion on this point. In respect of suicides, Denmark, among civilized countries, stands at the head, or more properly at the foot, of the list with an annual rate of 25 per 100,000 inhabitants. Austria follows with 21, Switzerland with 20, France with 14, Germany with 14, Sweden with 8, Belgium with 7, Hungary 5, Scotland 4, Italy 3, Holland 3, United States 3, Russia 2, Ireland 1, and Spain 1.

THE RECORD OF HOMICIDES.

In the record of homicides the annual average is higher in the kingdom of Italy than elsewhere, being 294 to 10,000 deaths, a very high figure. Spain follows with 238, the United States with 215, Switzerland with 138, Ireland and Austria with 88 each, France and Russia with 80 each, Sweden with 75, England with 72, and Germany with 64.

It is a somewhat interesting fact that the ratio of suicides to the population is highest in those countries in which murders are few and lowest in those countries in which murders are many. It would seem as if those inclined to take their own lives were reluctant to seek the lives of others and those who were reckless in their estimate of the value of the lives of others were scrupulous in protecting and preserving their own.

The extention of machinery for manufacturing purposes and the rapid utilization of electricity for motive power and for purposes of illumination has largely increased in all progressive countries the ratio of accidents. At the present time these are the average ratios of the number of accidental deaths to 10,000 annual deaths from all causes in the countries named: England and Scotland, 30; Ireland, 18; France, 15; Germany, 16; Russia, 6; Austria, 10; Italy, 5; Switzerland, 28; Spain, 7; Denmark, 12; and the United States, 40.

To the number of passengers carried the ratio of railroad accidents is greatest in the United States, and other countries thus follow in the order named: Russia, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Belgium, England and Switzerland.

ELECTRICITY'S VICTIMS.

The accidents attributable to contact in any form with the electric current are most numerous in the United States and public experience in this regard is very similar to what first followed the introduction of steam as a power of traction. With improvements, suggested by the practical operation of railroads and by utilizing new agencies as safeguards, the number of railroad accidents has been substantially decreased of late years, just as the present high rate of accidents from overhead wires will, probably, a few years hence be much less then it is now.

There is much variance between the figures of executions officially supplied by some governments and the actual number of such executions, some governments adding the return of lynchings and others giving only figures derived from court-martialships.

In the United states capital punishment is inflicted in nearly every state under the authority of the sheriff of the particular county in which the crime, for which it is a penalty, was committed. There are 4,000 counties in the United States, and consequently 4,000 sheriffs, exclusive of the self-constituted mobs of masked individuals who in certain districts of the south and west usurp, from time to time, the sheriff's duties and prerogatives.

In several European countries capital punishment has been explicitly repealed by law, and the same is true of three states in this country. No accurate figures, therefore, can be given on the subject of executions except such as are based upon the number of murders, punishment for which is highest in France and England and lowest in Italy and the United States.

But the fact is not to be forgotten that the proportion of foreign-born residents is greater in the United States than in any European country, and that the number of foreign-born criminals in the United States is abnormally large, and tends unjustly to augment in nearly every case the ratio of the United States.

If from the figures given an equation could be established it would be found that human life is held in highest estimate in France, followed by the eastern part of the United States, England, Germany, Holland, and Norway, in the order named.

Charming People.

There is a personal cleanliness that, with taste in dress and grace in manner, rivals and often outshines beauty. Trifles, like glossy hair, white teeth, well-kept hands, a smooth skin, redolent of health, sweet breath, fresh linen and spotless garments, go a long way toward making up the sum of personal attractiveness. All clean people are charming, but charming people are never more charming than when they are radiant with good grooming. It is some expense but saves a great deal of trouble to be habitually and exquisitely neat. It pays, though, immensely.