THE NEW INMATE OF HILFONT.

A THRILLING STORY OF OLD ENGLAND.

CHAPTER XIX.

I was not deceived. I went to my own old morning-room, which was Miss Austin's room now, and where I had received Bertie's first advances towards a confidential friendship. It was somewhat changed. Miss Austin's work-table, which stood at the window, was twice as big as any work-table I ever saw, and full to overflowing with the performances of the girls. Music-books and school-books, which were perfectly orderly to the eye of Miss Austin, who knew exactly where to find what she wanted, but were nevertheless rather an uneasiness to me, whose eye did not understand the irregular lines, filled the bookshelves. Books of general reading were not in this academic retirement. The fire place was guarded by a high fender, and the carpet was somewhat worn. Yet I felt a familiar pleasure in it, notwithstanding all these changes. It was still my room, where I used to have my private talks with all my friends, where my mother sat, and Derwent came. If it was a wor kshop, and they made shoes in it, it would still be my room.

I sat down there accordingly, not waiting—thinking it just possible that there might be something to tell—pretending to myself that it was premature, and that I really did not expect to hear anything, yet listening for Bertie's step all the same, and I confess, in the quietness and suspense, a single chill of apprehension stole over me. Was it Alice? Had she left her mother so soon? But of course it was Alice!—who but Alice could walk with Bertie Nugent after that fashion under the Estcourt trees?

Everything was quiet, languid, dull. I could not help returning to those days before my marriage when I knew nothing of Derwent, where he was, or what his sentiments were; when I used to sit in this same room by myself, hearing faintly all the sounds of life without, an isolated, lonely woman, thinking so to spend my life. And that day of Kate Crofton's marriage! But though I smiled, I trembled to think of it; and thanked God in my heart for the bright course that lay before their two children, whom God bless! Thus I waited by myself for Bertie's return.

And I was not deceived. Ere long I heard a quick, firm step outside, seeking from room to room for someone, and fancied I could hear a softer step steal upstairs. At last Bertie found me out, and plunged into the room with an exclamation of joy. His face was flushed—he was breathless with his great news—and came forward with such a swell of pride and happiness that I was touched to the heart.

"Cousin Clare," he cried, "wish me joy! I am the happiest man alive!"

"Happier than Hugh Sedgewick?" said I. "I wish you joy with all my heart, Bertie, for I suppose you can mean only one thing. God bless you, my dear boy!"

He came up and shook my hand, wrung it almost, so sincere was his grasp, and so fervent his happiness.

"I may own it to you now," said I; "it has been the desire of my heart. I have wished for it so much that I began to dread that it never would come to pass. Derwent says I am no match-maker, but I have both hoped and plotted this."

"I thought so!" said Bertie. "I knew you wished it—I told her so, but she would not believe me."

"I dare say she thought it too soon after this marriage," said I. "Why did she not come with you, Bertie? It must have been an agitating day for her, poor child."

"I wanted her to come, but she would not," said Bertie; "For it is strange what a settled idea Lucy has that you will not be pleased."

"Lucy! gasped out the name with a sudden sensation—first of utter surprise, then of actual rage and disappointment which horrified myself. "Lucy!" I could not say another word.

"Yes Lucy." Bertie looked at me, suddenly chilled and full of astonishment; then he continued in a tone of self-defense, half defiant, half apologetic—"Who should it be but Lucy, Cousin Clare?"

I think I groaned aloud in the mere effort to relieve myself. Lucy—the very surprise seemed to me a plan of malice to wound me the more deeply. Who should it be but Lucy? Oh, Bertie, innocent boy! I turned from him in pain and mortification to the window; then I turned, disgusted, from that part of Escourt which was to be Lucy Crofton's. For the moment I fell into the most unchristian and miserable emotions. Lucy! I kept my face away from him, and did not speak again.

And Bertie too kept silent. I have no doubt he was hurt, and shocked, and grievously disappointed; shocked that I should show such temper and unamiable feeling—disappointed that the crisis of his life had disappointed me. He stood looking at me wistfully, his face burning red, and troubled; not knowing whether to say anything or what to say. I had entered so willingly into all this prior anticipations, that the poor boy had grown quite sanguine of my sympathy, and was totally unprepared for the change now. So he stood quite silent, watching me, following with his eyes every movement I made. At last he spoke—

"I am grieved to disappoint you, Cousin Clare. I have not done anything which could in any way wound or mortify," here Bertie paused, with a rising color, "anyone else. But as for my choice, I rejoice and glory in it, even while I grieve that you do not agree with me; and having said this, perhaps I had better go away."

By this time I had come to myself. "You must do no such thing, Bertie," said I. "I was disappointed. I should have chosen another bride for you; but it was not mine to choose. You have decided for yourself, and I hope you will be happy."

"Hope! There is very little fear of that," said Bertie: "but I should be happier if you gave me a less cold expression of your satisfaction, Cousin Clare!"

"My satisfaction!" I said. "Wait a little, Bertie; one can not command one's wishes so suddenly. But it must have been a very short wooing which has been decided to-day."

"We were five weeks together at Christmas," said Bertie, recovering his spirits. "I contrived to be always as near her as possible; and a man can do a great deal in five weeks. Then there's nobody like her for that; she knows me better—what I prefer, and everything about me—than other people who have known me all my life."

There was another pause, and rather a painful one. If it had been Alice, we could have mutually praised her, and been mutually delighted; but being Lucy, there was all the usual awkwardness of an hour's interview with a friend who does not appreciate the perfections of the lady, and is not to be convinced of them. Poor Bertie's rejoicing lips were sealed, and his enthusiasm met a full check. He could not say half, nor a tenth part, of what he meant to say; and yet there was tenfold greater reason for proving to me the excellencies of Lucy than he had ever supposed.

"She has no guardian," I said, at last, in a tone which I felt to be chilling, but could not alter. "Her father left no will, and as she has no fortune, and Mr. Crofton undertook the care of her, none has been disappointed. I do not know whether Lucy thought of referring you to anybody else. She has great prudence; perhaps she bade you see Mr. Crofton?"

"She knew I came to tell you, cousin, which I thought was all that was necessary," said Bertie, in a mortified tone, "But of course I will see Mr. Crofton immediately. He who protects and cares for her surely has the best right to be consulted, and I trust soon she will want no other protection save mine."

"Then I presume you wish the necessary arrangements to be made soon?" said I. "But you are both very young, Bertie; it will be best to wait."

"The sooner the better, I think, especially now," said Bertie. Then there came another pause. I could see he was deeply mortified, and I was grieved at it, yet did not feel that I could do anything to mend the matter. "Then I will go to Mr. Crofton," he added, after a little, and looked wistfully at me, as if to see whether I had positively nothing more to say. He had almost reached the door before I spoke.

"Bertie," I said, calling him back, "I am sorry I cannot say anything to give you pleasure. I am disappointed; that is the whole. I had other fancies. By and by, of course, I shall be quite pleased; and in the meantime you must just bear with me. But this, of course, does not in the least affect what I said to you in January about Estcourt. Do not stop me; the matter is important in your circumstances, and you understand that nothing can alter the settlement which we made then. In the meantime, on your marriage, the half of the rents, and at my death Estcourt is yours."

"That must be as you please, cousin," said Bertie, firmly and nobly. "I would rather have half-a-dozen kind words just now than Estcourt; but I have not anything to do with that; it is as you please."

And so he strutted forth majestically, closing the door behind him with punctilious politeness, and left me alone again with my card-castle all blown to pieces. I thought it over, and I could see more and more what a blind fool I had been. From the first day they met, Bertie had sought her society; and though Lucy gave, or seemed to give, no part of her attention to him, otherwise occupied as she was at the time, I had no doubt she was conscious of it from the first. To think how easily I had been deceived!—how complaisantly lent my own assistance to deceive myself! When I began to go into particulars, and recalled that visit to the cottage which Bertie had persuaded me to, and which after all was not to visit Alice, but to be for a whole long day with Lucy, my whole heart rose against her. And if I turned to the future, remembering what pleasant dreams I entertained an hour ago, and how the entire scope of that future was changed, Estcourt itself grew painful to my eyes when I thought that henceforward its mistress should be Lucy Crofton; that she it was who should inhabit these familiar rooms, walk on that terrace, overlook that garden; that through her interpretation the next generation should learn the charitable folly of my orphan school, and have to think of those happy children whose voices I could hear, as almost paupers. The idea stung me; for I could perceive beforehand how Lucy would do it, and how tenderly satirical she would be upon poor Aunt Clare. And yet after all, that was a very secondary consideration. Was Bertie likely to be happy with Lucy Crofton for a wife? I was glad to try and forget this last view of the question. Till last Christmas, Bertie and Alice had always been together at every holiday time; but it was, of course, on the frankest footing of youthful acquaintance—the brother-and-sister kindnesses which I hoped to see grow into a more decided preference. But things had certainly changed at their last meeting. Alice was occupied with her sister. Had she observed that Bertie no longer took the same pains to ask her out and share her amusements? I could not tell; but I remembered with some comfort her air of pique, her blush of displeasure, and her unwillingness to leave my society for his. Yes; no doubt Alice had been clearer-sighted than I.

On my way upstairs—for it was drawing near the dinner hour—I encountered Lucy coming down. She was still in her white dress which she had worn at the marriage, and looked rather subdued and pale, but not so happy as one might have supposed from Bertie's happiness. For the first time Lucy faltered before me—hesitated, hung down her head, and changed color. I kissed her gravely, and was the first to speak.

"Bertie has told me," said I; "I confess I was surprised, Lucy; but I trust and hope you may both be very happy."

"Thank you, Aunt Clare," said Lucy. But she did not look up relieved, as I had expected she would; on the contrary, she avoided my eye, and stood by me with very evident disinclination for any further talk, waiting to hear if I had anything else to say. I had nothing else to say. I shook her hand and let her go, as she seemed to wish, and so reached my own room more puzzled than before. I could not understand it. She was not triumphant; she was not rejoicing; she looked exhausted and overstrained, as if she had gone through some trial which was almost too much for her; and when I closed my door, I fancied I heard her softly return and shut herself into her own room. Perhaps Lucy had more heart than I gave her credit for; perhaps—but conjectures were vain in respect to so self-commanded a person, who took nobody into her confidence. I had half a mind to go to her, having a compunction in my mind, and try to win her to some degree of frankness; but my compassion of the moment was not strong enough to overcome my previous feelings. I began to quarrel with my uncomfortable thoughts—strangely different from those of the morning—and could not help remembering that on the other side of the wall was Alice, who probably, like me, had sometimes thought of another conclusion to Bertie's youth. Well, well! disappointment is the one thing certain to every human creature; it might have been worse.

CHAPTER XX.

"So, Clare," said Derwent, "Bertie has lost no time in acting upon your words. Do you know with what errand he came to me to-night?"

"Yes; I saw him first," said I.

"And you don't seem very much delighted, I am bound to say. Did you expect the young fellow to hang on to your skirts, Clare?" said Derwent. "It does not answer at his age."

"I expected nothing unbecoming in Bertie," said I, a little displeased, "which that would have been; but I confess I thought it sudden. They have seen very little of each other to make up their minds so soon."

"For a youth of two-and-twenty he has chosen very discreetly," said Derwent. "A better girl than Lucy is not possible. I told him I thought he was in great luck, and he seems to be quite of my mind.'

"Yes; he appears very happy," said I.

"Upon my honor, Clare, you take it very coolly. I expected to find you quite excited about 'the second marriage in the family,'" said Derwent, laughing. "I would rather it had been Henry Crofton; but as it is I am very well pleased. What is wrong? You are quite severe and stately to-night, Madame Clare."

"I would rather it had been Henry Crofton too," said I; "that is all."

"Ah, I perceive; odd enough now I don't think you ever have taken to Lucy, Clare," said Derwent. "Why, I wonder? She's a very good girl, is she not?"

"A very good girl," said I, gravely.

"Then what have you got against her? She's particularly attentive to you. I like her for that," said my husband, with a glance of inquiry, from which I averted my face.

"And particularly attentive to me," said I; but sometimes people are too attentive and too good, Derwent. Poor human nature objects to be outdone."

"Which means that you don't intend to explain your objections to Lucy. As you will," said my husband; "but I assure you I congratulated Bertie heartily, and I think he has done very well."

With which words the conversation ended—ended with a kind of a ghost of a quarrel between my husband and myself, and a little restrained our cordiality for that night, which I am afraid did not improve the amiability of my sentiments toward Lucy. I lay awake pondering the whole matter for a long time, and the strange incident of the Easter Monday returned to my mind. Could Lucy have anything to do with the owner of that dashing cab and steaming thorough-bed? How was it that the sight of them overpowered her for the first time with such a consciousness of her orphanage that she was compelled to leave me, moved by feelings which had been quite quiescent and manageable hitherto, yet was still out walking in the garden when I returned? The circumstances were very suspicious, and became more and more so as I pondered over them, and in brief I was thoroughly discontented, and not to be satisfied by any exercise of reason. Lucy's calm was to me only an impenetrable and uncertain surface, which some unsuspected influence might break up under our feet at any moment. A person who is incomprehensible by ordinary rules of nature is generally more or less a suspicious person. This girl had been in my constant society for four or five months, and I knew no more about her wishes, her thoughts, and her loves, that I did the first day. Every now and then I made a sudden discovery of something which she had no motive whatever for concealing, and yet "never mentioned," which was her form of putting the matter. What would her power of concealment be if she had really had something to conceal?

In the morning I came to the resolution of asking a year's delay from Bertie, a very common condition, which, considering the age of both, was also very reasonable, and to which Derwent fully consented. Bertie gave in after considerable persuasion, but could not end the discussion without affronting me by a hope that in the meantime I would be kind to Lucy, which, from him, I confess, wounded—more than it ought to have done. Kind! perhaps he was right—for I certainly could not give love to my guest, nor, I fear, even esteem; but these things would not come on being commanded. Bertie and I accordingly, for the first time, parted rather coldly—another agreeable token of the influence of Lucy. They certainly took the very best method possible of making my negative dislike a positive enmity.

Mrs. Harley and her family left us next day. In present circumstances I thought it just as well to keep silent about this change of affairs. Alice was occupied with her brother, of whom, though I did not particularly admire him, she was very proud, and said good-bye to Bertie with such gay good humor and friendliness, that I took unwilling comfort from the thought that my intentions had as little force in her mind as in his. And Mrs. Harley could talk of nothing but Clara, wondering how far she was by this time, whether the dear child would like traveling, and if Mr. Sedgewick would be considerate enough to keep her well wrapped up. So there was really no occasion for introducing a new event, and, on the whole, it seemed wisest to say nothing about it. I will not positively answer for it that the wicked and worldly policy of those elderly people who snub the attachments of the young as a duty, did not whisper in my ear, "There is no telling what may happen in a year;" but at all events I took the negative method of wisdom, and held my peace.

The end of the week found us once more at home, and all these much-expected festivities thrown back into the past. I confess I had almost forgotten Clara Harley's marriage already. The new incident was of so much greater importance, that it blotted out that other complete event which no longer left any room for imagination. Clara was married, and there was an end of her; but as for Lucy, she was close to me, by side every day, and, strange aggravation, was Bertie's chosen, and the future mistress of Estcourt. I bent my mind to my duty as far as I was able. For Bertie's sake, and for necessity's, I tried very hard to find out some points of union between the veiled spirit by my side and my own. And Lucy replied to my efforts with the utmost sweetness—sat with me, walked with me, talked with me, was attentive to every wish I expressed, and tried to anticipate those I said nothing about, but withal never once lifted that veil, never betrayed herself; and love, however solicited, would not come. But we preserved, as may be supposed, an appearance of the most perfect friendship. Lucy kissed me morning and evening as duly as she came down and went upstairs. She talked of Bertie as sensibly and quietly as if she had been his grandmother; but I am grieved to say she still continued, despite all my endeavors, to provoke and "aggravate" me.

My attention was roused, and my eyes jealous. I remembered her paleness and heavy look when I met her at Estcourt on the stairs; I remembered the incident of the cab on Easter Monday. I began to think and recall to my mind what she said about her father's servant, and the letter addressed to Plantagenet Hall, and I could not help observing that Lucy still got the same succession of letters, and that still the maid brought down her share of the outward bound correspondence just as the post bag was about to be closed. One other time I thought I caught a glimpse of the same cab dashing along the road below Hilfont, and a little later saw Lucy enter, looking agitated and distressed: but when I questioned her about it, she only asked, with the same open smile of surprise, "I, Aunt Clare? I do not know anybody who drives a cab and visits in the village." There was nothing to be got out of Lucy; but I watched her with involuntary eagerness and kept her very close under my eye. When a young lady speaks very frankly about her betrothed lover, quotes his letters, and is quietly satirical over his opinions and weaknesses, and at the same time gets heaps of other letters, and seems to have some mysterious, unexplainable relationship with the Will-o'-the-Wisp cap, which nobody knows anything about, one's curiosity becomes interested. I almost think I should have read the addresses of Lucy's letters had she placed them on the hall table now; and I confess I was under temptations to steal the old man's bag from him and look over the correspondence clandestinely. Then there began to be faint indications, breaking even through Lucy's self-command, that all was not so calm with her as it used to be. Sometimes her eyes looked as though they had been crying; sometimes I was inclined to suppose she had not slept much the last night; and at such times Lucy quoted Bertie, and smiled at his simplicities with a positive bitterness, as if she owed him a grudge. I never studied the character of either man or woman before, but I did watch Lucy with an anxious and jealous regard. Nothing she did escaped me; and when she chose a book and read it, I used to read it after her, with some idea of catching a clew to her thought. But the books which Lucy read were all proper books, highly recommended for young ladies—the most of them loftily superior to any human sympathy whatever. I listened to her music, but that was the music she always played; and on the whole, I could discover nothing about Lucy. We walked together as if there was a dark bridge between us; and I knew instinctively that all my knowledge of her, all my watching of her, all the time we had spent together, had not enabled and never would enable me, to pronounce with certainty upon any one thing which Lucy was like, or was not like to do.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

We Must Have Peace.

While we are five millions of Canadians to-day, we have the ports, the navigation facilities, the mineral resources, the agricultural lands, the extension fisheries, the timber resources for employing and sustaining a population of fifty millions. The main thing needed for the successful upbuilding of Canada is the opportunity for peaceful improvement and development. We must have peace. We must have security. We cannot afford to keep up a standing army. The maintenance of a fleet is beyond our present ability, although we have the greater part of a million tons of ocean going shipping floating on all oceans and seas. Great Britain, at the expense of her own taxpayers relieves us of these costly safeguards. Her ironclads, her cruisers and her arsenals are as much for the protection of Canada as British shipping. The money which she spends on an army and navy and fortifications for the mutual benefit of all portions of the empire, we expend in building railways and canals, exploring remote districts, subsidizing steamships, promoting commerce, extending post-office facilities and in other works for the internal development of the country. The mighty protecting arm of the empire enables us to do this. With that withdrawn, we would be subject to war's alarms; the peaceful development of the country would be constantly interrupted, the treasury would be drained for naval and military expenditure.

Solomon's Wisdom.

Little girl—"I don't see why folks calls Solomon wise."

Aunt—"He was."

"Guess you don't read your Bible much. Once, when two women claimed the same baby, he wanted to cut it in two, so each could have half. Why, my little brother would have more sense than that."

A LIVE DAIRY POLICY.

ONTARIO MUST TURN HER ATTENTION TO BUTTER AND CHEESE.

No Profit Now in Raising Wheat—If Australians Can Make and Ship Butter With Profit to Great Britain Why Cannot Canadians Do So?

The Ontario farmer has learned by experience that there is no profit in growing wheat. There was a time when the wheat crop was the most important of any, and realized a profitable price in the market, but that day has gone, with small probability of its return in the near future. This condition has not been brought about by any deterioration in the quality of the grain produced, but is directly attributable to the increased production from the large areas brought under cultivation recently in foreign lands, where in former years, the cultivation of this cereal was not engaged in to any wide extent. But within the past decade or two India has sprung into prominence as a wheat producer of vast acreage, followed by Australia, Manitoba and Argentina. These have poured their product into Liverpool, which regulates the price of breadstuffs the world over and the price has come down and stayed down because of the cheapened supply. The Canadian farmer, when in competition with the Californian and Russian producer could hold his own, but he cannot compete with the humble wheat raiser in India, whose needs are no more costly than a rice diet and a loin cloth, nor with the cheap labor of the Argentine Republic, whence wheat is sent to England and marketed at 54 cents a bushel. It is true that grain from tropical countries is inferior to Manitoba grain, being softer and much less satisfactory in the milling, yet in meeting a want it is acceptable, and

LOWERS THE VALUE

of the superior article. With low prices abroad and lower still at home, the Ontario farmer cannot pursue wheat culture with any hope of profit, and must cast around for some more lucrative outlet for his energy. Australian farmers have met the difficulty by turning their attention to dairy products and taking their land out of wheat cultivation, and so successful have they been that Australian butter ranks high in the English market and meets with profitable sale. Ontario farmers would do well to consider Australia's example. Ontario is the pastoral province of the confederacy. Here are some of the finest pasture lands in the world, interspersed with lakes and streams of the purest water. Few countries can present conditions so favorable to the raising of cattle and the sustenance of dairy herds as Ontario presents. Canadian cheese holds a high place in foreign markets, but while great attention has been given to cheese production litttle attention has been bestowed upon butter as an article for foreign commerce. Farmers who have been losing money in raising grain could have secured a profit had they turned their attention to the dairy and availed themselves of the demand which always exists abroad for prime dairy products. The Australians, fully alive to this valuable trade, have given an intelligent attention to butter making, and the result is that they have, by the excellence of their product, developed a traffic with England which already has given most gratifying returns, with promise of great expansion in the future. If Australians can do this, Ontario agriculturists can do the same, and, as they have better facilities for butter production than can be found at the antipodes, and are within a comparatively short distance of the English market, the opportunity of

SHARING IN THE PROFITS

of the trade should not be disregarded. The advantage would all be upon their side. The land which is now exhausted through successive grain crops, would regain its fertility after a few years of use as pasture land, the work of dairying would not be so exacting on the farmer, fertilizers in the shape of manure would be plentiful, and all the farming necessary would be to produce such crops as are needful for winter feeding. Extensive dairying would lead to the selection of the highest type of milk-producing stock and the increased value of animals would be another source of revenue to those who bred them. By turning to this industry and following it with a will the farmers of this province could place themselves in a position which as grain growers they cannot hope to attain.

Both the Dominion and the Ontario Governments have done considerable towards directing attention to this important branch of agriculture. Prof. Robertson, and Hon. John Dryden have rendered invaluable service in this direction, and the travelling dairies have imparted much practical information upon the subject, but what is needed is a vigorous policy on the part of both Governments with a view to making diarying the leading branch of agriculture in this province, so eminently fitted by nature to prosper in that direction. The literature of the subject should be widespread in the farming districts, and dozens of travelling diaries instead of one or two should be put in operation in the country. If one Prof. Robertson can do much to encourage this industry, a dozen professors of the science of butter making could do much more, and this attention to a profitable business too long neglected would meet with the approval of every farmer and friend of the farmer in the land. The farming element in the Ontario Legislature can do a great deal towards furthering such a commendable movement, which, if properly carried out will in a few years make this province the finest butter producing country in the world.

Poor Thing!

Mother (entering parlor suddenly as the lovers turn up the light)—Ethel, you were sitting entirely too close to Mr. Getthere when I entered.

Ethel—Mother, you know well enough how afraid I am in the dark!

The Sultan of Johore wears an electric light in his shirt front.