

THE NEW INMATE OF HILFONT.

A THRILLING STORY OF OLD ENGLAND.

CHAPTER XXI.

Time had gone on thus until autumn—the end of September—the first six months of Bertie's year. He had come down to Hilfont twice, for a day or two each time, and we had recovered our cordiality. Lucy managed him admirably; she subdued his frown, and kept him within bounds without the shadow of a quarrel, though he was hot-headed enough, and very exacting; and Bertie was fully convinced that there was not such another in the world, and most comfortably confident in her attachment to himself. I used to hear him singing as he went, out of the gladness of his heart, a song of Burns, the burden of which celebrates, above all a certain heroine's qualities—the "kind love that's in her eye." This song Bertie murdered. I cannot use a milder expression, so far as other people are concerned—but it pleased him mightily. I remember, once, while he was doing something expressly for her, and singing, as usual, this favorite effusion of content, I saw Lucy cast at him, all at once, a sudden glance of contempt, of spite, of ridicule, so intense and bitter that I was startled. It was but a glance, and for a moment, yet it spoke, or seemed to speak, of an irritation and disdain which had been accumulated for months. Hearing me start, she turned another rapid glance to me—our eyes met, for the moment I fancied I could read Lucy's heart. A whole world of restrained emotion lay in her eyes—dislike, reluctance, warm opposition, a desire to be quit of us all, and fly away—and that, too, was but a glance. I could not pass it over in silence—could I act upon it? I rose with a sudden excitement which I could not subdue, and after a moment's consideration left the room. A momentary look—a revelation made neither by words nor deeds—but by a single glance out of Lucy's eyes. What would any one say to me if I proposed to build upon that? Of course that it was mere malice, dislike, and enmity on my part; yet I was no less convinced that I had seen into Lucy's private thoughts, and that she knew I had. I was disturbed and troubled beyond description, angry, indignant, and anxious. Must I stand by and see my good Bertie rejoice as a bridegroom over a woman who scorned him? Must I bestow my inheritance only to secure the unhappiness of my kin? Or if I interfered, be content to hear, both from Bertie and my husband, an odious, unmerited accusation, and to see this clever Lucy triumphant over all? It was the hardest problem I had ever needed to solve.

The next time Lucy and I were alone I spoke to her. I had resolved to try, once for all, to set matters right, and in no unkindly spirit; for even to herself this wretched deceit would bring nothing but unhappiness.

"Lucy," I said, "do you remember how you looked at me yesterday. Did you mean it?"

"Did I mean what, aunt?" said Lucy, lifting her eyes to me with the most innocent surprise in the world.

I expected this, and was not discouraged. "My dear," I said, "you are still very young; I dare say you feel a certain pleasure in being able to keep everybody around you in the dark as to your real feelings, but this is a poor enjoyment at the best, and it will recoil chiefly upon yourself. Even now, at last, try to have confidence in me, Lucy. I begged you, when you first came here, not to restrain yourself unnaturally. I beg you not to conceal your real heart under a pretense, or to keep up those false appearances. In this house there is nothing but kindness and good intention toward you—an honest affection and a true love. Even I, who love you least, mean you well, Lucy. I am a woman, and have had trials of my own; I can sympathize, perhaps I can help you. Try to have confidence in me."

Lucy looked up again, with great calmness, into my face. "You are very kind aunt Clare, but indeed it is quite unnecessary. You know quite as much of me as you will care to know. You heard of—of my engagement the very day it was made; what more can I have to tell?"

"You have more to tell!" cried I anxiously.

Lucy neither spoke nor looked at me; she went on sedulously at her crochet, and I thought I could see her hands tremble, but she answered nothing.

"You cannot always keep up this guard," said I; "sometimes for a moment nature will fail, and in that moment you will betray yourself. For your own sake, Lucy, I appeal to you. After the look you gave me yesterday, I can no longer be deceived."

Again there was a momentary pause. "I am sorry you should think I wish to deceive you, Aunt Clare," said Lucy, rather breathlessly. Then another silence. "I will explain my words, or my acts, whenever you please, aunt, as well as I can, but I can not explain my looks; or at least I can not explain things which other people may see in them."

"Then that is all?" said I.

"Yes, aunt," said Lucy, with some firmness; but she no longer ventured to look up to my face.

From that day, as is to be supposed, my vigilance increased, but mingled with this was a fluctuating background of anger and pity, according as I regarded ourselves or Lucy. I could not but feel confident that she wronged Bertie in her heart, and that idea kept me indignant. But this unfortunate, untruthful girl—she, after all, was the person to be pitied.

If I was right—always with that condition, if I was right—for Derwent and Bertie were perfectly happy and satisfied, and had not a doubt of me. It was a strange position in which to stand. I do not think I ever felt so isolated, so separate from my friends during all my life.

One autumn day I had been by myself in the village, visiting the wife of our curate, who was a gentle hypochondriac. On my way home I met the wife of the village

shopkeeper, who stopped to courtesy, and exhaust herself in inquiries after every member of our household. "I've seen miss over again the stile this half-hour or moor," said the woman, "and lookin' ought to be well. I thowt to myself, she's after the ferns or the flowers, like the most of them young ladies, but I rath'er think it's a talk she's having w' some un as pleases her. Young folks will be young folks, i' the village or i' the hall."

"You must be mistaken, I think. Miss Crofton is not very well to-day; I left her at home," said I.

"Bless you, ma'am, I'm never mistaken," said her informant; "I've browt up three lasses myself, and I knows the ways on 'em. I've gone to church thinking my Mary was bad in bed, I have, and whenever my back's turned she's made herself as gay as a peacock, a purpose to see Raaf Smith—him as she's married to nowadays. Bless you I knows 'em well."

"You are wrong, however, about Miss Crofton; pray don't think of repeating it; it is quite a mistake," said I, endeavoring to pass, and anxious to see for my myself. "I ne'er was a story teller," said the woman, "but there's moor things talked of in the village; it's but them that's most concerned that ne'er hear what all the world knows."

"What do you mean?" cried I, in amazement.

"You look down by the wood, ma'am," said the gossip, briskly; "there's a kind of a carriage there that's moor times than one been seen by the hall; and him that comes a driving of it you'll see talking to miss on toother side of the stile."

I confess after this I hurried away without another word; and anxious and in haste, took a by-way, which led, by a long detour, into the wood. I went very rapidly, finding roots of trees and broken branches no bar to my tremendous haste. Coming at last to a point which overlooked the high-road, I looked carefully down from among the trees, and saw, within a few yards off, at the junction of two roads, the same cab which I saw on Easter Monday in the street of the village. The little groom held the horse's bridle, and kept up a close supervision of the two roads; but either this by-way was unknown to him, or he could not see me. I was standing on the top of a mound deeply wooded, to the summit of which this school-boy track led; underneath, but a long way about, from the crown of the slope, lay the stile where Lucy was said to be. I wound my way cautiously down, to reach it if possible, unobserved; and before I reached I could perceive enough to confirm the gossip's tale. Close by the stile, ready to plunge into the other side of the wood, and gain his vehicle unperceived, stood a young man, of whom I could only say that he was not Bertie, and leaning upon him, with her arm in his, stood Lucy Crofton. They were absorbed, apparently, in an anxious, half-whispered conversation, in which frequent pauses were made, to permit the stranger to look anxiously out into the road, to see if any one was coming. They did not suppose any one was coming by that concealed by-way. I almost felt it unfair to steal upon them so entirely unsuspected, and made a rustling among the branches before I reached them, to give them warning. At the sound they both looked round. Lucy thrust her companion away, with an imperative "Go!" and the young man sprang across the path, but, finding me close upon him, and himself discovered, paused and turned round to her with an eager, vacillating look, as if for further orders. There was no escape. Lucy turned round upon me darkly, with a trembling lip, which still curled in a strange travesty of the usual smile, and met my eye with defiance. "Were you hiding among the bushes, Aunt Clare?" she said, with a tone of insult which was indescribable. I remembered it after, but was not cool enough to notice it at the time.

"It does not matter," said I; "I must have an explanation of this, and immediate ly. Who is this whom you steal out secretly to meet—you, Lucy Crofton, who are bound to another?"

Lucy did not answer me. She turned, and cried, "Go, Reginald—go!" with an eager gesture of her hand.

"Nay," said I, "do not go. If it is you who have persuaded this young lady to place herself in so unbecoming a position, stay, and tell me, her natural guardian, what this means."

"Eh! ah! What am I to say?" said the youth, looking at Lucy. "I wanted to tell you upon my honor I did—but you see it's all my father. Eh! what the deuce is a man to say?"

"Say nothing but good-morning," said Lucy. Go away—go! Do you hear me? Will you do what I tell you? Go!"

"By George, but I won't this time, though," cried the young man. See here, ma'am—it's none of her doing. I will come to see her somehow, if there were a dozen fathers between us; and if you choose to forbid me your place, I don't mind—but I will see her. I am fond of her—and she's fond of me. I won't be put off any longer, by George. It's all my old rogue of a father, and nothing else, upon my honor. Lucy, I'm not going to hold my tongue any more."

She did not speak, only looked at him with a significant look and gesture, which somehow changed his mood. He stopped gazed at her, gumbled "Good-by then," and with a half-sullen nod at me, plunged through the trees, and Lucy and I stood alone, looking at each other. I was very angry, I confess, but I was also deeply grieved.

"You would have found it better policy to tell me frankly when I asked you," said I. "Now let us get home; and I trust you will be ready to explain everything there."

She followed me home with a look of dark, immovable obstinacy which I could not have believed possible to that smiling face; keeping a step behind me all the way; walking with a conscious air of mock humility and disdain, which was of itself a tacit insult. It was rather a rough road, interrupted by branches of trees and heaps of fagots, cut down and piled on the way-side for the winter's fuel. I went on quickly, stumbling sometimes with my excitement and nervous haste. "You do not find it very pleasant walking here, Aunt Clare," said Lucy; "it might be better, perhaps to take the proper way."

"Did she mean to exasperate me? I made

no answer, but went on quietly; it seemed a week before we reached Hilfont. When we got there at last, I led her into the library, where I knew Derwent to be. We came in so hastily, I excited and angry, Lucy pale and obstinate, that he perceived at once something had gone wrong. He pushed away the letter he was writing, and stood up astonished to look at us. I could scarcely pause to take breath before I spoke.

"Derwent," said I, "you have put the fullest, most unlimited confidence in this girl; you have given her the place of a child in your house; you have even wished that it should be she who should share the inheritance with your heir after us. You sanctioned her engagement to Bertie Nugent, and gave her your blessing. Did she ever tell you—say, did she ever give you the slightest ground to believe that her engagement with Bertie was all a fiction, and that she has been pledged otherwise, and to another person, all the time?"

Derwent looked from me to Lucy, and from Lucy to me again. He saw me excited quite beyond all ordinary self-control; he saw her dark and down-looking, yet preserving her manner of tranquility; and I believe in his heart he sided with her quietness, and thought so much self-possession could not belong to one who was in the wrong.

"What do you mean, Clare?" he exclaimed in great trouble and annoyance, and with an impatient, half-angry tone.

"I do not say anything about what I have done; for I have neither felt nor professed confidence in her," said I; "but you have; she owes nothing but kindness to you. Tell me that she has disclosed the truth to you, and I will acquit her of all the rest."

"What truth? Pray, speak plainly; you amaze me, Clare," said my husband; "what has Lucy done?"

"I have only met and spoken a few words to an old friend, Uncle Derwent," said Lucy steadily; "one whom I knew years ago, and have always known. Aunt Clare does not love me; she wishes to separate me from Bertie; she watched me speaking to my friend, who happens to be a young man, and she has brought me here like a culprit to convict me of ingratitude to you."

"Indeed, Clare," cried Derwent hastily, "I am much surprised. I did not suppose you would let your feelings carry you so far. I must interfere to protect Lucy now, for I cannot but fear that you have been very unjust to her."

I looked at him, scarcely believing my ears. But he had averted his face, and was placing a chair for Lucy, and bidding her sit down; he would take care of her. I said nothing. I was thoroughly wounded and mortified; too indignant to defend myself. I left the room hastily and went to my own. Then, fearful of interruption, I went to a little inner chamber I had and fell upon my knees, in the great tumult and pain of my thoughts. The matter was changed; it was no longer Lucy; it was personal injustice, cruel and biting—the first pang of discord and alienation of heart between Derwent and me.

CHAPTER XXII.

I was in my own private sanctuary, a place which no one ever entered save myself; where I did, with tears and prayers, like a sacramental work, the homeliest needful offices. I was there, and my heart calmed within me; secondary troubles could not touch me there.

I remember well the first time I fled for refuge and soothing to that room. It was when, glancing listlessly over a newspaper, I saw, and, being fascinated, somehow could not help but read, one of those horrors of moral crime—a baby killed by its mother. I could not bear it. I came here with the great sob of intolerable anguish gasping in my throat. Why, why, oh, compassionate God, give the living child to her who dared the boldest act of crime to make herself free of that burden; and to me, alas! to me nothing, but a little grave? Oh, thou terrible life, thou art but for a while! who within thy limits dare answer such a question as this?

And here I had come many a day since—many a day—my heart always more or less throbbing with that pang which never went away. A little cradle, where once, for an hour of that sweet life which was counted by hours, my child slept, a little basket on the table, with the little garments laid in it; a low chair, where some one had sat holding him; and nothing more but the Bible, which laid a solemn calm upon my heartache when I read it there. I dropped upon my knees, with my head upon the chair—then I rose up, and took my seat there, and hid my face in my hands—and God knows, when one has a sharp stroke of this world's common trouble, and has no secret happiness to fall back upon, it is well to have a sacred grief, where one can clear one's soul from the dust of the ignoble overthrow. It calmed me like the touch of God.

I could not think of Lucy here. I could scarcely think of Derwent's unkind tone and averted face. I escaped from all, to wander longing to the verge of that heaven where the heart of my heart and soul of my soul, born for God and not for me, fulfilled the dear life ordained for him at the Lord's feet. O sweetest choristers, O holiest innocents, how many hearts break for you, and yearn for you, night and day, and hour and year, when no man knows thereof! I think the Lord Himself could not bear it, if it were not that that hereafter which shall put the children again into the mother's arms is even now with Him.

Thinking of these things, with my head bowed down in my hands, and my heart far away—having escaped out of the troubles which sent me here, and growing calm in the sadness of my heart, I heard all at once a sound that startled me. For the first time I had left the door unlocked when I came into my secret place, and when I looked up with a sudden start and cry, Derwent stood before me—stood at first amazed, wondering to find himself there; then he looked round with a troubled, astonished eye. Unaware of what all this meant, and having long ago ceased to dwell upon the trouble which was never absent from my thoughts, it was some time before Derwent realized what those things were. When he did realize it, he fell down by my side, and threw his arms round me, and, touched by a sudden touch of grief and pity, and tender consciousness of what this loss was, fell into a sudden, brief, involuntary weeping, which touched my very heart. I was far past crying for my own

part, and I was partly frightened by his tears, as women always are, and tried to soothe him instantly, and discharge this from his thoughts; but I was comforted by the sight of the grief, which showed me that I did not mourn alone. After a while he rose up, and held me close, forgetting too, as I did, everything that had occurred out of this sacred room. I did not know, and did not think what he had come to say, and neither did he. He looked round with wistful, pitying eyes, full of a great tenderness. He saw my Bible on the table, the only other thing in the room, and he knew in a moment my secret—the only secret I had ever had from him—the secret of a year.

"How long has this been, Clare?" he said softly in my ear.

"Ever since—" How could he ask—he must have known.

And once more he looked round the room, the water glittering in his eyes. "And this has been in your heart all this time; and you have come here every day," he said, slowly and sadly. Poor mother! poor Clare!"

I could have cried then; but he led me away, and locked and closed the door reverently and silently. Then he brought me into my own dressing-room, and sat me down on a sofa. "Clare," he said, "I came to ask if you would pardon me. I was very wrong, but I do not fear that you will pardon me now, and I am glad I found you as I did."

Then there was a little pause. When he resumed, it was in a different tone. "Lucy says," said Derwent, "that the person whom you found her talking to is an old friend, but will not give me any further information. I want to hear all that you know. I have tried to be content with the explanation she gives, but it is not easy. I dare say he is an old friend; still Bertie would not much like it, I dare say, and it seems our duty to understand all the circumstances. If it is not too much exertion for you, my love, tell me what you know."

I did tell him simply and without reserve; the letters, and Lucy's half explanation, and the precautions she had taken that I should not see those she sent away; the repeated visits of the cab; the warning of the shopkeeper's wife; the declaration of the young man himself, and Lucy's authority over him. Derwent listened with great attention, and shook his head. He was shaken in his confidence, and now distrusted him more than I did, leaping from one extreme to another; for I knew that Lucy never would do anything to compromise herself really in the eyes of the world.

"Who is he?—that seems the first question. Do you not think, Clare," said Derwent, "that if you really made an appeal to her and endeavored to win her confidence, she would tell you?"

"I have already tried," said I.

"But try again, for everybody's sake; try to ascertain who he is," said Derwent. "If it should happen to be an honest difficulty in the course of true love, why, you and I know enough of that, Clare, to be able to sympathize with them. I shall give her something, of course, when she marries, and I dare say neither of us would mind a little over-expenditure to secure her happiness. Tell her so, and she'll surely confide in you. Anything, so long as it's honest; it may be only a blunder of their youth."

"But, Bertie," said I.

"Ah, Bertie!" said my husband, uneasily; "that's the sting of the whole affair. Could she accept Bertie, and yet correspond with this other fellow? Impossible! Let's hope they had a quarrel, at least, and parted in heroics, and that poor Bertie, for his sins, came in at the critical moment, and got accepted in pique. Bad enough, Clare; but such things have happened. Poor Bertie! I'll have the delightful task of informing him, I suppose. Pleasant work! But Clare, you must try again to persuade her to confide in you."

"But what can I say, or what must we do if she persists in saying it was only a friend?" said I.

Derwent shrugged his shoulders, rose up, and began to pace about the room in troubled consideration. "Take clandestine means, I suppose," he said; "either she must tell us who he is, and how he happened by accident to come here, and meet her at that stile, or else I must trust to my wits, and find it out for myself."

"But she did not say he came by accident!" I exclaimed.

Derwent thought she did, but I dare say he was wrong. Lucy would not have committed herself to a falsehood so easily found out. I got up at length to go upon my unpleasant and undesirable errand. My rising startled Derwent; he came and led me to the door, where he paused again, looking rather anxiously into my face.

"Clare, I want you to do me a favor," he said.

I knew by instinct what it was, and held up my hands, begging him to spare me; but he only took my hands in his affectionately with great gravity and seriousness, and continued what he had to say.

"I want a promise from you, Clare. I know you will do it if you promise," said Derwent. "I want you to send these things away. My love, think! is it right? It is an idol's shrine at which you worship there."

"No," I cried, out of my very heart. "No; it is at the feet of the Lord."

But Derwent only shook his head. There is a difference between men and women. Into that retirement of my soul he would not go with me. "Promise," he said again, with the tenderest pity and affection in his eyes.

And I did promise; but while he returned well pleased and satisfied, I went away with a pang in my heart. He did not understand. He thought I would be comforted, and forget, if these tokens were gone. Forget! I would rather have died.

So I went away very slowly, collecting my thoughts, to go to Lucy, much calmed and tranquilized in my mind by the near touch of my sorrow, strengthened by coming near it, composed out of my angry thoughts. I felt that I could go to her now with a milder manner and kinder intentions, and began almost to hope that she could not resist me any longer. I wished no longer to vindicate myself, and justify my suspicions, but to do the best I could for us, and for us all.

But when I came to the door of the room, Lucy suddenly encountered me coming out with a little basket, which contained her crochet, in her hand. She went quietly down before me to the drawing-room, and sitting down, began to work just as usual, with calm nerves and enviable self-control. I sat down by her, and begged her once more to open her heart to me. I told her

if she would be frank, that Derwent would exert himself to set affairs right, and that candor now should wipe out the securities of the past. Lucy considered over it gravely for some time, bending her head over her work. At length she let me know her decision.

"Thank you, Aunt Clare; I am much obliged to you for your gentleness and forbearance. I dare say I provoke a great deal. Wait, please, till to-morrow."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A CENTURY AND A HALF AGO.

Story of the Capture of the French Fort at Louisburg by the American Colonies in 1755.

A remarkable celebration will take place next year, in which Canadians are interested. The year 1895 will be the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the taking of Louisburg from the French by the American colonies. With the seizure of the stronghold Cape Breton fell into British hands, and therefore it has special interest to Canadians who are now asked to join with New Englanders in commemorating the occasion. A visit to the historic spot was recently made by a correspondent of the New York Post. He found the new Louisburg a bright-looking little town of about a thousand inhabitants, while the old town about three miles away, has few inhabitants except those who have passed over to the great majority. The road runs over a rocky approach between fields filled with heaps of stones, marking the first lines of defense of the great fortress, across causeways, by ponds and beaches. On one of the latter may be seen, at low tide, the remains of one of the French vessels sunk one hundred and fifty years ago; for here was the inner harbor, now almost filled with sand. Still further on, we come in sight of shingle-sided, whitewashed cottages, rickety wharves, and platforms covered with salt fish, while men in oilskins are washing out nets, etc.—this where the lilies of France once waved. The oldest house in the place—and it looks its age—was probably built almost immediately after the siege. The whole point is covered with heaps of stone, which look almost as small as macadam, and there is enough of it, one would think, for most of the roads in Nova Scotia. Louisburg was begun in the year following immediately after the death of Louis XIV., taking twenty-five years to complete, costing thirty million livres, with a rampart of stone from thirty to thirty-six feet high and fifteen thick, and a ditch eight feet wide. There were six bastions and batteries containing embrasures for over 148 cannon. On an island at the entrance of the harbor was planted a battery of thirty cannon, carrying twenty-eight-pound shot, and at the bottom of the harbor was a grand or royal battery of twenty-eight cannon, forty two-pounders, and two eighteen-pounders. On a high cliff opposite the island battery stood a lighthouse, and within this point, secure from all winds, was a careening wharf and a magazine of naval stores. The entrance to the town was over a drawbridge spanning the moat, near which was a circular battery with sixteen fourteen-pound guns. It is hard to realize that the fortress city, capable 150 years ago of containing 6,000 troops within its walls, and which had 15,000 inhabitants, all told, should have so utterly disappeared from the face of the earth that scarcely one stone is left upon another to tell the tale of its life and death.

Changes in the Post Office Law.

Under amendment to the Post-office Act passed at the session of Parliament just closed, postage will hereafter be imposed at the rate of 1 cent per pound on almanacs in sheets, chromos, lithographs, prints or engravings, issued by any newspaper specially and not as part of its regular issue, and also on lithographs, prints or engravings issued by any known office of publication in a regular series at intervals of not more than one month. This latter section refers specially to cheap engravings issued by different Canadian newspapers. According to the rules of the international post, our Government has to carry free publications of this kind coming from the United States, and it has been represented to the Government that if the lowest rate of postage were imposed when mailed in Canada, the several classes of publications mentioned would probably be printed in the Dominion. Sir A. P. Caron has promptly acceded to the representations of the publishers, and has fixed the lowest possible rate on their behalf. Another amendment of an important character made in the Post-office Act will allow newspaper publishers to enclose in their newspapers not only accounts and receipts, which is permitted at present, but also printed circulars inviting subscriptions and the printed envelopes addressed to such publishers. The concession is, of course, confined strictly to the documents mentioned.

Time to Settle.



Travers—"That last suit of mine is worn out already."

Tailor—"Yes, sir; I have heard you say you never paid for your clothes until they were worn out."

The most surprised man in Bucks County, Pa., the other day, was Martin Warren. After a continuous sleep of twenty-seven hours, he awoke with perfect vision, although for years he has suffered from defective eyesight. During the same sleep his height had increased one and one-quarter inches.