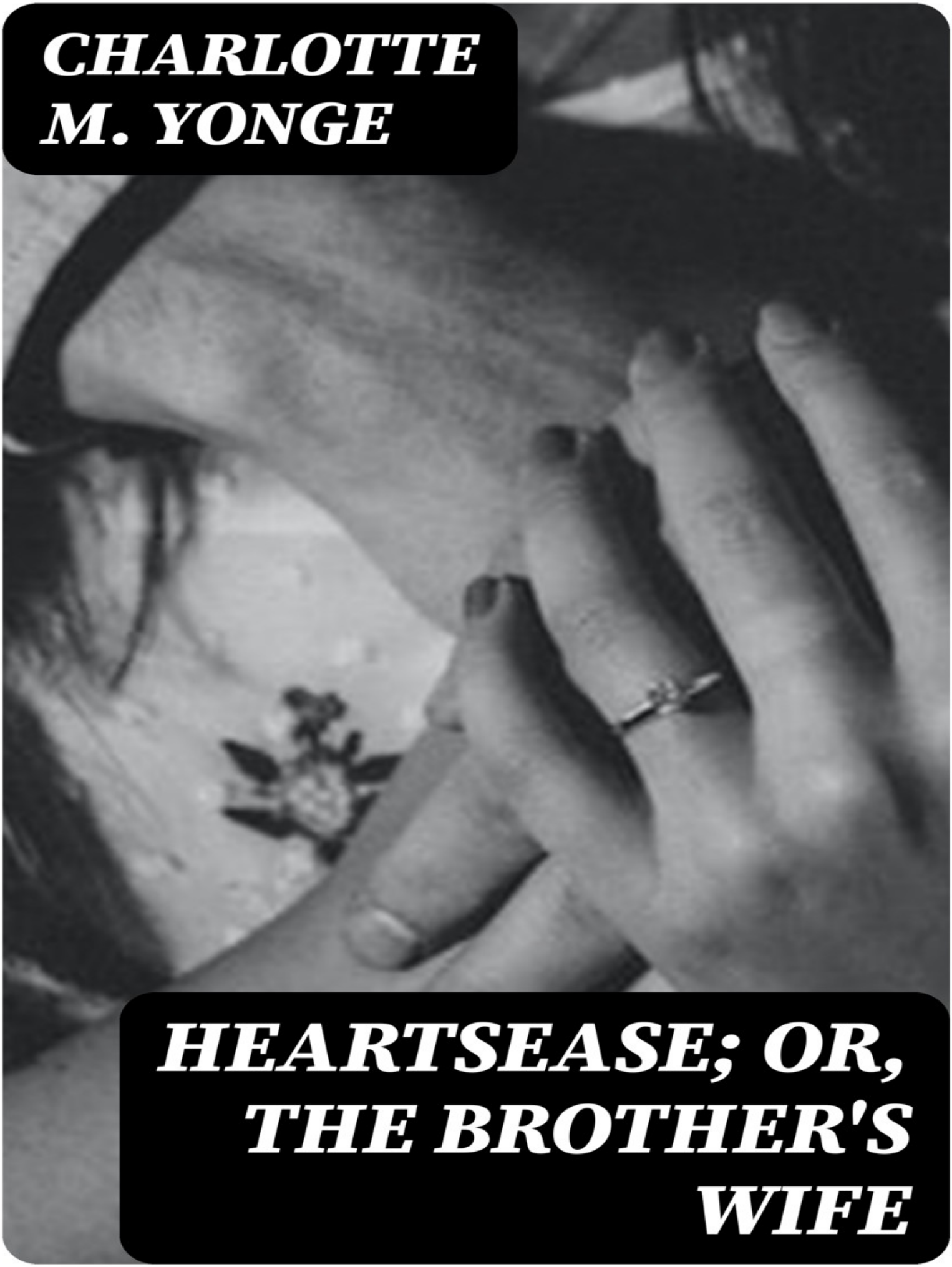
CHARLOTTE
M. YONGE
HEARTSEASE; OR,
THE BROTHER'S
WIFE

Charlotte M. Yonge

Heartsease; Or, The Brother's Wife

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PART I

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And Maidens call them Love in Idleness.

—Midsummer Night’s Dream

CHAPTER 1

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There are none of England’s daughters that bear a prouder presence.
And a kingly blood sends glances up, her princely eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch’s crown is softened in her hair.

—ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

The sun shone slanting over a spacious park, the undulating ground here turning a broad lawn towards the beams that silvered every blade of grass; there, curving away in banks of velvet green; shadowed by the trees; gnarled old thorns in the holiday suit whence they take their name, giant’s nosegays of horse-chestnuts, mighty elms and stalwart oaks, singly or in groups, the aristocracy of the place; while in the background rose wooded coverts, where every tint of early green blended in rich masses of varied foliage.

An avenue, nearly half a mile in length, consisted of a quadruple range of splendid lime trees of uniform growth, the side arcades vaulted over by the meeting branches, and the central road, where the same lights and shadows were again and again repeated, conducting the eye in diminishing perspective to a mansion on a broad base of stone steps. Herds of cattle, horses, and deer, gave animation to the scene, and near the avenue were a party of village children running about gathering cowslips, or seated on the grass, devouring substantial plum buns.

Under a lordly elm sat a maiden of about nineteen years; at her feet a Skye terrier, like a walking door-mat, with a fierce and droll countenance, and by her side a girl and boy, the one sickly and poorly clad, the other with bright inquiring eyes, striving to compensate for the want of other faculties. She was teaching them to form that delight of childhood, a cowslip ball, the other children supplying her with handfuls of the gold-coated flowers, and returning a pull of the forelock or a bobbed curtsey to her smiling thanks.

Her dress was of a plain brown-holland looking material, the bonnet she had thrown off was of the coarsest straw, but her whole air declared her the daughter of that lordly house; and had gold and rubies been laid before her instead of cowslips with fairy favours, they would well have become her princely port, long neck, and stately head, crowned with a braid of her profuse black hair. That regal look was more remarkable in her than beauty; her brow was too high, her features not quite regular, her complexion of gypsy darkness, but with a glow of eyes very large, black, and deeply set, naturally grave in expression, but just now beaming and dancing in accordance with the encouraging smiles on her fresh, healthy, red lips, as her hands, very soft and delicate, though of large and strong make, completed the ball, threw it in the little boy’s face, and laughed to see his ecstasy over the delicious prize; teaching him to play with it, tossing it backwards and forwards, shaking him into animation, and ever and anon chasing her little dog to extract it from between his teeth.

Suddenly she became aware of the presence of a spectator, and instantly assuming her bonnet, and drawing up her tall figure, she exclaimed, in a tone of welcome:

‘Oh, Mr. Wingfield, you are come to see our cowslip feast.’

‘There seems to be great enjoyment,’ replied the young curate, looking, however, somewhat pre-occupied.

‘Look at Charlie Layton,’ said she, pointing to the dumb boy. ‘That ball is perfect felicity, he had rather not play with it, the delight is mere possession.’ She was turning to the boy again, when Mr. Wingfield said, not without hesitation —‘You have not heard when to expect your party from Madeira?’

‘You know we cannot hear again. They were to sail by the next packet, and it is uncertain how soon they may arrive.’

‘And—and—your brother Arthur. Do you know when he comes home?’

‘He promised to come this spring, but I fancy Captain Fitzhugh has inveigled him somewhere to fish. He never writes, so he may come any day. But what—is anything the matter?’

‘I have a letter here that—which—in Lord Martindale’s absence, I thought it might be better—you might prefer my coming direct to you. I cannot but think you should be aware’—stammered Mr. Wingfield.

‘Well,’—she said, haughtily.

‘Here is a letter from my cousin, who has a curacy in the Lake country. Your brother is at Wrangerton, the next town.’

‘Arthur is well?’ cried she, starting.

‘Yes, yes, you need not be alarmed, but I am afraid there is some entanglement. There are some Miss Mosses—’

‘Oh, it is that kind of thing!’ said she, in an altered tone, her cheeks glowing; ‘it is very silly of him to get himself talked about; but of course it is all nothing.’

‘I wish I could think so,’ said Mr. Wingfield; ‘but, indeed, Miss Martindale,’ for she was returning to the children, ‘I am afraid it is a serious matter. The father is a designing person.’

‘Arthur will not be taken in,’ was her first calm answer; but perceiving the curate unconvinced, though unwilling to contradict, she added, ‘But what is the story?’

Mr. Wingfield produced the letter and read; ‘Fanshawe, the curate of Wrangerton, has just been with me, telling me his rector is in much difficulty and perplexity about a son of your parishioner, Lord Martindale. He came to Wrangerton with another guardsman for the sake of the fishing, and has been drawn into an engagement with one of the daughters of old Moss, who manages the St. Erme property. I know nothing against the young ladies, indeed Fanshawe speaks highly of them; but the father is a disreputable sort of attorney, who has taken advantage of Lord St. Erme’s absence and neglect to make a prey of the estate. The marriage is to take place immediately, and poor Mr. Jones is in much distress at the dread of being asked to perform the ceremony, without the consent of the young man’s family.’

‘He cannot do it,’ exclaimed the young lady; ‘you had better write and tell him so.’

‘I am afraid,’ said Mr. Wingfield, diffidently, ‘I am afraid he has no power to refuse.’

‘Not in such a case as this? It is his duty to put a stop to it.’

‘All that is in his power he will do, no doubt, by reasoning and remonstrance; but you must remember that your brother is of age, and if the young lady’s parents consent, Mr. Jones has no choice.’

‘I could not have believed it! However, it will not come to that: it is only the old rector’s fancy. To make everything secure I will write to my brother, and we shall soon see him here.’

‘There is still an hour before post-time,’ said Mr. Wingfield; ‘shall I send the children home?’

‘No, poor little things, let them finish their game. Thank you for coming to me. My aunt will, I hope, hear nothing of it. Good evening.’

Calling an elder girl, she gave some directions; and Mr. Wingfield watched her walking down the avenue with a light-footed but decided and characteristic tread, expressing in every step, ‘Where I am going, there I will go, and nothing shall stop me.’

‘Nonsense!’ she said to herself; ‘Arthur cannot be so lost to the sense of everything becoming. Such pain cannot be in store for me! Anything else I could bear; but this must not, cannot, shall not be. Arthur is all I have; I cannot spare him; and to see him shipwrecked on a low-bred designing creature would be too much misery. Impossible—so clear-headed as he is, so fastidious about women! And yet this letter spoke decidedly. People talk of love! and Arthur is so easy, he would let himself be drawn on rather than make a disturbance. He might be ensnared with his eyes open,

because he disliked the trouble of breaking loose, and so would not think of the consequence. Nothing could save him so well as some one going to him. He can read a letter or not as he chooses. Oh, if papa were at home—oh, if Mr. Wingfield were but Percy Fotheringham—he who fears no man, and can manage any one! Oh! if I could go myself; he heeds me when he heeds no one else. Shall I go? Why not? It would save him; it would be the only effectual way. Let me see. I would take Simmonds and Pauline. But then I must explain to my aunt. Stuff! there are real interests at stake! Suppose this is exaggeration—why, then, I should be ridiculous, and Arthur would never forget it. Besides, I believe I cannot get there in one day—certainly not return the same. I must give way to conventionalities, and be a helpless young lady.'

She reached the house, and quickly dashed off her letter:—

'My Dear Arthur,—I hope and trust this letter may be quite uncalled for, though I feel it my duty to write it. I used to have some influence with you, and I should think that anything that reminded you of home would make you pause.

'Report has of course outrun the truth. It is impossible you should be on the brink of marriage without letting us know—as much so, I should trust, as your seriously contemplating an engagement with one beneath your notice. I dare say you find it very pleasant to amuse yourself; but consider, before you allow yourself to form an attachment—I will not say before becoming a victim to sordid speculation. You know what poor John has gone

through, though there was no inferiority there. Think what you would have to bear for the sake, perhaps, of a pretty face, but of a person incapable of being a companion or comfort, and whom you would be ashamed to see beside your own family. Or, supposing your own affections untouched, what right have you to trifle with the feelings of a poor girl, and raise expectations you cannot and ought not to fulfil? You are too kind, when once you reflect, to inflict such pain, you, who cannot help being loved. Come away while it is time; come home, and have the merit of self-sacrifice. If your fancy is smitten, it will recover in its proper sphere. If it costs you pain, you know to whom you have always hitherto turned in your vexations. Dear Arthur, do not ruin yourself; only come back to me. Write at once; I cannot bear the suspense.

‘Your most affectionate sister,

‘THEODORA A. MARTINDALE.’

She made two copies of this letter; one she directed to ‘The Hon. Arthur Martindale, Grenadier Guards, Winchester;’ the other, ‘Post-Office, Wrangerton.’ In rather more than a week she was answered:—

‘My Dear Theodora,—You judged rightly that I am no man to trifle, or to raise expectations which I did not mean to fulfil. My wife and I are at Matlock for a few days before joining at Winchester.

‘Your affectionate brother,

‘ARTHUR N. MARTINDALE,’

CHAPTER 2

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She’s less of a bride than a bairn,
She’s ta’en like a colt from the heather,
With sense and discretion to learn.

A chiel maun be patient and steady
That yokes with a mate in her teens.
Woo’d and Married and A’

JOANNA BAILLIE

A gentleman stood waiting at the door of a house not far from the Winchester barracks.

‘Is my brother at home, James?’ as the servant gave a start of surprise and recognition.

‘No, sir; he is not in the house, but Mrs.—; will you walk in? I hope I see you better, sir.’

‘Much better, thank you. Did you say Mrs. Martindale was at home?’

‘Yes, sir; Mr. Arthur will soon be here. Won’t you walk in?’

‘Is she in the drawing-room?’

‘No, I do not think so, sir. She went up-stairs when she came in.’

‘Very well. I’ll send up my card,’ said he, entering, and the man as he took it, said, with emphasis, and a pleading look, ‘She is a very nice young lady, sir,’ then opened a room door.

He suddenly announced, ‘Mr. Martindale,’ and that gentleman unexpectedly found himself in the presence of a young girl, who rose in such confusion that he could not look

at her as he shook her by the hand, saying, ‘Is Arthur near home?’

‘Yes—no—yes; at least, he’ll come soon,’ was the reply, as if she hardly knew what her words were.

‘Were you going out?’ he asked, seeing a bonnet on the sofa.

‘No, thank you,—at least I mean, I’m just come in. He went to speak to some one, and I came to finish my letter. He’ll soon come,’ said she, with the rapid ill-assured manner of a school-girl receiving her mamma’s visitors.

‘Don’t let me interrupt you,’ said he, taking up a book.

‘O no, no, thank you,’ cried she, in a tremor lest she should have been uncivil. ‘I didn’t mean—I’ve plenty of time. ‘Tis only to my home, and they have had one by the early post.’

He smiled, saying, ‘You are a good correspondent.’

‘Oh! I must write. Annette and I were never apart before.’

‘Your sister?’

‘Yes, only a year older. We always did everything together.’

He ventured to look up, and saw a bright dew on a soft, shady pair of dark eyes, a sweet quivering smile on a very pretty mouth, and a glow of pure bright deep pink on a most delicately fair skin, contrasted with braids of dark brown hair. She was rather above the ordinary height, slender, and graceful, and the childish beauty of the form or face and features surprised him; but to his mind the chief grace was the shy, sweet tenderness, happy and bright, but tremulous with the recent pain of the parting from home. With a kindly

impulse, he said, ‘You must tell me your name, Arthur has not mentioned it.’

‘Violet;’ and as he did not appear at once to catch its unusual sound, she repeated, ‘Violet Helen; we most of us have strange names.’

‘Violet Helen,’ he repeated, with an intonation as if struck, not unpleasingly, by the second name. ‘Well, that is the case in our family. My sister has an uncommon name.’

‘Theodora,’ said Violet, pausing, as if too timid to inquire further.

‘Have you only this one sister?’ he said.

‘Six, and one brother,’ said she, in a tone of exulting fondness. A short silence, and then the joyful exclamation, ‘There he is!’ and she sprang to the door, leaving it open, as her fresh young voice announced, full of gratulation, ‘Here’s your brother.’

‘Guileless and unconscious of evil, poor child!’ thought the brother; ‘but I wonder how Arthur likes the news.’

Arthur entered, a fine-looking young man, of three-and-twenty, dark, bright complexioned, tall, and robust. He showed not the least consciousness of having offended, and his bride smiled freely as if at rest from all embarrassment now that she had her protector.

‘Well, John,’ was his greeting, warmly spoken. ‘You here? You look better. How is the cough?’

‘Better, thank you.’

‘I see I need not introduce you,’ said Arthur, laying his hand on the arm of his blushing Violet, who shrank up to him as he gave a short laugh. ‘Have you been here long?’

‘Only about five minutes.’

‘And you are come to stay?’

‘Thank you, if you can take me in for a day or two.’

‘That we can. There is a tolerable spare room, and James will find a place for Brown. I am glad to see you looking so much better. Have you got rid of the pain in your side?’

‘Entirely, thank you, for the last few weeks.’

‘How is my mother?’

‘Very well. She enjoyed the voyage extremely.’

‘She won’t concoct another Tour?’

‘I don’t think so,’ said John, gravely.

‘There has SHE,’ indicating his wife, ‘been thinking it her duty to read the old Italian one, which I never opened in my life. I declare it would take a dictionary to understand a page. She is scared at the variety of tongues, and feels as if she was in Babel.’

John was thinking that if he did not know this rattling talk to be a form of embarrassment, he should take it for effrontery.

‘Shall I go and see about the room?’ half-whispered Violet.

‘Yes, do;’ and he opened the door for her, exclaiming, almost before she was fairly gone, ‘There! you want no more explanation.’

She is very lovely!’ said John, in a tone full of cordial admiration.

‘Isn’t she?’ continued Arthur, triumphantly. ‘Such an out-of-the-way style;—the dark eyes and hair, with that exquisite complexion, ivory fairness,—the form of her face the perfect oval!—what you so seldom see—and her figure, just the right height, tall and taper! I don’t believe she could

be awkward if she was to try. She'll beat every creature hollow, especially in a few years' time when she's a little more formed.'

'She is very young?'

'Sixteen on our wedding-day. That's the beauty of it. If she had been a day older it would have been a different thing. Not that they could have spoilt her,—she is a thoroughbred by nature, and no mistake.'

'How did your acquaintance begin?'

'This way,' said Arthur, leaning back, and twirling a chair on one of its legs for a pivot. 'Fitzhugh would have me come down for a fortnight's fishing to Wrangerton. There's but one inn there fit to put a dog to sleep in, and when we got there we found the house turned out of window for a ball, all the partitions down on the first floor, and we driven into holes to be regaled with distant fiddle-squeak. So Fitzhugh's Irish blood was up for a dance, and I thought I might as well give in to it, for the floor shook so that there was no taking a cigar in peace. So you see the stars ordained it, and it is of no use making a row about one's destiny,' concluded Arthur, in a sleepy voice, ceasing to spin the chair.

'That was your first introduction?'

'Ay. After that, one was meeting the Mosses for ever; indeed, we had to call on the old fellow to get leave for fishing in that water of Lord St. Erme's. He has a very pretty sort of little place out of the town close to the park, and—and somehow the weather was too bright for any sport, and the stream led by their garden.'

'I perceive,' said John.

‘Well, I saw I was in for it, and had nothing for it but to go through with it. Anything for a quiet life.’

‘A new mode of securing it,’ said John, indignant at his nonchalance.

‘There you don’t display your wonted sagacity,’ returned Arthur coolly. ‘You little know what I have gone through on your account. If you had been sound-winded, you would have saved me no end of persecution.’

‘You have not avoided speculation as it is,’ John could not help saying.

‘I beg to observe that you are mistaken. Old Moss is as cunning a fox as ever lived; but I saw his game, and without my own good-will he might have whistled for me. I saw what he was up to, and let him know it, but as I was always determined that when I married it should be to please myself, not my aunt, I let things take their course and saved the row at home.’

‘I am sure she knew nothing of this.’

‘She? Bless you, poor child. She is as innocent as a lamb, and only thinks me all the heroes in the world.’

‘She did not know my father was ignorant of it?’

‘Not she. She does not know it to this day.’ John sat thinking; Arthur twirled the chair, then said, ‘That is the fact. I suppose my aunt had a nice story for you.’

‘It agreed in the main with yours.’

‘I was unlucky,’ said Arthur, ‘I meant to have brought her home before my aunt and Theodora had any news of it. I could have got round them that way, but somehow Theodora got scent of it, and wrote me a furious letter, full

of denunciation—two of them—they hunted me everywhere, so I saw it was no use going there.’

‘She is much hurt at your letter. I can see that she is, though she tries to hide her feelings. She was looking quite pale when we came home, and I can hardly bear to see the struggle to look composed when you are mentioned.’

This evidently produced some compunction, but Arthur tried to get rid of it. ‘I am sure there was nothing to take to heart in it—was there, John?’

‘I don’t know. She had burnt it without letting any one see it; and it was only through my aunt that we learnt that she had received it.’

‘Well! her temper is up, and I am sorry for it,’ said Arthur. ‘I forget what I said. I dare say it was no more than she deserved. I got one of these remonstrances of hers at Wrangerton, on the day before, and another followed me a couple of days after to Matlock, so I could not have that going on for ever, and wrote off to put a stop to it. But what does his lordship say?’

‘Do you wish him to forgive or not?’ said his brother, nearly out of patience.

‘Of course—I knew he would, he can’t leave us with nothing to live on. There’s nothing to be done but to go through the forms, and I am quite ready. Come, what’s the use of looking intensely disgusted? Now you have seen her, you don’t expect me to profess that I am very sorry, and “will never do so no more.”’

‘I say nothing against her, but the way of doing it.’

‘So much trouble saved. Besides, I tell you I am ready to make whatever apology my father likes for a preliminary.’

His brother looked vexed, and dropped the conversation, waiting to see more of the bride before he should form an opinion.

It was seeing rather than hearing, for she was in much awe of him, blushed more than she spoke, and seemed taken up by the fear of doing something inappropriate, constantly turning wistful inquiring looks towards her husband, to seek encouragement or direction, but it was a becoming confusion, and by no means lessened the favourable impression.

‘The next morning Arthur was engaged, and left her to be the guide to the cathedral, whereat she looked shy and frightened, but Mr. Martindale set himself to re-assure her, and the polished gentleness of his manner soon succeeded.

They stood on the hill, overlooking the town and the vale of Itchen, winding away till lost between the green downs that arose behind their crested neighbour, St. Catherine’s Hill, and in the valley beneath reposed the gray cathedral’s lengthened nave and square tower, its lesser likeness, St. Cross, and the pinnacles of the College tower.

‘A very pretty view,’ said Mr. Martindale.

‘The old buildings are very fine, but it is not like our own hills.’

‘No, it is hard on Hampshire downs to compare them to Cumberland mountains.’

‘But it is so sunny and beautiful,’ said the bright young bride. ‘See the sunshine on the green meadows, and the haymaking. Oh! I shall always love it.’ John heard a great deal of happiness in those words. ‘I never saw a cathedral before,’ she added.

‘Have you been over this one?’

‘Yes, but it will be such a treat to go again. One can’t take a quarter of it in at once.’

‘No, it takes half a lifetime to learn a cathedral properly.’

‘It is a wonderful thing,’ she said, with the same serious face; then, changing her tone to one of eagerness, ‘I want to find Bishop Fox’s tomb, for he was a north-country bishop.’

John smiled. ‘You are perfect in the cathedral history.’

‘I bought a little book about it.’

Her knowledge was, he found, in a girlish state of keen interest, and not deficient, but what pleased him best was that, as they entered and stood at the west door, looking down the whole magnificent length of nave, choir, and chapel, the embowed roof high above, sustained on massive pillars, she uttered a low murmur of ‘beautiful!’ and there was a heart-felt expression of awe and reverence on her face, a look as of rapt thought, chased away in a moment by his eye, and giving place to quiet pensiveness. After the service they went over the building; but though eager for information, the gravity did not leave her, nor did she speak at once when they emerged into the Close.

‘It is very impressive,’ said John.

‘I suppose you have seen a great many cathedrals?’

‘Yes, many foreign ones, and a few English.’

‘I wonder whether seeing many makes one feel the same as seeing one.’

‘How do you mean?’

‘I do not think I could ever care for another like this one.’

‘As your first?’

‘Yes; it has made me understand better what books say about churches, and their being like—’

‘Like?’

She changed her sentence. ‘It makes one think, and want to be good.’

‘It is what all truly beautiful things should do’ said John.

‘Oh! I am glad you say so,’ exclaimed Violet. ‘It is like what Annette and I have wondered about—I mean why fine statues or pictures, or anything of that kind, should make one feel half sad and half thoughtful when one looks at them long.’

‘Perhaps because it is a straining after the only true beauty.’

‘I must tell Annette that. It was she that said it was so,’ said Violet; ‘and we wondered Greek statues gave one that feeling, but I see it must be the reason.’

‘What statues have you seen?’

‘Those at Wrangerton House. Lord St. Erme is always sending cases home, and it is such a festival day to go up and see them unpacked, and Caroline and Annette go and take drawings, and I like to wander about the rooms, and look at everything,’ said Violet, growing talkative on the theme of home. ‘There is one picture I like above all, but that is a sacred subject, so no wonder it should have that feeling in it.’

‘What is it?’

‘It is a Madonna,’ she said, lowering her voice. ‘A stiff old-fashioned one, in beautiful, bright, clear colouring. The Child is reaching out to embrace a little cross, and his Mother

holds him towards it with such a sad but such a holy face, as if she foreboded all, and was ready to bear it.'

'Ah! that Ghirlandajo?'

'That is the name!' cried Violet, enchanted. 'Have you seen it?'

'I saw Lord St. Erme buy it.'

'Do you know Lord St. Erme?' said Violet, rather awe-struck.

'I used to meet him in Italy.'

'We wish so much that he would come home. We do so want to see a poet.'

John smiled. 'Is he never at home?'

'O, no, he has never been at Wrangerton since his father died, twelve years ago. He does not like the place, so he only comes to London when he is in England, and papa goes up to meet him on business, but he is too poetical to attend to it.'

'I should guess that.'

'I have done wrong, said Violet, checking herself; 'I should not have said that. Mamma told us that we ought never to chatter about his concerns. Will you, please, not remember that I said it?'

As far as the outer world is concerned, I certainly will not,' said John kindly. 'You cannot too early learn discretion. So that picture is at Wrangerton?'

'I am so glad you liked it.'

'I liked it well enough to wish for a few spare hundreds, but it seems to have afforded no more pleasure to him than it has given to me. I am glad it is gone where there is some one who can appreciate it.'

‘Oh, said Violet,’ Matilda knows all about the best pictures. We don’t appreciate, you know, we only like.’

‘And your chief liking is for that one?’

‘It is more than liking,’ said Violet; ‘I could call it loving. It is almost the same to me as Helvellyn. Annette and I went to the house for one look more my last evening at home. I must tell her that you have seen it!’ and the springing steps grew so rapid, that her companion had to say, ‘Don’t let me detain you, I am obliged to go gently up-hill.’ She checked her steps, abashed, and presently, with a shy but very pretty action, held out her arm, saying timidly, ‘Would it help you to lean on me? I ought not to have brought you this steep way. Matilda says I skurry like a school-girl.’

He saw it would console her to let her think herself of service and accepted of the slender prop for the few steps that remained. He then went up-stairs to write letters, but finding no ink, came to the drawing-room to ask her for some. She had only her own inkstand, which was supplying her letter to Annette, and he sat down at the opposite side of the table to share it. Her pen went much faster than his. ‘Clifton Terrace, Winchester,’ and ‘My dear father—I came here yesterday, and was most agreeably surprised,’ was all that he had indited, when he paused to weigh what was his real view of the merits of the case, and ponder whether his present feeling was sober judgment, or the novelty of the bewitching prettiness of this innocent and gracious creature. There he rested, musing, while from her pen flowed a description of her walk and of Mr. Martindale’s brother. ‘If they are all like him, I shall be perfectly happy,’ she wrote. ‘I never saw any one so kind and considerate, and so gentle;

only now and then he frightens me, with his politeness, or perhaps polish is the right word, it makes me feel myself rude and uncourteous and awkward. You said nothing gave you so much the notion of high-breeding as Mr. Martindale's ease, especially when he pretended to be rough and talk slang, it was like playing at it. Now, his brother has the same, without the funny roughness, but the greatest gentleness, and a good deal of quiet sadness. I suppose it is from his health, though he is much better now: he still coughs, and he moves slowly and leans languidly, as if he was not strong. He is not so tall as his brother, and much slighter in make, and fairer complexioned, with gray eyes and brown hair, and he looks sallow and worn and thin, with such white long hands.'

Here raising her eyes to verify her description, she encountered those of its subject, evidently taking a survey of her for the same purpose. He smiled, and she was thereby encouraged to break into a laugh, so girlish and light-hearted, so unconscious how much depended on his report, that he could not but feel compassionate.

Alarmed at the graver look, she crimsoned, exclaiming, 'O! I beg your pardon! It was very rude.'

'No, no,' said John; it was absurd!' and vexed at having checked her gladsomeness, he added, 'It is I rather who should ask your pardon, for looks that will not make a cheerful figure in your description.'

'Oh, no,' cried Violet; 'mamma told me never to say anything against any of Mr. Martindale's relations. What have I said?'—as he could not help laughing—'Something I could not have meant.'

‘Don’t distress yourself, pray,’ said John, not at all in a bantering tone. ‘I know what you meant; and it was very wise advice, such as you will be very glad to have followed.’

With a renewed blush, an ingenuous look, and a hesitating effort, she said, ‘INDEED, I have been telling them how very kind you are. Mamma will be so pleased to hear it.’

‘She must have been very sorry to part with you,’ said he, looking at the fair girl sent so early into the world.

‘Oh, yes!’ and the tears started to the black eyelashes, though a smile came at the same time; ‘she said I should be such a giddy young housekeeper, and she would have liked a little more notice.’

‘It was not very long?’ said John, anxious to lead her to give him information; and she was too young and happy not to be confidential, though she looked down and glowed as she answered, ‘Six weeks.’

‘And you met at the ball!’

‘Yes, it was very curious;’ and with deepening blushes she went on, the smile of happiness on her lips, and her eyes cast down. ‘Annette was to go for the first time, and she would not go without me. Mamma did not like it, for I was not sixteen then; but Uncle Christopher came, and said I should, because I was his pet. But I can never think it was such a short time; it seems a whole age ago.’

‘It must,’ said John, with a look of interest that made her continue.

‘It was very odd how it all happened. Annette and I had no one to dance with, and were wondering who those two gentlemen were. Captain Fitzhugh was dancing with Miss

Evelyn, and he—Mr. Martindale—was leaning against the wall, looking on.'

'I know exactly—with his arms crossed so—'

'Yes, just so,' said Violet, smiling; 'and presently Grace Bennet came and told Matilda who they were; and while I was listening, oh, I was so surprised, for there was Albert, my brother, making me look round. Mr. Martindale had asked to be introduced to us, and he asked me to dance. I don't believe I answered right, for I thought he meant Matilda. 'But,' said she, breaking off, 'how I am chattering and hindering you!' and she coloured and looked down.

'Not at all,' said John; 'there is nothing I wish more to hear, or that concerns me more nearly. Anything you like to tell.'

'I am afraid it is silly,' half-whispered Violet to herself; but the recollection was too pleasant not to be easily drawn out; and at her age the transition is short from shyness to confidence.

'Not at all silly,' said John. 'You know I must wish to hear how I gained a sister.'

Then, as the strangeness of imagining that this grave, high-bred, more than thirty-years-old gentleman, could possibly call her by such a name, set her smiling and blushing in confusion, he wiled on her communications by saying, 'Well, that evening you danced with Arthur.'

'Three times. It was a wonderful evening. Annette and I said, when we went to bed, we had seen enough to think of for weeks. We did not know how much more was going to happen.'

'No, I suppose not.'

‘I thought much of it when he bowed to me. I little fancied—but there was another odd coincidence—wasn’t it? In general I never go into the drawing-room to company, because there are three older; but the day they came to speak to papa about the fishing, mamma and all the elder ones were out of the way, except Matilda. I was doing my Roman history with her, when papa came in and said, we must both come into the drawing-room.’

‘You saw more of him from that time?’

‘O yes; he dined with us. It was the first time I ever dined with a party, and he talked so much to me, that Albert began to laugh at me; but Albert always laughs. I did not care till—till—that day when he walked with us in the park, coming home from fishing.’

Her voice died away, and her face burnt as she looked down; but a few words of interest led her on.

‘When I told mamma, she said most likely he thought me a little girl who didn’t signify; but I did not think he could, for I am the tallest of them all, and every one says I look as if I was seventeen, at least. And then she told me grand gentlemen and officers didn’t care what nonsense they talked. You know she didn’t know him so well then,’ said Violet, looking up pleadingly.

‘She was very prudent.’

‘She could not know he did not deserve it,’ said the young bride, ready to resent it for her husband, since his brother did not, then again excusing her mother. ‘It was all her care for me, dear mamma! She told me not to think about it; but I could not help it! Indeed I could not!’

‘No, indeed,’ and painful recollections of his own pressed on him, but he could not help being glad this tender young heart was not left to pine under disappointment. ‘How long ago was this?’

‘That was six weeks ago—a month before our wedding-day,’ said she, blushingly. ‘I did wish it could have been longer. I wanted to learn, how to keep house, and I never could, for he was always coming to take me to walk in the park. And it all happened so fast, I had no time to understand it, nor to talk to mamma and Matilda. And then mamma cried so much! I don’t feel to understand it now, but soon perhaps I shall have more quiet time. I should like to have waited till Lord Martindale came home, but they said that could not be, because his leave of absence would be over. I did wish very much though that Miss Martindale could have left her aunt to come to our wedding.’

John found reply so difficult, that he was glad to be interrupted by Arthur’s return. He soon after set out to call upon Captain Fitzhugh, who had been at Wrangerton with Arthur.

From him more of the circumstances were gathered. Mr. Moss was the person universally given up to reprobation. ‘A thorough schemer,’ said the Irish captain. As to the Miss Mosses, they were lady-like girls, most of them pretty, and everywhere well spoken of. In fact, John suspected he had had a little flirtation on his own account with some of them, though he took credit to himself for having warned his friend to be careful. He ended with a warm-hearted speech, by no means displeasing to John, hoping he would make the best of it with Lord Martindale, for after all, she was as pretty a

creature as could be seen, one that any man might be proud of for a daughter-in-law; and to his mind it was better than leaving the poor girl to break her heart after him when it had gone so far.

Arthur himself was in a more rational mood that evening. He had at first tried to hide his embarrassment by bravado; but he now changed his tone, and as soon as Violet had left the dining-room, began by an abrupt inquiry, ‘What would you have me do?’

‘Why don’t you write to my father!’

Arthur writhed. ‘I suppose it must come to that,’ he said; ‘but tell me first the state of things.’

‘You could not expect that there would not be a good deal of indignation.’

‘Ay, ay! How did you get the news? Did Theodora tell you?’

‘No; there was a letter from Colonel Harrington; and at home they knew the circumstances pretty correctly through a cousin of Wingfield’s, who has a curacy in that neighbourhood.’

‘Oh! that was the way Theodora came by the news. I wish he had let alone telling her,—I could have managed her alone;—but there! it was not in human nature not to tell such a story, and it did not much matter how it was done. Well, and my aunt is furious, I suppose, but I’ll take care of her and of my lady. I only want to know how my father takes it.’

‘He cannot endure the notion of a family feud; but the first step must come from you.’