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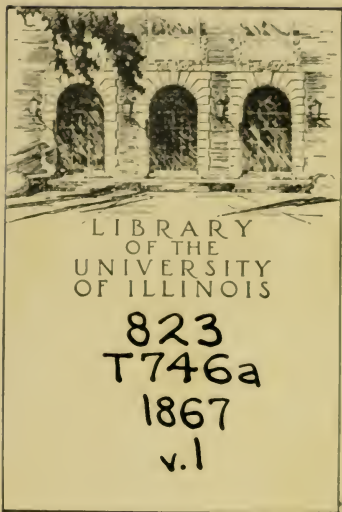
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ARTINGALE CASTLE.

BY

T. ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ARTINGALE CASTLE.

BOOK I.

INTRODUCTORY.

CHAPTER I.

TWO CUTTINGS FROM AN OLD NEWSPAPER.

IN one of our western counties there is a fine old English home—one of the most beautiful of those time-honoured mansions which have made English homes famous throughout the world. The present resident and owner of this mansion is the son of a man who became such under circumstances so remarkable as to be quite as well worth the telling as many a tale invented by the writers of fiction for the amusement of their readers. Some vague allusion to the facts of the story may be read in one of the latter volumes of a certain voluminous county history of the shire in question. But it must not be

supposed that the story is to be found there precisely as it is about to be told here. Much of the explanation of the facts delicately touched on by the county historian, and many of the main facts of the case themselves, were only obtainable from other less obvious sources. The principal of these (it can now injure nobody to say) was a garrulous old gentleman—a Mr. Joseph Gibbons—whose father had been the managing clerk of a once well-known, but now long since extinct, firm of solicitors. One might have supposed that this old gentleman had inherited a taste for, and an instinct and skill in, “getting up cases,” as a pointer pup inherits pointing, so carefully had he pieced together the fragmentary bits of fact and document which make the basis of the narrative, and so keen was his pleasure in relating and pointing out the bearing of them.

Of course the story reads somewhat differently in the aristocratically decorous pages of the county chronicler. No class of writers are more called on to make, and are more skilful in making things pleasant, than these excellent and useful writers. Necessarily so, for they have not the story-teller's privilege of changing the

venue of their tale, concealing names, and altering irrelevant circumstances, so as to prevent their revelations from giving pain or offence to individuals.

It is hoped that these precautions have been sufficiently taken in the following pages.

Nearly a hundred years ago, in one and the same small ill-printed sheet of daily news which sufficed to tell all that our grandfathers cared to know about what was going on in the world around them, might be read—and may still by any who will seek for them in the stores of the British Museum—the two following announcements.

The first is taken from the body of the paper, under the heading of “Fashionable Intelligence,” and runs thus :—

“It is with feelings of the liveliest satisfaction that we avail ourselves of the privilege specially accorded to us, of informing our readers of the approaching nuptials of one of the brightest stars in the galaxy of fashion. It is understood that on an early day next month Sir George Artingale, of Artingale Castle, in the county of Sillshire, will lead to the hymeneal altar the Lady Geraldine Tarlatane, the lovely

and accomplished daughter of the Earl of Foxley.”

The second of the bits of information alluded to occurs among the advertisements, which fill some two-thirds of the fourth page of the paper, and runs as follows :—

“On Monday the 24th instant will sail, wind and weather permitting, for Boston, in the colony of Massachusetts, North America, the good ship ‘Mary Thornton’ of this port, Captain Robert Johnson. For freight or passage apply to Thornton, Mallings, and Co., 9, Blackfriars, Thames Street.”

It was on a day some ten days previous to that mentioned in the latter extract that the Sir George Artingale mentioned in the former newspaper article called on his confidential lawyer, Julius Harding, gent., attorney-at-law of Gray’s Inn ; and his visit had reference to both of the bits of newspaper intelligence. He was not so fortunate however as to find Mr. Harding at home when he called ; and after having fired off a volley or two of curses after the fashion of gentlemen of rank and station of that day when irritated, he bade the clerk tell his master that he had called to ask what progress had been

made with the marriage settlements, and also to hear Mr. Harding's report of what he had done "in that other matter. Your master will know what I mean."

Accordingly, when the attorney returned to his chamber, his clerk, standing at the door of the lawyer's room, while his master sat himself down at a table thickly covered with papers, said—

"Sir George Artingale here an hour ago, sir. Cursed and swore a good five pounds' worth. Said he wanted to know how his marriage settlements are getting on; item, what you had done in the matter you know about."

"Very good, Gibbons! Put down the curses. I dare say your estimate is a fair one, duly considering that some abatement should be made on the large quantity he takes of the article; as for the settlement deeds, you could tell him, as well as I, that they cannot be ready before the end of next week; and as for the business I know of, why, I know it a great deal better than I like it, Gibbons."

"Yes, sir! If he calls again, sir, am I to tell him that?"

"Yes! you may tell him that—if you can think

of nothing better to say. But I am going to see about the business he speaks of, this afternoon; and I dare say I shall speak with Sir George myself."

And accordingly a few hours later in the day Mr. Harding, looking into his clerk's room as he passed, and saying, "I shan't be back here this afternoon, Gibbons—at the usual hour to-morrow morning. Let Baldock and Bradshaw's people have that deed of Alderman Snowbridge's this evening; and—yes, that's all, Gibbons!" walked out of his chambers into the great dreary square of Gray's Inn.

Passing out of the Inn under the gateway leading to Holborn, Mr. Harding set his face eastward, and there being neither omnibuses nor cabs in those days, and hackney-coaches being few, dear, and very slow, proceeded to walk for the best part of an hour in that direction. When he had reached Cheapside, he turned out of the great thoroughfare to the northwards, and in a few minutes more stopped at the door of a small house in one of the narrow streets which make an intricate labyrinth of that region. The district in question was neither so wholly given up to business purposes, nor so poor in the portions

not so given up in those days as it is now. There were then a very much larger number of decent-looking private residences — narrow, cramped, dismal, quiet, and gloomy-looking, but having a certain prim and threadbare respectability of appearance.

Knocking with a modest tap-tap at one of these, Mr. Harding asked of the girl who answered the door—a Scotch lassie, unless every feature of her face utterly belied her—if Mrs. Melville was within, and having not only been told in reply that she *was* then within, but spontaneously furnished with the further information that she had never been out since she came to the house, was shown into a little parlour on the ground-floor, while the lady in question was summoned from an upper part of the house.

Mr. Harding sat down, if sitting it could be called, on a little horsehair-covered sofa about a foot wide, and tall in proportion to its slimness, and employed the interval of waiting apparently in biting his nails, but no doubt less visibly in meditating on the business he was there to transact. In a very few minutes Mrs. Melville entered the room.

Evidently the attorney had seen her before.

Had he set eyes on her then for the first time, it would have been impossible for him to have avoided manifesting in some way the effect her remarkable beauty was calculated to produce. She was certainly not more than twenty years old, and had an appearance of utter girlishness about her, which seemed totally unsuited to the matronly appellation she bore. Any one accustomed to the specialties of national type, and to observation of the little peculiarities of manner, would have guessed her also to be a Scotch-woman. And the first accents of her voice turned the guess into a certainty.

CHAPTER II.

JESSIE MELVILLE.

MR. HARDING jumped up as she entered, and first bowing very ceremoniously, while she with equal solemnity executed an elaborate, but evidently rural-taught curtsey, took her hand, and in very courtly style placed her in the middle of the abominable postilion's-bar-like sofa, which he had just quitted.

“I have called, my dear madam, by the directions of my client, Sir George Artingale,” began the lawyer, “to hear from you the result of your consideration of the proposals I had the honour of making to you on his behalf, and to tell you that an opportunity for conveniently carrying them into execution now offers itself.”

“If you think that it was an honour to make those proposals, sir ——,” began the lady, in a

strongly-marked and somewhat rustic Scotch accent, but with a peculiarly modest and naive elegance of manner. The lawyer, however, did not allow her to proceed any further.

“My dear Mrs. Melville,” he cried, interrupting her, “pray do not mistake me; you are aware that I am but an agent; I spoke only of the honour of being employed to communicate with you. You must know, that I have neither art nor part, as we lawyers say, in the events which have made the arrangements I am employed to carry out—ahem! expedient—I may say, expedient. Nor am I called upon to express an opinion concerning them. The wisest plan will be for us to confine ourselves strictly to the consideration of the future.”

“I have come to understand, sir,” said the lady, while a silent tear rolled down her cheek, “that that is what gentlemen may consider—*expedient*—in circumstances such as mine. What can the result of consideration be,” she added after a pause, “to one so utterly helpless as I am?”

“My dear Mrs. Melville——” began the lawyer again; but this time it was his turn to be interrupted.

“And I do not think it right, sir, or honourable for you to address me by that name,” said the lady.

“My *dear* madam,” returned the lawyer, with a strong and a pained expression of face, “is this wise? Now, I put it to yourself, *is* this reasonable? Have you not consented to the adoption of the name you object to? Are you not known here in this house by that and by no other?”

“You know, sir, how I have consented,” she said; “I consented to do what I was compelled to do. And when the people here call me Mrs. Melville, they know no better. But you do know that that is not my name.”

“My *dear* lady,” cried the lawyer, dropping his arms by his sides in an attitude of despair, and heaving a deep sigh, “shall we gain anything by going over all that matter again? You compel me to remind you that I have no such knowledge as you attribute to me. I do not know that your name is not Melville. At least, I do not know that you have any title to the name you claim. I do not know that you have no title to it. I simply know nothing on that subject. What I do know is, that I can see no means by which you can

prove yourself to be entitled to the name of Lady Artingale. You assert that that took place between you and Sir George Artingale, which would assuredly have made you his wife, according to the Scotch law, could it be proved to have occurred, exactly as you suppose it to have occurred. You assert that two witnesses were present. But you have no idea where to find them. You do not even know their names. You say that they were servants of Sir George. It is to be feared that if all that you suppose to have taken place, did take place, and if even you could put your hand on the persons you mention, your position would be no whit improved. For in that hypothesis the servants would doubtless testify according to the wishes and directions of their master. Pray understand, however, that with all this I have nothing whatever to do. My client assures me that no legal marriage took place between you. You conceive that such a marriage did take place. But you fail to show me the smallest proof of your assertion. Far from being able to adduce any proof that would be available in a court of law, you are unable to show me, sitting here, any reason to convince me that you were not the

victim of an error, arising from your ignorance of the circumstances necessary for the constitution of a legal marriage. I have no doubt—no moral doubt—that you fully and entirely believed yourself to be contracting marriage. But I do not, as I said before, see any possibility of your succeeding in legally establishing the fact. If I did see any such, I should not feel at liberty, even in the interest of my old client, to advise you that your case is hopeless, and to tell you, as I have told you, and now tell you, that you have no course open to you but to close with the proposals made to you.”

“It is very, very cruel;—very, very wicked!” said the poor girl-mother, down whose pale cheeks the salt tears had been coursing during the latter part of the lawyer’s harangue.

“Upon all that I can pronounce no opinion; you must feel, yourself, my dear madam, that in my ignorance of the circumstances, I can pronounce no opinion.” (The lawyer’s conscience twinged him a little as he said this.) “I can safely say that *I* have not acted and am not acting cruelly or wickedly in the matter; and that must suffice for me.”

“I do not say that you have been cruel, sir!”

sobbed the poor Scotch lassie, somewhat reconciled to her visitor by his declaration of perfect belief in her own belief in the genuineness of her marriage.

“In truth,” pursued he, “I would fain be as kind in this painful business as the nature of the circumstances will admit. And now let us calmly look at the matter as it stands. Understand, once for all, that in laying before you the proposals which I am commissioned by my client to make, I express neither approbation nor blame of any kind. It is not my province to do so. I am but the medium of communication. Begging you to bear this in mind, I have to point out to you that the idea, which you have conceived, whether erroneously or otherwise, of the position which ought by right to be yours, makes it undesirable to Sir George Artingale, who denies your claim, that you should remain in this country. At the same time, he fully admits that what has passed between you gives you a claim on him which he is willing to recognize, if you, on your part, will consent to seek a home in the colonies, and will promise to live there under the name which you have now assumed, making no attempt to use or lay claim to any other. On

these conditions he undertakes to provide for you, and I have directions to see settled on you, legally and indefeasibly, the sum of two hundred pounds a year, which will be regularly paid to you, wherever you may settle yourself in your new country."

"And if I should refuse to leave the country, and to accede to the conditions?" asked she.

"In that case I have no proposals to make to you. Such a contingency, I may say, has not been contemplated. For you must excuse me, my dear lady, if I say that it would be unwise to a degree, not to be expected from any sane person. You would be rejecting a position of competency, comfort, and respectability for one—forgive me for saying so—the reverse of all these. Remember, that whatever may be your impression respecting the union between you and Sir George Artingale—whatever even may have been the real facts of the case—you have no hope whatsoever of establishing your claim; no hope of inducing the world to believe in it. Your boy, if you remain, will suffer from the stigma attaching to his birth——"

"No stigma is attached to his birth!" broke in the young mother, passionately.

“ — from the stigma supposed to attach to his birth,” continued the lawyer; “whereas in the new home proposed to you he will be free from any such disadvantage. You will be known there as Mrs. Melville, a widow. And the future before you may be in all respects as happy a one as that of any comfortably provided widow. It is, indeed, impossible to hesitate about accepting the proposal made to you.”

“ You say, sir, that you believe me to be sincere in my solemn declaration that I was duly and truly married to Sir George Artingale. Do you advise me, bearing this in mind, to go to America? Bearing in mind that you are speaking to a poor betrayed, helpless creature, who has no human being to give her counsel, would you, if you were called on to advise some one in whom you had yourself an interest, advise them to give up their true station of a married wife, and go away for ever?”

“ Most honestly and truly, my dear madam, if I were advising any one, however near and dear to me, under the circumstances, I should not hesitate for an instant to say that the only thing to be done was to go. Here there is, as I most

truly believe, no hope for you. With all my heart, and in my conscience, I advise you to accept the terms, and to go."

"I will go, then!" said the poor girl, dropping her head upon her bosom.

"Believe me, it is the wisest—the only course open to you. Trust to me that the arrangements for your voyage, and for your subsequent means—two hundred pounds a year secured to you for life—shall be well and properly attended to. You will, of course, let me know where you fix your home, as soon as you have settled yourself."

"And when am I to go?" she asked, submissively.

"That is one of the points on which I came to speak to you. See, here is the advertisement of a ship about to sail for New England. The 'Mary Thornton' will sail in about ten days' time. It is a good ship; the owners are very respectable people, and the captain—Captain Johnson—is a very worthy man. I have made all inquiries on the subject. A berth shall be secured for you and your boy; and I will let the owners and the captain know that you are the widow of a client of our firm."

“In ten days from this time?” asked she, wistfully.

“Yes; the ship sails about that date. By-the-bye, it would be well that I should know your Christian name. It has never been mentioned to me,” said the lawyer, with a business-like briskness, that seemed to show the relief he felt at having brought his negotiation to a successful termination.

“My Christian name is Jessie. I suppose I may be allowed to keep *that*. My maiden name was Jessie Carrington,” she replied, while the recollections connected with the old sound caused her tears to flow afresh.

“Oh, yes, to be sure; there is no reason why you should change that. But it will be as well perhaps to avoid all mention of the name of Carrington, as well as of course—any other name. The berth shall be secured in the name of Jessie Melville,” said the lawyer.

There was little more to be said between Mrs. Melville and her visitor. A few arrangements were made respecting her preparations for the voyage. The lawyer promised to come for her himself, and to accompany her on board, and introduce her to the captain; and then took his

leave, heartily glad that the matter was settled, and the business off his hands.

And on the 24th of May, in the year 17—, the 'Mary Thornton' dropped down the river, carrying with her to the new world "Mrs. Melville, widow, and George Melville, aged one year, son of the above."

CHAPTER III.

MISTRESS AGNES ARTINGALE.

THE 'Mary Thornton' duly sailed, and duly arrived at her port; and shortly afterwards the widow Melville found herself settled, comfortably enough and happily as far as outward circumstances were concerned, in the little town of Newport. On this side of the Atlantic—save once by the discreet but not unkind Mr. Julius Harding—she was no more heard of; and Sir George was left free to "lead the Lady Geraldine Tarlatane, the lovely and accomplished daughter of the Earl of Foxley, to the hymeneal altar," according to the programme laid down for him in the "Fashionable Intelligence."

He did so lead her; and having afterwards led her during a London season through the usual exhibiting places appointed for such pur-

poses, he led her next to his ancestral castle of Artingale, in the county of Sillshire. And thereafter the lovely and accomplished Lady Geraldine was almost as much unheard of and forgotten as was Jessie Melville in her distant home on the other side of the Atlantic. For Sir George was not a man who delighted in the beauties of that ancestral home, or in Sillshire, or in the worshipful state in which the Sillshire worthies expected the owner of Artingale Castle to live on the lands of his forefathers, or indeed in any of the joys and pleasures of domestic life. The only "angulus terræ" which really smiled to him was Tattersall's *corner*; and the only glades he cared to wander among were those of Bond Street and its neighbouring haunts.

The lovely and accomplished daughter of the house of Foxley saw very little indeed of him at Artingale. At the end of a year a daughter, christened Agnes, an old hereditary name in the family, was born to him. Possibly the sex of his first-born child was a disappointment to Sir George; though he did not seem to be a man likely to think much about such matters, or to care for the preservation of a name, the "soiling" of which for aye he seemed to be the "ane sad

loset" destined to accomplish. Nevertheless, there are unnoticed nooks and corners in men's minds in which sentiments lie hidden, which no one—perhaps not even the owner of them himself—would have suspected himself of possessing. And it may be that with the stupid unreasonable-ness of a selfish and dissipation-brutalized man, Sir George was alienated more than might otherwise have been the case by this disappointment from his neglected wife.

At the end of a second year, however, the Lady Geraldine presented him with a son, who was named Hildebrand, according to the ancient practice of alternating that name with George in the house of Artingale. And it may have been that the birth of this lord of the creation might have had the effect of making Sir George a somewhat better husband, if any opportunity had been given him for such reformation. There was no such opportunity; and I suppose therefore that we must give him the benefit of the doubt; though my own notion is that no such process as the converting of a sow's ear of a dissipated London man of a very dissipated period into the silken purse of a dignified, domestic, wife-and-home-loving baronet could

ever have been effected. There was, however, as has been said, no opportunity of trying the experiment in the interest of poor Lady Geraldine; for she died within a few weeks after the birth of her son, and had the honour of being laid to her rest in the Artingale chapel attached to the chancel of Artingale church, among a large assembly of most unexceptionable predecessors.

As for Sir George, he took his place by her side, in that notable assembly of the bearers of the proud old name, in the most decorous fashion about five years later. It was the first occasion on which he had visited Artingale since his wife's death. But that five years' interval had not been passed by the Artingale people, by the tenants, and specially by Mr. Decimus Oblong, the old steward, without very frequent reminders of the baronet's continued existence. The life Sir George was leading in town made his calls for money very frequent. None was forthcoming, on the other hand, for the repairs which the grand old pile had for some years past urgently needed. Bad was going to worse very rapidly at Artingale during those five years. The grass grew in the avenue, and all over the once nicely gravelled walks of the old Italian

garden ; moss discoloured the flags of the grand terrace, and the steps of the great entrance ; and the rooks in the noble old trees seemed to caw with a melancholy consciousness of the general desolation.

It was well that there remained any rooks to caw at all ! Had those evil days to Artingale been extended from five years to ten, it is safe to say that Mr. Decimus Oblong would not have succeeded in keeping a tree standing on the estate. As it was, many a noble tree in some outlying woodland at a considerable distance from the house went down before the woodman's axe for the supply of the spendthrift baronet's needs. And it was fortunate that the woods in question existed to bear the brunt, which would otherwise have fallen on the magnificent ornamental timber near the castle. As it was this was spared. And though sadly out of repair, and urgently needing the outlay of a much larger sum of money than could be afforded from the estates for the purpose, Artingale Castle, when it came into the possession of its new infant owner, was still one of the most beautiful and noble residences in England, and by no means too far gone in decay to be restored

to all its original magnificence by the judicious outlay of a sufficient sum of money. This, however, poor Mr. Decimus Oblong had no means of furnishing; and he was compelled, during the minority and the absence of the new proprietor, to keep the place water-tight, and stave off ruin by the best make-shifts he could.

It was fortunate for Artingale Castle that the losel baronet died early—fortunate for the castle and fortunate for the castle's heir—fortunate for the latter, as far as such matters come within the scope of human ken, in more important respects than the mere preservation of his heritage from utter destruction. The premature death of the father made the chance that the son might grow to be a different guess sort of man a much better one than it would otherwise have been. And Sir Hildebrand did become a very different sort of man from his father. His character and that of his sister Agnes, one year older than her brother, were mainly due to the care bestowed on their training by an old maid—herself also an Agnes Artingale—and an aunt of Sir George. He, Sir George, had been an only child of the previous Sir Hildebrand. His orphan children

had accordingly neither uncle nor aunt to take care of them. But there was an only sister of that Sir Hildebrand, an aunt therefore of Sir George. She was, indeed, the only person remaining of the blood of the two infant Artingales to whose care they could be entrusted. And *Mistress* Agnes Artingale (who always called herself so—never either Miss or Mrs.) immediately on her graceless nephew's death came forward with an offer to take charge of her grand-nephew and grand-niece.

Of her nephew, *Mistress* Agnes Artingale had seen very little, indeed absolutely nothing during several years before his death. She had never seen the Lady Geraldine, his wife; and of course had never seen the children, of whom she offered to take charge. The offer from her was not, therefore, produced by any sentiment of affection. *Mistress* Agnes had felt it to be a matter of duty. I am inclined to think that old maids generally are a duty-recognizing race. And it would have been difficult to name the task that *Mistress* Agnes Artingale would not have done, or attempted to do, if she were clearly of opinion that it was her duty.

I have no doubt that the good old lady was

duly sensible of the higher sanctions, which require the performance of our duty from each of us alike, whether peer or peasant. But she did not habitually put these forward in her talk. Perhaps she felt that such considerations were of too sacred a nature to be so put forward, and was of opinion that the prominent mention of them at every turn savoured of a cant which was especially obnoxious to the old lady. What she *was* in the habit of continually putting thus forward was a sort of modification of the grand and well-known, "England expects that every man this day will do his duty," which might be expressed tolerably accurately, perhaps, by, "Artingale expects every man, and woman too, this day to do his, or her, duty."

What "Artingale" represented to her mind in this context was perhaps not very accurately definable. It did *not* mean the visible extant head of the family, who never did any kind of duty himself, assuredly. It was a kind of abstraction, elaborated by her mind out of all the glories, the greatness and the worth of past generations of the house. I think that the outward and visible manifestation and symbol of this abstraction was, to the mind of Mistress

Agnes, the grand and beautiful old castle itself. The stones, and the walls, and even the expressive windows, and the trees of the old place, however, could only by a very strong poetical license be said to expect anything, save tumbling down. And the ancient lady did not, probably, really attribute to them any conscious expectations respecting the conduct of the members of the family. The sentiment was with her a special and particular adaptation of "*noblesse oblige*." There was, to the mind of Mistress Agnes, no nobility equal to that attaching to the house of Artingale. And the old French saying, therefore, was in her mind applicable, with a greater force, to the members of that house than to any other mortals whatever.

The obligations which "*noblesse*" laid on Mistress Agnes were often heavy enough to be borne, and the duty which Artingale expected from its own sufficiently arduous. But Mistress Agnes never shrank from the call. Every duty which she conceived to be laid on her by these expectations she performed, or strove to the utmost to perform.

She must have been nearly sixty when Artingale expected her to take the charge of her

good-for-nothing nephew's orphan children, having been by some years his father's senior. She was living at the time, and had been for many years living, in the cathedral city of Sillchester, some five-and-thirty or forty miles away from Artingale Castle, which is situated in the northern part of the county. The society of the city of Sillchester is generally considered—not by Sillshire people only—to be better than that of most country towns. It might lead to an inconveniently long examination of the social theories of different classes of persons, holding various shades of class opinions, if it were attempted to investigate the exact nature of the superiority thus claimed. But it is a fact that the number of persons belonging to those classes which are understood to constitute society is more than usually large at Sillchester. It is a very favourite residence with independent persons of moderate though comfortable means. It is a very pretty city, situated in a very beautiful country. It is not a great centre of trade; and it possesses no manufactures. Genteel people, who are not rich, have a better chance there, therefore, than in any of the great wealth-creating towns of England. The clergy

attached to the cathedral leaven the society pleasantly and advantageously, not being so numerous, in proportion to the rest of the Sillchester world, as to render the tone decidedly and exclusively clerical, as is the case in some of our smaller episcopal cities; yet holding a sufficiently important position in it to insure a somewhat higher degree of general culture, and a somewhat more aristocratic tone, than the place would have been likely to possess had the large cavalry and infantry barracks, which contributed a very agreeable element to the general mixture, been left to give the exclusive flavour to it.

In the society of this happily and favourably constituted city Mistress Agnes Artingale held a well-marked and indeed rather a high place. The aunt of a Sillshire baronet of large estates had claims to which the Sillchester world was the last world in the world to be slack in allowing their full value. The aunt of any baronet of large property would have been duly considered there; but the aunt of a Sillshire baronet was held to be entitled to a far higher degree of consideration; for the Sillshire folk are a clannish set. The Dean's wife and Mistress Agnes

called each other "my dear." The country gentlemen exchanged presents of wonderfully fine melons with her, and always owned themselves vanquished in the rivalry. The possessors of deer-parks in the neighbourhood used to send her haunches of venison. It was as regular a thing for the bishop to dine with Mistress Agnes Artingale, whenever he came to the palace, as it was for the judges to be entertained by the sheriff. It was sufficient for a minor canon's wife to have been seen in her drawing-room for her title to a place in the best Sillchester set to be at once recognised. Cornet Ibbotson of the 99th Dragoons knew himself to be a made man, as far as social promotion went, when Mistress Agnes had declared that she remembered his grandmother.

It will be understood, then, that the old lady occupied a decidedly distinguished position in the world in which she moved, and that her life was in all respects an infinitely preferable one to that which she would have led in a poky little house in May Fair, such as the modicity of her fortune, combined with the necessities of Artingale obligations, would have condemned

her to inhabit, had she even been tempted to leave her native shire for the great Babylon.

In this matter of a house it was very especially better. For the house which Mistress Agnes inhabited and owned in Sillchester was perhaps the most beautiful in the town, and very certainly a more beautiful one than most of the towns of England could show. It was situated immediately within the grey and lichen-grown old walls of the city, which were also the walls of her large garden. The ground fell away very rapidly from the foot of the wall, after leaving along the base of it just sufficient space for an espalier of roses, and an exquisitely charming sunny terrace walk, commanding the finest view of the cathedral in all Sillchester, and of the picturesque range of hills shutting in the valley of the Sill on the further side of that river. Mistress Agnes' garden, indeed, was one of the marvels and stock sights of Sillchester, and was duly celebrated in the guide-book to that famous city.

In that pleasant abode Mistress Agnes Artingale had for many years been leading the even and somewhat monotonously uneventful, but dignified, calm, and not unpleasant tenor of her

life, when her nephew's death threw upon her the duty of undertaking the charge of his two children. It was a very serious matter to the old lady, involving no trifling changes in her establishment, her habits, and her household. Her old-fashioned but excellent house afforded ample room for the reception of the new comers. Nor were there any troublesome considerations respecting the financial part of the arrangement to complicate the matter. There was no need to trench on the comfortable but moderate competence of Mistress Agnes for the supply of any portion of the expenses occasioned by the orphan children. The Artingale acres were abundantly sufficient to furnish all that was required for this purpose, and to supply a round yearly sum for the recovery of the estate, and the clearing off of debt during the years of a long minority into the bargain. Nevertheless, to the old lady herself, and in a nearly equal degree to the old lady's old servants, the coming of the two children to the Moat House at Sillchester involved a great revolution, and the changing of many of the inveterate habits of many years. And to a maiden lady of sixty such changes are not agreeable. Artingale, however, expected Mistress

Agnes to do her duty, and she earnestly set about performing it in no grudging spirit. In a word, the one object of the maiden aunt's life thenceforward became the education of the Artingale children, and the due training of them in the special way in which it became Artingale children to go.

It might be expected perhaps that in her efforts towards this end a maiden aunt would be likely to be more successful with her niece than with her nephew. Both were educated entirely at home by the help of all such governesses, tutors, instructors, and masters as seemed most calculated to attain the high end in view. Neither expense, nor assiduous care, nor constant thought devoted to the subject were spared. But whether it were that, as had been hinted, Mistress Agnes was more capable of girl than of boy culture, or whether it was that the material was more fortunate in the one case than the other, the fact was the Sillchester education turned out much better in the case of Miss Agnes Artingale, junior, than in that of her brother, the young Sir Hildebrand.

Not that the heir to the Artingale name and estates was a bad boy, or grew up to what could

be called a bad man. He grew to be as different a man from his profligate father, to begin with, as it was possible for a man to be. The main things, after all, to be complained of in Sir Hildebrand arose, I think, from deficiency of brains. He was a dull lad, and he grew to be a dull man. The live-long lectures on the Artingale greatness, which were intended by Mistress Agnes to generate in him the same noble code of high Artingale virtue which made the law of her own life, only succeeded in begetting in the home-bred youth intense pompousness, and a monstrously exaggerated notion of his own importance. He grew up self-willed, imperious, and domineering. Had he inherited an evil disposition and vicious tendencies, he would have been intolerable. But he really had little harm in him. He was not ill-natured, or grossly selfish, or spiteful, or unforgiving, or violently passionate, or given to low indulgence of any kind. He was simply a cold, pompous, ludicrously proud worshipper of his own family greatness.

His sister was formed of much finer clay. She grew up to great beauty of a noble and queenly type. Her brother, it may be men-

tioned, was also a handsome man of the large, heavy, placid-featured sort. But the feeling of family pride, which only made him a heavy bore, communicated to her manners a stately grace and slightly old-fashioned elegance of deportment, which suited well her queenly style of beauty. She also—this second Agnes—accepted her great-aunt's code of Artingale duty in the same lofty sense in which the old lady practised it. "Noblesse oblige" was in all its fullest force the maxim of her life. It might safely and literally have been said of Agnes Artingale, the younger, that she would not have, at any time from her sixteenth year upwards, done any act or spoken any word which she deemed unworthy of her name to have saved her life. And to her larger and more genial mind and heart, to do almost anything inconsistent with the highest and purest code of conduct and morality was to derogate from what was due to the Artingale name.

In a word, Agnes Artingale, the younger, was at eighteen a very noble creature; the cynosure of all eyes in her little Sillshire world; the *facile princeps* belle of the county; receiving the homage due to her beauty, her goodness,

and her social station with an unspoiled modesty and quiet dignity of manner which, while adding a kind of courtly grace to her walk through life, was saved from becoming offensive to the sensitiveness of the various pride and vanities around her by the genuine sweetness of her disposition, and the genuinely native good breeding of a delicately sympathising character.

But as she is not the heroine of the following tale, the events of which occurred when she had become an old woman, I cannot venture to detain the reader over this introductory matter longer than is necessary to make him acquainted with the facts and the persons, which have been thus presented to him in a general way, because they were influential in producing the characters which, in their turn, produced the events which have to be related.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRECENTOR OF SILLCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

IT was for the above reason desirable, before entering on the main subject of the following narrative, to make the reader acquainted with the facts which have been laid before him, and to give him some slight acquaintance with the antecedents of some of the personages concerned in them. Nearly enough has been said for this purpose. Excellent Mistress Agnes Artingale had been sleeping beneath the flags of the nave of Sillchester Cathedral for several years when the circumstances took place, the narrative of which will begin with the following book of this story. The Moat House had long since passed into other hands; and her place of honour in the choir of that fine old church knew Mistress Agnes no more.

Nor is it necessary to say anything more respecting the early days of Sir Hildebrand. He was one of those characters which can be fully described in a very few words—a dull flat, marked only by one notable specialty, the only high ground in all the monotonous level of the horizon—his inordinate family pride.

Enough, perhaps, has also been said to enable the reader to form some not altogether inadequate conception of the richer and nobler character of his sister. And we might at once proceed to the main business of our story, but that there was one incident in the early life of Agnes Artingale, the younger, of such importance in the formation of her mind and character, as it had become at the time when the reader will again meet with her, that it must be mentioned. It was an incident of the kind which is wont to be the most important of all the incidents of a woman's life; and it was very important to Agnes Artingale. But the importance of it to her was different in kind from that which exists in the cases of most women.

Both the Agnes Artingales were great lovers and cultivators of music; and the great-aunt, on receiving her nephew's orphans into her house,

had been delighted to find this point of sympathy between her and her infant grand-niece. She had not failed to cultivate the budding talent and taste of the child by all the means which the Sillchester world was capable of supplying. In a cathedral city, in which the service was performed in admirable style, where the clergy and even the citizens in general prided themselves on the excellence of their choir, and where the clerical element was a strong constituent portion of the society of the place, it will be easily understood that the cultivation of music, especially at the time of which I am here speaking, was tinged—hardly, perhaps, with an ecclesiastical hue, that would be saying too much—but with the colouring of those styles of music which would be likely to find favour in ecclesiastical eyes, and to be cultivated by professors mainly conversant with cathedral choral practice.

Many of the prebendaries, and all the minor canons, were more or less accomplished musicians. I remember well that it was a source of much trouble to the worthy Dean and Chapter that one of those gentlemen was grievously addicted to poaching—was, indeed, known to be

an incorrigible poacher. And there was an irreverent and unmusical owner of some shooting in the immediate neighbourhood of the city, with whom the erring (but never missing) minor canon used occasionally to get into very unecclesiastical hot water. But then he had such a splendid voice, not only for an anthem of Clarke's or Croft's, but for "Glorious Apollo," or "Drink to me only with thine eyes," that the Chapter was fain to wink at backslidings, the cognizance of which would have risked irreparable injury to the Sillchester choir. But these are reminiscences which, it must be owned, have very little to do with our present story, and are, moreover, by-gones, which our severely proper age will probably think had better be allowed to be by-gones. I suppose it is better that they should be so. But the fact is that there was much cakes and ale in the land (perhaps too much) in those days.

I was saying, when my recollection of the Rev. Minor Canon Brackenbury led me into this digression, that the Chapter of Sillchester used to be a remarkably musical body. And the similarity of tastes in this respect led to a still greater degree of intimacy between several of

the cathedral clergy and the inhabitants of the Moat House than might otherwise have been the case. Now one of the minor canons—a man of a very different stamp from “poor Jack Brackenbury,” as that reverend gentleman was habitually, though somewhat irreverently, called in Sillchester—the most thorough musician among them, and a very respectably clerical clergyman into the bargain, was an especially frequent visitor at the Moat House. This gentleman’s name was Perivale—the Reverend Sandgate Perivale. He was in every respect a treasure to the Sillchester Chapter, being a most competent and enthusiastic musician, the owner of a superb tenor voice, a scholar, a gentleman, and a good clergyman, and withal poor enough to be contented and glad to hold a minor canonry eked out by the proceeds of a very small chapter living in the city of Sillchester, which it was not worth the while of any of the cathedral dignitaries to hold. All these qualifications were not often to be met with combined in the same individual at the period of which I am writing; and the Chapter prized their young precentor accordingly.

Besides all the good gifts that have been

mentioned, the Rev. Sandgate Perivale was a very handsome man; and it was well known in Sillchester that if the bachelor precentor had only had the discretion to fall in love in the right place, there was more than one lady in Sillchester who would have been well content to become Mrs. Perivale, and who in becoming so would have more than doubled the minor canon's somewhat slender ecclesiastical income. But the precentor must needs fall in love in the wrong place. In a word, he fell in love with Agnes Artingale. Singing with her, teaching her, mingling their enthusiasms for the choice works of their favourite authors, the result was not one to be wondered at. Bearing in mind what has been said of the gentleman and what has been said of the lady, it would surely have been more to be wondered at if that which did happen had not happened. It strikes me so, and it probably strikes you so, gentle reader. It would strike anybody so except the persons concerned and their immediate surroundings. They all thought it very wonderful.

All such portion of the Sillchester world as became cognizant of the fact thought it very wonderful. And yet they all knew Miss Agnes

Artingale the younger and the Reverend Mr. Sandgate Perivale to be exactly what they have been described to be in these pages. But though they knew this, the facts that more spontaneously and persistently presented themselves to the Sillchester mind, as having a permanent bearing on the question, were the indisputable ones, that Miss Agnes was an Artingale, the niece of the venerated and stately inhabitant of the Moat House, the daughter of one of the most magnificent of Sillshire baronets, and the bearer of a name far more ancient and more honourable in Sillshire minds than any baronetcy or dignity of belted knight, or marquis, duke and a' that, that any king can mak'. On the one side there were these ruling facts corroborated by that other outward and visible one, that the lady in question, "vera incessu patuit dea"—that she stepped along the flags of the sunny and picturesque Sillchester High-street with a queenly grace and maidenly dignity that seemed to put a dividing abyss between her and the other mortals of those parts.

On the other side the facts that stared the Sillchester public unpleasantly in the face were, that though the precentor was the very beau-

idéal of a precentor and a thorough gentleman, and very charming man as all female Sillchester allowed, the precentorship was notoriously worth but 120*l.* per annum, and the living of St. Botolph ad Pontem only 90*l.*! Nor was this the worst of the matter. Sillchester would have forgotten if it could—but it was impossible—that old Perivale, the father of the faultless precentor, had been not only a mercer in the High-street, but a bankrupt mercer who had died in grief and trouble; while another old Perivale, the bankrupt mercer's brother, a prosperous grazier in the north of Sillshire, had brought up his unfortunate brother's orphans, and had sent Sandgate Perivale first to the Sillshire grammar school, and then, with an exhibition, the reward of the lad's good conduct, to Sillchester College in the University of Oxford, whence he had returned with the best possible character and recommendations to clerical preferment in his native city.

Sillchester *could* not forget all this. And Sillchester thought that under the circumstances it was very wonderful that the precentor should fall in love with Miss Agnes Artingale. The wonder was not felt or spoken in an ill-natured

or spiteful way; for the Reverend Sandgate Perivale was a very popular man. People looked on it more as an awful misfortune which had fallen upon them. "Have you heard this sad business of poor Perivale?" was whispered to one another among those who were aware of the melancholy truth. Even the ladies were not savage on the subject, comforted as they were by the consideration that any practical result of so infatuated a passion was wholly out of the question, and looking on the sad result as a misfortune partaking of the nature of a judgment naturally following on the dangerous rashness of such a walking of the angels with the *sons* of men as had taken place between Agnes Artingale and Mr. Perivale.

There was one exception indeed to this general female charity, in the person of the Lady Sempronia Lindisfarne, the wife of one of the canons of the cathedral. She was an acidulated noble lady of a pessimist tone of mind, and a tendency towards Low Church doctrines, which had created a little distance between her and the inhabitants of the Moat House. She used to say in speaking of the matter that it was "a great trial:" as in truth it was to those more

immediately concerned. But Lady Sempronia meant—and by some incomprehensible process of mind felt—that it was a great trial *to her* to have to witness such circumstances. She very openly and decidedly moreover propounded the “judgment” view of the case, and was manifestly solaced under her trial by the consideration that judgment was executed.

But among all those who felt that this luckless passion was a wonderful thing, calculated to overturn all preconceived notions of probability, none were so much surprised and wonder-struck as the principal parties themselves. As was to be expected, under the circumstances, full recognition of the fact had been reached gradually; gradually by the precentor, and yet more gradually and slowly by his lovely pupil. Yet the fact that had to reveal itself to Agnes Artingale was a two-fold fact, each half of which might, it may be thought, have helped to render manifest the other. Perhaps, after all, it was so to a certain degree. For it was even in the midst of the great sorrow of attaining to a conviction that Perivale loved her, that the yet greater pain came upon her of having it revealed to her consciousness that she loved him!

How had it happened? how had it been possible? How had it been possible for her to have allowed herself to fall into such oblivion of all that Artingale expected of her? For to Agnes Artingale the whole matter, in all its bearings, became clear in the same moment in which her mind opened itself to the fact that she loved Sandgate Perivale. As a woman she felt no shame that, being loved by such a man, she should love him in return. She knew what he was; and she did not attempt, for an instant, to disguise from her mind his entire worthiness of her love. But none the less was the entire, the irreversible impossibility of their union fully present to her mind in the same moment that she became aware that she loved him. There was no doubt, and could be no hesitation about the matter. Oh that she were the poor and undistinguished daughter of some other minor canon! Poor! Wealth had nothing to do with it! Even could she only have been as Lucy Slowcome, the pretty daughter of the rich Sillchester attorney! But there could be no such fate for her! She was an Artingale. Her path of duty was clear. And she had but to follow it, at whatever cost of suffering and hopeless future blank for herself.

As for him, he was hardly less impressed with the hopelessness of his love. He did not dare to hope that it should be returned. He was not a confident lover. And those who assure us, as some do, that such are the most likely to succeed, have gathered their experience from not the best specimens of womankind. But even if he had ventured to expect that Agnes Artingale's love might be his for the winning, he would have been almost as certain as she was that all happy love between them was out of the question—quite shut out by the paramount requirements of other sterner, more palpable, and more recognized facts.

Why did he not put himself out of harm's way, while he might yet have escaped comparatively scatheless? Ay! Why upon earth did he not do so, when he knew that no good could come of his staying? "*Virginibus puerisque canto.*" And perhaps some of them may be able to answer the question. Why does the moth keep circling around the lamp, till at last he perishes in the flame of it?

The Rev. Sandgate Perivale, however, was not quite so blindly reckless as the moth—not so irresistibly passion-driven as to make no effort for

his escape—to plan no retreat from a position which every passing day made more sweet, and yet more intolerable. Again and again he determined to fly at all hazards; and again and again his courage was insufficient for the execution of his intent. But at last fortune lent her aid in so unmistakeable—so providential a manner, as some persons would say—that he felt that now or never was the moment to break the hourly strengthening chain that bound him. There came to him an offer of a living, a very comfortable rectory worth some £400 a year, in the north of Sillshire, not far from the little town of Billiford—not far either from Artingale Castle. In other circumstances he would, in all probability, have declined the preferment. For he was attached to the cathedral and city of Sillchester, as Sillchester was attached to him; and there was little doubt that some better preferment would have been found for him by the Chapter ere long, which might have been tenable with the precentorship which all Sillchester was so anxious that he should continue to hold.

But as matters were he felt that it would be madness, and culpable madness, to refuse to avail himself of the legitimate means of escape

thus held out to him. So he determined to accept the rectory of Saliton Regis, and to bid adieu to the pleasant close and streets and streams of Sillchester for ever.

But he determined, after long consideration and much painful indecision, to *speak* before he went. Why? Perhaps—perhaps there was an unavowed, almost unconscious, gleam of hope still lingering at the bottom of his heart. Perhaps he thought that it *might* be that some miracle of love would make the impossible possible in his favour. Perhaps the temptation of letting the queen of his soul know that he was going forth into the wilderness (almost literally so; for Saliton is on the borders of the vast wild moorland district which occupies a large portion of the north of Sillshire)—that he was leaving all that had hitherto smiled on him in life, and going into a solitary, lone, and permanently loveless exile for love of her—perhaps, I say, the temptation of telling this to Agnes Artingale (for he was but a mortal man) was too great for him to resist.

At all events he did determine to tell his love before he renounced it for ever.

CHAPTER V.

AGNES ARTINGALE'S LOVE-STORY.

It was on a lovely afternoon in July that he betook himself to the Moat House for the purpose of doing so. He had been singing the lovely and touching anthem from the Psalm, "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, oh Zion!" in the afternoon service of the cathedral, with more than usual expression and effect; and he went direct from the cathedral on his errand.

The gate at which visitors to the Moat House ring for admission does not admit the comer immediately into the house, but into a little court, on which the house opens on one side while the other side of it is open to the garden, in such sort, that any one admitted at the outer gate may proceed to the garden without en-

tering the house. The old servant who opened to Mr. Perivale told him that Miss Agnes was in the garden, probably on the terrace, which has been before mentioned, and offered to call her in, supposing that the precentor had come on his usual musical errand. But Mr. Perivale said that he would go himself and find Miss Agnes in the garden.

He did go accordingly with a brisk and quick step, but a wildly beating heart, straight to the terrace, under the old city wall, which formed the boundary of the garden on the side farthest from the house. Along the whole middle length of this beautiful terrace walk the ground fell away in a well-shaven turfy bank, so steep as to be scarcely practicable for the foot. The two Artingale children, while they *were* children, and before little Sir Hildebrand had learned that such movements were incompatible with the dignity of his position—a lesson which he understood and learned at a surprisingly early age—would run races down the steep incline, and often perform the latter half of the descent in very un-Artingale rolling fashion. But this was done to the great grief and scandal of the ancient gardener; and for all save as could be

guilty of such childish indecorums the flagged walk at the top of the high bank might be deemed inaccessible in all that part of its course from the lower garden. But at either extremity of the terrace there was a broad flight of handsome free-stone steps, by which the terrace was reached, passing up between the garden-wall on the one side of them and a series of standard roses and geraniums in pots on the inner side. The garden-walls, which joined the city walls at right angles, at either end of the long terrace were completely hung with Virginia creeper, which was already, at the date of Mr. Perivale's visit, beginning to assume here and there some of the crimson tints of its autumnal gorgeous livery.

Mr. Perivale approached the terrace by the steps nearest the house. He had been conscious of a temptation to gain a few minutes' reprieve by crossing the lower garden to the steps at the further end of it. But he had been ashamed of the cowardice which prompted the thought, and marched straight to his work like a man, feeling much as the leader of a forlorn hope might be supposed to feel in scaling a similar height.

He had very little doubt that he should find Agnes on the terrace; it was her most favourite

walk; and they had often paced the grey old flower-bordered flagstones together, enjoying in company the magnificent sunsets over the distant valley of the Sill, where it opens out into the wide flat estuary which that river forms for a few miles before it reaches the western sea, and the gorgeous skies behind the grey mass of the square cathedral tower, every outline of which was traced in black on the golden ground. Such walks had been many; and the terrace had become of late more than ever the spot which Agnes loved best in all the world; and the conversations which had passed there with her musical instructor, beginning for the most part with subjects musical, but branching off insensibly into long interchanges of thought on every conceivable topic, had shown of late a marked tendency, which Agnes herself had noted not without a vague and but partially understood misgiving, to make themselves the unfailing topic of her subsequent solitary musings in the same spot.

Mr. Perivale was not wrong in his expectations that he should find Miss Artingale on the terrace. As his head reached the level of its stones, he saw her at the further end of it; and

she was alone. She was standing still at the moment when he first caught sight of her, in an attitude of evidently pensive reverie. Her small graceful head, with all its wealth of glossy, golden-coloured hair catching and reflecting the evening sunlight, like a highly-glazed silken tissue, was drooping on her bosom; and the light straw hat which should have protected the shining ripples from the sun's too curious gaze was hanging by its long blue ribbon from one listless hand, while the other was raised to her face in such sort that the delicate little chin was held in its palm, while the long and slender forefinger was pressed against the cheek and temple. She was tall, considerably more so than the average height of women, and she was wont to hold herself with marked uprightness, which girl critics were apt to call stiff, and which even the Sillchester youth of the other sex protested, when speaking to such criticizing belles, and admitted even to each other, recalled in the expression of it a more than sufficiently distinct remembrance of Scotland's device and motto. And notwithstanding the drooping attitude of the head, the wonted erectness of the slight figure, proudly and firmly poised on its long and slender

and beautifully arched feet, was shown to advantage, as Perivale caught sight of her against the evening sky.

He was going quickly up the steps, but on seeing her thus standing motionless he instinctively paused too, and he perceived that she had not seen him. But her thought, whatever it was, that had produced the pause in her walk and had thrown her into the attitude of pensive reverie, passed from one phase to another, even during the moment Perivale stood spell-bound on the steps. For with a sudden movement the head was thrown up with a slight awakening shake of its lovely curls, she crossed her arms on her bosom, with the hat still hanging by its string from her hand, and resumed her walk with a somewhat extra expression thrown into the usual goddess-gait, which seemed to correspond with the proud movement of the head.

Perivale in the same instant resumed his ascent of the terrace steps. She was walking towards the end of the terrace at which he was ascending, and it was impossible but that in the next moment she should become aware of his presence. He sprang forward at a bound, and

stood on the walk at the top, and she saw him. It was the commonest and most likely incident in the world that he should be there at that hour. And if the unusual emotion, which the knowledge of the errand on which he had come caused in him, were in any degree felt by her also, the reason of it could be found only in the nature of the meditations which had been occupying her.

That expression of her attitude and person which has been described were changed at once on seeing him. That extra proudness in the step went out of it, leaving only the amount of graceful, but slightly *prononcée* dignity which always characterized it. The stately carriage of the head was somewhat relaxed, and she came forward with a quickened step to meet him, and with her hand extended in greeting.

But even as she neared him, she became aware, by the expression of his face and manner, that something more than ordinary was occupying his mind, and was in all probability about to form the subject of his words; and suddenly a half-conscious sympathy of embarrassment took possession of her also, which rapidly grew into a cold and mighty dread, as she marked the

pallor of his face and the unusual working of his features. She could not have told at that moment what she feared; but afterwards her reflection on what was then passing in her heart would have enabled her to confess to herself that she knew in that moment that he was going to tell her that he loved her. And she was unfeignedly thankful—nay, she could hardly escape from the persuasion that it was a strangely mysterious and merciful providence which had willed that the previous current of her own thoughts had in some degree prepared her for the occasion.

“Miss Artingale,” he said, as they met, speaking in a strange and constrained manner, but in a low voice, and with a quieter calm than usual—“Miss Artingale, I have come to tell you of a piece of fortune that has happened to me; of singularly good fortune, I suppose I ought to say.”

“Indeed! I am so glad——”

“Yes. I am sure you would be glad. You have always been so kind. The fact is, that I have had the offer of a living—a very good living—a rectory—and——”

“I am truly glad. What, here in Sillchester?”

“No; not here. A long way off in the north of Sillshire. But I have decided to accept it—indeed have accepted it.”

“But, Mr. Perivale, what will Sillchester do without you? What will become of the choir? Do you really mean to give up Sillchester?”

“Yes, I shall give up Sillchester, and the church will have no difficulty in getting a better precentor. I have thought it best,” he went on more hurriedly. “One cannot have everything just as one would wish it—even if I did wish to remain here; but I have made up my mind that I do not wish that. I have come to the decision that it will be best for me to quit Sillchester.”

“I am very sure that all Sillchester will regret the decision,” she said, speaking somewhat more lowly than before, and dropping her eyes on the ground with a very slight corresponding movement of her head.

“Thank you, Miss Artingale, thank you!” he replied, with a little quaver in his voice; “it is *very* kind of you to say that. I have not announced my determination to the Chapter, or indeed to any of my friends in the city yet. I wished to tell it first to you, Miss Artingale,

because—because there was something else that I wished to tell you at the same time.”

“To me, Mr. Perivale?”

The words were all but repellent; and maidenly pride, combining with Artingale pride, intended that they should be spoken with all the freezing dignity with which they infallibly would have been said to any other man in the world in the position of Mr. Perivale. But the poor little quaking heart turned traitor to its mistress, and imparted a tremor to the voice, and constrained the eye to look shyly up from under its lid into his face for one infinitesimal portion of a moment as she spoke, which might have told her secret to a shrewd bystander. But these manifestations told nothing to Mr. Perivale. He went on more hurriedly and with increasing agitation—

“Yes, Miss Artingale, there is something which I wish before leaving Sillchester for ever to tell you. I have had much difficulty in making up my own mind whether I should do so or not; and my difficulty is made greater by my doubts whether you may think that I ought—whether you may consider that it is pardonable in me to do so under the circumstances or not.”

“Pardonable, Mr. Perivale?”

“Miss Artingale,” he hurried on, drawing up his handsome person into a more rigidly upright attitude before her, and looking into her face with the boldness of desperation as he spoke—
“Miss Artingale, I am, as I have told you, about to leave this place; I shall not see either Sillchester or you more. I go to find a new life, and to face it and bear it as best I may. And this I do because I have been mad enough to dare to love you. I have raised my eyes to you, and have loved you, and do love you with a love unconquerable—unquenchable—a love that will live with me while I live, and, I think, not die when this life shall end. And this I *could* not go away into my exile without telling you. Were I not sure that after this day and this hour I shall see you no more, I should not have ventured—I should not have deemed it fitting to tell you my secret. But being so sure, the telling it can occasion no ill to you, and it will be a consolation to me that you should know what is the cause that has driven me forth from this place, and how madly I have loved you. Can you forgive?”

All this he had said as rapidly as he could

she speak the words, and then stood before her unmoving, as if awaiting the doom that was to scathe him.

She stood equally upright, equally motionless; but she had become very white, and a tremulous motion might have been observed in her closed lips. After a pause, which seemed to have been of many minutes to the man who was standing before her, she opened her lips, and essayed to speak; but no sound came from them that could reach his ears; and in the terrible silence he was constrained to speak again.

“Have I unpardonably offended you, Miss Artingale?” he said, in a low, slow, pleading voice.

She shook her head slowly and sadly; and then forming the words apparently with difficulty, said—

“You have accepted this offer you say, Mr. Perivale?”

“I have accepted it, Miss Artingale.”

“You will announce your acceptance of it?”

“I shall announce it to the Chapter to-morrow morning.”

“And—my aunt? You will take leave of her?”

“I purpose doing so, and thanking her for all her much kindness to me now—this evening—before leaving the house.”

“And after that you will see her no more?”

“After that I have no purpose of seeing her again.”

Then there was again a long pause, while the two still retained their position opposite to each other, till at length Mr. Perivale added—

“Have I your forgiveness, Miss Artingale, for having said to you the words I have spoken?”

“I think you have done rightly,” she then said, still speaking in the same slow way that seemed as if the dryness of her throat made utterance difficult to her—“I think you have done rightly, Mr. Perivale, and wisely, in determining to act as you tell me you have determined under the circumstances you have disclosed to me. I think it will be well that you should go from Sillchester; for, since it is as you say, your continuing to live here could—could—could not be for good. It is well—and right—that we should part here this evening, as you have decided—for—for ever. But I too have something that I would wish to say. I

have to thank you for much kindness — for much—much——”

But here the proud bosom began to swell, and the quivering lips to tremble, and she was obliged to stop short in her words.

“Miss Artingale——” he began again.

But she interrupted him with an upraised forefinger, as she resumed, having mastered her emotion.

“Hush!” she said; “you have done well, Mr. Perivale, as I have said. But this is very sudden to me. You have had time to think of—of—of all that you wished to say to me. I would fain say some further words to you before saying my last farewell. But I need time to think awhile. Give me a little time. See, now; you shall go down these steps, and walk slowly round the garden, and come up again to the terrace at the further end, and I will wait here the while. And when you return we will say our farewell. Will you do this?”

So he turned from her, and walked slowly down the steps.

And Agnes Artingale set herself to use the truce she had bargained for with all the power of her mind.

She loved the man who had thus told of his love—loved him as she felt then in that moment that she could never love again—loved him with a love that made it seem quite sure to her that she could never love at all again. All scales had fallen from her eyes, and upon this point she had no longer any doubt at all. But the point to the decision of which she strove, during the few minutes that were accorded to her, to bend her mind with all its clearness was not whether she should, could, or possibly might accept this proffered love, and freely give her own in return. On this question there was for Agnes Artingale no possibility for doubt, or space for a moment's hesitation. What would have made her happiness was not more clear than the absolute necessity of at once, and without a second thought, renouncing it. Was she not an Artingale? Was not the duty of loyalty to her race and to the obligations imposed by it paramount to every other consideration? Had it not ever been so with the members of her house? (Of course, the Artingale chronicles carefully set forth by Mistress Agnes and inculcated on the youthful daughter of the race had very cursorily and slightly mentioned the *gesta* of her own father.) Would not any the smallest

failure in this respect bring heart-break on every human being who was near and dear to her? Would she not be marked, some day, in the solemn assemblage of the sons and daughters of the name in that holy of holies, the Artingale chapel at Artingale, as the only unworthy scion of the house who had brought shame on the grand old name? And what was her personal happiness to this? Such thoughts as these, and the accepted facts deposited in the deepest soil of the mind by years of such habitual thinking, did not now pass through her mind in the detailed fashion in which they are set down here. The general out-come and product of them was too much a constituent part of her mind itself for any such meditation to be necessary or possible. It never for the space of any lightning-flash of the mind occurred to Miss Artingale that there was any possibility of her uniting herself to the son of the bankrupt mercer of Sillchester High-street.

The question on which she was striving to arrive at a decision before Mr. Perivale should have accomplished the round of the garden was this: Should she reward the confession he had made to her by making a similar one to him?

There is much in every girlish heart that does and should make such a confession difficult. There are many, probably, who, fully alive to smaller proprieties, and incapable of understanding the bearing of larger ones, may think that the confession in question was one that, under the circumstances, ought not to have been made. But the feelings which were prompting Agnes Artingale to make it were the promptings of a very noble and generous nature, and of a large and loving heart.

Had it not been made certain to her that Mr. Perivale was on the point of quitting Sillchester, Agnes Artingale would not have contemplated doing what she was now making up her mind to do. Not that she would have for a moment imagined that any *danger* to herself could have arisen to her from such a course—any danger of being led into a possibility of changing her mind, or falling from her resolution on the subject. This would never have occurred to her as within the limits of possibility. But she would have felt that such a confession would have made continued intercourse with the object of it inconvenient and indecorous. As it was, there was no place for any considerations of that sort.

But what moved her was a grand and noble feeling that she should thus be giving a life-long consolation to him whose happiness had, along with her own, to be sacrificed to the necessities of *her* position. She knew that her own happiness—all that happiness which can be born of happy love, which, to people at Agnes Artingale's time of life, and to such hearts as hers, all too truly represents itself as the only happiness life has to give—she knew that all this happiness was to be renounced by her for ever. And she fully believed that a similarly cold and sunless future was before the man who loved her also. She felt that the confession which he had made to her would henceforth for ever be the one "green spot in memory's waste," to which she might look back through future years, and that to it, and to him who had made it, she would owe the consciousness that she had, at least, been loved. And she felt and knew that this was *very* precious to her. Was it not due to him to give him a similar consolation—to furnish him with the same support through the blank loneliness to which the inexorable path of duty led him as it led her?

Before the precentor's head had appeared on

the level of the terrace, coming up from the garden at the further end of it, she had decided that such consolation *was* due from her to him. And she had determined on going through the ordeal of administering it to him.

As Mr. Perivale approached her, slowly coming along the far-stretching terrace, she turned towards him; and this time she was able to speak more calmly and easily. It is true that what she had to say was that which in ordinary cases is most difficult to a maiden to articulate. But all contemplation of those consequences which usually follow from such a confession by maidenly lips was so totally excluded from her mental horizon; it was so wholly a sequel-less and purposeless love that she was about to own, a boon so saintly in its object that she was about to confer, that her confession seemed to be quite moved out of the range of those feelings which usually impart to such a conscious embarrassment.

There was also, perhaps, another feeling which prompted Agnes Artingale to wish that the man who loved her should not be left unaware of the nature of her feelings towards him. To use the ordinary compendious expression, she was about

to sacrifice her love and her lover to "family pride." And yet never was gentle heart less moved by anything akin to pride in her own private estimate of her own private self. She was simply doing a duty which she had been taught to consider as binding on her beyond almost any other. And she felt a generous anxiety that the gentleman who had honoured her with his love (for all the Artingale pride did not avail to make her—for her own individual self—feel the matter otherwise) should not be left to imagine that she had failed to comprehend that he was worthy of her love, and, had they but stood alone on some unstoried shore, might have freely had it.

"Let us take a turn together—one more," she said, "to the other end of the terrace; and I will say what I had it in my mind to say to you, my dear friend."

The last three words were said with a little pause between each, and with a marked emphasis on each of them.

Mr. Perivale turned and placed himself in silence by her side for the proposed walk. For a minute they stepped on thus side by side without speaking.

“You have told me, my dear friend,” she said at length, again laying a distinct emphasis on each of the three words, “that your departure from Sillchester, for good and all, is definitively decided; that this is the last time we shall see you; that you say your farewell to us to-night. And—you have told me that—you love me. And I have told you that it seems to me right and wise that you should go. And yet this is not all that I would fain have said between us before you go.”

She paused again for some time; and then in the same tones, low and quiet but not inexpressive of emotion, she continued—

“Do you know why I told you that it seemed to me wise and right that you should go?”

“I can but suppose, Miss Artingale, that it was because the confession which I had dared to make to you was unacceptable.”

“Unacceptable!—Yes; it was unacceptable—for two reasons. The first because considerations of which you must be aware, and which I am above all things bound to respect, make it impossible that such—such a—proposal should be accepted; the second reason, because it is most

painful to me to know that what I am bound to do and to say must cause you pain and suffering."

"Miss Artingale——"

"Let me go on," she said hurriedly; "I have yet more to say. The reasons I have given you make it absolutely impossible that I should, in one sense, listen to the words you have spoken to me. They are therefore, as you say, unacceptable. It is absolutely, irrevocably necessary that we part, to meet no more, on this evening. But there is another sense," she continued, bending her head and dropping her eyes to the ground, and speaking in a very low voice—"there is one sense in which what you told me was not unacceptable to me. Did I not believe in the singleness, nobleness, and sincerity of your heart, even as I believe in the truth and simplicity of my own, I could not say to you what I am now saying."

"Miss Artingale, can it be——"

"Pardon me, my friend, for interrupting you, and I pray you hear me out. To my own heart your declaration was not unacceptable. I wish you to understand that the rejection, or rather the renunciation of your love, which pains you,

is, believe me, not less painful to me. While refusing to you that which would, you tell me, make your happiness, I am also sacrificing my own. But I am sacrificing it in obedience to the imperative commands of duty. Would to heaven, my friend, that no such duty was imposed on me! Would to heaven that I were free to act in this matter according to the dictates of my own heart! Believe me that they would be in accordance with those of your own. And you will not, I am sure, fail to attribute my having thus spoken to you to its true motive. I could not bear that, after what you have told me, you should go away from me without carrying with you the only one consolation which it was in my power to give you. Your love has not been thrown away on one incapable of appreciating the value of it. For me, too, what has been said this day between us will never be forgotten, never be cancelled. And the love which duty will not permit me to accord to you will—be very sure of it—never—never be given to another.”

She stopped in her walk, as she ceased speaking, and turned full round in face of him, proudly lifting her head and fair open brow to meet his

gaze, and looking with her clear and candid eyes into his face, and holding out both her hands for the grasp of his.

“Bid God to bless me, my friend!” she said, as he took them into his trembling with emotion; “and pray to Him often for me. And now leave me without further word! So best! God bless and keep you, and comfort you, ever and ever!”

Her voice for the first time trembled as she spoke the last words; and she turned away, as she uttered them, towards the part of the terrace furthest from the house. He made a movement to detain her yet a moment, and would have spoken, but she said—

“No! no more words save to bid God bless me; it is best so.”

She lingered a moment for the blessing she had asked; and he said, with a broken voice, placing his hand on her head as he spoke, “May God for ever keep, and bless and comfort you, Agnes!”

And so he turned and went down the steps. And that was the beginning and the end of Agnes Artingale's first and last love-story.

And it was expedient for the due under-

standing of many passages of the following narrative that the reader should know thus much of the history of Agnes Artingale the younger, the sister of Sir Hildebrand.

BOOK II.

ARTINGALE SHALL BE ITSELF AGAIN.



CHAPTER I.

SIR HILDEBRAND'S FAMILY.

AT a period somewhat more than twenty years subsequently to the date of the circumstances narrated in the last chapter, Sir Hildebrand Artingale and his family were living at Artingale Castle that quiet and dignified, but somewhat monotonous life which Sir George Artingale, the present baronet's father, had condemned his noble wife to lead in solitude, but which he had so utterly refused to share with her. The family of Sir Hildebrand consisted of his wife, the Lady Lavinia Artingale, his daughter Mary, and his maiden sister, Miss Agnes Artingale. Sir Hildebrand had no son; and this was a

matter of great sorrow to him. He promised himself however that Mary's husband should one day assume the name and arms of Artingale; and he was a man who could find in contemplating this arrangement a very considerable consolation for the other disappointment.

This disappointment, however, had not been the only trouble of Sir Hildebrand's life. He had lived always since his majority in a state of monetary "tightness." It would be too much to say that he had been an embarrassed man; but he had ever had pressing need of larger funds than he could command—need, that is, not of the means of living comfortably and in a quiet way consistently with his social position, but need of means sufficient to effect what he had very nearly at heart—the perfect recovery and restoration of the Artingale estates and Artingale Castle from all the evil that had been inflicted on them by the spendthrift prodigality and neglect of the worthless father whom he had never known.

Sir Hildebrand was by no means a spendthrift or extravagant man, in the ordinary acceptation of the words. He was, on the contrary, a careful man, a man of laborious accounts, and far

from exorbitant in his own personal expenses. Nor was he afflicted with an extravagant wife, or a costly family. For twenty years the domestic economy at the Castle had been managed on a scale of expenditure not mean indeed, or inconsistent with the perfect comfort of the inhabitants and the due keeping up of the status of the Artingale name in the county, but careful, moderate, and such as suited the notions of dignified county magnates, who were not in the habit of migrating annually to the great Babylon.

Nevertheless Sir Hildebrand was constantly labouring at, and more frequently than not sighing over his accounts, as he worked at them with old Mr. Decimus Oblong, now a very aged man. The fact was that Sir Hildebrand had a very long and up-hill work before him when he took possession of the Artingale estates on coming of age. It is true that much had been done during his long minority; but much more still remained to be done—at least according to Sir Hildebrand's notion of what "Artingale expected" from him. The rental of the estates was a large one; but it had been dreadfully dipped by the late reckless spendthrift, Sir

George, who had received them from *his* father in a by no means intact condition. Then the Castle itself was in a really pitiable state. For generations past it had been deprived of the care and repairs necessary to keep it in really good condition ; and during the latter part of the reign of the late baronet it had been allowed to fall into complete dilapidation ; and nothing, or but little, had even yet, at the epoch to which I referred at the beginning of this chapter, been done to remedy this beyond such absolutely indispensable repairs as were requisite to render one wing of the immense building habitable by its present tenants. Nothing had been done for the restoration of the grand old building to its original magnificence ; and this after twenty years of occupancy by the present baronet, whose heart was set more intently probably than on any other earthly object in accomplishing this restoration. But what could he do ? It was, as Mr. Decimus Oblong continually urged, a yet more important object to clear the estates of debt. Much had been done towards this during Sir Hildebrand's minority ; and the rest was now in a fair way to be accomplished. Still for some years to come a large portion of the rental

of the estates would have to continue to be set aside for the completion of the arrangements which had been made with the holders of the various claims on the property; and with these arrangements Sir Hildebrand would not and indeed could not well interfere.

Yet it appeared to him that the old walls of his ancestral home reproached him mutely every time he looked at them and marked their deplorable condition. And this was every day and nearly every hour. *Artingale* had been *expecting* these restorations so long! If there could have been anything touching in the cold and pompous dulness of the baronet's character it would have been his love and veneration, his almost worship for his home—the home of his fathers—the outward and visible symbol of the greatness, the antiquity, and the dignity of his name; and Sir Hildebrand longed with a longing far greater than he was capable of feeling on any other subject that he might yet live to accomplish the complete restoration of the noble old pile. He would have been only too happy if the time had come when it would be possible to devote every penny of the income not needed for the personal every-day wants of

the family to the accomplishment of this great work.

For all that sum would be needed, and needed for several years. It was indeed a great work that had to be done; and it by no means entered into the baronet's notions to do it in a perfunctory manner, or in a grudging spirit. What could be too good or too grand for Artingale Castle? And the chapel was all but absolutely in ruins. It had been a gem of fourteenth-century Gothic architecture. Dust from the slowly crumbling vault above was lying thick on the cracked and partly rotten oaken stairs of the grand staircase, which had been one of the finest specimens of the early Tudor style in the kingdom. The great hall was in a yet worse condition; for the oaken panelling had been torn from the walls throughout the greater part of it. The stone-work of the grand terrace was almost ruinous; the balustrades dividing it from the gardens beyond were mostly broken, and in great numbers had altogether disappeared. The fixtures throughout the part of the house not inhabited by the present family—that is to say, about three-quarters of the entire structure—would have to be renewed, and indeed so would

those of the part that was occupied; for of course the thing must be complete; and the fittings, which according to Sir Hildebrand's notion would have to be on a very different scale of magnificence from those which had been put in to serve the nonce in the inhabited rooms, must necessarily be changed.

It will be easily understood that the work on which Sir Hildebrand had set his heart was no small one. Various partial and somewhat loose estimates of the necessary expense had been made; and Mr. Decimus Oblong declared that it would go a long way, "the best part of the way, Sir Hildebrand, towards six figures."

The baronet was fortunate—more than most men with similar tastes and desires—in having the perfect sympathy on this point of all the members of his family—all women-kind, as we have seen them to be. It would not be true to say that to all or either of these three ladies the restoration of the Castle was as wholly engrossing an object, as paramount a desire, as it was to the baronet himself. But they all three in their different ways loved the place dearly, and would fain have seen at least its progress to decay arrested, if they did not sigh for that Phoenix-

like magnificence of resurrection which was never absent from the baronet's day-dreams.

Miss Agnes Artingale perhaps shared most largely in her brother's ambition. To her, as to him, there was something sacred in the ancient walls, and a symbolic virtue in the name they bore. They were "Artingale" to her as to him; the embodiment of all the past historic glories of the name. Miss Agnes was all for restoration, but she did not feel the necessity of adding fresh splendours to the ancestral pile. Mary was enthusiastically fond of the place in which her entire life had been passed; she was now very nearly twenty years old, and she admired the beauty of her home with all the keenness of a thoroughly cultivated taste; but I suspect that, apart from the wish that the desires of her elders should be gratified, she would have been content for her own part if the old walls could have been rendered secure to stand as they were; if the ivy, which had overgrown the east end of the chapel, could be so cared for and pruned as to render visible the stone-work tracery of the arched windows; if the great terrace could be put into good repair, and the lawns in front of it well kept and closely shaven. Lady Lavinia

in her inmost heart wished mainly, and in the first place, that the needed repairs might be quickly executed in such sort as should prevent certain bitter draughts from sweeping as they did in certain conditions of the wind from the old uninhabited rooms through the occupied portions of the mansion, for Lady Lavinia "enjoyed a delicate state of health." But in the next place, and really I think almost as eagerly as she desired that cherished dearest wish, Lady Lavinia wished very sincerely all that her lord and master wished. She wished the accomplishment of the great work of Artingale's ambition also on a third ground. She considered that it was hardly respectable to have one's house, or, at least, parts of it in such a—well, really, in such an untidy condition as many of the rooms at Artingale. She was not quite easy in her mind as to what people might say of it; for Lady Lavinia, though a noble lady (she was the fifth daughter of the Earl of Sorley, of Tor Sorley, in the southern division of the county), and though Mrs. Grundy is essentially a middle-class potentate, yet Lady Lavinia was a devout worshipper at the Grundian shrine. She was a gentle, weak creature, industriously bent, as it

seemed, on getting the utmost sorrow and trouble out of a life that gave her very small opportunities in that line; and her fears of Mrs. Grundy afforded a means of getting a little misery out of circumstances that without such fears could not have been available for the purpose. Then she was an invalid, and that was a resource to her, without which it is difficult to say how she would ever have contrived to make the two ends of the four-and-twenty hours meet. The visit of her doctor, Mr. Jonas Hathaway, of Billiford, was to her the epoch in her day, which his daily dinner is to many a man, at that time of life when most other pleasures have begun to fail him. Lady Lavinia withal was to the best of her lights and abilities a good wife and a good—well, she could hardly perhaps be called a *good* mother, but was, at least, an affectionate and kind mother. She was perfect in that great wifely duty of devoutly believing that her husband was the greatest and noblest man who stepped the earth. She had married him under a different impression: she had in those days imagined that she, the daughter—though the fifth daughter—of the Earl of Sorley, had descended somewhat from her lofty sphere to ally

herself with the Sillshire baronet — leaving entirely out of her consideration the fact that the grandfather of the noble earl her father had been a very industrious and successful maker of bricks. No Artingale, however, was likely to overlook that circumstance; and Sir Hildebrand at a very early period of his married life found occasion to open his wife's eyes to the true doctrine on this point, and without any great difficulty succeeded in effecting her thorough conversion to the orthodox faith. She was now, and had been for many years perfectly well aware that it was her husband who had raised *her* to an eminence far superior to that on which her birth had placed her, and that her position in Mr. Burke's "roll of fame," as the daughter of a mushroom earl, was as nothing in comparison with admission to a place in the Artingale pedigree.

For all these various reasons the three ladies who composed Sir Hildebrand's family were agreed in wishing what he wished—the restoration of the grand family residence; and in truth the old place well merited their care and affection for it.

CHAPTER II.

ARTINGALE CASTLE.

ARTINGALE Castle, I say, was worthy of the love of its inmates, and of the restoration which it was their hope and intention to bestow on it. The Artingales had been there lords of Artingale manor, church, village, park-lands, woodlands, corn-lands and meadow-lands, and of many an adjacent manor, from a period far antecedent to the date of the oldest portion of the existing Castle. Their location in the land dated from the Conquest ; while the Castle was of the early Tudor period. But the lords of Artingale must have lived beneath some roof in the antecedent time ; and Sir Hildebrand, and Mr. Decimus Oblong, and the local antiquaries and the Billiford guide-book maintained that certain very donjon-like cellars, beneath what was now the

great staircase, were the remains of an earlier mansion, and dated from a period as early as —any date Sir Hildebrand thought fit to assign to them.

The main part of the existing buildings, however, clearly belonged to the early Tudor period. But the great terrace, and the Italian garden in front of it, had been constructed after the Restoration. The front of the building, along which this terrace ran, faced the south, and turned its back on the sea, the coast of which was about four miles to the northward. The main entrance of the Castle was not in this southern front, but on the side of the building, on the left-hand of one facing in that direction,—to the eastward that is to say. On that side lay the greatest extent of the park, through which the road approached the Castle, having entered it nearly three miles from the house, at the gate-house which opened on the road from Billiford, on the south, to Billmouth, a little fishing village of that name, on the coast to the northwards.

On the other side, on the right, that is, of one standing on the terrace and looking southwards, was the chapel, believed to be the oldest part of the now existing buildings, once a gem of Gothic

architecture, but now little better than a ruin, though a very picturesque one. The roof was still on, though not in very water-tight condition. But the principal beauty of the building, which still remained to it, consisted of the windows of what, in technical ecclesiastical phraseology, is called the east end, and should be such in fact; but which, in the case of the chapel of Artingale Castle, was the south end. For the chapel had been built in such sort that the east side of it was contiguous with the west side of the Castle; and there were two entrances to it, one from the outside at the (should be) west front, which in fact was to the north, and one from the interior of the Castle at the east side. But the whole of that portion of the little chapel which answered to the position of the lady-chapel in a cathedral, the part which (formed like the majority of French cathedral churches, and unlike almost all English ones) was enclosed by a pentagonal east end, and which contained in each of its five walls the beautiful windows, or rather the remains of them—all this portion of the chapel, in form like a huge bay window, projected beyond the southern front of the Castle; in such sort that it formed the western boundary of the grand terrace.

The stone-work in these windows was still nearly complete, and very beautiful; and the beauty was increased by the thick drapery of ivy which had covered the whole of that part of the chapel walls; only that there was rather too much of a good thing, and the yearly encroaching ivy threatened at last to turn the whole pentagonal end of the chapel into a huge and shapeless mass of green. And this was the little pet bit of restoration that Mary Artingale most sighed for—the clipping of the ivy in such a manner as to constrain it to let the beautiful arches and mullions of the windows to be seen. It will be understood, if I have succeeded in making my topography intelligible to the reader, that one of the five windows of the east end of the chapel looked right down the length of the terrace, forming a most beautiful termination to it. This one window Mary had prevailed on Mr. Decimus Oblong to have liberated from the obliterating ivy; and Mary, in her moonlight walks on the great terrace, could thus enjoy the capricious play of the moonbeams finding their devious way into the interior of the deserted chapel, through the ivy-clothed opposite windows to the west and south-west.

The inhabited portion of the house was that on the east side, nearest the entrance, and at the opposite end of the terrace to the chapel. And that wing had two good rooms, looking on to the terrace, besides a charming little window occupying a projection facing and corresponding to the projecting part of the chapel which has been described. This little room, which indeed could be considered such only by comparison with its neighbours, was a square as large in either direction as the width of the terrace; and it had two windows at right angles; so that one of them, to the south, looked over the country beyond the terrace in that direction, and the other, looking to the west, commanded the entire length of the terrace. This room was called Lady Lavinia's boudoir. But as her ladyship had for many years made a practice of sitting in her chamber during the entire morning and until dinner-time, the delightful little room in the south-eastern angle of the Castle had become the joint property and favourite abiding place of Mary and her aunt, Miss Agnes.

There are few more exquisitely beautiful home-views in England—which is equivalent to saying that there are few in the world—than

that commanded from the windows of this room, and indeed by the whole of the terrace to the south of Artingale Castle. The main feature in the landscape is the wide valley of the little river, the Bill; a valley a world too wide for the purpose of affording a way for that noisy and fussily important little stream to the sea. The Castle, as has been said, stands at about three or four miles from the coast, turning its back on it, and facing the more genial southern and inland view. Almost immediately behind the Castle—perhaps at nearly half-a-mile distant from it—the noisy little stream of the Bill expands itself into a tidal estuary; and, content with its increased importance, becomes silent. The estuary itself, however, is but a small one, barely affording at its mouth the means of shelter for a few fishing boats. The general course of the stream, coming down from a tract of high moorland farther to the south, is from south to north. But at that part of its course at which Artingale Castle stands it has been forced, by the projection from the western side of the valley of a promontory of some geological formation too hard for the chafing little river to cut through, to deviate from its course, making a turn to the eastward

in front of the Castle, and resuming its southward course as soon as the obstacle has been got round. Upon this sort of promontory the Castle stands, facing the up valley southward, and looking from its back windows over the estuary.

The little promontory which thus turns the stream for a short space out of its course, and on which the Castle is built, is not high ; nor are the gently sloping sides of the valley through which the river runs, and which shut in the view from the terrace and the south front of the building. The flat bottom of the valley is occupied by grazing land and meadows, in part irrigated, and all of them of the brightest green. The swelling sides of the valley, diversified and divided by numberless yet smaller valleys and ravines, bringing tiny contributions of water to the Bill, are very richly wooded. An abundance of the silver birch fringes the lower extremity of the woodland in a wavy line, every here and there receding up the hill-side sufficiently to allow an upland meadow to encroach on the domain of the woods, and anon descending into the valley so far as to plant its most advanced videttes on the margin of the river. The upper

portion of the woods consists of alternations of oak, beech, and plantations of larch.

Nestled into a little fold of the hill-side on the eastern slope of the valley, almost on a level with the stream at the bottom of it, at no great distance from the before-mentioned park gates, yet so placed as to be nearer to the south-eastern angle of the Castle than they, is the little village of Artingale, with its church, its delicately-tapering church spire, and last, not least important, its somewhat celebrated peal of bells. They were very musical bells; and Mary Artingale often raised a question whether the rooks in the rookery, which stood just on the further side of the chapel at the western end of the terrace, or the Artingale bells in their nook to the south-east of it, made the sweeter music.

Add to all these elements of beauty a numerous population of grazing herds on the pasture lands at the bottom of the valley, many a glimmering and glistening patch of the sparkling waters of the Bill, caught by the eye here and there in its sinuous course down the glen; and close in the whole with the distant blue line of the moorland high grounds, varied in one or two places by the craggy outline of rocks rising above the rest of

the horizon—and it will be admitted that the inmates of Artingale Castle had a fair scene to look on, and abundantly wherewithal to endear them to their home.

CHAPTER III.

FELIX FARLAND, OF FARLANDSTOKE.

IT was a lovely spring morning in April, 18—, and Sir Hildebrand, having left his sister and his daughter in the breakfast-room (Lady Lavinia never, by any chance, appeared at breakfast), had retired to his study, a comfortable and handsome room at the north-east angle of the Castle, and forming there a projection which corresponded to that occupied on the south-east angle by the room which has been described as Lady Lavinia's boudoir. The baronet's study had also two windows at right angles, one of which, that to the east, commanded a view of the drive, by which the principal entrance of the Castle was approached; and the other, that to the north, caught a distant view of the estuary of the Bill, and a peep at the sea beyond. Over the chimneypiece, which fronted this latter

window, there was hung a magnificently-emblazoned pedigree of the Artingales, beginning with Sir Leoline, who came over with William the Conqueror. The large sheet on which the pedigree had been originally engrossed and emblazoned was mounted on a much larger sheet, so as to leave a large margin, on which a great number of notes and references, the results of Sir Hildebrand's studies and researches, were written in his fine and carefully-formed, but somewhat crabbed characters.

Sir Hildebrand sat himself down, on the morning mentioned, to his morning's work, at his study table, and proceeded slowly and methodically to draw forth sundry bundles of papers, on which it was to be expended.

He was a handsomely built personable man, somewhat heavily formed for his time of life, which was still on the sunny side of fifty; not that he had any tendency to that *paunchiness* which but too often results from fifty years of more feeding than working, but the whole framework of the man was massive; his limbs were huge, and his hands and feet the same. And the make of him, as well as the manner of his movements, was of the kind that indicates a lym-

phatic temperament. Of his face much the same might be said. It was composed of regular and not ill-cut features, and would have been really handsome if the lower part of it had not been more massive and heavily formed than the upper part. The eyebrows were black, large, and regularly shaped, but so much arched as to impart to the countenance an expression which was not that of deep wisdom. He was entirely and scrupulously shaved, and the large extent of face thus exhibited had a complexion which was almost that of a young girl in the purity and delicacy of its pink and white. The mouth was indicative of weakness, but thoroughly good-natured in expression. As for his costume it is as well to describe it, once for all, because it never varied, save from its before-dinner phase to its after-dinner phase, and because it was as much a part of the ideal presentment answering to the name of Sir Hildebrand Artingale, in the minds of all those who knew him, as his face itself. He wore powder, a square-cut blue tail-coat with brass buttons, and light-coloured drab kerseymere breeches, which, with Hessian boots, set off his tall figure to much advantage. Add to this a double eye-glass hanging from his neck, and a

somewhat broad-brimmed and low-crowned black beaver, which he had a habit of carrying in his hand more frequently than on his head; and further, picture to yourself a carriage almost ridiculously erect; a gait, the grace of which was injured by a tendency to a slight rising on the toes while walking, and which was further calculated to provoke a smile in those who saw the baronet for the first time by the extreme and precise turning out of the toes of the handsome Hessian boots;—let the reader, I say, put together these properties and accidents in his mind's eye, and he will have as accurate a picture of the baronet in the flesh, and, indeed, nearly as complete a knowledge of the man in the spirit, as if he had lived in the northern division of the county of Sillshire for the last quarter of the past, and the first quarter of the present century.

One more trait, and the portrait shall be handed over to the reader's imagination for filling up, without any further touches. Sir Hildebrand's gloves cost him nine pounds two and sixpence a year! I do not think that the fact ever presented itself to his mind in that form; but I deduce it from a long observation of his practice, joined to an elaborate calculation. They

were a pair of very thick handsome buckskin gloves—a pair, for it was not on record that he had ever changed or replaced them by a new pair—and therefore I leave out of my calculation of the expense of them the original cost. He never wore them by any chance, but always took them out with him; always threw them into his hat when he carried it in his hand, and always lost them every day. Every day they were brought home to the Castle by some ragged little urchin of the village, and every day this service was rewarded with sixpence = per annum 9*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.*, Q. E. D., barring leap-year. Sir Hildebrand's gloves were a regular source of income, and the finding them a recognised industry among the village urchins, who might often be seen tracking the baronet at a respectful distance, and eagerly awaiting the results of his carelessness.

Sir Hildebrand had barely sat himself down to his table, and pulled out his papers, as has been said, when he was interrupted by the entrance of an old servant in livery, who, shutting the door behind him, advanced two steps into the room, and made a low bow before speaking his errand.

“If you please, Sir Hildebrand, Mr. Oblong is wishful to speak to your honour.”

“Been here long, Richard?”

“Not long, Sir Hildebrand. Your honour was at breakfast when he come.”

“Tell him I am ready to see him, Richard;—and, Richard, put a chair on that side of the table for Mr. Oblong. Mr. Oblong is beginning to get an old man!”

“Hey! your honour; he began that a goodish number of years ago, Mr. Oblong did; but *he* don’t think himself an old man! I’ll go bail, your honour, he thinks hisself younger nor I am!”

“Shouldn’t wonder, Richard! Tell him to come in,” said the baronet, who seldom let any occasion of communicating with a servant pass without some few words in the nature of chat. Sir Hildebrand’s servants and dependents thought him the least proud gentleman in the world; but the county gentry, his neighbours, thought him a few degrees prouder than Lucifer.

Mr. Decimus Oblong entered,—very evidently, whatever he might think about it, a much older man than Richard. He was very tall, taller than Sir Hildebrand—as thin as a whipping-

post, and almost as upright, though evidently a little shaky about the knees.

“How do, Oblong? Always hearty, eh? How’s the rheumatism, eh? Sit down,” said Sir Hildebrand.

“Oh! bless your heart, Sir Hildebrand, *I’ve* no rheumatism—not to speak of; but I suppose I shall have some day as I get on. It’s what we most of us come to. But for the present, Sir Hildebrand—*for* the present, I don’t feel that I am much the worse for wear.”

“That’s right. I wish the ceilings of the great staircase were like you, Oblong. But I fear they will come down before you do. I was looking at them before breakfast. I am sadly afraid that if we cannot manage to do something before long, we shall have to talk of rebuilding the old place instead of restoring it.”

“My errand this morning, Sir Hildebrand, was to tell you that I think I see a fair chance—a *very* fair chance—of being able to get to work at the repairs at once.”

“What, have you seen Mr. Farland?” asked the baronet, eagerly, while the sudden flush over his large pink and white face showed how closely

the matter on which the old steward had touched sat to his heart.

“Yes, Sir Hildebrand, I saw him yesterday evening. He has just returned to Stoke with young Mr. Felix from Bath. He bid me tell you, with his compliments, that he and Mr. Felix hope to have the pleasure of riding over to the Castle to-morrow morning.”

“And about—about our notion, Oblong?—the idea which suggested itself to you, you know, respecting the—ha—hum——”

“Well, Sir Hildebrand, my impression is that Mr. Farland would be likely enough to fall in with such a proposal. It was not my place, you know, Sir Hildebrand, to do more than feel the ground, as I may say; and I did feel the ground—just feel the ground as far as I thought I could do without presumption; and my impression is that Mr. Farland would not be indisposed to entertain the idea—ah—ha—hum—yes! I may say—entertain the idea. Mr. Farland alluded to the expediency of certain conditions—alluded vaguely and generally, as of course he would do to a person in my position; and I have no doubt—really, Sir Hildebrand, *no* doubt that his purpose in riding over

here to-morrow morning is to discuss the matter with you himself."

"Very good, Oblong, *very good*. You have managed the matter very discreetly—very; and it would be a very great thing! Wouldn't it, Oblong, eh?"

"A very fine thing, indeed, Sir Hildebrand; and I am sure I for one should go to my grave content when I had lived to see the job done."

Now the "idea" which had been suggested and the "job" to be done were briefly these. It had been suggested by the steward that Mr. Farland might lend Sir Hildebrand the sum of money necessary for the restoration of the Castle. But to make the reader understand the value and the feasibility of the idea, it is necessary to explain who Mr. Farland was.

Felix Farland, of Farlandstoke, was a country gentleman, the owner of a very pretty estate of that name in the adjoining parish to Artingale. The property was a very much smaller one than that of Artingale; and the residence on it was a house of infinitely less importance and pretension than Artingale Castle. Yet Mr. Farland was a very much richer man, especially richer in available ready cash than Sir Hildebrand; and

the house at Farlandstoke was a yet more ancient mansion than the Castle. The Farlands indeed were an older family in the county than the Artingales, being one of those few remaining families of Saxon blood who maintained the pretension, and it was believed with justice, that they had held their lands from father to son from times anterior to the Conquest; and Felix Farland, Esquire, was to the full as proud of his Saxon descent as Sir Hildebrand Artingale could be of his Norman ancestry; and the two representatives of the two old once-hostile races had many a sparring match together on the subject—all in good part and on friendly, neighbourly terms, although the two men were almost as dissimilar as it was possible for two country gentlemen, both of ancient blood, to be.

Mr. Farland was, to begin with, sixty years old—a good fifteen years Sir Hildebrand's senior—though in vivacity of manner and brightness of mind he might well have seemed the younger of the two. The fact was, that the elder gentleman was a man of considerable talent and quickness of parts, shrewd, active-minded, and a scholar of very considerable, especially antiquarian, learning; whereas the

baronet was, it can hardly be denied, rather a dull fellow, and very much of a blockhead. Then Mr. Farland was a small man, and Sir Hildebrand was a very big one. Mr. Farland was the father of an only son—Sir Hildebrand of an only daughter. Mr. Farland was a widower—the baronet's wife was yet living. Finally, Sir Hildebrand might be called for the reasons, and in the sense which has been explained, a poor man, while Mr. Farland was a very rich one.

The manner in which this last point of contrast came to pass was this. The Farlands had for very many generations been very small landowners in comparison with their Norman-descended neighbours the Artingales. The rental of the latter property was at least tenfold that of the former. But the Artingales had been in some degree permanently and in a much greater degree temporarily impoverished by the causes which have been related; while the father of Felix Farland the elder, the present owner of Farlandstoke, had married the enormously rich heiress of vast iron mines and iron works in South Wales. Felix Farland the elder, the sexagenarian owner of Farlandstoke at the time of my story, and the father of Felix

Farland the younger, had also married an heiress, who had brought him a large and very valuable estate situated in the rich alluvial flats of Somersetshire, near Bridgewater; and Felix Farland the elder had been, and Felix Farland the younger now was, an only son. The Somersetshire heiress had died young when her only child was but seven years old, and since that time his father had lived the life of a solitary and studious bachelor, having occasion for but small expenses beyond what was required for the continual increase of his library. So that it came to pass at the time of which I am speaking that Felix Farland, Esq., of Farlandstoke, was a very wealthy man indeed.

The mansion at Farlandstoke was also a very different style of residence from the Castle at Artingale. There was a certain portion of it which Mr. Farland maintained was as old as the twelfth century at least; and in all probability it was so. This ancient work, however, formed no part of either of the outer façades of the existing house, but was entirely enclosed in building of a more recent date, much as the dwelling-house of Ignatius Loyola has been enclosed by a comparatively modern church;

and this ancient kernel of his mansion was held by the master of it to be well-nigh as sacred as the Order of Jesus deem the jealously guarded dwelling of their founder. The oldest part of the visible façade of the house was the entrance and the porch, and the bay window over it; and a very picturesque morsel it was—built of deep-coloured red bricks, with cut stone corners and mouldings; but the house in general made no pretence to symmetry or uniformity. Originally a quiet small residence, it had been increased, not to any very great extent, at various periods; the most notable enlargement having been a long gallery, run out by the present owner from the side of the house, in communication with his own study, for the accommodation of his extensive library.

Now, different, and indeed contrasted in many points, as the men were, Sir Hildebrand Artin-gale and Mr. Farland had always been very good neighbours, and, to a certain degree, friends. They were the representatives of the two by far oldest names in that part of the country; and they had both, though in somewhat different ways, a strong reverence for antiquity and for ancient blood, and a feeling of respect for each

other on that ground to begin with. When Sir Hildebrand had first taken possession of his estates and the Castle, then a young man of one-and-twenty, he had found Mr. Farland his nearest resident neighbour; and the elder man had very cordially welcomed the younger one, and taken him by the hand, while giving pronounced expression, as he did so, to that deference which was so dear to Sir Hildebrand, and which was genuinely felt by Mr. Farland towards the representative of such a name, and the owner of such a grand monument of antiquity as the Castle. And time had gone on ripening their intimacy into friendship. They had discussed together many a magnum of port in the provisional dining-room at Artingale, and as many in the more thoroughly comfortable oaken-panelled parlour at Farlandstoke; and they had wrangled almost as frequently over the pretensions to antiquity and comparative glories of their families.

They had also very often during the later years of the period in question discussed another matter with less of wrangling and greater identity of views. In a word, it had appeared very desirable to both fathers that their names

and estates should be united by the union of their children. Of course, Sir Hildebrand would have much preferred having a son of his own. But of this, alas! there was no chance. If, indeed, it should please Providence, taking into consideration the peculiarity and urgency of the circumstances, to remove the Lady Lavinia, and so leave it open to the baronet to contract a second alliance, from which an heir to his name and title might be hoped, the case would have been a different one. But the ailments of the Lady Lavinia seemed to be of the nature of those which has given rise to the saying—the creaking wheel runs the longest! And to do the baronet justice, it never entered his head to wish that his plaintive wife's placid days should be shortened. He was a very kind husband, as far as he knew how to be, and was entirely disposed to be so to a wife who worshipped the Artingale greatness, and himself as the incarnation of it, so thoroughly as the Lady Lavinia did.

Mr. Farland also had formed his own opinion on this part of the subject. He had taken more than one opportunity of obtaining from that somewhat bluff and coarse, but exceedingly shrewd practitioner of the old school, Mr. Jonas

Hathaway, his opinion on this point. And the result was that Mr. Farland did not see any great probability that Sir Hildebrand would ever form a second marriage. And if he did not, Mary Artingale would assuredly be a great heiress. Mr. Farland was perfectly well acquainted with the exact position of the Artingale estates; knew all that had been done to clear them, and how much remained still to be accomplished. He knew quite as well as the baronet himself, and much more scientifically, what was needed for the perfect restoration of the Castle; and was perfectly well aware of the difficulty of finding means for doing this, and at the same time going on with the arrangements for the clearance of the property.

Knowing and clearly understanding all this, Mr. Farland was well aware that Mary would be an heiress very well worth having, even by so rich a man as his son would be. It would be the third wealthy marriage made in succession by three generations of the house of Farland, and would place that family in a position in the county, and, indeed, in England, which need veil the bonnet to never a Norman-descended noble in the land!

But the mere wealth that was one day to be Mary Artingale's made in Mr. Farland's mind but a small—or, at any rate, a quite secondary—item of the desirableness of a marriage between her and his son. There was the blood, the name, the situation of the broad and rich acres close to his own, and lying around Farlandstoke, far more desirable in his eyes than any acres elsewhere. And then, above all—yes, I really think, above all in the considerations which tempted Mr. Farland to desire the match—there was the Castle itself. He not only strongly sympathised with Sir Hildebrand's longing for the restoration of it—it might almost be said that he was as anxious about it as the owner. Mr. Farland was not an envious or covetous man, nor by any means disposed to think that anybody had got anything better than he had himself. But he did almost envy Sir Hildebrand the possession of Artingale Castle. Then he feared, very greatly feared, that Sir Hildebrand would make a mess of the great work of restoration, if he were ever able to take it in hand. He feared that the baronet would not be so amenable to advice as could be wished in this matter. He felt that he himself knew exactly

how every part of the work should be done, and carried in his mind's eye the appearance of the restored fabric as clearly as it could be shown in an architect's plan.

If only he could have the doing of it, what a place he would make of it! And if his son and the heiress of Artingale were to be man and wife, he would at least, it might be hoped, have some say in the matter. And then what a name, what a race would be that that should spring from such an alliance! Two such names joined! What nobility could boast such a descent as that from the Saxon Farland and the Norman Artingale!

Thus although Mr. Farland, the son and the husband of wealthy heiresses, was quite alive to the advantages of Mary Artingale's pecuniary expectations, his desire for the marriage was not altogether mercenary in its nature. It recommended itself to his antiquarian and genealogical tastes and prejudices yet more strongly than to his sense of the value of wealth. And to the baronet the idea was an equally acceptable one from feelings and considerations of much the same sort, partaking in his case rather more of the appreciation for pelf, pure and simple, and

rather less of gratification for his antiquarian tastes perhaps, than in that of his more highly-educated and cultured neighbour.

Both the fathers, however, had long since satisfied themselves that such a marriage would be, under all circumstances, a very desirable one. They had not, in their frequent discussions of the matter, spoken much of the aptitudes or qualifications of the parties more immediately concerned. It is a way fathers are apt to have, to leave such minutiae out of the question. The two representatives of the two ancient families had talked much and long as to the assuming of names and arms, and such matters, but had taken the acquiescence of their children quite as a matter of course. Mr. Farland indeed had in no wise concealed his ideas upon the subject from his son, and had met with no sort of opposition to them in that quarter. All the country side knew that Mary Artingale was a very lovely girl, and Felix Farland, junior, was as much aware of the fact as the rest of the world. Every one knew that the Lady Lavinia was a cipher, and a sick cipher too, if one may be allowed that somewhat incongruous mixture of metaphor with literalness. And everybody

in the north of Sillshire had the highest possible respect for and opinion of Miss Agnes Artingale; and knew that the education of Mary was the work of her intellect and her loving care. Mary had lived among the Sillshire world all her life, and nothing but good had been ever heard of her. And it is not, therefore, much to be wondered at if Mr. Farland, junior, notwithstanding he had as yet but little opportunity of knowing Mary Artingale, found nothing to object to in his father's notion.

As for Mary, no such direct communication of the destiny intended for her had as yet been made to her. It had been considered premature, and on the whole injudicious to do so. Enough, however, had been often said in Mary's hearing, by all those about her, to lead her to guess that it was probable enough that her parents might consider young Mr. Farland as the most suitable person for her future husband, and to invest him, therefore, with an interest in her eyes. As yet she could hardly be said to be acquainted with him; for since they had both been children, and during his holidays playmates, he had been at Oxford, and almost entirely absent in Somersetshire during the vacations. Sir Hil-

debrand, however, felt perfectly secure of the dutiful acquiescence of his daughter, and expressed himself to Mr. Farland as having no shadow of doubt on the subject. Was she not an Artingale? And even in the altogether improbable case of her inclinations prompting her to differ from her relatives in her views as to the bestowal of her hand, had not the ladies of his house always known how to postpone inclination to duty in these as in all other matters?

Now this was the state of circumstances under which an idea had occurred to Mr. Decimus Oblong, which had been eagerly adopted by Sir Hildebrand, that it was not improbable that Mr. Farland might be willing to lend the money necessary for the restoration of the Castle. And this, in fact, was the business on which that gentleman had proposed to talk with Sir Hildebrand on the morrow of the day on which the steward gave Mr. Farland's message to his master.

CHAPTER IV.

FELIX FARLAND, THE YOUNGER.

ABOUT ten o'clock on the following morning Mr. Felix Farland, senior, and Mr. Felix Farland, junior, were trotting up the road through Artingale Park to the Castle door, followed by a groom who was carrying, rather to his own inconvenience, a large something, about the size of a man's head, carefully enveloped in white paper. It was *not* a man's head, nor was it any mysterious object on which the interest of my story hinges, and anent which the reader is to wonder and speculate till towards the end of the third volume. It was simply a huge bouquet of magnificent hot-house flowers. There were no hot-houses, as yet, at the Castle; and these cuttings, from the abundant stores of the Farlandstoke gardens, were an offering from the

younger Mr. Farland to the intended lady of his love.

“A remarkably fortunate circumstance it was, Felix, that the late baronet lived no longer than he did!” said the elder gentleman, looking around him with much admiration on the beautiful trees with which the park was thickly studded; “another five years of that ne’er-do-weel scamp’s existence, and there would not have been a stick of it left! The mischief would have been irreparable—quite irreparable!”

“Ah! that would have been a thousand pities! What did he die of, the late baronet?”

“How should I know? London, and London ways, I suppose. He died of London! What does it signify? He died in time; and one of the finest parks in England is as fine as ever! One of the finest parks in England, I maintain it to be—and with a residence to match.”

“If the old walls only stood as firm as the trees!” rejoined his son; “but it is little better than a ruin as it is.”

“It is such a ruin, that if I had the spending of some fifty thousand on it, it should be a house such as no hundred thousand could now pro-

duce—let alone the history of the place, and the memories attached to it!”

“Ah! the memories!” said his son.

“I don’t think that you ever saw much of Mary Artingale,” resumed his father, after a pause; “but I suppose you remember her?”

“Oh! yes, sir; I remember her,” said the young man.

“And don’t you remember her as a charmingly pretty girl—as one of the prettiest girls you ever saw?”

“Well, father, that would be saying a good deal, you know, for a fellow who has just come from spending the winter at Bath. We had a rare lot of fine women there, I can tell you—tip-toppers from London, some of them.”

“Pooh! London, indeed! And ‘tip-toppers’—a thoroughly vile and objectionable phrase! I will wager my head that there was not a lass among them to be compared for beauty, freshness, or goodness to Mary Artingale!”

“I dare say you are right, sir.”

“Of course I am! Don’t talk to me about your fine ladies at Bath! And hark ye, here, Felix—do you think there was any one of them to be found in the pump-room or at the Mall

who was the heiress to such a park as this, and such a castle as that, my boy! What do you say to that?"

"I am awake, sir! Besides," added the young man, after a pause, and in a different tone, "I never meant, you know, to suppose that any of that lot were fit to hold a candle to Miss Artingale. Only, you see, I would not have her think that I had never seen a pretty face except hers in the world, or fine women, or dashing women, or tip—I beg pardon—number one-ers I mean."

"Number one-ers!" ejaculated the senior, with a groan. "Heavens, what will become of our pure vernacular speech! Pray, Felix, is that expression a recognized one among the cultivated of the rising generation? I am aware of the fact that language is ever changing."

His son assured the old gentleman that the phrase in question was authorized by the practice of the politest circles.

"In that case," rejoined the senior, "it may be that Miss Artingale will not object to it. Nevertheless, I should counsel you, Felix, in communing with a young lady, whose walk in life has hitherto been a somewhat secluded

one, to be sparing of neology, however picturesque."

"Certainly, sir!" answered the young man dutifully, having, however, as much notion of what his father meant as the horse he was riding.

"Now I shall go into Sir Hildebrand's study to speak to him on business," said Mr. Farland, after another pause, as they neared the Castle, and you had better ask if the ladies are at home, as I have no doubt they will be. And while I and the baronet are settling our affairs, do you make the most of your time with Miss Mary. Do you understand?"

"I am awake, sir!" said the young man, giving his father that consolatory assurance for the second time. And with that the father and son dismounted from their horses at the door, and Mr. Felix, junior, took the bouquet from the hands of the groom.

I am afraid the reader will not have been as much impressed in favour of Mr. Farland, junior, by what has already been seen of him, as that young gentleman deserves. And it is necessary that right should be done in this matter.

Felix Farland, junior, was twenty-four years

old at the time of which I am speaking, and he was what is generally called a fine young man; unquestionably, in the eyes of any recruiting officer in the service, a *very* fine young man. He stood six feet one inch in his stockings, and was athletically built in proportion to this fine height. His face was of that type which would have proclaimed him of Teuton race, all the world over. Blue eyes, well opened, frank, and guileless; a fair clear skin, ruddy with health, and slightly tanned by the sun and wind; round face, with an appearance of being, if anything, broader than it was long; a thoroughly good-tempered mouth, with large lips, somewhat of the thickest; an abundance of light-coloured and slightly curling hair; no unshaven beard or moustache; large ears, with an indomitable tendency to stand out from the head like handles, and a kind of loose and broad manner of carrying himself, which seemed as if every part of his person were exulting in its own bigness, and freedom to become bigger if it pleased—all this bespoke the purity of the Saxon blood, and indicated a nature of creature quite as different from that of the Celto-Frank or Latin variety of the genus *homo* as a dog is from a fox.

Such was the outward and visible presentment of the heir and representative of the long line of Farlands. It is a type very easily described and understood, and the description of the inner man need hardly be more complex. If Felix had lived in the days before culture by means of books had well-nigh superseded the conception of any other kind of culture in men's minds, I do not think that he would have been deemed altogether a blockhead. As it was, I fear, he was so deemed. It seemed as if the soil of his mind was uncultivable by that method; and this was the more unfortunate that his father was essentially and especially a book man. There are bibliophobes as well as bibliophiles. And Felix, the younger, was afflicted by the former phrase of affection to a very remarkable degree—to a much greater degree, doubtless, than would have been the case, had not the four-and-twenty years of his life been passed in a continual and painful struggle against the attempt on the part of the world around him to drench him forcibly with book-learning. Nature is strong however, and Felix nearly beat them in the end. Some natures are said to throw off that which is repugnant to them, as a duck's

back does water ; and the simile expresses very completely the way in which young Farland's mind threw off learning. Forced upon him, as it might be, by superior force for a while, triumphant nature on the first opportunity expelled it from the system, and left the original nature as untainted by the foreign substance as before.

It spoke well for the young man that the life-long struggle which had thus been going on between him and the world around him had in no degree soured his natural disposition. It is true that it is more easy for the conquering party to come out of a struggle with unruffled temper than for the conquered party to do so ; and Felix came out the life-long contest a victor. The conquered party were all the teachers, pedagogues, tutors, college deans, wardens, and vice-chancellors, who had been conspiring together to force book-learning into his system. Felix had beaten them triumphantly, and forgave them.

To strive to become learned and to fail in the hard attempt from incapacity to learn must be very painful. But Felix had been pained by no such strivings. He wished only to escape from

the enforced attempt. He was not without powers of observation, and he saw that the book-men around him at the University were mainly pale, while he was the very picture of health and strength; they often had headaches—he knew not what a headache was; they were frequently cross and out of spirits—he was in perfect good humour, and in excellent spirits, and in charity with all men from one year's end to another. For those who were compelled to worry themselves over books, by the necessities of finding the means of life, he had the profoundest pity; but for those who, undriven by dire necessity, subjected themselves to the same slavery, he had but unmitigated wonder and astonishment.

For the rest, he had many qualities which all men and all women consider excellent and admirable. Imbued by the earliest home-teachings with an entire and affectionate respect for religion and its spiritual teachers, he would on Sunday, with punctual attention and reverence, and complete assent of mind, listen to the precepts which enjoined him to turn the other cheek to the smiter when smitten on the first; and on Monday he would have felled to the ground with the utmost certainty and alacrity any human

being who had the temerity to raise a hand against him, or against any weaker creature whom he felt himself called upon to protect. And he generally did feel called upon to protect, to the best of his judgment and light, most of those around him who were weaker than himself.

He could ride like a centaur, swim like an otter, jump like a stag, box like Jackson, and was as complete a master of the mysteries of single-stick and wrestling as the most competent professors of those accomplishments. Fencing he had not chosen to learn, considering it to be a French, and therefore an effeminate pursuit; a conclusion to which he had been led by the mischance that the only professor of the art whom he had happened to fall in with was a Frenchman.

He was careful in money matters, and had a shrewd, half-humorous sort of appreciation of what is called "the main chance," which was not in him incompatible with very considerable generosity. He had a country-bred and almost instinctive abhorrence of waste, but it was waste in its simplest and most apparent form, not waste as a political economist would understand it, that revolted him. Ten useless well-fed serving-men

in his father's house would not have annoyed him in the least; but the sight of a bit of good bread thrown into the hog-tub was an offence to him. Victuals were in the first case doing what victuals were intended to do; but the second seemed to his guileless mind a wanton provocation of that judgment of "want" which has been promulgated by an authority equal to that of scripture—if, indeed, it were not scripture—against wastefulness.

On the whole, Felix Farland, the younger, was not a bad fellow, though he *did* talk of ladies as tip-toppers, and boast of his acquaintance with the belles of the Bath pump-room; not so bad a fellow as the reader was inclined, I am sure, to consider him, from his first appearance on this stage. Neither was he, I should be inclined to think, a fellow whom many a girl, perhaps most girls, might not have been easily brought to love. He had the disadvantage, to be sure, of extreme shyness on all occasions where the sex were concerned. He was as utterly afraid of a woman as he was unafraid of any man; and the real explanation of those boastings to his father respecting his Bath experiences must be sought in the terror with which he was looking forward

to his coming interview with Miss Artingale. It was mere bragging to keep his courage up ; and shrewd old Mr. Farland, who knew his son pretty well, was perfectly aware that such was the case.

In the Castle, on the other hand, the promised visit of the two Mr. Farlands had been looked forward to with yet more of anxiety and preparation than on the part of the visitors ; for on their side it was the young man only who was at all nervous on the subject. Old Mr. Farland had of course no reason to be at all anxious or excited on the occasion. But Sir Hildebrand could not help feeling a good deal of nervous excitement. Was the great, the paramount desire of his life about to be gratified ? Should he indeed live to see Artingale Castle as it ought to be ? What would be the nature of the proposals which Mr. Farland would make to him ?

Then it cannot be denied that Miss Artingale had been looking forward to the visit, of which her father had duly warned her, with some natural girlish trepidation and expectation. The state of her mind, with regard to young Farland, has been described. She had no idea that

it was considered by her parents as irrevocably fated that she was to become Mrs. Farland, or Artingale-Farland, or Farland-Artingale. She was far from aware that such a marriage had ever been distinctly planned, or even that such a notion had ever presented itself to the Farlands, either father or son. But she knew that the young man, who was coming there then for the first time as a young man, was in a position which made it seem to everybody a very likely, natural, and suitable thing that they should become man and wife; and she felt a little trepidation accordingly.

It was two or three years since she had last seen Felix, and boys, and still more girls, change so rapidly at that age, that it was almost the same thing as making the first acquaintance of a stranger. Mary had no very distinct recollection of what the boy looked like when last she saw him. She had been yet more of a child at the time than he had been; her development into a woman both mentally and physically having been one of those late and rapid ones which I think are most frequently observed in fine and rarely endowed female natures.

Under these circumstances it was pardonable that Mary could not help looking forward to the expected visit with a certain degree of anxious expectation and interest; and that—though she would hardly have admitted even to herself that such was the case—she should have bestowed a little extra care on her toilette that morning.

It was not needed; for Mary, both in face and figure, was possessed of that rare perfection of loveliness which no adventitious aid can enhance. She was very much what her Aunt Agnes had been at her age, and was an Artin-gale every inch of her. She was as tall as her aunt, but somewhat slighter than the queen-like figure which had awed while it charmed the Sillchester *jeunesse dorée* somewhat more than a quarter of a century ago. Mary was slender for her height almost to a fault; and, had it not been for the air of perfect health and the fawn-like elasticity of her step and movements, it might have been feared that the frail delicacy of her invalid mother had been inherited by her child together with the beauty which had captivated Sir Hildebrand when he was just entering into manhood. Such was not the case, however;

and Mr. Decimus Oblong, whose greatest pride it had been some ten years since to teach Miss Mary to ride, and one of whose most onerous duties it now was to accompany her on horse-back, could have testified to the young lady's possession of an amount of vigour and strength which rather severely tested his own aged powers of endurance. Sir Hildebrand was not a horseman; and it had come to be a recognized part of Mr. Oblong's duties to be Mary's squire, as he had been her riding-master; for Decimus Oblong had in his younger days been a great and famous horseman, and was still more at his ease in the saddle than anywhere else. He often declared that some twenty years ago he should have liked nothing better than to accompany such a rider as Miss Mary from one side of the county to the other; but he confessed that her notions of a morning's ride were beginning to be a little too much for him of late.

Miss Agnes Artingale was, as the reader has already had an opportunity of knowing, both a large-hearted and a large-minded woman. The two qualities can hardly exist apart indeed. She was a woman of strong good sense and

sound judgment; but I think that her niece Mary had the brighter intelligence of the two. There was a vein of humour in her composition which did not enter into the graver character of her aunt; and I am not sure that this finer element of character might not have so operated as to cause Mary Artingale to follow a different line of conduct from that which her aunt had pursued on the occasion which has been narrated at the close of the first book of this story, should it ever happen to her to find herself placed in similar circumstances. It was not that she was less deeply conscious of the claims of duty, or less capable of sacrificing inclination to those claims; but that I think it probable that she might form for herself a somewhat different theory of duty.

It may seem, indeed, that the adoption of a line of conduct in a matter so important and so thoroughly involving the entire constitution of the character could hardly be supposed to depend on the more or less humoristic views of life and its concerns which the actor may be disposed and enabled by nature to take. Yet I think that it was this element in Mary Artingale's character which would have led her to act

differently from her aunt in such a crisis. It enlarged her *humanity*—using that word in its largest sense. It is the humorous man who feels most keenly that “one touch of nature makes all the world akin.” The larger feeling of what human nature expected of her would in the case of Mary Artingale have limited in some degree the omnipotence of the expectations of “Artingale.”

All such speculations, however, are superfluous—or at all events premature—as regards Sir Hildebrand’s daughter and heiress. One thing was at all events certain at the time of which I am now speaking, and that was the very perfect accord and very close union which existed between Mary and her aunt Agnes. And it might have been very safely predicted that, if ever Mary should be unhappily called upon to form a decision in any such case as that which had led to her aunt’s single life, that aunt’s counsel would have a great if not paramount share in the determining of it.

CHAPTER V.

ARTINGALE SHALL BE ITSELF AGAIN.

“Is Sir Hildebrand at home, Richard, and in his study, eh?” said Mr. Farland to the old servant, as he entered the hall.

“Yes, sir; his honour have been in the study ever since breakfast. Mr. Oblong have been with him a bit; but I think the old man be gone now.”

“And Miss Agnes is in the terrace-room, I suppose?” added Mr. Farland.

“Yes, sir; Miss Agnes and Miss Mary be in the terrace-room. I heard the pianer a-going as I come to the door.”

“Well, then, Richard, I will find my way to the study, while you go and ask the ladies if they will permit Mr. Farland, junior, to pay his respects to them.”

And so saying, the elder gentleman proceeded towards the well-known door of the study, knocked, and entered, leaving his son to await the reply which the ladies might send him. But as Richard, properly desirous of delivering the message entrusted to him exactly as he received it, told the ladies that Mr. Farland's "tutor" was wishful to pay his respects to them, some little time was lost in ascertaining the true sense of the announcement, during which poor Felix, with his magnificent bouquet in his hand, was waiting in the hall—a delay which did not tend to diminish the painful sensation of shyness with which he at last entered their presence.

Mr. Farland, of Farlandstoke, senior, had no such feeling to contend with in entering the study of his old neighbour and crony. He found the ponderous baronet sitting at his library table busily occupied with, as it seemed, a mass of account-books. He got up, however, with as much alacrity as it was in his nature to exhibit, on the entrance of Mr. Farland, and stepped forward to meet him, with some slight consciousness at his heart of a desire to conceal the fact that he had been anxiously expecting his visitor.

“Ha! Farland,” he cried, “delighted to see you. What a lovely morning! no wonder you were tempted out! I am tied to my work here, you see, as usual.”

“Not very busy, I hope, Sir Hildebrand; else I shall fear that I have chosen too early an hour for my visit. But I wanted to be sure to find you at home.”

“Oh, no! very glad you have come. Damn the accounts! I am tired of them.”

“I have sent Felix, who rode over with me, to make his bow to the ladies. I am afraid they may think the interruption an unwarrantably early one.”

“Not at all. They will be delighted to see him. So he has just returned from Bath?”

“Yes; the day before yesterday. And now I hope he will have an opportunity of making himself better known here than he has been hitherto.”

“Ay, to be sure. We have seen too little of him.”

“And how is my little friend Mary and Miss Agnes? Her ladyship, I suppose, much as usual?”

“Yes, always suffering, poor thing! the

others are all right. Mary was out on horseback with old Oblong before breakfast this morning. The old man's work in that respect is getting a little too much for him, I am afraid, though he will not hear of it. Mary will need another squire before long, poor old fellow!"

"Ay, we must try if we can provide her with one,—not quite so old. Meantime, if she will accept the escort of another senior, not quite so far gone as old Oblong, I shall be only too happy to put myself at her service."

"That would do charmingly. I am sure Mary would be most grateful. Won't you come nearer the fire?"

"No, thank you; I am warm with my ride—such a delicious morning. And the park is looking lovely as the spring comes on. What a bit of land it is, Artingale! If ever I envied a man anything, I could find it in my heart to envy you the possession of this park."

"And house," said the baronet, with a complacent sort of melancholy in his tone. "Yes," he added, "there are not many such places as Artingale in England—not many. But—" and the baronet supplemented his word with a shrug of his broad shoulders, and a deep sigh. "Ah,

if you *had* Artingale, Farland," he added, with a wistful look into his old neighbour's face, the wistfulness of which he was too simple-hearted and guileless to attempt to conceal; "if Artingale *were* yours, what a place you would make of it! But what can *I* do?"

"Yes, I think I could. I flatter myself that I should know how to set about such a restoration as should make Artingale Castle not one of the finest, but the finest place in England—next to Windsor. Perhaps I ought to say next to Windsor."

"Of course, of course! Though they have no such staircase at Windsor as Artingale has—or had once—had once. More's the pity that I should have to say so. I declare to you, Farland, that the condition of that staircase has been a heartache to me for twenty years. But what can I do?"

"I'll tell you what it is, Artingale: we must see what *we* can do," said Farland, while the whole of Sir Hildebrand's wide extent of pink face became crimson with a flush of pleasure; "we must see what *we* can do. Artingale Castle *must* be restored; it would be a disgrace to England to let it perish. And every year that

passes tells terribly on the cost of the work to be done. It ought to be done, and done at once."

"But what is the use of talking in that way, Farland, when it will take—when it must be years yet before I can—in short, you know all about it as well as I do," said the baronet, throwing his bulky person back in his chair, and crossing one Hessian-booted leg over the other.

"Yes, I know—I know," returned the elder gentleman; "and the fact is, the express purpose of my ride over here this morning was to have a conversation with you upon the subject, and see whether we cannot hit upon some plan by which the work might be begun at once."

"Would to God it might be possible! Could I live to see Artingale once again itself, I declare to you, Farland, that I could lie down and die a happy man."

"Well, now, look here, Sir Hildebrand," said Farland, taking out his spectacles and putting them on, though it did not seem as if he had anything to look at which could need their aid; for he edged himself forward in his chair, and resting his elbows on his knees, rubbed and clapped his hands together as if he were washing

them, while, instead of looking at the baronet, he gazed down at the carpet; "look here, Sir Hildebrand: I am almost as much interested in the place as you are yourself from mere love of it, and admiration for the grand old house. But, of course, I do not mean to say that that interest alone would suffice to lead me to make to you the proposals I have come here to talk over with you. You will understand that?"

"Of course, of course," said the larger man, with a slight touch of magnificence in his tone, and getting up from his chair in his nervous excitement to stand with his back to the fire on the hearthrug.

"Nevertheless, my purely artistic and antiquarian interest in the matter is great," continued Mr. Farland, speaking deliberately and still with an accompaniment of hand-washing; "very great. You know, however, Sir Hildebrand, that I have another and further interest. Do you understand me, and is it still your wish and your purpose to give effect to those plans which we have so often talked over together in this room and at Farlandstoke?"

"Unquestionably it is so, my dear Farland—unquestionably both my wish and my purpose.

What can I desire better for my Mary, what better for Artingale—which latter ought indeed to be the higher consideration—with me, as it would be with the girl herself. A good girl is Mary, Farland, and an Artingale every inch of her!”

“And I quite as unquestionably can desire nothing better for my boy, and Felix could desire nothing better for himself than such a wife. As I was saying, therefore, I have of course, looking forward to such a hope, a higher and a nearer interest in Artingale and its fortunes than a merely general and antiquarian one. Is it not so?”

“Certainly, Farland! Assuredly it must be so. I will not deny that it has been a source of sorrow and grief to me that Providence has not seen good to bless me with a male heir to the old name and the old house. It has been a long and a sore grief to me. But being as it is, I could wish for no better heir than a son of yours, who should unite two such names and two such shields.”

The baronet somewhat Jesuitically got over, by means of this wording of his sentiments, all allusion to the vexed question of how the two names were to be borne, making a mental

reservation on that important point. His old friend did not fail to remark this, but contented himself with making his mental reservation also, and continued deliberately to wash his hands, and gaze on the carpet at his feet, as he slowly let fall, into the eager ears of the baronet, the sequel of his communication.

“Feeling therefore this interest in Artingale, and almost as anxious as you can be yourself, my dear Sir Hildebrand, for the restoration of the Castle; well aware too, as I am, of the extreme importance of not allowing the work of repair to be longer delayed, it has seemed to me, Sir Hildebrand, that some satisfactory arrangement might be made, by virtue of which I might be able to advance the funds necessary for the work. Would such a scheme be agreeable to you, Sir Hildebrand?”

“My dear Farland, how can you ask such a question? Agreeable to me! Why you know, no man better, that it would be the fulfilment of the dearest wish of my heart! But—” and the baronet reseated himself in his chair, let his large hands fall with an expression of helplessness on the arms of it, and shook his head slowly as he added, “you also surely know, Farland,

that I have no power of giving security for such a sum as would be needed, without undoing that clearing of the property which it has been the work of my life to achieve."

"I know—I know all that! I am, if you will forgive my saying so, as well aware of the position of the property as you can be yourself. I am well aware of the admirable and persistent efforts which you have made to restore the property to its due status. But let us look how the matter stands. It is my fervent hope—yours too, as I gather from your words—that a certain marriage settlement may be the complete quittance in full for any money I may bring forward for this purpose. This is our hope and expectation. But life and its issues are uncertain. The best laid plans will sometimes fail. We *may* be disappointed. It is right that this contingency, improbable though it be, should be provided for. Well! this money to be advanced is not going to be thrown into the horsepond. It is not going to be spent in riotous living. It is to be expended in restoring, improving, and saving from destruction one of the noblest mansions in England. What, according to the vulgarest auctioneer's estimate,

may be the value of those old walls? And what, estimated in the same way, will be their value when we shall have restored them? I am quite willing to find the needful funds for the work, on the security of the restored building itself. Of course I should not propose, and you would not accept such an arrangement except under the actual circumstances of the case, and the almost certainty that the bond to be executed will very shortly be destroyed as so much waste paper. What say you, Sir Hildebrand, to my proposition?"

The portly and ponderous baronet was not what is called demonstrative by nature, or capable of giving way to any very lively expression of feeling. But Mr. Farland, looking up at his neighbour from under his bushy eyebrows with a shrewd glance, could see that again his large face was suffused with a crimson flush of emotion.

"My dear Farland," he said slowly, "to you, who have so much feeling in common with me on this subject, I do not hesitate to confess that the day which saw such an arrangement completed would be the happiest of my life. Of course, under other circumstances, or to any

other person than yourself, I could not admit the idea of a mortgage on the Castle. But with our views in prospect, the plan appears to be perfectly unobjectionable."

"In that case——"

"To be sure," interrupted the slower baronet, "as you say, life is uncertain. Mary may die to-morrow, or your son may die. In the former case, which God in his mercy forbid, why, I should have done my best, I should have done my duty by Artingale; and those who come after me—faith, I hardly know who they would be, there *are* Artingales in the north, I believe—those who come after me must do the best they can. But in the latter case, should so heavy a misfortune fall on us all, it would be hard——"

"True, true, Sir Hildebrand! Look here, then. Should *that* calamity befall, I should have so little care for any worldly pelf, that I am quite willing that the bond should be so conditioned that it shall be null and void in the case of the death of my son before his marriage with your daughter, or of his refusal to contract such marriage."

"The terms, my dear Farland," said the baronet, "are more generous than I could have

ventured to propose. They are most generous. But—are you well aware, Farland, of the dimensions of the work to be undertaken, and of the sum which will be necessary for the job?”

“Tut, tut! *that* shall not be the difficulty! But I think I have some tolerably correct ideas upon the subject,” said the elder gentleman, with a slow motion of his head, which imparted a pump-handle-like movement to the well-barbered pigtail which stood out from the nape of his neck at an angle of forty-five degrees.

“Oblong maintains that the work will go far into six figures!” said the baronet, using the phrase which he had heard often repeated from the lips of the old steward.

“A hundred thousand!” said Mr. Farland, putting his hands into his breeches pockets, inclining his powdered head to one side, and shutting one eye, “a hundred thousand pounds! I do not think it will cost quite that; but if it need a hundred and fifty the work shall not be stinted for the lack of funds. Artingale shall be restored to what it should be!” And the old gentleman in his turn rose from his chair as he spoke, and took his stand upon the hearthrug, with his hands behind his coat-tails.

“You think that Oblong puts it above the mark at a hundred thousand?” inquired Sir Hildebrand.

“Well, yes! I think so. And I am not at all disposed to stint the work, Sir Hildebrand; far from it. But perhaps I may have better data to go upon than my friend Oblong.”

“Better data than Oblong!” said the baronet, with a strong expression of incredulity.

“Yes, I think so—better data than Oblong has; and, perhaps, I may venture to say, a somewhat more competent acquaintance with the subject-matter in hand. But I have not trusted solely to my own knowledge and experience. My old friend and crony, Henningtree, from Sillchester, has been staying with me for a few days, and I have talked the matter over with him. Henningtree, you know, is a very special and superior man. The whole work of the restoration of Sillchester Cathedral, which has been about for so many years, and is now nearly completed, has been in his hands. And it has been done in a manner that has won golden opinions from every competent judge in England. I suppose that as a student of English mediæval civil and ecclesiastical architecture, Henningtree

has not his equal in the profession. He is a man of large and liberal artistic culture, as well as thoroughly competent practical experience. Depend upon it, we could not have in all England a more useful and valuable opinion upon the subject than Henningtree's."

"I dare say—I dare say! So you have already consulted him?" said the baronet, in a tone which indicated a slight shade of annoyance at what appeared to him an approach towards an attempt to take the matter out of his own hands. This, in truth, was exactly what Mr. Farland was anxious to accomplish as far as might be possible hereafter; from no other motive and with no other intention than that the work should be done as well and as judiciously as possible; to which may be added an unconscious desire to have for himself as large a share as possible of the exceeding great pleasure of doing it. And he most unquestionably was very far more competent to conduct such a work than the baronet himself. But, of course, Sir Hildebrand did not perceive or for an instant admit any such thing. And the baronet had more than enough real affection for the place, and just enough of elementary notions on that

and kindred subjects to be quite alive to the pleasure of doing the work of restoration for himself, and jealously anxious to keep it in his own hands. And each of the two gentlemen knew the other quite well enough to be instinctively aware that he would try hard to get for himself the biggest share of this very delicious cake. Each had his point of vantage ground in the contests that were likely to arise between them on this subject. Artingale belonged to Sir Hildebrand; he was the master; and *en dernier ressort* his will must, of course, be supreme. But, on the other hand, Mr. Farland had infinitely more knowledge of the subject, infinitely better taste, and, in a word, all the advantages which a clever and highly-educated man has over a dull and very imperfectly educated one—and he had the power of the purse. Both gentlemen scented already the matters of conflict which were likely to arise between them; but both were far too eager for the work to be begun to permit these prospects of disagreement to stand in the way of their purpose.

“Well, consulted—” said Farland, in reply to the baronet’s last words; “of course it will be for you to do that; and much more of real con-

sultation must be had before anything can be definitively decided on as to the method of attaining the end we have in view. But it was proper, you must feel, Sir Hildebrand, that I should satisfy myself in some degree of the feasibility, the nature, and the extent of the work to be undertaken before I made to you the proposals which I have just laid before you."

"Yes, that is true, Farland—quite true," said the baronet, while his slowly-moving mind began to realize the truth that the work of restoring the Castle would not be altogether so unmixedly delightful in the doing as if he had the means for carrying on the work in his own pocket; "but what did Mr. Henningtree say, and how far had he gone into the matter?"

"Well, of course very imperfectly as yet—hardly can be said to have gone into it at all; but just forming a rough opinion from the plans which I showed him——"

"Plans of Artingale!" cried the baronet, becoming crimson with a different feeling from that which had flushed his face a few minutes previously—"plans of Artingale! Why, Farland, how came you to——"

"Well, the fact is, Sir Hildebrand, that when

the idea I have been suggesting to you first occurred to me, I obtained the existing plans of the Castle from old Oblong. No doubt he knew, or at least guessed my purpose; and you know, Sir Hildebrand, a hundred thousand pounds, more or less, is no trifle; and it was necessary that before making you my offer I should look before I leaped, you know—look before I leaped, eh?”

“Yes, that was right, too,” said Sir Hildebrand; “and what did Mr. Henningtree say?”

“Oh! his general remarks tended to bear me out in my idea that the entire work might probably be done for somewhat less than the sum we talked of—perhaps for eighty thousand or so. It would not be necessary, you know, to bring forward all the money at once.”

“No; when one was sure that the needful sums would be forthcoming as the works went on. And that brings us to the question of the interest, Farland,” said the baronet.

“Ay! the interest—hum! Well, now, you see, Sir Hildebrand, my *interest* in the matter is not easily measured at so much per cent. My interest is of a different kind. And look here, Sir Hildebrand, my proposition would be that no

interest whatever should be understood to accrue till the entire work shall have been completed ; and then the sum expended shall bear interest at three per cent. ; all such interest to be deemed to be satisfied and acquitted on the day of the marriage between your daughter and my son. Will that do ?”

“ I can only say, again, Farland, that the arrangement you propose is a most generous one,” said the baronet.

“ Well ; then, we can direct Oblong and my lawyer, young Hathaway, to prepare the necessary papers as soon as possible ; and there is nothing to prevent our putting our shoulders to the work to-morrow.”

“ To think,” ejaculated the baronet, casting up his eyes to the ceiling, “ that I have lived to begin the restoration of Artingale after all !”

“ Live ! why, you are a young man yet, Sir Hildebrand,” said the senior, cheerily.

“ Well, not a very old one, certainly ; but somehow I have been longing—hopelessly longing as far as I could see—for this day so long, that I began to think it would never come to me ; and now——”

“ It has come.”

“Thanks to you, my dear Farland—thanks to your kindness and friendship.”

“My dear Sir Hildebrand, not a word of that; we shall be working together for our common interest—for our common interest. Of course the first thing will be to have the Castle thoroughly, well, and scientifically surveyed; then we shall obtain with some degree of accuracy an idea of the nature of the results we intend to produce, and then we shall be able to decide where we had better begin.”

“Just so, Farland—quite my own idea!” said the baronet.

“Probably,” resumed the elder gentleman, “the grand hall and terrace front should receive our first attention. When we have once got the present heavy ceiling removed——”

“Remove the ceiling of the grand hall!” cried Sir Hildebrand, aghast; “why, that was always considered a *chef-d’œuvre* of the period of the Restoration. Artists were brought from Italy expressly for the execution of the work.”

“But the house, my *dear* Sir Hildebrand, was not built at the period of the Restoration. What have we to do with the period of the Restoration I should like to know—a period of utter deca-

dence as far as architecture is concerned? When we have got that ceiling out of the way, I was going to say——”

“Farland, I cannot consent to any such thing. All my life I have admired that fine ceiling; and I know that it has always been considered one of the fine things about the Castle. Why, I can remember, when I was a boy, that the old housekeeper used to bid the people who came to see the place to admire that ceiling, and tell them that it was the work of Italian artists brought to this country on purpose. I remember it as if it was yesterday.”

“But don’t you think, Artingale, that in expending a hundred thousand pounds on the restoration of the Castle we should do well to be guided by some rather better authority than the old housekeeper? If the plasterers who put up all that heavy ornamentation had been brought from heaven instead of from Italy, it would not go one inch towards showing that a fourteenth-century hall ought to have a seventeenth-century ceiling.”

“I can’t give up that ceiling, Farland; indeed I can’t. What on earth would you put in the place of it?”

“Probably nothing—probably we should find the original timbers in perfectly good condition. But if not they must be restored. We must have the grand old rafters, to be sure.”

“I never can consent to it, Farland,” said the baronet, who was now heavily pacing up and down the room in a fidgety state of distress.

“But consider the necessity, my dear Sir Hildebrand, of keeping to some uniformity of style in what we are going to do. I declare to you that I do not think it would be worth while to expend a hundred thousand pounds on the production of some hybrid monstrosity such as a millionaire brewer builds for himself when he wants to do something very grand; at least, I for my part should not consider it to be worth while.”

The meaning of this was very plain; and the baronet began to perceive that he should by no means be let to have his own way in the spending of the hundred thousand pounds. He had a presentiment that this was but the first of many a similar battle to be fought during the progress of the work, and he was the more anxious to hold his own, if it should be possible to him to do so.

“Certainly, I understand that the style of the work should be in some degree uniform,” he said, coming to a stand once more on the hearth-rug; “but if you consider, Farland, that that handsome ceiling was put up at great cost just because it was thought desirable to hide the naked rafters, and that at a time when taste was not at a low ebb——”

“I don’t know about that! At all events, the idea of those who put it up was to fashion the grand old building of a grander time to the taste of the day. Now we have learned better than that. Artingale should show itself in every feature to be the work of the age to which it really belongs. Now what have *you* to do, you, Artingale, who date in this land from the Conquest—what have *you* to do with the taste of the period of the Restoration? Do *you* want *your* house to look like the mushroom residence of some ducal son of a Stuart king’s mistress? Leave Restoration ceilings, plaster and whitewash to them, in heaven’s name, and let Artingale look like what it is, the house of a gentleman, whose forefathers were gentlemen in the land when their fathers, if they had any, were—God only knows what!”

The heavy baronet could not resist this well-

aimed flattery levelled at his weakest point. He felt that he must yield, and that the fine Italian ceiling was doomed.

“Well, Farland,” he said, “I suppose you are right, looking at it from that point of view; I suppose you are right. Have you spoken to Mr. Henningtree on *that* subject, too?” he added, with a slight remaining feeling of ill-humour.

“Oh, no! but I quite know what I am talking of on that point, believe me, Sir Hildebrand, without consulting anybody; as, indeed, you see it yourself, Artingale, when you reflect on it. But talking of Henningtree, it is very desirable that we should both of us together have a talk with him. You do not know him, I think?”

“No; I have been so little of late years at Silchester. I am not aware that I ever saw him even.”

“Well, then, will you come and dine with me to-morrow, and make his acquaintance; and bring the ladies with you? I have some of the neighbours from Billiford coming to dine with me—rather an omnium-gatherum party—but you don’t mind that. And we shall be able to have some talk with Henningtree. I would name another day, but he is away on some business of

his own to-day, and he returns to Sillchester the day after to-morrow."

"Thanks! with all my heart! Who have you got?"

"Why, in the first place, Mrs. Henningtree, a very clever little woman she is; then the Hathaways, father, son, and daughter. Let me see, three—five—and ourselves, seven; you and Miss Agnes and Mary, ten;—oh, and old Captain Curling and an American friend of his will make twelve. We shall be just a dozen. Ware thirteen!"

"All right! I rather like old Curling. As for Hathaway, I think he lives half his life in this house, worse luck!" sighed the husband of an invalid wife. "Did you not say that the young man was now your lawyer?"

"Yes, young Hathaway is my lawyer since old Barker died four months ago. Young Jonas was brought up in Barker's office, and then went away to London, till his old master's death seemed to make an opening for him at Billiford. Since that time, he has transacted whatever little business I have had to transact;—a very steady fellow, I fancy—and a competent lawyer."

"Very good, we'll come. At least, I suppose

my sister will have no objection. But I say, Farland, I suppose that the old green seal won't come out for such an omnium-gatherum party as you call it, eh?"

"Well, perhaps it might not have come out; but in your honour, it shall; and old Hathaway shall taste a glass of port that he will know to be better wine than he ever drank before. Hathaway understands a glass of wine as well as any man in the county."

"Five o'clock, eh?"

"Yes, five o'clock, as usual. And now I must find my boy, and be off."

"Won't you go in and say how do you do to the women?"

"Well—no. I must not this morning," said Mr. Farland, looking at his watch; "I must be at Billiford at one, and it is half-past twelve now. Good-day, and good-bye till to-morrow. I am deuced glad we have settled this business, deuced glad! Good-bye! I will send Richard, by your leave, to call Felix."

So the two old neighbours parted, Mr. Farland to ride at a brisk pace with his son to Billiford, and the baronet to remain in his arm-chair buried in thought and in pleasant dreams of

brick and mortar, and carpentry, and Artingale himself again, till he was roused by the luncheon bell, which always summoned him, not to join his sister and daughter at that ladies' meal, but to pay a visit to his invalid wife in her chamber.

CHAPTER VI.

LITTLE BERTHA.

“WELL, Felix,” said his father, as they trotted through the park, “how did you speed with the ladies? I did my business very satisfactorily in the study. How did you get on with yours in the boudoir, eh?”

“Well, you did not give me much time, sir,” said his son; “you must have done your business with Sir Hildebrand very quick, for——”

“Oh! you found the time short, eh? Then you liked your visit, I suppose?”

“Yes, sir, I liked it; they were very civil—the ladies were!”

“Civil! yes, I suppose they were civil!”

“But I mean they were quite pleasant, you know; not a word of quizzing a chap, or anything of that sort!”

“And the tip-toppers, and the number one-ers of the Bath pump-room *did* sometimes indulge in something of that sort, I conclude,” said the senior; with a grave smile.

“I don’t know about that, sir!” rejoined his son, blushing till his ears tingled; “I didn’t say that. But I do say that Miss Mary is the tip—that is, the out-and-outerest—I mean, sir——”

“I understand, Felix; you mean that Mary Artingale is the most charming girl that you ever met with, and that your Bath acquaintances are not fit to knot her shoe-tie! That’s about it, isn’t it?”

“Yes, sir,” said the young man, nodding his head emphatically, “that is it!”

“You’re right, my boy. And she is as good as she is charming; as clever as she is pretty.”

“Clever!” said Felix, alarmed; “is she clever? Well, she didn’t seem clever to me at all. And that’s a thing I generally find out in a person at once too. I don’t think there’s anything of that in her, father, I don’t indeed! Why, bless your heart! she never spoke of a book all the time I was there; and we were a-talking all the while, she and I, just as if we

were old friends. She did indeed! I don't think there can be much cleverness in her."

It was evident that Felix was already so much smitten as to be most unusually eloquent and enthusiastic in defence of Mary from so injurious an imputation. Upon another occasion his father would have been provoked to causticity by his son's anxiety to clear his lady-love of all suspicion of cleverness; but he was too well pleased at the result of the interview between the young people to be caustic, so he only said—

"And what did you talk about, then, that showed Mary to be free from all taint of cleverness?"

"Oh! about the country, and about horses, and riding, and—Miss Artingale is very fond of riding, sir. And, law bless you, she knows all the country side better twenty times than I do! She forded the Bill once, when the waters were out, and her horse had to swim for it. She has ridden up to the Moor many a day. She knows the names of every Tor on the Moor. Then she has been out for a sail in a revenue cutter; and she is very fond of dogs. Oh! I don't believe there's a bit of cleverness in her."

“Well, you’ll see more of her to-morrow; for they are coming over to Farlandstoke to dine, Sir Hildebrand, Miss Agnes, and Mary.”

“What, with old Curling, and the Hathaways?”

“Yes, to be sure! Why not? Sir Hildebrand is far too thorough a gentleman to find anything disagreeable in dining with honest folk, his neighbours, because they are not all of them descended from companions of William the Norman.”

“And is Lady Lavinia coming?” asked Felix, who had been so much of an absentee from home of late years as not to be aware of what all the rest of the country side knew, that the Lady Lavinia never, by any chance, left her home, or was to be found (and that very rarely) further from her chamber than the sunny flags of the south terrace of the Castle.

“Lady Lavinia!” answered his father; “oh no, she is too much of an invalid; she never goes out.”

“But Miss Agnes is coming? Do you know, father, I shouldn’t wonder if Miss Agnes was rather clever. She seemed more like it, a precious deal, than Miss Artingale.”

“What, did she speak of a book in your presence? But never mind! You need not make an offer to her. I can’t deny that I think she is rather clever. You must bear with the eccentricities of old folks, you know.”

Felix knew that his father was laughing at him, and coloured up accordingly. But he did not feel sufficiently sure of quite comprehending the gist of his satire to attempt any reply. So he fell into a meditation on what he should say to Mary on the following evening, and on her appearance in evening dress. And the rest of the ride to Billiford was accomplished by the father and son in silence.

Meanwhile “Aunt Agnes” had been yet more anxious to ascertain what impression Mary’s future suitor had made on her than Mr. Farland had been to discover how his son had been impressed by the heiress of the house of Artingale. Miss Agnes was a sharer in all her brother’s plans, schemes, hopes and wishes; and was perfectly aware of the family project of alliance. She too was every inch an Artingale, and was deeply anxious for the restoration of the old Castle. She too was fully alive to the duty of acting in all respects as Artingale

expected of her, and was ever ready, as has already been abundantly seen, to consider the claims of duty as paramount to every other consideration. Assuredly she was not less so disposed to consider them now, at forty, than she had been on the terrace of the Moat House at Sillchester when she was eighteen. Nevertheless, I think it very doubtful whether she would now have acted as she did on that occasion. Without being one whit less leal in her allegiance to conscience and to duty, I think it not improbable that she might, at the latter period of life, have judged differently as to the pre-eminence of the conflicting claims of rival duties. She still held in full force, however, the doctrine that man, and in a yet greater degree woman, should be ready at all times for self-sacrifice to whomsoever or whatsoever had a just claim on such devotion. And she held as ever to the belief that "Artingale" had very strong claims on all the sons and on all the daughters of the race. She had held, in her own case, that these claims were absolutely paramount. Was she prepared to hold the same now in her niece's case?

That all those same considerations which had led her, more than twenty years ago, to refuse

the suit of the Rev. Sandgate Perivale were strongly in favour of Mary's listening to the suit of the heir of Farlandstoke, Miss Agnes was fully aware. And if only Mary could feel towards Felix as she but too well remembered herself to have felt towards the poor precentor, all would be well. But if Miss Agnes had perhaps learned to doubt how far her own decision on her own case had been a wise and right one, she was far clearer that at all events the great and high claims of "Artingale" could not go to the extent of making it right for Mary, or any other girl, to accept a marriage in defiance of the dictates of her heart.

Under these circumstances Aunt Agnes was, as can be easily understood, not a little anxious to ascertain what impression young Farland had produced on her niece.

She herself had formed an estimate of the young man quite as correct, and somewhat more comprehensive, than his judgment of her had been. His persuasion that Miss Agnes was to be suspected of cleverness was exceeded by her conviction that he was in no degree open to any such reproach. Miss Agnes, in truth, was more than clever; she was a woman of large intelli-

gence and of (for that day) unusually varied culture; and she had in a very few minutes convinced herself that Felix Farland, junior, was a young man of very limited intelligence, and almost no culture at all.

But it did not, in her estimation, follow from that that he might not be a very good, and in all probability the best available husband for Mary, if Mary could like him. He seemed to be thoroughly good-natured, guileless and fresh-hearted. As far as could be gathered from any word that had fallen from him, his notions seemed to be those of an honest-hearted, upright, honourable and generous gentleman. Might not Mary be as happy with such an one, and might not such an one be as worthy a lord of Artingale as if he were as much disposed to live in a world of books as his father? Literary culture was a far more exceptional thing in those days than it has become—some think not wholly happily—in these latter days. Very worthy country gentlemen abounded who rarely opened a book from year's end to year's end, save their prayer-books in church time, and who would as soon have thought of speaking of any literary subject as of attempting the squaring of the circle. If Mary

could like him?—that was the all-important question.

“Well, Mary,” asked the aunt, as soon as he was gone, “what do you think of our new neighbour? Have you any recollection of him?”

“Not the least bit! I shouldn’t have known him if I had met him on the road. We were but children when I last saw him. Indeed, he seems but a big schoolboy still. What do I think of him, aunt? I don’t know! He seems very good-natured, and full of spirits. I think I like him. I was very much pleased by the manner in which he spoke of poor little Bertha.”

“Yes, so was I, Mary! I think his heart is in the right place. And that reminds me that Bertha was to come up to the Castle to make a sketch this afternoon. We will go out and see how she gets on, and say a word or two to her after luncheon, poor little thing!”

“Why not go first, aunt, and bring her in to lunch with us?” said Mary, eagerly.

“No; I think not, dear. It would not be quite fitting. You see, Mary, Bertha’s position is a very exceptional one; and that, indeed, makes the greatest part of the sadness of her lot, poor little thing. It would be to put her

mischievously out of her place to bring her to lunch with us ; and it would be equally unfitting, and, indeed, quite out of the question to ask her to go into the servants' hall, and take a meal with them."

"Oh, aunt! Send little Bertha to eat with the servants!"

"That is just what I say, my dear! One could not do it. That is the difficulty of her position. Old Hannah, her grandmother, in whose house she lives, would go into the servants' hall and dine with them, naturally, properly, and happily enough. Of course she would, having been herself a servant."

"Was she ever in papa's service?" asked Mary.

"No: she had been placed in the cottage where she now lives, and had a pension assigned to her by Sir George, your grandpapa, before his death. But for many years, for all the early part of her life, Hannah was a servant in the Castle. All the present servants, and all the neighbourhood know that she was so. We could not ask her to lunch with us. It would be no kindness to her to do so. And how can we treat her granddaughter, living in her house, otherwise?"

“I suppose you are right, aunt, as you always are, you know. But I am quite sure of this; that our little Bertha is more fit to be the companion of well-educated ladies than many who are admitted into the drawing-rooms of gentlemen and ladies. Compare her to Lucy Hathaway, now! Not that I mean to say anything ill-natured of Lucy. I like Lucy well enough. But which of the two is most like a lady?”

“Well, dearest, I dare say that I should give a judgment in accordance with yours on such a point,” replied her aunt; “but for all that, Lucy, whether justly or not, has the consciousness that in a drawing-room she is in her right place; while poor little Bertha would have still more strongly the consciousness that she was not in her right place. That, as I said, is the misfortune of her position. She has no right place.”

“Poor little darling!” rejoined Mary. “Well, if we must not ask her to lunch with us, we will go out to her afterwards, and have a chat with her, and look at her drawing, and encourage her, poor little thing! I am sure she needs it. And we may take out some fruit to her, mayn’t we, aunt? There can be no harm in that.”

“ No, I think there can be no harm in that,” acquiesced the elder lady.

Little Bertha, the subject of the above conversation—she was never called otherwise than “ little Bertha ” by every soul in the neighbourhood ; and I think that very few ever remembered that her real name was Bertha Donne—little Bertha was the daughter of one Richard Donne, by his wife Bertha, the daughter of Hannah Campbell, the old pensioned servant of the Artingale family. Hannah’s husband had been Sir George Artingale’s butler. And in the days of Sir George’s prodigal life, the butler and the laundry-maid had been quite sufficiently well off to give their only child Bertha an education much above their own rank in life. Bertha Campbell had been sent to a good school, where it had come to pass that the drawing-master who attended the establishment had fallen in love with her, and, somewhat against the liking of the well-to-do servants, her parents, had married her. They had hoped that their child might do better than become the wife of a poor artist. Bertha Campbell, however, looking at the matter from a different stand-point, thought the promotion from the laundry and

butler's pantry to the atelier a great one, and at all events desired no better. The event, however, went far to justify the views of her parents. For Richard Donne was one of those luckless men who, despite undeniable talent and the absence of any very marked faults, seem destined never to succeed. The story of him and his young wife, their struggles, their defeats, and of the gradual closing of the waters over their heads was the common old one, that has so often been told. The luckless couple had, however, one piece of luck in their lives. They died within a few weeks of each other! It may, perhaps, be counted also as another piece of good fortune that they had but one child, a little girl, the "little Bertha" of our story. This child had from a very early age shown very strong signs of inheriting her father's artistic talent, and, indeed, her mother's; for it had been a similarity of tastes and tendencies in this respect which had mainly tended to bring together Bertha Campbell and the poor drawing-master. And throughout and despite all the miseries and struggles of their life, the poor artist and his wife had striven and contrived to provide for the liberal and artistic education of

their little Bertha. And when they died, leaving her wholly unprovided for, without a relative in the world except her then widowed grandmother, old Hannah Campbell, the pensioned servant of the Artingales, though she might hope that at some future day her talent might be her bread-winner, she was not yet either old enough in years to attempt becoming a noun substantive in the world, or old enough in art to obtain a livelihood by her pencil. There was no course open to her save becoming an adjective to her grandmother. There was no great hardship in this to either of the parties concerned. Old Hannah lived in a very pretty cottage on the Artingale estate, comfortably enough on a pension, which, together with the product of her savings, made one other mouth to be fed—and especially that the mouth of little Bertha—no evil. And the company of her granddaughter was of course a great comfort to the now very aged woman. Nor was Bertha's life at all an uncomfortable one, as far as the supply of her material wants was concerned. Nor was old Hannah otherwise than kind to her. But little Bertha's future prospect seemed dark and dreary enough. Her grandmother

was now eighty-five; and though a hale and hearty old woman, could not be expected to last much longer. What was to become of little Bertha when she was gone? Then the old woman, though kind enough to her granddaughter, could not, or thought she could not, afford to obtain for her the necessary means of improving herself in her art. Indeed, could she have paid the price of lessons, how were they to be obtained there on the north coast of Sillshire? So little Bertha had to make her uphill way for herself as best she might, with many sore misgivings as to what was to happen to her when her grandmother's life should drop.

And truly it would be difficult to imagine a human being less fit to be left to fend for herself, alone in the wide world, than poor little Bertha Donne. Her sisters in unprotected isolation, who have passed through similar trials, will know that the fact that she was in her own way extremely pretty was not calculated to make her path a safer or more easy one. But she was in every respect unfit to stand alone. She was the tiniest, frailest-looking little creature! Her appearance suggested the idea that the wind of a rough word would blow her away into the

farthest corner of the room. Then she was timid and distrustful of herself beyond the ordinary timidity of girls; her overweeningly humble estimate of herself and her own value in the world represented to her that she had no right to claim or expect any place save the humblest in the social scale. What was she good for? The making of her grandmother's bed seemed to her a function quite as high as she had any business to aspire to! And yet she was the daintiest little creature, exquisite as the ermine in her personal purity, with a transparent miniature little hand, that seemed taxed to the extent of its powers in manipulating a tiny palette and a camel-hair brush. Light as a fairy, quick in her movements, shy as a startled fawn, blushing painfully at the merest word addressed to her by any save the few whom she loved, almost unable from excess of timidity to speak a word herself in return, save when her heart was unlocked by the golden key of affection—little Bertha was in truth ill-calculated to face the future that to all appearance was before her.

I have said that she was very pretty, and I think that such would have been the almost universal male verdict on the question. But to

hear Bertha Donne called pretty was one of the things that Lucy Hathaway could not stand. Perhaps Lucy fancied that if Bertha were pretty she could not be so, being, as she was, the very opposite of Bertha in almost every respect. But this would have been an error arising from want of due catholicity of taste; for unquestionably Lucy Hathaway was a very pretty girl also; but it riled her to be told that Bertha was pretty—an insignificant, under-sized, skin-and-bone little atom of a creature, with no features at all save a great pair of eyes ever so much too big for her weeny little face, and a huge mass of pale, colourless curls!

It was a wonderful head of hair for that tiny person, absolutely reaching, when shaken down, below her knees; fine as the finest silk; and whatever Lucy might say and think, the sun, when he shot his beams in and out, hither and thither among the waves of it, did not find it colourless. Why, there was every tint from golden amber to the veritable “*blonde cendrée*,” which Greuze loved to paint, to be found among the lights and shades and reflections of it!

Then as to those great, liquid, widely-opened eyes, it was all very well for Lucy Hathaway,

with her bright, sparkling, flashing, black eyes, to declare that little Bertha had no meaning in her limpid blue ones. But if anybody had had the luck to look into the depths of those same blue eyes, when little Bertha, sitting, sketch-book on knee, in some safely-secluded haunt, had been betrayed into idleness and reverie by the song of a lark in the blue sky above her; or even when, standing by her grandmother's arm-chair, she looked down on the old face feverish with suffering, and strove with soft fingers and softer tongue to charm away rheumatic pains—why then, I think, such looker would have liked to look again.

Then little Bertha had the most delicate complexion ever seen on a human face. Was it snowy-pale, or blush-rose pink, or the colour of the first faintest streak of a summer dawn? Hard to say; for it changed with every passing minute. A word, a thought, a sight, a sound, was sufficient to vary its tints, as capriciously as the cloud-shadows flitting over a sunny sea change the hues of it. Of course the bright, brilliant, richly-tinted colouring of a sparkling brunette like Lucy Hathaway—colouring such as Titian knew how to paint—is a very lovely

thing. But for all that, there are hearts, and moods of the heart, to which the exquisite delicacy of little Bertha's face might be found to appeal more irresistibly.

This was the "poor little darling" who, according to Aunt Agnes' judgment, could not be asked into luncheon, but to whom fruit from the luncheon-table might be taken out, and who might be petted and protected, and encouraged in any other way that could be devised, not incompatible with that eternal fitness of things which placed so immense an interval between the ladies of Artingale Castle and the granddaughter of an old servant of the family.

So as soon as the luncheon had been eaten, Mary dressed up a little basket with fruit and flowers as coquettishly as if it had been intended for presentation to a queen, using, if the truth is to be told, some of the beautiful hot-house flowers which young Farland had brought her for the purpose; and the two ladies slipped out upon the great southern terrace in quest of their protégée. It was clear that Mary knew where to find her, for she guided her aunt directly to the spot which the little artist had chosen for her work. Passing along the entire length of

the great terrace, till they reached the chapel at the further end of it, they there descended into the shrubbery which enclosed the lower garden on that side, and entered a little path, which wound through the shrubs round the eastern end of the chapel till it came to a secluded little clearing amid the trees of the rookery to the westward of the chapel, from which spot a seat, afforded by a felled tree, commanded an exquisitely beautiful peep of one ivy-mantled window of the chapel, of a portion of the terrace with its imperfect and broken balustrades beyond, and a glimpse of the spire of Artingale Church rising above the woods, which formed the boundary of the park to the eastward. This was the charming little bit of home-view which Bertha had chosen to exercise her pencil on. There were all the component parts of an almost perfect landscape; but the attempt was an ambitious one.

The ladies came upon her as, seated on the trunk of the prostrate tree, with her paper stretched on a board on her knees, she was intently measuring some of her distances by the aid of her pencil upheld between the subject and her eye. The rooks overhead were holding a

very animated debate, in which very various opinions prevailed as to what on earth she could be about there in the midst of their rookery ; but their chattering did not in the least disturb the little artist, whose absorption in her work was such that she was not aware of the coming of her visitors till they were close to her.

The landscape on which she was at work was a lovely one. But many an artist would have deemed the sketcher herself, in the setting around her, a yet more attractive subject. The fairy-like little figure was dressed in a close-fitting brown holland dress, made in the plainest possible fashion from neck to foot, without a scrap of ornament of any kind save a blue ribbon for a belt at the tiny waist. It was a bright sunny morning, and she had taken off her little straw hat, and deposited it on the log beside her ; so that the sunbeams straying among the trees of the rookery played on her wealth of curls, as they fell behind her head thrown back for the better taking of the observation on which she was engaged.

She started as Mary spoke to her, having been so intent on her work as to have been unaware of their coming.

“Hard at work, eh, Bertha? And how does the drawing come on? Let me look, while you eat some of this fruit Aunt Agnes and I have brought you.”

“Oh, Miss Artingale, how good of you! How can I thank you as I ought!” she said as she rose hastily from her seat, blushing up to the roots of her hair, while she made a deep curtsy to the elder lady, adding as she did so, “Miss Agnes, I am sure I can never tell you how grateful I am for all your kindness to me. What lovely, lovely fruit!”

“But you are to eat it, not look at it; and I am to look at the sketch-book meanwhile. Come, let me see what progress has been made,” said Mary, stretching out her hand towards the book, which the owner held shyly down on the other side of her little person, as if she would fain have concealed the nature of her occupation. Thus pressed, she put the book into Mary’s hands, and thus had her own at liberty to take the basket of fruit.

“Now you eat one of those pears, and take no heed of us, while we criticise your work,” said Mary, holding up the open sketch-book, so that her aunt could also see the artist’s work.

“Upon my word, you have got on!” she continued; “is not that window charming, aunt, and the ivy so freely touched! I declare I did not think she could have managed the perspective of the terrace so well. It is really a difficult bit of drawing. Has she not improved, eh, aunt?”

“Indeed I really think she has! Perseverance and labour, my dear child,” said Miss Agnes, with more of moral than artistic truth, “rarely fail to insure improvement. I cannot doubt that you will succeed in making yourself an artist.”

Bertha looked up into the face of the stately figure, holding her sketch-book far above her own little head, with a shy glance of gratitude, while a flush of pleasure came over her face.

“I have had a greater bit of encouragement,” she said timidly, “with this drawing than I ever had before. It is sold,” she added, quickly withdrawing her eyes from the tall figure of Miss Agnes, and casting them on the ground.

“Indeed!” cried Mary; “I congratulate you with all my heart. ‘Ce n’est que le premier pas qui coûte.’—The first step is always the most difficult one,” she added, thinking that the

French proverb might be unintelligible to little Bertha. Bertha understood it, however, perfectly well, and would have pronounced the words more like a Frenchwoman than Mary Artingale did. For the little creature had all the delicacy of perception which belongs to the artistic idiosyncrasy, and which, developing itself in the ear, as well as, in Bertha's case, in the eye, produces facility in acquiring correctness in the pronunciation of the sounds of other languages than her own.

“And pray who is the purchaser?” said Mary, with genuine curiosity.

“The worst is, that I am afraid that the purchaser's motive for buying the drawing was pure kindness and generosity, and not any real merit in the drawing itself,” replied Bertha, still fixing her eyes on the ground, and playing nervously with the ends of the blue strings of her hat, which she had taken into her hand when rising to salute her visitors.

“But who is the purchaser?” insisted Mary.

“Young Mr. Farland,” said Bertha, becoming crimson all over, for no reason whatever that she could have possibly guessed. “He has just come home to Farlandstoke, and was riding past

grandmother's cottage, and got off his horse to come in and ask how she did, as he used to do, years ago when he was a boy. And I was sitting at the little table at the window, at work correcting my perspective, and so he saw the drawing. And he was very kind, and said it was very pretty, and that if I would sell it, he should very much like to have it. Was it not kind of him?"

"Yes! it was kind," said Miss Agnes; "but I dare say that it was none the less true that he thought it a very pretty drawing. I am sure I think so."

"And how much is he to give you for it, my pet? I am so glad," said Mary.

"He wanted me to name the price, and I did not know what to say; and grandmother, who was sitting over the fire, seeing the difficulty I was in, said that perhaps he would not think ten shillings too much. And Mr. Farland said that that would be robbing me—that he knew that the drawing was worth more—and that if I would let him have it for a pound, he should think he had made a very good bargain. But I know that it was all said from kindness to help me," added the little artist, again stealing a

glance at the face of Miss Agnes, as she ceased speaking.

Miss Agnes thought that she knew as much also. She had a strong idea that our friend Felix cared about as much for the poetry of the pretty water-colour sketch as he would have done for that of a page of Spenser. But she was confirmed in her notion that Mary's suitor was a thoroughly good fellow.

"I think that the purchase does great credit to Mr. Farland's good taste," said Mary; "and I think that the drawing is worth the price he named for it; and I congratulate you on your first earnings with all my heart. And now you must finish the drawing as carefully as you possibly can, and we shall see what old Mr. Farland, who is a real good judge, says to it."

"Oh! I shall be so afraid. I am afraid that he will say that his son has made a very foolish purchase. But he will know that it was done out of kindness," said poor little Bertha, really shaking at the idea of her poor drawing having to undergo the criticism of the learned Mr. Farland, and his spectacles and his pig-tail.

"Never fear, little one. Finish your drawing as carefully as you can, and I have no doubt

that it will find favour in the eyes of Mr. Farland. I think Mr. Felix has made a very good purchase, and I shall tell him so," said Mary, with the least little bit of heightened colour on her handsome face as she spoke.

"And now we will leave you to your work, my dear," said the elder lady; "we shall come and look in upon you at the cottage before long."

And with that the two ladies turned to continue their walk; and little Bertha sat herself down on her log to work at her drawing with redoubled ardour.

CHAPTER VII.

WHO'S WHO AT FARLANDSTOKE.

ON the following day the dinner party at Farlandstoke came off according to the programme Mr. Farland had given Sir Hildebrand when he asked him to join it. But as a dinner of a dozen country neighbours is apt to be a dull affair to outsiders, who know nothing of the social "whos" and "whats" and social politics of the neighbourhood, it will be well to let the reader make some acquaintance with those members of the party to whom he has not yet been introduced.

The baronet of Artingale, his sister, and his daughter, as well as the host, Mr. Farland, and his son Felix—five of the party—are in some degree already acquaintances. Of Mr. Henningtree also the reader knows, at least, who and

what he was. Mr. Farland had in no degree been blinded by partiality for his old friend and fellow "virtuoso,"—as the phrase was in those days—when he had spoken to Sir Hildebrand in the terms he had used of Cyril Henningtree, F.S.A., and a great many other capital letters to boot.

Henningtree was one of the earliest of that race of scholars and men of taste who, towards the close of the Georgian era, discovered that the birth of art did not date from the "*Renaissance*," that we in England, in one and perhaps the noblest of the arts, possessed treasures of a far higher order and value than aught that we had ever succeeded in creating by attempting to imitate Greek or Roman art. He had superintended the thorough restoration of the grand old cathedral of his native city in a spirit and with a sympathetic feeling which had been for many a long generation unknown in England, and was now bringing the work to completion in a manner that had won the admiration of every competent judge in Great Britain. Had he chosen to push his career as an architect in London, he could have been yet more widely known, and have left a more largely recognised

reputation behind him. But quiet, modest, and retiring in his nature, not altogether dependent on his profession, which had been that of his father before him—indeed it would be more correct to say not at all dependent, for his modest competence was sufficient for the needs of himself and his wife, whom he had married late in life, and who had borne him no children;—too much devoted to general culture to be willing to give himself up entirely to the practice of his profession, and, moreover, an enthusiastic lover of his native city and his native county, he had chosen the “fallentis semita vitæ” of a country town, and he had never repented of his choice. He was one of those men who indissolubly unite their names to that of some locality. He was “Henningtree, of Sillchester,” and was, beyond the sound of his own much-loved cathedral bells, never spoken of otherwise. And he was “of Sillchester” most thoroughly and entirely. There was hardly a human being in the city whom he did not know, and certainly not one who did not know him. For more than one generation had pushed up from boyhood to manhood while the unchanging figure of Cyril Henningtree was one of those

best known in the close and on the High-street of Sillchester. Indeed, the tall, spare figure of the architect could hardly fail to be well known, for it was a remarkable one. He wore powder and pig-tail, and a broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat, much like that of a Quaker. The resemblance to one of that society was increased by the fashion of his coat, which was also cut after the old fashion, collarless. But it was always chocolate in colour, as were also the other habiliments, including long gaiters up to the knee. Of course, shirt collars were unknown in that day. Mr. Henningtree wore an unstarched white cravat with no visible tie, and beneath it a very abundant and rather elaborate shirt frill, coming out from between the unbuttoned sides of his waistcoat as far as half way between his neck and his waistband. This rather specially large show of cambric was always of the finest quality, and of the most exquisite purity of colour and condition. And those who had ever seen the old gentleman never forgot the elaborate and dainty elegance of his precautions to ward off from this model frill the slightest possible defilement from the snuff, which he consumed in rather large quantities. If Mr. Hen-

ningtree made any difference in his apparel in summer and winter, the extra protection needed was obtained by some means which was not visible on the surface. For the outward appearance of the tall, slim, and rather elegant figure was always the same—always, except that at dinner time the chocolate-coloured garments were exchanged for a black suit of the same fashion, and the gaiters for black silk stockings.

Such was for many a year Henningtree, of Sillchester. The place he occupied in the city was a marked, a well recognised, and an important one. It was difficult to imagine how Sillchester could go on without Cyril Henningtree. Several constituent parts of it could not go on without him—among others, a sort of ecclesiological and antiquarian printing society, of which he had been the founder, and of which Dr. Theophilus Lindisfarne, one of the canons, a scholarly banker of the city named Falconer, and Mr. Farland, were among the leading members.

Dr. Theophilus Lindisfarne read from the altar every Sunday the command which forbids the coveting of one's neighbour's wife; and I have not the smallest suspicion that the canon

coveted his friend Henningtree's wife in any such sense as to make him a breaker of the commandment. But he did sometimes groan in spirit over the difference of his own lot in this matter from that of his friend and brother antiquary. For little Mrs. Henningtree was in all respects a help meet for her husband, while the canon's wife, the Lady Sempronia Lindisfarne, was, as all Sillchester knew, in many respects a thorn in the flesh to her husband, and especially in her dislike of, and opposition to, his literary dilettanteism. Mrs. Henningtree, on the other hand, took the utmost interest in her husband's pursuits, and had in many cases executed the very able drawings which illustrated his contributions to the printing society.

'Twas the difference, in fact, between brains and no brains. The poor, peking, peevishly pious Lady Sempronia was, I fancy, from all I have ever heard of her, a fool. And unquestionably Mrs. Henningtree was a very clever woman. She was a little bit of a creature, and had not been without a fair share of personal attractions when, some thirty years before the time at which the reader is asked to make her acquaintance, Mr. Henningtree had married her

on the verge of old-maidenism, at the age of three or four-and-thirty. She had been, and indeed still was, a bright brunette, with dark, piercing eyes, and black hair in abundant quantity. She had been—and again, I may add, still was—remarkable for her exceeding activity and brisk, quick, almost brusque movements. Her body, like her mind, had the almost lightning agility of some of the insect world, who dart, flit, flash, and shoot hither and thither with a rapidity which defies the slower human eye to follow it. I do not quite mean that when Mrs. Henningtree jumped from her writing-table to consult some volume on the shelves at the further side of the room, or when on a Sunday she flitted up the nave to her seat in the choir of the cathedral, or when she shot into her drawing-room to receive some visitor, as it was her wont to do, and dashed into full talk the instant she entered the room, the rapidity of her motions did absolutely render her invisible, but it was so quick, spasmodic, and spring-like, that it really did suggest the mode of movement of some dragon-fly or other flashing creature of that sort.

The little lady had been the long motherless

daughter of a late canon of Silchester, and had been for many years the pupil and companion of her father, when at his death she was left almost unprovided for, and when Henningtree made her his wife. Her father, Dr. Blackridge, had been a very learned man, and had made his daughter a very learned woman in sundry very out-of-the-way and, many people will think, very useless departments of learning — useless, at least, to a young lady. Thus Miriam Blackridge had been, and Miriam Henningtree still was, a very competent Hebraist, largely read in matters pertaining to Eastern history, philosophy, and philology, a good Syriac scholar, and possessed of a very considerable acquaintance with several of the cognate languages.

Without being prepared to admit that they were altogether useless to her, I am free to confess that I do not think that any of these rare gifts contributed much to the winning of Cyril Henningtree's heart. He was a sufficiently large-hearted and liberal-minded man, sufficiently a lover of all intellectual culture, to consider Miriam Blackridge not one whit a less desirable wife because she was possessed of all this out-of-the-way lore. He was pleased that

she should possess, or rather that he should possess in her behalf, the rich and valuable library of her late father, which was nearly the whole of her inheritance from him, and which, had he not come forward with the offer of his hand, must have been sold to find the means of procuring the small modicum of daily bread that the little lady required. He was pleased to see Walton's Polyglott shouldering Piranesi on his shelves, though he liked to complain to his intimates that Miriam's light literature really turned his slimmer, though taller, folios out of house and home. But the marriage between Cyril and Miriam did not turn the former into a student of Oriental philology, while it did turn the latter into an ecclesiologist and architectural antiquarian and draughtswoman. For the little lady's intelligence was the more versatile of the two. Indeed nothing, however remote from her usual paths of study, nothing in the way of information, came amiss to her, or failed to be seized on and assimilated by the omnivorous agility of her mind. She was full of fun withal, a capital caricaturist, always ready for and thoroughly enjoying a laugh, and as young in mind, and apparently almost in body, as she had

been thirty years ago. She was the very salt of the best society at Sillchester—only that the ladies of the Close and of the Castle Hill (that is, the aristocratic quarter of the ancient cathedral city) were rather afraid of her, and dreaded a certain wicked twinkle that would come into her bright dark eyes sometimes, on occasions when they were totally unaware that any joke was hovering in the drawing-room air.

On the whole, it may be said, that a better choice of a wife, adapted for his special needs, no man ever made than did Cyril Henningtree when he selected Miriam Blackridge for his partner in life.

Well, then, who have we next of the party assembled in the long, low drawing-room at Farlandstoke, waiting to go into dinner punctually at five, whether the last guest had arrived or not? There were the three from Artingale; the host and his son; the Henningtrees, staying in the house; Captain Curling and the stranger, his friend, and old Hathaway and his daughter—eleven. Young Jonas Hathaway, the lawyer, had not yet made his appearance; but there were yet three minutes before the bell would ring, which at Farlandstoke irremissibly sum-

moned the guests to the dining-room as the clock struck six.

Captain Curling and the stranger from the other side of the Atlantic, his friend!—what of them? Captain Curling, as invariably so called as if he had been a post-captain in His Majesty's service, was in fact a veteran and retired commander of the merchant service. He was, however, a somewhat better educated man than was at that time common in that station of life, and had been a very efficient, a very useful, and highly trusted man. Mercantile adventure in those days threw men into situations of difficulty and danger more frequently than in these more quiet times, and Captain Curling had acquitted himself on some such occasions so as to merit the high approbation and entire confidence of his employers. He had also been a very successful man, and now, at the age of sixty-six, had been able, some seven or eight years ago, to settle down on a very comfortable competence in a pretty cottage within five minutes' walk of his native town of Billiford, a widower and, to his great sorrow, childless, but happy in the respect and liking of the whole neighbourhood.

Now, it had so happened, that Captain Cur-

ling, on the occasion of one of his numerous voyages across the Atlantic, had been thrown into business relations with a merchant and shipowner of the name of Fraser, of Salem, in the new State of Massachusetts. This business relation had, on that and on the occasion of subsequent voyages, ripened into friendship. And when, some ten years previous to the time of which our story treats, Mr. Fraser, in consequence of some of those sudden misfortunes to which all commerce, and especially that of our go-ahead cousins in their new country, is liable, became an almost ruined man, his English friend, Curling, was able to be of use to him in obtaining a good berth for his only son, George Fraser, on board a merchant ship, under a good captain. The ruined Salem merchant did not long survive his misfortunes, and George, who had lost his mother years before, was left an orphan, with his own way to make in the world.

That way, however, he had appeared to be very well able to make. Son of a shipowner, and coming out of a boyhood passed among a population of so seafaring a character as that of his native town, George Fraser was as much of a seaman as he was of a landsman when he began

his career as a mariner. He rapidly made himself master of his profession, and having gained the goodwill and confidence of his employers, was in the course of a few years, mainly in consequence of his own merit, but in some degree owing to the favour due to the friendship of the English captain, his father's friend, promoted to be mate of a first-class clipper. In that capacity he still further advanced himself in the opinion of his owners; and it so happened that he had the opportunity of doing so not only as a seaman, but as a shrewd and trustworthy man of business. So that when, about seven or eight months previously to the date of the dinner party at Farlandstoke, a vessel belonging to George Fraser's employers had been lost in the Bristol Channel, and the business arising out of that misfortune had necessitated the presence of a clever, active, and entirely trustworthy agent on the scene of the calamity, Fraser had been sent on the errand.

He had in this manner been brought into the near neighbourhood of his own and his father's old friend, Captain Curling, who had thus the great pleasure of welcoming George beneath his own roof. And thus it came to pass that the Salem

mate of an American merchantman was one of the party assembled in Mr. Farland's drawing-room.

"Bring him! bring him with you by all means, captain," Farland had said when the worthy captain had assigned the presence of this stranger within his gates as a reason for not accepting on that occasion the invitation of his neighbour. "Felix will ride over and tell Mr. Fraser, with my compliments, how happy we shall be to see him. Faith, we shall be all the livelier for having a new element among us!"

This had been said and settled before it had occurred to Mr. Farland to ask the party from Artingale to join his dinner-table on that day; or possibly he might not have invited the New England mate to meet the Artingale ladies. But, in truth, had he previously made acquaintance with George Fraser, he need not, and would not have hesitated on this score. Though as unlike as could well be to any of the types of social men whom it was at all probable he would meet at Farlandstoke, and in many respects devoid of the conventional manners of English gentlemen, the American sailor was a man that would not have disgraced any company.

In the first place he was remarkably handsome, and stood six feet two in his stockings; thus over-topping young Farland by an inch or so. His features were not of the type which is most familiar to us as that of our trans-atlantic cousins in general. His face was more like the face of a north-country Englishman. It was a bright, genial, loveable face, with laughing deep-blue eyes, which looked out frankly and joyously on all the world around them; a wide mouth, well cut above a square and sturdy chin, and ever ready to relax into a kindly smile, which disclosed a perfect range of regular and brilliantly white teeth; crisply curling light-brown hair, and a ruddy clean complexion, naturally clear and transparent, but well tanned and bronzed by many a daily and many a nightly exposure to the salt spray and cutting blasts of the Atlantic. His limbs, both arms and legs, seemed to be specially long; and he had a kind of loose litheness in his gait and movements which had a sort of ready-for-anything expression in it, not without its charm. He wore no beard or moustache—these appendages were not so common in those days as now—and was always scrupulously well-shaven, which added

to the bright joviality of his whole appearance. Always, apparently, in the highest spirits, and in manner and bearing more like a great joyous boy than a man, one would have said that misfortune and sorrow could not enter where George Fraser was. Nevertheless he was now eight-and-twenty years of age, and he had known of sorrow and trouble a fair share in his time. And lightsome and boyish as he seemed, his employers could have certified that a shrewder head and sounder judgment could not readily be found than those of George Fraser. A phrenologist would have guessed as much to look at him; for though his head was rather a small one for his great height, he had a brow and forehead that gave promise of more than one good gift, intellectual and spiritual. In a word, no man could look on the young American mate without trusting him; and no woman without being attracted towards him. On the evening in question he appeared in Mr. Farland's drawing-room in a complete suit of light-blue cloth, coat, waistcoat, and trousers of the same material. The solecism of his appearance in such a costume was not at that day quite so notable as it would be now; for men did not

then confine themselves so scrupulously as in these days to the costume of an undertaker's man at a funeral. Sir Hildebrand, for instance, always wore a blue coat with gilt buttons, and a white waistcoat; and young Farland was dressed also in a blue coat, of a somewhat more recent fashion. Mr. Farland and Mr. Henningtree were dressed in scholarly black, with powder, black silk stockings, and silver buckles. Mr. Jonas Hathaway, in black also, but he wore no powder nor buckles, and his hose were of woollen. Captain Curling was dressed in a snuff-coloured suit from head to ankle, with an exhibition of shirt frill that outdid Mr. Henningtree himself. I am sure the captain, as a prudent mariner, must have deemed it right to "take in" some of all that flowing cambric, whenever there were any signs of wind in the sky.

As to the Hathaways, Jonas Hathaway, generally called "the Doctor," though no diploma had ever so dubbed him, was a "general practitioner" of the old school, possessing no very profound medical science, but a large dose of mother wit; a shrewd, long-headed, observant, coarse, humorous, upright man, taking a rather coarse and vulgarly conventional view

of his duty in that station of life to which Providence had called him, but acting up to that view conscientiously ; well liked and esteemed in the neighbourhood, and held to be a thorough good fellow by high and low.

Miss Hathaway—Lucy Hathaway—the only sister of her only brother Jonas, the younger, was now understood by herself and everybody else, except the parish register, to be four-and-twenty years of age. But the last-mentioned authority held her to be thirty. She has already been in some measure described, as far as outward appearance goes. For the rest, Lucy was not a bad girl, in her way. She was a very good daughter, and a very efficient manager of her father's widowed household. She was kind, too, to the poor of the parish, and not only that, but useful among them. She did a good deal of real hard work as a sort of medical aide-de-camp to her father ; and was all the more efficient for good, and all the more acceptable to the objects of her care, in that she did not attempt to extend her ministrations to other than their material needs. I think, too, that Lucy was naturally a good-natured girl, even to her own equals and contemporaries, or,

at least, that she had been so once upon a time. But I take it, those unacknowledged six years, which could not be altogether cancelled from her consciousness, had, in those days, the effect of imparting a dash of spleen and acerbity to her feelings towards her should-be contemporaries, but real juniors of her own sex. Lucy Hathaway did not wish to figure in the churchyard of Billiford, when her time should have come, as "Lucy Hathaway, *spinster*, late of this parish;" and it may be feared, perhaps, that the increasing probabilities that this might be the fate in store for her were beginning to exercise an unfavourable influence on her character and temper. Nevertheless, and for all that, Lucy Hathaway was generally understood and admitted by the world of Billiford and its neighbourhood to be not a bad sort of girl. And I am sure that, as she appeared in the drawing-room at Farlandstoke on the occasion in question, in her simple white muslin dress—a real Indian muslin, please to observe, well known to be such by the rank and fashion of Billiford—with a cherry-coloured sash and neck ribands, a dress admirably setting off her bright brunette style of beauty, she must have been admitted to be a pretty one.

To tell the truth, Lucy was very specially anxious to look her best on the present occasion. This dinner-party was an important occasion to her. It is hardly fair to say in broad, plain words what Lucy had never in such categorical form avowed to herself, much less to any one else in the world; but I think that she was not without a hope that the great and glorious promotion of being made Mrs. Felix Farland might fall upon her; and I would by no means have it supposed that such a latent and carefully-hidden-away thought was conceived in such a fashion as to involve any very censurable conduct or sentiment in pretty Lucy. Enough has been said of Felix to show that he may well have appeared a very Phœbus Apolló in the eyes of poor little Lucy Hathaway. What knew she of his inability to scale the heights, even the lower slopes of knowledge? And what would she have cared if she had known? Was he not as good as gold, and as handsome as eye or heart could desire? Was he not the *facile princeps* of all the youths she had ever seen? I do not think that Lucy was in love with Felix; it would, of course, be out of all rule and highly improper for her to be so, until he had duly

asked her to love him. Nor do I imagine that she would have worn the willow, or paled her bright cheek, if so it were that Felix should make no request of the kind. But she was quite ready to be asked, and to make him a good and loving wife if he had the grace to do so. She also had been a playfellow of his, though some years his senior, in early days, and perhaps—perhaps there might have been some one or two occasions in the course of later years when Lucy might have had some fair ground for thinking that Felix looked on her not altogether with indifference.

At five precisely the dinner-bell was rung, and Mr. Farland at once gave his arm to Mrs. Henningtree, while her husband offered his to Miss Agnes Artingale. They had been old acquaintances in former years, when Agnes had been an inhabitant of her aunt's house in Silchester, but had seen little or nothing of each other in all the long track of time since those days. The baronët took Lucy Hathaway, who looked very bright and pretty in her blushes at such promotion; and Mary was escorted by her old acquaintance of many years and many days, "the

Doctor," Lucy's father. Captain Curling, his friend Fraser, and Felix followed.

"Hathaway, what has become of Jonas, eh?" said Mr. Farland, as they went out of the drawing-room.

"Don't give him up yet, sir!" said old Hathaway; "we have got to cross the hall and the billiard-room yet; and I should not wonder if he were to save his credit for punctuality still."

And sure enough, the words were hardly out of his mouth, when, as they were crossing the inner hall, Mr. Jonas appeared, not coming from the direction of the front door, but from the opposite side, on which lay the offices of the house. He came in silently and swiftly, a slender, brisk, unexceptionably-dressed little figure, with a very good-looking face on its shoulders—a figure whom, in the absence of all information on the subject, one might perhaps have guessed to be a dancing-master—and making a deft and agile bow, with all a dancing-master's grace, to the master of the house as he passed with Mrs. Henningtree on his arm towards the dining-room, said with a pleasant smile on his pretty little features—

"Almost a minute, sir!—apologize for not ap-

pearing in the drawing-room!—hard-worked man of business——”

“Nay! you are punctual as my old clock; you must have heard the bell ring!” answered Mr. Farland, with a nod, as he passed on; and Jonas, bowing anew to the others as they passed, fell into his place among the young men who closed the procession.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DINNER-PARTY AT FARLANDSTOKE.

MR. FARLAND took his place at the head of the table, and placed Mrs. Henningtree on his right. Next to her sat Sir Hildebrand, with Lucy at his right hand. Next to her sat George Fraser, with Jonas Hathaway on the other side of him. Opposite to Mrs. Henningtree sat Miss Agnes, on the left hand of Mr. Henningtree; next to whom, on the other side, was Mary, with the doctor on her left. Next to old Hathaway was Captain Curling; and Felix took the bottom of the table. And by good fortune, rare on such occasions and under such circumstances, everybody was contented with their position. For if Mrs. Henningtree found—as it cannot be denied that she did find—the baronet on her left somewhat ponderous and dull, Mr. Farland on her right

was a favourite of hers, and the only one of the party, save her own husband, with whom she could be said to be well acquainted. And if Lucy was at first inclined to be a little discontented with the fate which placed two intervening persons between her and the young master of Farlandstoke, she found some amends in being placed next to the strikingly handsome and lively stranger from the other side of the Atlantic. Mary was well pleased to have an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with Mr. Henningtree, of whom she had often heard her aunt speak. Old Hathaway and the captain were old cronies; and the others had nothing to complain of.

For awhile the conversation was mainly confined to talk between immediate neighbours.

“So, after all the talking about it, you have removed the old screen from the cathedral?” said Miss Agnes to Mr. Henningtree; “I confess I can hardly bring myself not to regret the change. But you were favourable to it, I believe.”

“Yes, indeed, Miss Agnes! And if blame there be, I believe I must take it all upon my own shoulders. For at first I had all the Chapter,

except Dr. Lindisfarne, against me. The Dean would not hear of it—looking more, I fancy, to the snugness of his own stall than to any architectural fitness. I had a hard fight for it!”

“And you conquered! Has the poor old screen been already taken down?”

“Yes, every vestige of the hideous old eyesore! and I am sure, my dear madam, that when you favour us with a visit to Sillchester you will approve of the change.”

“Oh! I have no doubt that you are right, Mr. Henningtree; and I dare say the entire effect of the building is improved. But it is so difficult, you know, to think that a dear old friend can be better otherwise than as one has known him. And I did love the old church so, as it used to be!”

“Yes, indeed, I can understand all that! One has to be very stern to old associations sometimes in the interest of real conservation. After all, you know, it is restoration, and not innovation, Miss Agnes.”

“Of course; and I have no doubt at all that it is right in an artistic, as well as in an antiquarian point of view. But it is innovation to

me; I have so many memories attached to the dear old church as it was."

"Of course, of course. Guess whether I have not myself!"

"Do you remember my aunt, as she used to come into her place in her pew immediately under the Dean's stall?"

"Do I not! I could as easily forget Bishop Landulph's tomb at the foot of the altar steps!"

"And I suppose the old pew is gone too?"

"Yes, we have got rid of the pews. I am sure you would go with us there, Miss Agnes."

"Oh yes! no doubt. I am sure you are right; but that don't quite avail to cure one's regrets for what was once so familiar, and is now no more. Fancy my poor aunt's spirit wandering, as it certainly would if it were permitted to revisit earth at all, to the old church to find all changed! How I see her now, walking up the nave to morning service!"

"Ah! I remember it well. Miss Agnes Artingale, of the Moat House, was almost as much a part of the procession marching into the choir as the Dean himself."

"And is the church quite open now, Mr.

Henningtree, from the west door to the altar?" asked Mary on the other side of him.

"Perfectly open, at least as far as the view is concerned," replied he.

"I don't wonder the Dean did not like the alteration, poor old gentleman!" returned Mary. "Surely it must be very cold, sitting out in the middle of that great church!"

"Well, we have not left the stalls altogether without some shelter at their back. You must pay a visit to Sillchester, Miss Artingale, to see how we have managed it. But you do not remember the old screen?"

"Yes, I think I do. It is many years since I was in Sillchester. But I fancy I remember how the cathedral looked. I am afraid I thought the old screen, with its carving and gilding, very beautiful."

"I think you would like the church better now," returned the architect.

"You don't get such mullet as these on the southern coast of the county, Mr. Henningtree," said old Hathaway, leaning forward and speaking across Mary Artingale.

"No; I don't think the red mullet is so fine on our side. I am sure I do not know why it

should be so," replied Mr. Henningtree. "We can get the fish from the northern coast, of course; but as there is plenty on our own side, and the journey is rather a long one, I do not think that much finds its way to Sillchester."

"I think that most of the fish on our coast is better than what you get on the southern side," said the baronet from across the table; "I will back Billmouth for fish against any port on the southern side of the county!" he added, with the genuine local prejudice of a territorial magistrate.

"Why, those fellows down on the south coast don't go out in such weather as our Billmouth boatmen do, Sir Hildebrand. Why, I have seen our Billmouth men put out when the boat could scarcely get out of the harbour!" said young Farland.

"So that the fish must be better!" said little Mrs. Henningtree, with a laugh in her eye.

"Certainly, ma'am; the ablest and boldest boatmen will catch the most fish," said old Captain Curling, with a vague idea of upholding his own against the rival side of the county.

“Only that rough weather is not the best for fishing,” remarked the American.

“Pleasure of a glass of wine, Mr. Fraser?” said the host; “you do a great deal in that way on your side of the water?”

“Yes, sir; we do a little fishing in our country,” answered George, with a bright smile in his handsome blue eyes, and putting a somewhat stronger accent on the “sir” than an Englishman would have done.

“There is a great stroke of fishing done by boats that hail from Marble Head and other ports near Salem—that’s my friend Fraser’s native place,” said Captain Curling. “They go to work in earnest in such things in the colonies, they do.”

“What colonies, captain?” asked George, with a *démure* look.

“Why, I was speaking of the New England colonies, to be sure,” said the captain, innocently; “did not I mention Salem, and who don’t know where Salem is?”

“I am sorry to say I don’t,” said Mary; “where is Salem?”

“Salem, miss, is a thriving port of Massachusetts, once a colony of Great Britain in the

days when my friend Captain Curling first knew the place, but which somehow or other calls itself an independent state now," said George, blushing, and showing a magnificent range of brilliant and regular teeth, in a frank, good-humoured smile.

"Our friend from over the water had you there, Captain!" said Hathaway; "the world has been jogging on since you have been laid up in ordinary in Woodbine Cottage."

"Well, states or colonies, it is all one—much of a muchness, I take it," said the captain; "and I don't suppose you know much more about the rights of it, Doctor, than I do."

"Not quite the same thing, Captain," said Fraser, laughing.

"Not quite!" said Mr. Henningtree. "Suppose we have a glass of wine together, Mr. Fraser, and drink to 'Let bygones be bygones,' and may Old England and New England be always good friends for the future!"

"With all my heart, sir! Quarrelling don't contribute to commercial transactions anyway; and it's commerce speeds the keel I sail on."

"Are you very fond of the sea, Mr. Fraser? I suppose you could never make up your mind

to settle down on land?" said Miss Lucy Hathaway, with a sidelong, half-raised glance up at the bright genial face beside her.

"Yes, miss, I like the sea. But as for settling down, why not settle down?" he said.

"Oh! you sailors never do. You are such ramblers; and then it must be so tame and dull after all your adventures at sea," said the lady.

"Ask Curling," replied he; "yes, we are most of us glad enough to settle down when the time for it comes. But my time isn't come yet, and won't come yet awhile, I'm thinking."

"Captain Curling! But he is so different, you know. Of course he is glad to rest, poor old man! But I should think you would find a shore life very dull, Mr. Fraser," rejoined the damsel.

"And no doubt I shall be just as glad to rest as he when my time comes. The captain has done a deal of hard work in his time, I can tell you, miss, Captain Curling has."

But Lucy did not seem to be much interested by this instance of the *otium cum dignitate*, and made another attempt to bring back the conversation to more interesting personalities.

"I suppose you must find it very dull down

here in our little village; there is so little to interest you," she said, looking up at him a little more openly this time.

"Not a bit of it," said he, briskly; "quite the contrary. You spoke just now, miss, of a sailor being dull ashore. Now I can tell you that there is nothing in life, so far as I know, so dull as a middle watch on a calm night at sea."

"What is a middle watch?" asked Miss Lucy.

"Well, the watch from midnight till four in the morning. If it's rough weather there is something to do; but if it is quiet there is nothing to do—nothing on earth—or rather," he added, with a laugh, "nothing on the sea, and that's more to the purpose. Many's the time, miss, that I've envied the men sitting forwards and spinning yarns. At least they had somebody to speak to, and something to while away the time. But an officer, you see, miss, must hold himself apart, and keep himself *to* himself. And very dreadful dull work it is sometimes, I can assure you."

"And so you walk up and down the deck, I suppose, and look at the stars and the moon."

“Yes, just that, Miss Lucy; that and thinking of those we’ve left at home.”

And here George’s handsome and jovial features assumed an expression which seemed to promise a possibility that the conversation might be made to take a somewhat more interesting and sentimental turn than Lucy had hitherto succeeded in imparting to it.

“Ah, yes, I can sympathize with you there,” said she; “I can easily imagine that at such an hour the heart would turn to those it loves the best.”

“Well, yes, it kinder does. But it ain’t ‘those;’ it is but one in my case,” said George, looking a little sentimental in his turn.

The conversation was decidedly becoming interesting, even though the revelations that were apparently forthcoming might be of a nature to interfere in some degree with the probabilities of yet more interesting confidences on the part of the undeniably amiable stranger. Lucy was touched too by the poetical elegance of the phrase in which he had, as she understood him, said that his heart turned ‘kinder’ in thinking of the distant loved one; being unaware that by the sound so uttered the hand-

some young Yankee intended to say that his heart turned homewards in a "kind o'" manner.

"Ah! one—one only! It is the reply of a true heart! And it is sweet to you to speak of her in a foreign land to ears that can sympathize with your every feeling on the subject, is it not? I need not ask if she is beautiful?"

All this had been said on the lady's part in those *sotto voce* tones which, amid the clatter of knives and forks, serve perfectly the purposes of a tête-à-tête conversation between neighbours at a dinner-table. But the gentleman would persist, rather to his pretty examiner's discomfiture, in replying to her with a clear and ringing distinctness of utterance, which might have sufficed for the issuing of orders on the quarter-deck.

"Well!" he said, half musingly, "I have been told that she was a right-down beautiful woman; and I can easily believe it."

"Was!" said Lucy, much taken aback.

"Was when she was young, you know!" returned the young man; "and even now, that she must be five-and-sixty if she is a day, she is a remarkably fine-looking old woman, though I am her grandson that says so."

“Your grandmother!” said Lucy, with a touch of disappointment in her tone—so dear to the female heart is a bit of sentimental confidence, even though the revelation of George’s sole-loved one reopened to Lucy a vista of possibilities which made him more interesting than ever in her eyes.

“Yes, my grandmother, miss; she is all I have at home now, to think of or to love. I lost my mother before I was old enough to know her, and my father died when I was a lad. His mother, bless her old heart, is all I have left.”

“Your father’s mother. Then her name is Fraser too!” said Lucy; “and I suppose you live with her when you are at home?”

“Yes, miss, when I am at home. But I never am at home long together. We sailors are at home on board, you know, miss. I often wish I was able to be with the old woman a little more, for she is quite lonely in the world,” he added with a sigh, and lowering his voice a little.

All this time the rest of the party had been conversing in separate groups almost as exclusively as Lucy and George Fraser. Miss Agnes,

Mr. Henningtree and Mary, had continued, the two former their Sillchester reminiscences, and all three their discussion on the restoration of the cathedral; and Mary had begun to take quite a lively interest in the subject, and to conceive a wish that she might be able to accept Mr. Henningtree's invitation, and go to Sillchester to see the improvements and have them all explained to her by him.

At the top of the table Mrs. Henningtree had passed an hour much to her satisfaction and amusement, in drawing out her neighbours, Mr. Farland, to the right, and Sir Hildebrand, on the left, and contrasting the characters and minds of the two men, so singularly dissimilar in their similarity.

Old Hathaway and the captain had been perfectly happy in the discussion of the good things before them, and in the chat of each other.

But Felix, at the bottom of the table, who had thus been left to a tête-à-tête with Mr. Jonas, was not equally contented with his lot. He had at the beginning of dinner felt it incumbent on him to improve the occasion by making some progress in the task of winning the heart of Mary Artingale; and he had carried on the

work so far as to ask her to take wine with him. But perceiving that she seemed to be quite taken up by the conversation that was going on between Miss Agnes and Mr. Henningtree, and judiciously considering that at least no harm was being done in that quarter, he had been content to defer all more active operations till afterwards in the drawing-room.

Under these circumstances it was more consistent with certain inconsistencies often observable in male, and sometimes in female, human nature than with reason, that Mr. Felix, somewhat bored by the attempts at conversation between himself and the young lawyer, felt discontented with the flirtation going on so prosperously to all appearance between the handsome stranger and his old playfellow pretty Lucy Hathaway. So commencing his attack by asking Fraser to take a glass of wine with him—a ceremony without the aid of which no man in those days could get a glass of wine with his dinner—he leaned across Mr. Jonas, and said, “I suppose you are often obliged to be down at Westport, Mr. Fraser? Is your business nearly settled? I should think you must be wearying to get away.”

“Wearying, sir! Not a bit, sir! I am anxious to get back to my own work; and to say the truth, your people in the old country here do take their time about things, they do, indeed! But else, for the matter of that, I never spent a pleasanter time in my life.”

“How long do you think it will be before you get your affairs all settled?” asked Felix.

“Well, upon my word I can’t say! It’ll be a good bit yet, a couple of months or more, I expect. Shouldn’t wonder if we were to have to go to law with the other ship.”

“What other ship?” asked Felix.

“Oh! it was the old story; a running-down question, you know! Which of them went his own side of the road, and which went his wrong side? Now our folks say——”

“Side of the road?” asked Felix.

“Yes; which of them steered as he was bound to steer, according to our sea rule of the road.”

And then the young mate went on to explain what the maritime rule of the road was.

Presently, however, a diversion was effected by Miss Agnes, who said aloud from the further end of the table, “I congratulate you, Mr. Felix,

on your discriminating patronage of the fine arts!"

"Ma'am? Miss Agnes?" returned Felix, utterly taken aback by this unexpected attack, "I don't understand what you mean, indeed I don't; I assure you I never patronized anything, and I know nothing at all about the fine arts—nothing whatever, upon my word!"

"Oh, fie! Mr. Felix; but I see that you are one of those who 'do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame!'"

And assuredly poor Felix was by this time blushing scarlet up to the roots of his hair; although in truth he had not the remotest idea of what Miss Agnes was talking about, or whether she was commending him, or blowing him up for some unknown offence.

"I know nothing about it, upon my word and honour, I don't indeed, Miss Agnes!" he asseverated, with every appearance of truthfulness.

"Oh, come now, Mr. Felix! Who was it that found an artist at work on an unfinished water-colour drawing, and was so struck by the merit of the piece that he forthwith purchased it?"

"Oh! now I know what you mean; but indeed I did not know before," said Felix,

blushing worse than ever. "But I only bought poor little Bertha Donne's picture because I thought she was in want of the money, and so to encourage her, you know, poor little thing! I did not know, and I don't pretend to know, whether it was fine art, as you call it, Miss Agnes; I didn't, upon my word!"

"Well, I think it is a drawing that does credit to the artist, and to the discrimination of the purchaser. And Mary thought so, too, when we came upon her by surprise, as she was putting the last touches to it, up on the west side of the Castle. Did you not think it was very good, Mary?"

"I did, indeed," replied Mary, thus appealed to; "but I am no judge at all, you know. But I thought it was very kind of Mr. Felix to purchase it," she added simply, but still colouring up as she spoke, and rather wishing, as soon as the words were out of her mouth, that she had not uttered them.

"Oh, Miss Mary! I am so glad that you—appro—that you thought it right—the right sort of thing to do, you know," said Felix, with reckless courage.

"But what is it all about?" said his

father; "why have you not shown me the drawing?"

"I have not got it yet, sir," replied Felix, still very ill at his ease; "it was not finished."

"But what is your account of the matter, Miss Agnes?" he continued, turning to that lady.

"Simply this," said she; "that Mary and I went out after luncheon yesterday to pay a visit to Mary's little protégée, Bertha, not at the cottage, but in the rookery up at the Castle, where Mary knew that she was going to sketch; and that we found her finishing a very pretty drawing of the chapel and the terrace, which she told us, with many expressions of gratitude, that Mr. Felix Farland had seen in an unfinished state when he had called at the cottage, and had agreed to purchase, refusing to abide by the valuation of ten shillings put on the drawing by Bertha's grandmother, and insisting on paying twice that sum for it. That is an exact account of all we know about the matter, is it not, Mary?"

"Yes, aunt, that is what little Bertha told us; and we both of us admired the drawing very much," replied Miss Artingale.

“And we both thought,” added the elder lady, “that whether or no Mr. Felix knew anything about the fine arts, he knew very well how to do a kind and generous action.”

“Don’t forget to let me see the drawing, Felix, as soon as it comes home,” said Mr. Farland.

“And so you have a promising young artist, *en cachette*, down here among the shades of Artingale?” said Mrs. Henningtree. “At what time are we to start on our way homewards to-morrow morning, Cyril?” she added, addressing her husband.

“Oh!” said he, “we need not be early, since we have made up our minds to be two days about it. I should say that ten, or half-past ten would be early enough.”

“Because I was thinking,” rejoined the lady, “that I should have liked to see the drawing Mr. Felix has bought, and the artist, too, if it were possible.”

“Nothing more easy!” said Mr. Farland. “We will tell Thomas to go down to old Hannah’s cottage this evening, and ask little Bertha to step up here with her drawing at nine o’clock to-morrow morning. If there is really

any promise in it, it will be good for her that you and Henningtree should see it. Be so good as to ring the bell, Felix."

"Do you think your father would let me come up in the morning to see the drawing, too?" said Fraser to young Farland; "I should much like to."

"Delighted to see you, of course. Mr. Fraser, sir, says that he should like to come up and see little Bertha's drawing."

"Will you come and breakfast with us, my dear sir? we shall be delighted to see you; eight o'clock punctual. And you will see, let me tell you, not only a drawing, but a pretty little girl into the bargain. I consider Bertha Donne to be very pretty."

"Most happy to come, sir, without any reference to the last inducement," said Fraser, with his frank, sunny smile.

"The queerest little elf of a creature! the granddaughter of an old servant of the Artingales," whispered Lucy to Fraser.

So the bell was rung, and Thomas the groom was sent with the message which was destined to produce a terrible flurry of trepidation and shyness in the poor little artist's bosom.

And then the ladies got up to leave the dining-room; and Mr. Farland, the baronet, and Mr. Henningtree congregated into a knot at the head of the table, while the three young men got together at the foot of it, and the captain and the doctor—both so styled by courtesy—continued their chat and their potations together.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. AND MRS. HENNINGTREE MAKE A BET.

WE pretty well know already what was the subject of the conversation at the head of the table. Of course it was not necessary to say anything to Mr. Henningtree respecting the nature of the arrangement which had been entered into between Mr. Farland and the baronet, with a view to the restoration of Artingale Castle. Nor was it necessary to explain to him the exact nature of the interest Mr. Farland took in the work, beyond that which he might naturally be supposed to feel as a neighbour, and more especially as one to whom such matters and subjects had, as Henningtree well knew, been the objects of life-long study. Indeed, as has been already said, Mr. Farland had already spoken to Mr. Henningtree in general terms upon the subject.

It was therefore now only needful to say, that Sir Hildebrand had finally determined on putting his hand to the work, which he had, as was well known to all the county, been all his life so desirous to undertake; that he had done Mr. Farland the honour of consulting him upon the subject; and that he (Farland) had mentioned to Sir Hildebrand the very great advantage it would be to obtain the opinion and advice of Mr. Henningtree.

“I have not however ventured,” said Mr. Farland, “to tell Sir Hildebrand that you could undertake the work, Mr. Henningtree.”

“The day has been,” said Henningtree, shaking his head, “when I should have desired nothing better than such a chance. Artingale is a noble pile, one of the most interesting, in my opinion, in the kingdom; and the work of its restoration is one which any competent man would be proud to undertake, and which ought to suffice, when accomplished, to make the reputation of any man. But—” and the old gentleman paused, again shaking his head, and imparting a corresponding oscillation to his well-powdered pigtail.

“But what, my dear sir?” said Farland;

“not that I expected, I tell you fairly, that you would bring yourself to undertake so large a work at such a distance from your beloved Sillchester. I did not give Sir Hildebrand any hope of it.”

“No, I could not now undertake it. In the first place, I am too old a man. A younger and more active man is needed, and who may fairly hope to see the work to its close. And then you know, my dear Farland, my other avocations. We are well on, it is true, with the work at the cathedral, but there is still a great deal to be done. You know that no day passes over my head at Sillchester that does not see me many hours in the cathedral.”

“Yes. And I believe,” said Farland, “that if the last stone was in its place, and the last bit of carving completed, you would still spend as many hours as ever in the church. Nay, I fancy that heaven itself will be no heaven to you unless it is permitted to your spirit to wander in the nave of the old church now and then.”

“But in the mean time the work is *not* finished, and I flatter myself that I am still needed there. No, I could not, at my time of life and with my occupations, undertake so

great a work as the restoration of Artingale. But as far as counsel and advice can be of any service, Sir Hildebrand is most welcome to the best which I can give, *most* welcome; for it would be a real pleasure to me to be allowed to interest myself in the work."

"I beg to assure you, my dear sir," began the baronet, pompously, "that I am very deeply impressed with the value of any counsel with which you could favour us, and very deeply obliged——"

"And I'll tell you what I can do for you," added Mr. Henningtree, interrupting the slow speech of the heavy baronet, "I'll tell you what I can do—and I think it would be doing you a greater service than if I were to put my own worn-out old shoulders to the wheel—I can recommend you a man who would, I think, be more adapted to your purpose than any other available man in England. There are not too many men in the profession to whom I should like to entrust such a work as that we are talking of in all England. The young man I have in my thoughts has been educated and has practised his profession under my own eye. I know him thoroughly, and I have the very highest

opinion of him, both professionally and otherwise. He is my right-hand man at the cathedral, and I shall miss him sadly. But it would be a great thing for him to have such a work as that of which we are speaking put into his hands, and I truly believe that I should be rendering you a valuable service also."

"I think I know the man you mean, Henningtree. I have spoken to him in your office before now—Purcell Lancaster, is not he the man you mean?"

"Purcell Lancaster is the man; and I do not think you could have a better."

"Rather of the youngest for a trust of such magnitude, is he not?" said Mr. Farland.

"Well, you know, that all depends. One man is older to all good purposes at twenty than another is at thirty. If the work were mine to do, I can only say that I could wish to put it in no better hands; that is all I can say."

"And I am sure I can desire no better recommendation," said the baronet. "Who is the young man—it seems to me as if I remembered the name of Lancaster in connection with Sillchester?"

"Of course you do, my dear sir!" replied

Mr. Henningtree. “You must remember old Lancaster as organist of the cathedral. He was not *old* Lancaster when you first remember him, Sir Hildebrand; but he was well on in life when he married a girl—she was not a girl, by-the-bye, when he married her—who had not a shilling in the world; a singing mistress she had been, in Sillchester, for many a year, and got such a living as a singing mistress in a country town could get. They had been lovers for years. At last they married, and poor Mrs. Lancaster died in giving birth to her first child. Poor Lancaster named the boy Purcell, after one of the favourite masters of his art. The poor man never held up his head after his wife’s death, and died five years after her, leaving this boy Purcell an orphan.”

“What a melancholy story!” said Mr. Farland.

“Melancholy, indeed!” re-echoed the baronet; “and what a queer name, Purcell, to christen a child by.”

“Well, poor Lancaster had served the Chapter well and faithfully for over forty years, and of course something was to be done for his orphan boy. So the child was taken care of, and as soon as he was old enough he was put into the

chorister's school, and got an education, which is a good one enough when it happens to fall on favourable ground. The lad had a charming voice, and as long as it lasted he served as a chorister in the cathedral. When he lost his voice the Chapter apprenticed him to me. I never had an apprentice before; but I had known and liked old Lancaster well, and I had watched and liked the boy. He came into my office, worked in the way those work who mean to conquer, and did conquer accordingly. And now, gentlemen, you know as much as I can tell you about Purcell Lancaster; and I repeat that, in my opinion, you could not put the work of the restoration of Artingale Castle into better hands."

"I suppose," said Mr. Farland, "that it would be necessary, or at least desirable, that he should be resident on the spot."

"Unquestionably it would be necessary in the first instance, at all events. The first thing to be done, you know, will be to make accurate plans and drawings of every part of the Castle in its present condition, and then to come to a clear decision as to what it is intended to do with it, and then make the necessary plans, drawings,

and estimates. All this must be done before a single workman is put into the place; and for the doing of this it would be extremely desirable that the architect entrusted with it should be resident as near his work as possible. I suppose there would be no difficulty in finding suitable accommodation at no great distance from the Castle?"

"Oh! dear, none at all," said Sir Hildebrand.

"And I suppose that we cannot do better, Sir Hildebrand, than close at once with my friend Henningtree's proposal. I remember being impressed very favourably by the young man when it occurred to me to speak with him at Sillchester."

"Certainly, we can do no better," replied Sir Hildebrand, "and I am very much obliged to Mr. Henningtree for his recommendation and for depriving himself in my favour of the services of his assistant."

"Then, when the plans have been made, and we have all the measurements and other necessary information, I shall be most happy if I can be of any use in suggesting what would be the best course to pursue."

“Your assistance will be invaluable to us, my dear sir. I shall not fail to use the liberty you kindly give me of recurring to it,” rejoined the baronet.

“Would it be your idea, then, to take the matter in hand at once?” asked Henningtree.

“Oh, quite so—quite so!” replied Mr. Farland, feeling that the baronet might think that the answer to this question depended more on him—Farland—than on himself. “It would be your wish, I think, Sir Hildebrand, to lose no time in getting to work?”

“Oh, quite so; the sooner the better—the sooner the better,” said the baronet.

“Very good; then we may consider that as settled. As soon as I get to Sillchester I will speak to Lancaster, and let you have a line by post to tell you how soon he can be with you.”

And then the three gentlemen rose and prepared to go to the drawing-room, and the three juniors immediately followed their example, as did also the doctor and the captain, after lingering a minute to take one more glass of the Farlandstoke port.

Meanwhile in the drawing-room Miss Agnes

and Mary had been telling Mrs. Henningtree all about little Bertha, who and what she was, and her hopes to make herself capable of earning her livelihood as an artist, in terms which had made the active-minded little lady take quite an interest in the visit she was expecting at breakfast-time the next morning. And when the gentlemen came in from the dining-room, and Sir Hildebrand told his sister of the arrangement that had been made with reference to Mr. Purcell Lancaster, and mentioned that it would be necessary to look out for some place in the near neighbourhood of the Castle where that gentleman could find a suitable lodging and accommodation, it at once occurred to Miss Agnes that old Hannah's cottage would be the very thing. There was a decently-good upstairs room which the inmates of the cottage did not occupy; the vicinity to the Castle was exactly what was needed, and the price that would be paid for the accommodation would be a material comfort and assistance to the old woman and her granddaughter. As for a working office, that, as Mr. Henningtree pointed out, would be far more conveniently and usefully arranged in the Castle itself. The part of it occupied by the

family of course need not be in any degree intruded on. It would be easy to put into some one of the old rooms the few articles that were needed for all the purposes of a surveyor's and architect's working office. So it was settled that, when little Bertha should make her appearance with her drawing the next morning, she should be charged with a proposal to her grandmother to the above effect.

And then Mr. Farland's guests disposed themselves to return to their several homes. The Artingale carriage was announced, as was Captain Curling's gig. The doctor and his son and daughter had only to go to the neighbouring village, and, as was their custom on similar occasions, returned on foot.

"Jonas," said his father, as they walked in the May moonlight under the fine old trees that formed the Farlandstoke avenue, "I say, Jonas, what did you think of that young American sailor?"

"Well, father, I don't know. I didn't think much about him. He seems a good-natured sort of chap enough. But you should rather ask Lucy, for she was doing a fairish business in the flirtation way with him."

“Don’t be a fool, Jonas!” said his sister; “as if——”

“But Jonas *will* be a fool,” rejoined their father; “never mind him, but tell me what you observed of this stranger?”

“Observe, sir! I don’t know! he seemed very well inclined to be civil and pleasant.”

“Ugh! what a thing it is to be devoid of the faculty of observation!” cried the old doctor. “Why, one would suppose,” he continued, “that you had neither of you eyes in your head! As for Jonas, it his business to look at and think of words rather than things. But I do wonder that you should not have observed anything, Lucy!”

“La! father! what are you driving at? What could I observe? He seemed, I say, a very nice young man—very much so!”

“Very nice young man! Pooh! Then you neither of you had eyes enough to see the remarkable likeness between him and Sir Hildebrand?”

“Can’t say that I saw anything of the kind, sir,” replied his son.

“La, father! likeness between that young man and old Sir Hildebrand! I think it is you that have no eyes!” cried Miss Lucy.

“Yet I have been thought to have rather specially good ones, in my day, miss. And I was struck by the similarity of their features directly I saw the two men together. Of course, one is a young man and the other an old one, or at least, old enough to be the other’s father. One is light and lithe, and the other bulky and heavy. But all that does not prevent me from seeing that the make of the face and features is curiously similar. Humph!” continued the old general practitioner, with a shrug and a sort of inward chuckle, “if Sir Hildebrand had been a man of the same sort as his father, I should have fancied——”

“Fancied what, sir?” said Jonas.

“Why, fancied that there might have been a relationship recognizable by the doctor, though not by the lawyer—humph!”

“Only that this Mr. Fraser,” returned his son, “knows all about his own people—knew his father, who died a few years ago in Massachusetts, in America, and now lives with his grandmother, of the same name—not a ghost of a case, sir.”

“Case! of course not! But I was struck by the likeness. And he is like Miss Agnes, too,

and like Miss Mary, as well," persisted the doctor.

"La! father, how can you talk such nonsense!" said Miss Lucy. "Mr. Fraser like Mary Artingale! Well, I'm sure!"

Nevertheless, Doctor Hathaway had not been the only person present at the Farlandstoke dinner-party who had been struck by the same observation. For when Mr. and Mrs. Henningtree found themselves alone together in the privacy of their chamber in the Farlandstoke mansion, and the husband and wife had compared notes on what had passed during the evening, Mrs. Henningtree said to her husband—

"Did it occur to you to remark, Cyril, that that young American sailor—a very handsome fellow he is, too—is like the Artingale family; like every one of them, more or less? I could not help staring at him to study the queerness of the latent resemblance between him, a young man, and Miss Agnes, an elderly woman."

"Such likenesses often do strike people, especially people as familiar with their pencil as you are, Miriam; but the resemblance was too latent, as you call it, for me."

“To me it was curiously apparent; and if I had seen him, without knowing anything whatever about him, I should have supposed him to be one of the Artingale family.”

“Do you know, this affair of the restoration of the old Castle will be a very fine thing for Purcell.”

“And I am sure he will do honour to your recommendation.”

“If I had not been sure of that I should not have recommended him. It will be a very large affair. I take it—mind, I know nothing about it, but I fancy—that Mr. Farland finds the money, and that in all probability in consequence of a marriage arrangement between young Farland and Miss Mary.”

“But with all respect to our host, our young friend Felix is as big a booby as I ever set eyes on,” said the little lady.

“My dear, those bright eyes of yours have a greater capacity for discovering the boobyism of those on whom they light than the eyes of most other people. Felix Farland I believe to be an honest-hearted, good sort of young fellow as one could wish for a country gentleman. God bless my soul! if all men were fit to set the

Thames on fire, what would become of the insurance offices?"

"Very true, Cyril; and there are plenty of excellent good booby girls created on purpose to be fitting mates for the good booby boys. But is Mary Artingale one of them?—that is the question. I should say, as far as I can judge, from one evening passed in her society, that she is not!"

"Well, women mostly see further into such matters than men; but I'll tell you what, Miriam; if Felix Farland marries Mary Artingale, you shall give me a copy of the Museum Clementinum; and if he does not, I will give you that landscape on Sill Moor that you fell in love with when we were in London."

"Done!" cried the little lady, eagerly, skipping across the room to put her hand into that of her husband, who was standing on the rug with his back to the fire; "I'll hang the landscape opposite to the window in my boudoir."

"Done!" said her husband; "I can find room for the Museum on the lower shelf in my study."

"We shall see," retorted the lady. "And, by-the-bye, talking of landscapes, I am curious to

see the little Bertha they were talking about, who is to come up with her drawing to-morrow morning. They were telling me all about her. It seems an interesting case of native talent."

"It is in her grandmother's cottage that they propose to find a lodging for Purcell, is it not?" said Mr. Henningtree.

"Yes; I understood so," replied his wife.

"If this little Bertha should be an attractive little personage, I hope we shall have no love nonsense between her and Purcell. That would be a great folly."

"Oh! no danger, I should think. I don't think they seemed to speak of her as a person likely to make any mischief of that kind. They say she is a little bit of an elfin-like tiny creature."

"But I have known cases," said Mr. Henningtree, looking at the miniature little figure of his wife, "in which tiny creatures have done mischief of that kind! Oh—oh!"

"Hush—! You will alarm the household! What will the servants think we are doing?"

"Guess, very likely, that you are pinching me black and blue."

“ And they’ll guess, no doubt, that you deserve it,” said the little lady, as she stepped into bed.

Into *his* bed, Sir Hildebrand Artingale got that night in a happier frame of mind than had been the case for many a long year. For now at last he was going to see fulfilled the long-deferred desire of his heart : Artingale Castle was going to shake off the long lethargy of decay, and be itself again ; and when he should be gathered to his fathers, Artingale would admit that he, at least, had done his duty by the name.

BOOK III.

THE RESTORATION OF THE CASTLE IS BEGUN.

CHAPTER I.

THE BED-ROOM AT THE COTTAGE.

“COME up and look at it, granny!” said little Bertha, who had just descended into the stone-flagged kitchen, where old Hannah was sitting at the window, from the upper story of the cottage, with her ordinarily pale face flushed with exertion, and in some degree perhaps also by excitement — “Come up and look at it, granny; I don’t think that we can do anything more. It really looks very nice and comfortable.”

“Not I, lass; I don’t want to look at it. Do anything more, quotha? I should think not, indeed! You would not ha’ done half so much

if I had my way. Why if it was one of the quality themselves as was going to lodge here, you could not make more fuss about it.”

“You know, granny dear, the ladies told me to make it as nice and comfortable as I could. And if that dear, kind Miss Agnes had not had the thought to lend us a bed from the Castle, I don’t know how we should have managed; but now it really looks as nice a little bed-room as a gentleman need desire.”

“Gentleman, indeed! I don’t know what the world’s coming to, not I!” rejoined the old woman crossly; “I don’t understand anything about it. And the Castle ladies, too! Why this chap, as is going to lodge here, is he as has got the job to do up the Castle, isn’t a? Didn’t you tell me he was coming to work at the Castle? And what the dickens such a bother should be for about finding a bed and a sup of victuals for a working man passes me! A bed from the Castle, too! My certy, it’s a fine pass as things is coming to!”

“But, granny, as far as I can understand, this Mr. Lancaster is not just what you and I would call a working man, though, no doubt, he is coming here to work, and——”

“He’s a coming to do up the Castle, isn’t he, lass? Didn’t you tell me that was what he was a coming for?”

“Yes, granny dear; to superintend the restoration of the Castle. That is what Miss Agnes said. He is an architect by profession.”

“And that I take it is what we used to call a bricklayer by trade, in my time. And true enough the Castle needs one. What time is a a-coming here, lass?”

“The Sillchester coach don’t get to Billiford till seven, granny; and it’s only half-past five now; and I suppose it will be half-an-hour more before he can get here.”

“There it is again! Sillchester coach quotha! In my time such folk travelled a-foot, or if not, by the waggon. Coach, indeed, for the likes of him!” grumbled the old woman, between whose estimate of the coming guest and her granddaughter’s there was evidently a wide divergence.

From the above conversation, which took place just ten days after the day of the Farlandstoke dinner-party, it will be seen that the proposal for lodging the young architect in Hannah’s cottage had been made and accepted, though not very graciously, by the old woman,

that all little Bertha's fears lest she and her grandmother should not be able to make the vacant room as comfortable a bed-room as could be wished had been overruled by Miss Agnes, who had overcome the main difficulty in the manner Bertha had referred to; that the work of restoring the Castle had been proposed by Mr. Henningtree to his pupil, and under the advice of that gentleman accepted by him; and that it had been decided by the different parties concerned to begin the work—or at least that preliminary portion of it for which the services of Mr. Lancaster were in the first instance required—without any delay.

It was true, as Bertha had said, that when Miss Agnes had first spoken to her on the subject, on the occasion of her carrying her drawing to Farlandstoke to be shown to the party assembled there, she had said some word about making the spare room at the cottage as comfortable as circumstances would permit. But in truth little Bertha had been scarcely capable on her return to her grandmother's cottage of giving a very clear and accurate account of what had passed. The poor shy, shrinking little artist had never been exposed to such an

ordeal before—an assemblage of four gentlemen and a lady to sit in judgment on her poor drawing! Bertha had been tempted to wish her work in the fire, and herself a hundred miles off. Of course they were all very kind to her. Mrs. Henningtree had praised her drawing warmly, had given her much counsel, and had strongly encouraged her to persevere with her studies. Both Mr. Farland and Mr. Henningtree had said a kind word, and the former had warmly commended his son's good taste in purchasing the sketch, though he knew very well that good taste had had nothing to do with the motives which had prompted Felix. As for Felix, Bertha did not so much mind his presence, for he seemed almost as much abashed and as shy as herself. But then that other strange gentleman—taller than even Mr. Felix—Bertha had felt more afraid of him than of all the others put together. He had only spoken once to say that the picture seemed to him a right-down smart one; and having pronounced that judgment, he had transferred his attention from the work to the artist herself with a pertinacity of which she somehow could not help being conscious, though she tried hard to think only of

what the others were saying to her, and which made her feel more painfully shy than ever. She came away, however, at last with an order from Mr. Farland for a companion drawing to the one purchased by his son; and her heart was so full of this and of all the excitement of the ordeal through which she had passed, that her grandmother was excusable if she had been more than usually slow in comprehending the message her granddaughter brought her about the proposed lodger.

The ladies from the Castle, however, had paid a visit to the cottage since, and had themselves inspected the spare room, and pronounced it perfectly satisfactory, and all that could be wished for the purpose. It might indeed well be considered so.

The cottage in which old Hannah had lived on her pension from the Artingale family for now more than a quarter of a century was in truth most charmingly situated in an angle of the park, and in close proximity to the village of Artingale, which was however entirely on the outside of the park palings, with the exception of the church, which stood on ground a little lower than the knoll occupied by the

cottage, and a little farther down the valley of the Bill, and therefore to the south of Hannah's dwelling.

It was a cottage, really and essentially a cottage, but one of the old-fashioned sort, roomy and not scrimped for space, with much room indeed wasted according to modern notions of such things, but wasted in a fashion which those who have occupied such dwellings well know the comfort of. It was thatched on a very high-pitched roof; but the Sillshire thatchers are good at their trade, and know how to make a thatch tight against rain and wind, warmer than any other covering within, and infinitely more picturesque without. It had in front two gables and a short space of intervening roof between them; and these three roof-trees supported the covering of as many chambers, three on the ground-floor and three above, nearly half the height of the latter being in the roof. Of those on the ground-floor the centre one, which was the largest, and on which the outer door opened, was called the kitchen, but was in fact the living room of the family—*i. e.*, of the old woman and her granddaughter. It was a rather large room, with a window on either side of the door;

another door, opposite to the front door, leading to the back of the house and the staircase; a large fireplace in the centre of the wall to the left of one entering the house; a door in the far corner of the same wall leading to the room under the left-hand gable, which was the old woman's bed-room, and a door in the corresponding corner of the opposite wall leading to "the parlour," a sort of sacred apartment never used for any purpose, save that Hannah and her granddaughter always took a state tea there in much discomfort on Sunday afternoons. This room might have been of much service to little Bertha as a workroom for her drawing; but her grandmother would not allow it to be thus desecrated, and had peremptorily refused to permit that it should be used for the accommodation of the stranger.

On the upper floor the room over this parlour was Bertha's bed-room; the space over the kitchen was somewhat lower than the two rooms under the two front gables, and was used for little else than a landing-place and a receptacle for certain clothes-presses, containing a rather large quantity of linen and other such articles, which Hannah had persistently hoarded up

during her long life. On the right-hand side of this landing-place, looking *from* the front windows of the cottage, and therefore over old Hannah's bed-room, was the spare room, the known existence of which had given rise to the idea of finding a lodging for the young architect in the cottage.

It was by no means a very small room, according to modern ideas, and certainly a pretty one, despite the fact that the upper portions of the lateral walls sloped inwards in obedience to the exigences of the timbers of the roof. There was a small window cut in the western wall, to the right of a person looking from the front of the cottage southwards, which was recessed in the upper sloping part of the wall. But the main window of the chamber was under the front gable, looking southwards; and from this window the view was really charming. Immediately below it was the tiny but bright flower-garden of the cottage, with its porch covered over with an abundant wealth of honeysuckle and creeping roses. Then came a sunny slope of the park, and beyond that the little ivy-grown church of Artingale, with its pretty spire and its harmonious bells beneath it. To the right of

the church, far away up the valley of the Bill, the view was nearly the same as that from the Castle terrace, with the same distant blue hills and grey crags of the moor for the bounding line of the horizon.

One little object, of singular beauty in the landscape, was seen to great advantage from the cottage which was not seen from the Castle. This was the Artingale chapel attached to the little church, and almost as large as all the rest of the building, in which were the tombs of many generations of the family. The chapel at the Castle had never been used as a burying-place. The Artingales had always buried their dead in the Artingale chapel attached to the parish church. It was a charming little building, with three beautiful windows of Early English Gothic under its steep grey roof, running out to the westward, at right angles to the chancel of the church. For at Artingale the chancel or altar end of the church, which should have been to the east, pointed almost directly due south; so that the right angle made by the nave of the church and the Artingale chapel was in full view of Hannah's cottage window.

The smaller western window of the room

which was to be appropriated to the stranger commanded a view of the western end of the Castle terrace, and of the well-nigh ruined chapel at the extremity of it.

Within the chamber everything had been done that dainty female fingers, and intelligent female care, could do to make it look a very picture of neatness and cozy comfort. If Mr. Purcell Lancaster was not abundantly contented with the accommodation provided for him he would indeed have been very hard to please.

Bertha was, it must be admitted, a little proud of her handiwork, especially of a splendid bunch of dog-roses, violets, and lilies of the valley, culled and arranged by her own little fingers, and placed in a vase (which when engaged in more prosaic duties was called a jug) on the little round table in the window. Bertha was proud of the pretty appearance of the room, and was disappointed that her grandmother was too cross to come up and look at it. Perhaps, however, it was better as it was; for Hannah might have declared that flowers were altogether out of place in a working man's bedroom, and have insisted on their removal.

And now what more could be done? Nothing;

and yet it was still an hour and a half to the time for the arrival of the Sillchester coach, even if it should arrive at its due time. The boots at the 'Artingale Arms' had been fully instructed to inquire for Mr. Lancaster on the arrival of the coach, and to show him the way to the lodging destined for him. What more was there that could be done? Bertha went into the back kitchen (at the back of that part of the cottage which has been described there was the staircase, a back kitchen, and a wood-house) to satisfy herself by another examination whether her preparations for the stranger's evening meal were all in due order. As for putting the kettle on the fire for the tea, which she had for a moment contemplated, the manifest absurdity of doing so a good two hours before it would be needed was too evident to permit any hope from that resource yet awhile. Yes, there was the loaf covered over with a coarse clean napkin, the butter on a plate in a cool corner, the rashers ready cut for popping on the fire at a minute's notice. There absolutely was nothing more to be done. So Bertha went to stand in the porch, and watch the setting of the sun over the Artingale woods, and speculate on the diversity

of view respecting the social status of the expected guest, involved in the words and recommendations of Miss Agnes, and the commentaries of her grandmother.

Though far too humble in spirit to say as much, even to her own heart, Bertha could not help an unrecognized conviction that Miss Agnes would not have placed anybody that could be properly called a mere workman to lodge in their cottage. Then the remuneration which had been agreed on seemed to Bertha's ignorance much larger than could be paid by a bricklayer, as her grandmother had called him. Master bricklayers, however, no doubt made a good deal of money. Mr. Bell, of Billiford, was a master bricklayer; and he lived in much better style than anything that their cottage, even at the best, could afford. But if nothing better than Mr. Bell were needed at the Castle, why not have employed him, a man well respected by all Billiford? Then picturing to herself the unknown stranger under the semblance of another Mr. Bell, she blushed with a feeling of having been guilty of an absurdity and incongruity in the matter of the poor nosegay, so carefully arranged in the best jug upstairs, and from that

fell to doubts as to the sufficiency of the quantity of rashers prepared.

Probably even this newly suggested view of the case might have availed to induce her to run once more upstairs and remove the nosegay from its place, had she not been just then interrupted by a visitor.

It was Miss Lucy Hathaway, who had "just walked over to ask how old Hannah was."

Lucy was not a frequent visitor at the old woman's cottage. Hannah was much too comfortably off to need charitable assistance, even in the matter of medicines. But at eighty-five one is apt to be on terms of near acquaintance-ship with the doctor, and the doctor's family. And Lucy came to the cottage, now and then, really as her father's aide-de-camp to see how the old woman was, and whether there was any need of a visit from her father. But there was no sympathy or liking between the two girls. Bertha was afraid of Lucy—twenty times more afraid of her than she was of Miss Artingale, or even of Miss Agnes; she could not imagine why it should be so, but so it was. Lucy on her part had a contempt, and almost an aversion, for poor little Bertha. She thought her a feckless, in-

capable, helpless and useless creature ; whereas she herself was essentially, not only in her own opinion but in reality, the reverse of all this. Then she felt a resentment, of the nature of which she did not attempt to render any account to herself, that a person occupying the social position which Bertha avowedly did should occupy herself as she did with "drawing and painting and such like," and should absolutely obtain praise and approbation by so doing. She considered that such pursuits and ambitions betokened a certain "uppishness" and presumption which, taken in conjunction with the more than modest bearing of the little artist, must be held to involve a really disgusting amount of hypocrisy and slyness. Then the people would call her pretty. Pretty ! Why, if Bertha were pretty, what could she, Lucy, be ? And yet she had been an acknowledged belle at Billiford for the last twelve years ; and therein was, I have no doubt, the real gist of Lucy's grievance. But she was wrong, for her brunette beauty was of the durable kind ; and she had not been prettier twelve years ago than she was still.

Then again—and this was perhaps the heaviest of the counts against poor Bertha—one did not

know how to behave to her. She was neither fish nor fowl! Why should any difference be supposed to exist between her and all the other poor girls of the parish? And yet the people would suppose such difference to exist. She did not expect, Lucy supposed, to be considered a lady! And yet one seemed to be compelled to address the little creature and behave to her very differently from what one did to all the other poor girls, who were some of them better off by a good bit than Bertha Donne. Why was this? Lucy could not understand it for the life of her, for her part! And yet she did always behave to Bertha Donne very differently from her manner to all the rest of those whom she declared she considered Bertha's equals.

For all these reasons there was not much of liking between the two girls, as has been said; and Miss Lucy was a less frequent visitor at the cottage than she probably would have been if it had been otherwise.

CHAPTER II.

THE 'HERO' ARRIVES UP TO TIME.

HOWEVER, Lucy had now "walked over to see how old Hannah was, and how her rheumatism was doing."

"Thank you very kindly, Miss Lucy," said little Bertha; "I think my grandmother has been rather better since this fine weather set in. Indeed she has little to complain of."

Now it was rather an offence to Lucy to be addressed by Bertha as the latter had spoken to her. It seemed to her ears that Bertha Donne had no right to call her "Miss Lucy." The other girls of the parish, when she was performing her visits of charity, always called her "Miss." Lucy had no clear theory on the subject, but she had a sort of feeling that this use of her Christian name implied an undue

assumption of equality on the part of the old menial servant's granddaughter.

So she answered rather tartly, "Well, if she has nothing the matter with her, perhaps I might as well have spared myself my walk. The poor people in the cottages rarely want to see one, I suspect, unless they have need of one."

"Nay, Miss Lucy, I am sure grandmother is much obliged to you for coming. Would you like to step in and speak to her?"

"What is the use if she is not ailing? So, Bertha," she added, suddenly, sitting down on one of the seats of the porch as she spoke, "you are going to have a lodger at the cottage, I am told. Is it true?"

Lucy had in vain striven to find some means of making the conversation naturally lead up to this, the real object of her visit, but she had failed in the endeavour. She would fain also have broached the matter graciously; but her usual habit of snubbing Bertha Donne, and her dislike of her, had placed this too beyond her power. So she had been driven to put her question brusquely and suddenly as above, and to indicate by means of what she felt to be a condescension distasteful to her—the taking a

seat in the porch—that she intended to have a little conversation on the subject.

“Yes, Miss Lucy. The ladies at Artingale proposed it, and my grandmother thought that it would be an assistance to us.”

“Of course it will, if you make him pay well. But who is it that wants to come and lodge at Artingale, I should like to know?”

Now Miss Lucy knew very well who the expected lodger was, and what he was coming to do at Artingale; but she also had been puzzled to understand the nature of the social status of the person for whom this preparation was made. Was he a “workman,” as old Hannah had said, or was he a “gentleman?” The two classes were very clearly divided by a perfectly intelligible and unmistakable line in Miss Lucy’s mind. Was he, in fact—for this was what she had in her thoughts—within the sacred pale of “society,” or without it? This was the question. Now Mr. Bell, the master bricklayer, though understood to be a warm man and a responsible, was clearly on the outside of the barrier; for at Billiford in those days the limits of “society” were very well and clearly defined. There had been a degree of doubt in

the case of Captain Curling when he had first come to pass the evening of his days at Billiford. As the mere skipper of a merchant vessel he would scarcely at that time have been admissible within the charmed circle; but the owner of Woodbine Cottage had always been very specially "in society." Then there was no Mrs. Curling to complicate the case, and when he had been once asked to dine at Farlandstoke the captain was not only thenceforward a very clearly recognized part of society, but was held to be very good society too. Now was this Mr. Lancaster, who was coming to "do the repairs" of the Castle, a second Mr. Bell, or was he something of a quite different nature? At first sight it seemed clear that he must be a mere Mr. Bell, possibly of a larger growth; but then Lucy had, as we have seen, met Mr. Henningtree at Farlandstoke at dinner; and she had heard that he was "doing the repairs" of the cathedral at Sillchester. Now there could be no doubt that Mr. Henningtree was "in society."

In a word, was it or was it not the case that Providence was about to bestow, in addition to the amiable young American, yet another avail-

able beau—I am afraid that was the phrase that Miss Lucy would have used in speaking on the subject—to the very limited resources of Billiford in that article? That was the question; and had Miss Lucy been in the company of one of her own friends and equals, that question would have been asked without the least beating of the bush, and would have been answered with most perfect intelligence and sympathy. But with Bertha Donne propriety forbade any such friendly communing of the spirit. So she had to approach her object by a less direct route.

“Who is it,” she asked, “that can want to lodge at Artingale?”

“It is Mr. Lancaster, Miss Lucy, the gentleman who is going to superintend the repairs at the Castle.”

“Oh! the *gentleman* who is going to superintend the repairs at the Castle,” re-echoed Lucy, with a slightly ironical emphasis on the word “gentleman” and the grandiosity of the subsequent phraseology, but with more of curiosity and careful consideration.

“That is what Miss Agnes said—the very words she used,” said Bertha.

“Miss Agnes called him the *gentleman* who

was coming to superintend the repairs of the Castle? Then he must be a gentleman, sure enough," said Miss Lucy, more to herself than to her companion.

And it seemed to become clear also to Bertha that the new lodger could not be another Mr. Bell.

"So it seems to me, Miss Lucy," she said; "though grandmother seemed to think that he must be a bricklayer of some sort."

"A bricklayer!" cried her visitor, with infinite scorn. "A likely thing that Miss Agnes Artingale would call a bricklayer a gentleman! But of course, so that he pays his board and lodging honestly, it is no matter to *you* whether he is a gentleman or a bricklayer. But to us it is important to know whether he is a sort of person that one can become acquainted with."

"I am afraid, Miss Lucy, that I can't tell you anything that will help you to find that out," said little Bertha, with a grave demureness that was not without a slight touch of irony in its tone.

"You, child!" said Miss Lucy, quite unconscious of any such thing; "of course, you can-

not. I wonder if he will be received as a visitor at the Castle!"

"Miss Agnes did not say anything about that, Miss Lucy," returned Bertha, who was all the time standing at the entrance of the porch with her shoulder leaning against the rose-covered arch of it, watching the deepening crimson tints of the approaching sunset.

"No; I should suppose not, child," said Miss Lucy, with a great toss of the head. "We shall see, I suppose, in good time! What o'clock do you expect him—what did you say his name is—to arrive?"

"His name is Mr. Lancaster; he will arrive, I believe, by the coach from Sillchester," said Bertha.

"And the 'Hero' gets in at seven!" Miss Hathaway alluded to the six-inside post coach, which was called the 'Hero' from its achievement of the feat of accomplishing the journey between Sillchester and Billiford in one day, and not to the expected stranger. "And the 'Hero' gets in at seven," she said, looking at her watch.

"Will you tell me, please, what o'clock it is, Miss Lucy?" asked Bertha, with an unrecognized consciousness that the application would not be

ill received by virtue of the admission it involved of the fact that Miss Lucy Hathaway possessed a watch, whereas she, Bertha Donne, had none.

“It wants but a minute or two to six. I suppose that you are all ready for him?”

“Yes, his room is ready,” said Bertha, shortly.

“I suppose,” said Miss Lucy, after a pause, “that I may go up and see how you have managed—that is, if you have no objection.”

“Oh dear, no! you can go up, if you please, Miss Lucy,” replied Bertha. But, in truth, she had some objection. For though she was by no means unwilling that Miss Hathaway should see how comfortable and nice-looking a room they were able to offer to the expected stranger, she had an instinctive dislike to expose the work of her hands and all the evidences of her careful devices to the certainly not-indulgent criticism of her visitor. Especially she disliked that she should see the nosegay on the table in the window—why, she would have been puzzled to say.

Lucy turned into the cottage door without waiting for further invitation; and as it chanced that old Hannah had gone into her bedroom, she was able to pass at once through the kitchen

to the staircase without having to stop to speak to the old woman, as she must otherwise have done. She was sufficiently acquainted with the geography of the cottage to need no showing of the way; and she marched directly to the spare room, while Bertha followed her.

On entering the room she was evidently struck by the unexpected air of comfort it presented.

“Upon my word!” she exclaimed, “dimity hangings at half-a-crown a-yard, if they cost a penny! A swing-glass on the dressing table! Candles—an easy chair—and flowers!—upon my word! It’s plain to see that *you* suppose him to be a gentleman, any way!”

“As for the bed and the dimity hangings,” said Bertha, feeling that honesty demanded the explanation, and at the same time not altogether sorry to disclaim some of the too-great magnificence which was so evidently astonishing her visitor, “as for the bed and the dimity hangings, Miss Agnes lent them to me from the Castle.”

“O—h! Miss Agnes lent the bed? I wonder you liked to ask her for that.”

“I did not ask her,” replied Bertha; “she proposed it herself.”

“O—h! she offered to send down a bed!”

rejoined Miss Lucy, thoughtfully; and it became clearer to her than ever that the person who was to "do the repairs" at the Castle would assuredly be "in society." And the conviction quite determined her to prolong her visit to the cottage till the stranger should arrive. She had "walked over to the cottage to see how old Hannah did," with a half-formed intention of doing so, but had been doubtful whether it would be worth while. Now she was determined not to quit her ground till she had seen the new comer.

"Well, I am sure," she said, as she turned to the door to go down stairs again, "you could not have done more if you had expected a prince. I wonder," she added, as she passed out again to the porch of the cottage while Bertha still followed her, "I wonder what sort of a person he will be!"

Bertha had perfectly well understood the motive of Miss Hathaway's visit to the cottage on that particular evening, and had read very accurately the course by which her thoughts had travelled to the determination to be present (if not at the death at least) at the breaking cover of the anticipated addition to Billiford society. She had, however, no objection to Miss Lucy's

staying so as to be there when the stranger should arrive, and if she had had an objection, would have been far too timid to let Miss Hathaway perceive it. On the contrary, she was rather well pleased that it should be so. She had been looking forward with much nervous trepidation to the duty imposed upon her of receiving the new comer, and installing him in his lodging all by herself; for her grandmother, of course, could not count for much in the way of assistance, and she thought that the presence even of Miss Lucy Hathaway, uncongenial as it might be under other circumstances, would be an acceptable help.

So she said, "The readiest way, Miss Lucy, for you to find out what sort of person he is—at least, what sort of *looking* person he is—would be just to wait here till he comes, if that would not be too great a trouble to you."

"Well; I almost think I will, if I shall not be in old Hannah's way. I can sit here in the porch, you know. Don't let me detain you, if you have anything to do," said Miss Lucy, a thought more graciously than she had spoken hitherto.

"Thank you, Miss Lucy. I have nothing

more to do ; everything is ready. It is too dark to sit down to my drawing, and grandmother has gone into her own room for her evening nap," said Bertha.

" Well, then, I think I will stay ; it can't be very long now ;—half-past six !" she said, again consulting her watch. " The ' Hero ' gets in at seven ; it will be twenty minutes or so before he can get his things and come here. I ought to be at home to give papa his tea at eight—or a quarter-past would do," continued Miss Lucy, calculating the time at her disposition ; " yes, that will do—if the ' Hero ' keeps its time. I think it has been doing so since the fine weather set in. Then I shall not be in your way, if I stay till he arrives ?"

" Not at all, Miss Lucy ! Pray stay."

" But how is he to know where he is to come to, and how is he to find the cottage ?" asked Lucy.

" Mr. Henningtree will have told him that he is to lodge in grandmother's cottage in the park, and boots at the ' Artingale Arms ' has been told to ask for Mr. Lancaster as soon as the coach arrives, and to show him the way and bring his luggage here."

“Everything arranged, upon my word! Why you are turning out quite a woman of business, little Bertha. We shall have you managing the affairs of the nation next!”

“I hope not,” said Bertha, with a little smile.

And so the two girls continued to chat, while the twilight faded into darkness, Miss Hathaway always scratchy, despite her wish to be civil and conciliatory, and Bertha devoutly wishing that the minutes would fly a little faster, and bring the conversation and her nervous waiting to an end.

Seven o'clock was heard to ring out musically from Artingale steeple; another quarter of an hour was got through by dint of patience, and then Miss Lucy's watch came into requisition about once every minute.

At last a something that seemed to be the end of a portmanteau was seen to rest on the top of the stile in the wall that divided the park from the churchyard, by which a path passed from the village of Artingale to the cottage; and in the next instant a brown-gaitered leg was seen to be thrown over the stile. But that was recognised as belonging to Nick, the 'Artingale Arms' boots, and was therefore interesting only

as a forerunner and announcer of more important things.

Another second and boots himself stood in the pathway on the park side of the stile, and proceeded to shoulder the portmanteau anew. And the next decisive moment sufficed to answer both the girls who were watching in the cottage porch, that the stranger who was to "do the repairs" at the Castle was certainly no Mr. Bell, of larger or of smaller proportions. Mr. Bell, indeed! The first glimpse of the new comer's figure completely convinced Lucy of the absurdity of all doubts as to whether Mr. Lancaster was to be admitted "into society," and Bertha decided as summarily that the bed from the Castle and the dimity hangings, and her other preparations, were not a whit too grand for the occasion, and that all fears respecting the congruity and appropriateness of her own special little contribution of the nosegay might be set at rest.

CHAPTER III.

MR. PURCELL LANCASTER IS ADMITTED INTO
SOCIETY.

OTHER and more competent judges than either Miss Lucy Hathaway or little Bertha Donne—though I do not think that the critical acumen of the latter on the subject was altogether to be despised—might have judged, as they did at first sight, that Purcell Lancaster was one qualified to be admitted into “society,” not only, indeed, into that of Billiford and Artingale, but into any society whatever. Such judges, not perhaps deeming it necessary to encounter the horns of the dilemma that presented itself to those damsels as to the “workman” or “gentleman” categories of humanity, might have said of Purcell Lancaster that he was evidently every inch a gentleman, and as evidently every inch a workman.

Many a man is thoroughly a gentleman, of whom the first sight is *not* sufficient to convince a competent judge of the article that he is such. In many cases a somewhat more protracted inspection of the specimen, and in some a certain amount of *vivâ voce* examination is needed for decision on the point in question; for it is not on every thorough gentleman—whether he be the normal inheritor of gentle nature from a long line of gentle forefathers, or whether he be the happy though less normal product of nature in her most bounteous mood—that she has bestowed those outward, visible, and unmistakable signs with which she marks her favourites, and had marked Purcell Lancaster.

Still less does every true and genuine workman bear about with him, stamped on his outward man, any certificate of the excellence that is in him; but in Lancaster's case there was expression of "doing faculty," as the Germans call it, on his ample brow, an active and quick intelligence of eye, and a certain purpose-like and brisk adroitness in his bearing, and well designed adaptation of means to ends pervading his every movement and action, which irresistibly impressed the mind of any one in his com-

pany with the notion, that there was a man who could do, and would do well, whatever was set before him to do.

The two girls who stood waiting for him at the porch of the cottage as he came up the path from the churchyard stile, preceded by boots with the portmanteau, did not, either to their own hearts or to each other, or to their acquaintances afterwards, express their judgment of the stranger exactly in the above terms. But that judgment was not very diverse from the description of the man which has been set before the reader. The first verdict of both girls, pronounced both aloud and in her own heart, was that there was no mistake about his being a gentleman. The next point in which their opinions were equally in accord, but which was expressed aloud only by Miss Lucy, was that the new comer was a remarkably good-looking fellow. Neither of them made any remark either aloud or consciously to themselves respecting that remarkable expression of capacity for doing which has been noticed as characterizing young Lancaster, but each of them unconsciously set him down in her mind as one of those men who could be relied on for prompt

and successful action in any case in which it might be needed. It is one of the points of character respecting which a woman most surely, rapidly, and instinctively estimates a man, and the marked presence of the quality in question is one of the surest passports to her liking, esteem, and respect.

The young architect then had already won golden opinions from both these two girls, strongly contrasted as they were in character and disposition, before he had come near enough to speak to them; and when he did so his address abundantly confirmed their favourable prepossessions. Had he not been told by Mrs. Henningtree, among other particulars, of the remarkable smallness of the little girl, his landlady's granddaughter, he would probably have fallen into the error of mistaking Miss Lucy Hathaway for the person, or the granddaughter of the person, whose house he was about to inhabit—a mistake which would have greatly tended to check the growth of the favourable opinion which that young lady was disposed to hold regarding him. But his immediate recognition of the original of the portrait Mrs. Henningtree had painted for him of the

little artist saved him happily from this blunder.

“Miss Bertha Donne — Mr. Purcell Lancaster,” he said, laughing and bowing to the little artist; “perhaps it would have been the more correct thing for boots from the ‘Artingale Arms’ to have presented me, but he didn’t do it; so I had to do it for myself. Will you accept my own announcement of myself? But you are prepared to expect such a person, I suppose?”

“Oh! yes, sir,” said Bertha, smiling, “we are quite prepared for you.”

“And I, you see, was quite prepared to know you at once. My dear old friend Mrs. Henningtree has told me all about you.” Here he looked with a slightly-inquiring glance towards Lucy, who was still standing in her corner of the porch, and feeling rather *embarrassée de sa personne*, and bowed slightly to her.

“This is Miss Lucy Hathaway,” said Bertha, simply, in reply to his look of inquiry, and certain that Miss Lucy would be angry unless she found some means of enabling her to take part in the conversation.

“Happy to make the acquaintance of a friend

of Miss Donne's," he said, bowing to her again more markedly.

"My father," said Lucy, wheeling round fully towards him, so as to turn her shoulder towards Bertha, and affecting to speak in a sort of stage aside—"my father is the leading medical man at Billiford, and I was here this evening to see if old Hannah, this young person's grandmother, you know, was in need of a visit from him."

Lancaster at once understood all that this speech was intended to teach him, and one or two things besides. He perfectly comprehended the nature of the blunder he had made in calling Miss Hathaway, the "principal medical man's" daughter, the "friend" of Bertha Donne; but he did not think it necessary to take any trouble to repair the error.

"Is your grandmother a sufferer, then?" he asked, turning round to Bertha.

"Not more, I suppose, than people of her age generally are—much less so than many—only a little rheumatism. My grandmother is several years past eighty, sir."

"Yes! that is a great age. What a lovely position your cottage is in! And close to my work, too! What a grand old pile the Castle

is! You may guess whether I am anxious to have a good look at it."

"I am sure you will admire it the more, the more you see of it," said Bertha, with the genuine enthusiasm of a provincial for the recognized lion of the neighbourhood.

"If your grandmother is awake now, Bertha, I will speak a word to her before I go home, but I cannot wait any longer," said Miss Hathaway.

"I will go and see, Miss Lucy," said Bertha, turning to go into the cottage, and thus leaving Lancaster and Miss Lucy together.

Lucy lost not a moment in profiting by the occasion to impress yet more clearly on the stranger's mind the relative positions held by herself and "little Bertha" in the world of Billiford.

"Old Hannah and her granddaughter, Mr. Lancaster, are not altogether in a position to require charitable assistance. The old woman has a pension from the Artingale family, where she lived many years as a servant, which fortunately keeps them from want. Nevertheless, you know, people of that class always need looking after more or less—they are so ignorant and so

shiftless ; so my father, who is too busy to be often able to do so himself, likes me to look in on them and others of the poor people from time to time."

Again the young architect understood every word of this, and learned as before a little more besides what it was intended to tell him ; but he only said, " I have no doubt, Miss Hathaway, that you are able to do much good in that manner."

" No, Miss Lucy, grandmother has not waked yet. I should be sorry to detain you any longer," said Bertha, returning from the cottage.

" Very well ; then I will go home now, and call again before long."

Bertha had no doubt at all as to Miss Lucy keeping this promise ; but she only said, " Good night, Miss Lucy ; I am sure grandmother will take it very kindly of you."

" Good night, Mr. Lancaster," said Miss Hathaway, making him an elaborate and formal curtsy.

" Good night, Miss Hathaway," returned he, with as formal a bow. And Lucy tripped down the path to the stile in the churchyard wall, her trim, well-built, and active figure looking very

pretty in the light of the moon, which had risen while they had been talking.

“You must be ready for your supper, Mr. Lancaster, after your journey,” said Bertha, turning to him as soon as Miss Hathaway had left them; “I will go and see if my grandmother is awake. And you would like to see your room?”

“I am in no hurry to move from this spot, Miss Donne. Let us wait a minute or two. Do not wake your grandmother. How exquisitely lovely the valley and the church look in the moonlight!”

“It is very beautiful. But I have no means of comparing the scenery around Artingale with any other part of the country; for I have no knowledge of any other.”

“Nor is my knowledge a wide one. But I have seen nothing, and do not believe that the world contains much that is more beautiful in its way than the scene before us.”

Bertha was very far from being insensible to the charm of the scene, and of the beautiful light which was then lying on it. But her heart was full of cares and anxieties on a different subject, and she could not forbear from

returning to it. Would this no Mr. Bell, but very decided gentleman, be content with the accommodation provided for him? Then boots had escaped while Miss Hathaway had been taking up her attention, leaving Mr. Lancaster's portmanteau just inside the cottage door, instead of taking it upstairs as he ought to have done; and how was she to get it to her guest's bedroom? Then again she had spoken of supper! Who knew whether tea and bread and butter, and rashers of bacon, would at all fulfil the promise of supper to the mind of the stranger? Poor little Bertha was in truth troubled about many things.

“I hope you will like your room, Mr. Lancaster,” she said timidly; “but you know this is merely a poor cottage; and grandmother and I are, as Miss Hathaway told you, very poor people, and not able to do much to make you comfortable. But Miss Agnes thought that you would find it convenient to be near the Castle; and there is no other place so near as this.”

“I am sure I shall be as comfortable here as I could wish. It is as pretty a cottage as I ever saw. The Miss Agnes you speak of is Miss Artingale, I suppose?”

“Not Miss Artingale. Miss Artingale’s name is Mary. Miss Agnes is Sir Hildebrand’s sister,” replied Bertha, with an accuracy of precedency which would have done Garter King-at-arms’ heart good.

“To-morrow morning I must wait upon the baronet. I have had some account of my future employer from my friend and old master, Mr. Henningtree; but I should like to hear your account of the family, Miss Donne,” said he, with a pleasant smile.

Bertha blushed as if she had been caught in some *flagrante delictu* of the most shocking kind, and turned towards the cottage door as if, in the excess of her shyness, she meditated running away instead of replying to this direct demand for her secret opinion on so important a subject. But after a second or two, seizing her courage with both hands, as the French say, she dashed with headlong desperation into the thick of the task before her.

“They are the kindest, best people in the world—that is, Miss Agnes and Miss Artingale. Lady Lavinia I have scarcely ever seen; only two or three times in my life. She is a great invalid, you know; and never goes out. But I

believe she is a very kind and good lady. But nothing can exceed the goodness, the kindness, the condescension of Miss Artingale and her aunt. I do not think there can be better people in the world!" and Bertha had suddenly grown eloquent with the enthusiasm of her gratitude, and her pretty features glowed with the earnestness of her feelings. "Sir Hildebrand, of course, I have seen less of," she continued; "but I believe he is a very good man. He is much respected by all the neighbourhood. But—I don't know why I think so," said Bertha, meditatively, "but somehow I do not think Sir Hildebrand is—how shall I say—not so clever as Miss Agnes and Miss Artingale."

"Ah! you think they are clever, Miss Donne? but it is unfortunate for me, if the baronet is less so; for my business will be with him, you know," said Mr. Lancaster, much amused inwardly at the similarity of the opinion arrived at concerning the baronet and the account given of him by Mr. and Mrs. Henningtree, and by little Bertha.

"But, dear me, Mr. Lancaster, I have no right to say that Sir Hildebrand is not clever!" protested Bertha, alarmed at the high treason

which she had uttered. "Of course I can know nothing about it. Only I do think that the ladies are *very* clever!"

"Intelligent and appreciative art critics?" said Mr. Lancaster, with a sly smile.

"Oh, Mr. Lancaster!" cried poor Bertha, turning crimson far more painfully than before, and feeling as if she should sink into the earth under so dreadful an attack. "I am sure—of course I don't know—it is very presumptuous in me——"

"Not at all, Miss Donne! I know all about Mr. Felix Farland's picture, and your artistic studies. We are fellow-students, for I have attempted a little in that line myself; and we must show each other our work, and establish a mutual laudation society. But seriously I do not know any surer means, and equally expeditious, of ascertaining whether a person has any brains in their head than is afforded by hearing them attempt to criticise an artist's work."

"But I am not an artist, Mr. Lancaster; pray do not fancy me one! And pray, pray, do not imagine that I say that Sir Hildebrand has no brains in his head!"

“No, no! we will leave Sir Hildebrand a fair field and no favour, to show his brains himself.”

“And now I am sure you must want your supper, Mr. Lancaster: I call it supper,” she continued, feeling by this time a little more at her ease with him; “but all we have to give you is a rasher of bacon.”

“And what can man below want more?” said he.

“Then that will do for man below. But man upstairs will want his portmanteau in his room, and I am afraid, Mr. Lancaster, that I have no means of getting it there, for that lazy boots has left it in the kitchen,” said Bertha, beginning to blush again and to be terrified at her incredible audacity in actually daring to joke with a strange gentleman, then seen for the first time in her life.

“Man below, when he soars aloft, should carry his own portmanteau with him,” rejoined Lancaster, with a laugh, taking his by one handle and swinging it on to his shoulder.

“This way,” said Bertha, tripping past him to open the opposite door leading to the staircase. And so the portmanteau was carried upstairs, and Mr. Purcell Lancaster was introduced to his room.

“Oh! what a beautiful room! what a charming room! That view of the Castle, and this view of the village and the valley! and the moonlight streaming in! and a nosegay on the table! If any one could dream of a pretty bedroom it could be none other than this. I do love a pretty room, Miss Donne.”

“I am so glad you like this. We could not have made it so comfortable without the bed, which Miss Agnes lent us from the Castle!” said Bertha, with a sort of feeling that honesty required this avowal.

“Beneficent Miss Agnes! Really, how very kind! though I must of course understand that the kindness was shown to you.”

“She is, indeed, a kind person. And now I will run and see about getting your supper ready.”

“What a dear, deft, neat-handed little Phillis of a maiden it is!” said Purcell to himself, as soon as she was gone. “If I am not in luck in the way of lodging I do not know who can be!” he added, taking a more leisurely survey of his apartment.

“What a very pleasant gentleman! I seem to know him quite well already!” said Bertha

to herself as she busied herself about the supper ; “and he called himself a fellow-artist! I should not wonder if he were to be kind enough to teach me a little !”

Meantime Lucy Hathaway had announced at her father’s tea-table the decided and unquestionable admissibility of Mr. Purcell Lancaster—no longer “the man who was to do the repairs” at the Castle, but “the architect to whom the restoration of the Castle was entrusted”—within the pale of the most aristocratic Billiford society. The young lady had even gone beyond the judicial declaration of this fact, and had intimated that she had been able to see “with half an eye ;” but this was only to be considered as a proverbial expression, for she had unquestionably made the utmost use of two whole eyes, and those very bright and sharp ones, on the occasion in question ; but what she meant probably was that she had had only a short period during which to bring them to bear on the subject of her investigation—that she had been able, she said, with half an eye to perceive that he would be a very valuable addition to their social circle of acquaintance.

Miss Lucy’s undisputed verdict had been

carried an hour later to Woodbine Cottage by her father, who went that evening to enjoy a game of cribbage and a glass of punch with his old friend the captain; and by her brother Jonas to the "club-room" at the 'Artingale Arms,' a social haunt of a kind which, in these days of "Athenæums," reading-rooms, and "institutes" of all sorts, would hardly perhaps be honoured by the presence of so correct, respectable, and well-to-do member of the legal profession as Mr. Jonas Hathaway, but which in those less intellectual times, when the delights of sanded floors, long clay pipes, liquor-stained mahogany tables, and the flow of soul exhibiting itself in "a song or a sentiment," at the choice of the soul thus actively flowing, welled up into higher levels of the social strata, constituted a centre, from which the verdict that had gone forth respecting the new comer was conveyed with the utmost speed to the whole community.

CHAPTER IV.

BERTHA'S VISITORS.

THE next morning Lancaster was awakened, as he had intended that he should be, by the earliest beams of the May morning shining in directly upon him through his window, left uncurtained that they might freely do so. His first movement on jumping out of bed was to run, not to the larger window, through which the light was streaming, and which commanded the view of the village and the valley, but to the smaller window, from which, as has been said, a view of the western part of the Castle terrace and the ruined chapel was to be seen. He was longing for a sight of the building on which his cares were to be employed. The place had appeared to him in the moonlight of the preceding evening even more beautiful than he had been led to expect it. The work before

him seemed to him to be everything that his artistic instincts and his professional tastes and interests could desire ; and the minutes seemed to pass slowly till he could be on the spot and make his first general survey of the castle and its position.

But he had another small matter to attend to, which he was bent on getting done the first thing this morning. He had brought his portmanteau with him to his lodging, but had left at the Artingale Arms a much larger case, containing all the necessary apparatus of his work—his drawing-boards, his paper, his instruments, &c. —saying that he would call the first thing in the morning, and see it taken up to the castle, and deposited in the room which was to be appropriated to him as an office. And this done, he purposed waiting on the baronet.

He dressed himself therefore as noiselessly as he could, thinking that the other inmates of the cottage were probably still asleep, and crept down to the kitchen, intending to let himself out without disturbing anybody. But the first thing he saw, on noiselessly opening the door which led from the staircase to the front kitchen, was little Bertha in her neat brown holland

working dress, sitting at a little table in front of the window nearest to the sacred parlour, busily bending over her drawing. Her back was turned towards him, and he had entered so silently that she was unaware of his approach. So he stepped with a noiseless step across the stone floor, and stood behind her looking over her work before she was aware of his presence.

The drawing of the chapel and terrace had been finished and sent home to its purchaser; and the work she was engaged on was a drawing taken from the stile in the churchyard path, which has been before mentioned, and comprising the chancel and steeple of the church, with the Artingale chapel standing at right angles to it, and a group of fine elm-trees which stood on the other side of the churchyard, between it and the entrance to the village. It was a drawing requiring considerable accuracy and knowledge of perspective. Lancaster stood looking at it—and, perhaps, a little at the artist—for a minute or two, while she was still utterly unconscious of his presence.

It was hardly fair.

At last he said, very quietly, "Upon my word, Miss Donne——"

He could get no further with the commendation he was about to utter ; for she sprang up from the little table so violently as to throw the water from the glass upon it all over the table, and over her drawing, and uttering a cry which was almost a shriek of terror.

“Oh ! Mr. Lancaster,” she cried, pressing her hand to her panting side, and looking piteously up into his face, “how could you do so ! You don’t know how you terrified me.”

She was trembling like an aspen leaf all-over ; but Lancaster’s first movement was to rescue the drawing, and care for its restoration from the damage it had received.

“I am so sorry,” he said, in a tone which indicated that he really *was* very sorry ; “it never occurred to me that you would be so painfully startled. Can you forgive me ? I do not think the drawing will be permanently the worse. That, indeed, would be a thousand pities.”

Bertha put out her hand to take the drawing from him, and he let her do so. She had again seated herself in her chair, but her heightened colour and panting breath showed how greatly she had been startled.

“Will you not forgive me?” he asked again, really very penitently.

“If you will promise never to do so any more,” she said, smiling a very pretty smile through the tears which had begun to gather in her eyes.

“Indeed, indeed, I never will; it was very foolish of me; but, perhaps, the minute or two that I stood looking at your drawing, before I spoke to you, may be good for something after all; for an idea came into my head that I think is a good one.”

By this time Bertha was sitting again with her drawing before her, and had in some degree recovered herself.

“If it is a very useful idea, and frightening me out of my wits was necessary for the thinking of it, I suppose I must be content to have been frightened.”

“But the frightening was not at all necessary, and I have no such excuse to plead. What I was thinking was this. It occurred to me last night, after that one peep at the Castle in the moonlight, that it would be a very interesting thing to have a series of drawings of the Castle in its present condition, before the restorations

are commenced—drawings for publication, I mean—to be engraved or lithographed, or, perhaps, better still, etched. I was thinking a good deal about it in the night; and it came into my head, while I was looking over your shoulder, that you could help in such a scheme—that we might do the work together, in short.”

“Oh! Mr. Lancaster, I do drawings for publication!”

“Certainly; why not? That before you is a difficult drawing. I see how you have done it. I see that one or two corrections would be desirable. I could make those corrections in ten minutes; but I could not make that drawing in as many hours.”

“My drawings engraved!” said Bertha, *sotto voce*, as if the enormity of the idea had taken her breath away.

“Yes; your drawings and mine together, with a little letter-press, which we could do together, or which I could supply. I think the thing would answer. I will consult Mr. Henningtree and a friend I have in London on the subject. We should probably bring it out by subscription; a five-guinea volume—say twenty drawings.”

Twenty drawings! Subscription! Five-guinea volume! Bertha's head seemed to be going round. What manner of man was this? Was he the present owner of Aladdin's lamp, or was he simply crazy? Five-guinea volume!—say twenty drawings! All knocked off as one might say a pot of tea and eggs—say a couple of eggs for breakfast.

“Turn the matter over in your mind, Miss Donne. You know the place well, and will be able to suggest subjects. That is the style of work we should want,” he said, tapping his forefinger three or four times on the drawing before her—“a little more firmness in the outlines, perhaps.”

“But, Mr. Lancaster——”

“I must run away now! I must go to the Artingale Arms to get the case with all my workshop furniture, and have it carried up to the Castle; then I will be here to breakfast—what time shall I say?—will eight do?—and we will talk over our scheme at leisure. After breakfast I must go and present myself to Sir Hildebrand. Will eight o'clock do?”

“Yes,” said Bertha, positively out of breath; “breakfast shall be ready at eight; but Mr.——”

“Good-bye. I’ll be here at eight!” and he was off, and bounding down the path to the churchyard stile in a series of leaps rather than a run, before she had recovered from the feeling of being enveloped in a whirlwind.

Punctually at eight o’clock Purcell was back at the cottage to breakfast, and found it ready for him. Old Hannah was not yet out of her room, and he was therefore all the more able to talk to Bertha of his grand partnership publishing scheme. He was delighted, he told her, with the room they had assigned to him for a workshop, as he phrased it. It was a room which had served as a sort of anteroom to the chapel, in passing to it from the interior of the Castle, and looked, consequently, on the western extremity of the terrace.

“I can see the window of it from the west window of my room upstairs,” he said. “It is a very eerie situation, next door to the ruined chapel. What a pretty ruin it is!—and with all the uninhabited part of the Castle between it and the nearest living creatures! But I shall like it none the worse for that. I have the key of the outer door of the chapel, and can enter and pass to my room by that way. From

the other side of the room, I can get at all the rest of the building which is to be the scene of my operations, and can wander about, and study moonlight effects *ad libitum*."

"How long do you think it will be before workmen can be set to work on the building?"

"Oh! there will be a good month or six weeks' work before we can get to that point. I must survey the whole building accurately, and make drawings, plans, and measurements of every part and detail of it; I must thoroughly examine every portion of the structure, foundations, walls, timbers, roof, and ascertain in what condition they are. Then we shall come to the work of planning, designing, and determining on the restorations, and making accurate estimates of them; and then we may go to work with stone and brick and mortar."

"And you can really think of preparing drawings for publication in the midst of all that!" said Bertha.

"Oh, yes, plenty of time! We'll do it between us. I put down two subjects in my mind this morning, the east end (that is south, in reality, as it stands) of the chapel interior view—a charming morsel——"

"I know it," said Bertha, nodding and smiling.

"——and the old stair from the south-west corner of the grand hall, a very interesting specimen of old wood-work, but a difficult drawing to make—you shall take that. And I think that some of our subjects should be reserved for the restored building, as it will be—that in the interest of the architect, you know. And I have been calculating, as I walked from the inn with my case of tools to the Castle, that we should be able, I think, to give twenty-four drawings, if we have as good a subscription as I hope for."

"Oh, Mr. Lancaster, don't talk of 'we!' It seems like laughing at me; it does, indeed! And you go so quick! just as if it was all settled. It makes one feel as if one was being carried away, despite one's own will, by a hurricane."

"Well, I won't be like a hurricane, if I can help it. But I don't see the use of losing time. I think the idea is a good one. Are you willing to venture your labour in the execution of, say, a dozen drawings in the style of that you were occupied on this morning? That is the ques-

tion. And remember that, if we fail, the drawings would remain as saleable as before."

Bertha felt that she was being carried away by the hurricane more than ever. But before Lancaster had finished his breakfast, he had not only obtained her assent to this plan, but had talked her into almost as much enthusiasm for it as he felt himself.

And, having done this, he set forth again on his way to the Castle, to wait upon Sir Hildebrand; and Bertha, after attending to what was needed for the service of her grandmother, giving the old lady her breakfast, and seeing her safely into her easy-chair—so placed as to command the view from the window—sat down to the drawing she had been working at when Lancaster had so alarmingly interrupted her.

But her work did not get on as well as it usually did. Diligently as she strove to keep her attention fixed upon it, she caught herself again and again with her brush suspended idly in her hand, and nearly dry, while her eyes were wandering away down the valley in front of the window at which she was sitting, and her thoughts were castle-building with reference to the grand and amazing conception of this wonderful lodger,

and perhaps diverging from time to time a little to the author of the conception himself.

It was during one of such pauses in her work, while she was gazing absently out of the window instead of on the sheet of paper before her, that her eye lighted on the figures of two men coming in the direction of the cottage from the churchyard stile that has been spoken of. And she thought that she recognized Mr. Felix Farland, junior, in one of them. It was pretty clear that he was coming to the cottage, for that path through the churchyard would not have been the shortest way from Farlandstoke to Artingale Castle. Bertha guessed also in the next minute that the other person could be no other than the American gentleman who had embarrassed her by looking at her so fixedly that morning when she had taken her drawing to Farlandstoke. His figure was not sufficiently familiar to her for her to recognize him at the distance he was from the cottage; but the person with young Mr. Farland was taller than he; and Bertha had remarked that the American stranger *was* taller than Felix, and she did not know of anybody else in that neighbourhood who was so.

She was right in her guess. The two advancing figures were young Farland and the American mate from Salem, Mr. George Fraser. Since the morning of the exhibition of Bertha's drawing at the Farlandstoke breakfast-table, the two young men had been a good deal together. There was much that was alike, though perhaps more that was contrasted in them. There was the same frank, open-hearted, open-eyed, guileless nature and jovial temperament in both, the same high spirits, the same perfection of animal vigour and athletic form; though Farland was the heavier, and Fraser the lither man of the two. There was the same thorough honesty of heart, and straightforwardness of character. But all the rest was contrast. And in all that appertains to mental culture and intelligence the difference was altogether in favour of the American. They each had found somewhat that was agreeable in the society of the other. And young Farland assuredly had no other object in seeking the society of the American than this something, whatever it was. But, though Fraser liked the companionship of the young English squire, the study of whom opened quite a new phase of human nature to his ob-

servation, and though he could not fairly be said to have consciously had a second view in seeking it, yet I suspect that there was another motive, which, more or less unconsciously to himself, influenced him to feel that in coming near to Farland he was approaching something else which had attracted him.

There was nothing to surprise little Bertha in a visit from young Mr. Farland. From the time when she had first come to live with her grandmother, Felix had been in the habit, whenever he was at home, of looking in at the cottage from time to time on some kindly errand of good neighbourship or other,—to ask after the old woman, to bring her presents of snuff, or some little comfort or other, sent by the house-keeper at Farlandstoke. He had first fallen into the habit from having come to the cottage in company with Mary Artingale when they were both children together; for of course it was the more natural duty of Mary to look after an old servant and pensioner of the family. But Farlandstoke was a house kept with a more largely liberal hand than Artingale; and it was easier for Felix to order the groom to follow him with a couple of bottles of port, or any

such like present, than it was for Mary to obtain a similar largesse from the grip of old Bennet, the Castle butler. Thus it had become an usual thing for Felix to look in at the cottage when his walks or rides took him in that direction. And when he had recently returned home he had resumed the old habit, and had thus, as we have seen, been led to purchase Bertha's drawing. Yes; he was falling into his old habit, and continuing the kindly attentions of old times. But (and there were eyes and tongues in Artingale and Billiford sure to remark the fact,—those two sharp eyes of Miss Lucy Hathaway among the surest and the first) whereas in the old times there had been nobody in the cottage but an old woman and a little child, there were now an old woman and a young girl, whom masculine obliquity of vision and judgment at Billiford persisted in deeming attractive. Moreover, it had been remarked that in those former years young Mr. Felix and Miss Artingale were wont usually to visit the cottage together. But now Mr. Felix had been observed to make his visits there alone. Of course it was very easy to imagine plenty of reasons why this might very naturally be the

case; and Billiford had not been led by its observations on the subject to say more than "Humph!" But this "humph" was said in a tone which implied that Billiford thought it would be right—and meant—to keep an eye on that portion of the domain of society.

Miss Lucy Hathaway said "Humph," and promised herself to keep two very sharp and bright eyes on that outlying spot of the Billiford society.

Now I do not think that these "humphs" had ever reached the ears of Felix; but it strikes me as possible that they might have reached the ears of the young American stranger within the Billiford gates.

In this wise.

When, on the day on which Bertha had carried her drawing to Farlandstoke to be judged by Mr. and Mrs. Henningtree, George Fraser met his friend and host Captain Curling at the four o'clock dinner at Woodbine Cottage, he had spoken to his old friend, as was natural, of his breakfast at Farlandstoke, and of the little artist and her drawing, and had, indeed, seemed to the captain to be rather full of the subject.

"Who is she?" inquired he of his old friend;

“for I could not rightly make out by what was said among them.”

“Oh, *I* know! Why, I’ve known her ever since she was that high,” said the captain; “and to tell the truth, she is not much higher now,” he added, looking at George with an expression that seemed to claim applause for the candour shown by such an admission.

“Well, then, captain,” said George, “if you know so well, maybe you can tell me. I want to know who she is.”

“Why, what *can* it matter to you, George, who she is? Who she is! as if she was anybody! Why she is not, as one may say, rated on the ship’s books at all! She is the granddaughter of that old woman she lives with. Old Hannah, she *had* a rating—before the mast. She was a servant at the Castle years ago. Her daughter married a painter—educated for the quarter-deck—painter died—she died; little Bertha left with nothing all the horizon round to look to, save that old woman and her pension;—and she can’t keep afloat much longer—stands to reason!”

“Well, but she has got her art to look to now.” said George; “a very pretty picture it

was she had done, as I ever set eyes on. I don't pretend to much judgment in that matter, but all of them there said it was first-rate well fixed. I should say she *was* educated for the quarter-deck," he added, after a pause, "and that she would be an ornament to any deck—or cabin either, for that matter."

Captain Curling was in the act of helping his guest to a slice of a beautiful little leg of moorland mutton (such mutton, my poor boys, victims of a generation of progress, as you have never eaten, such as we used to eat before scientific breeding and agricultural economy had taught men to kill their mutton at two years old instead of four); he had already made one incision right down through the pope's eye to the bone, when the above observation of his young friend arrested his hand.

"George," he said, in a voice of deeply significant warning, looking up at the handsome young face opposite to him, over the rim of his tortoise-shell spectacles, and using the carving knife in his hand solely with a view to oratorical effect and emphasis,—“George, my boy, you have an eye to your binnacle; mind which tack you're on, and keep in mind the port you are bound for.”

Captain Curling, the simplest and kindest of men, especially prided himself on a fifty Rochefoucauld power of insight into the human heart; and affected a tone of—usually ludicrously naïve—cynicism, which he conceived to indicate that profundity of knowledge of human nature in all its various forms—follies, vices, and weaknesses—which, as the captain held, could be acquired in no other walk of life but that of a skipper in the merchant service. Being an old bachelor, he considered himself an especially competent and sagacious judge of women, and would often point out how the calm vantage ground of that position was absolutely essential to such looking on at married life, as could enable a spectator to form a sound judgment of the chances of the game. The captain did not profess to be an admirer of the sex. His friends said that a petticoat was the only object in creation of which Captain Curling had ever been afraid. His enemies would probably have said (if he had had any, but he had none, even among the sex at which he so perseveringly shook his head), his enemies would probably have said that the captain had been a disappointed man, and that the grapes he persisted in calling so sour had hung too far above his reach.

“George, my boy,” continued the captain, emphasizing his words so forcibly with the carving knife, that a drop of dark brown gravy was jerked off the point of it on to the snowy tablecloth, “George, my boy, when you have reason to think that you are shoaling your water, never neglect the lead.”

“Aye, aye, sir!” said the young man, from the other side of the table; “but I have sea-room enough, never fear.”

“No man, sir, as knows his duty,” rejoined the captain, dogmatically, “has sea-room enough when he is lying off a lee coast in a gale, leastways not so as that some more room wouldn’t go to make his mind more comfortable. And, George, a woman is a lee coast, and a very dangerous one; when I hear a young man speaking, as you was speaking, when your words came between me and the mutton the way they did just now, I know that a wind is blowing as is likely to grow to a gale.”

“Never fear, sir. I was born in Salem town, and our folk mostly do have eyesight enough to keep ’em from steering stem on into the breakers.”

“And, mind you, lad, no privateering in these waters. Bertha Donne, poor little thing, is as

good a girl as ever stepped—that is, as far as 'tis the nature of any of them to be—and if one thing is bad, another may be worse, you understand.”

“All right, sir,” said George; “God forbid that I should have any such evil in my thoughts. But I am told that that young squire, the old man’s son, where we dined—and a strapping fine young fellow he is too, though *he’d* be like to starve, if he had to live on his wits—they tell me that he is for ever going to the cottage where that little girl lives.”

“Stuff, George! how can you talk in that way, when I tell you that she is a good girl.”

“Well, and why not? what has that to do with it?” said George, looking up from his plate, surprised.

“Got to do with it!” re-echoed the captain. “Why, you don’t suppose that if a youngster in the position of young Mr. Felix Farland was to be a running after such a girl as Bertha Donne, in the way you intend, he could mean anything but wickedness and mischief.”

But the American could not see this at all. It seemed to him likely enough that young Farland might have thought little Bertha as attractive as she had appeared to him, and might

very naturally have the purpose of asking her to be his wife.

It was under these circumstances that George Fraser, considering his old friend Curling to be the best of good fellows, and a most excellent ship's captain, yet none the less deeming him to be absolutely and entirely ignorant of everything appertaining to such matters as those upon which the worthy captain had been bestowing upon him his advice—it was under these circumstances, I say, that George cultivated the acquaintance of young Farland, and took an opportunity of asking him one day to let him (Fraser) go with him on a visit to old Hannah's cottage, being minded to judge for himself on what terms Felix was received there, and with what kind of objects he was in the habit of going there.

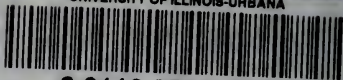
And thus it came to pass that the two young men were walking up to the cottage, when Bertha looked up from her drawing, and was roused from the reverie into which she had fallen by seeing them.

END OF VOL. I.





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