

He had come to fancy that his own attitude towards Sybil found a counterpart, allowing for the difference of sex, in that of Sue towards Sybil's brother. And this idea had been confirmed, if not originated, by Reggie himself. That young gentleman, taking it for granted that he was the object of Susan Playfair's admiration, neither boasted of the supposed fact nor yet attempted to conceal his consciousness of it. That the girl should be fond of him was natural—almost inevitable; whether he did or would return her affection was a matter

for further consideration. This being the state of Reggie's mind, he was not a little disgusted, as we have already said, to find the prospect of his departure from England viewed with such apparent equanimity by Susan. And it was by this same phenomenon that Tom was now puzzled in his simple heart.

It never occurred to either of the young men that whatever Susan's feelings might have been as a mere girl, a change might have come over them with the dawn of womanhood.

CHAPTER IV.

A TOUR OF INSPECTION.



DURING the short time that he was at home Tom Playfair held his peace; but he took a step that was far more effective than any verbal argument could have been, in compelling the Jessops to realise the true character of their proposed undertaking.

"As you are all so set on this venture, why don't you come aboard the *Peruvian* to-morrow morning, and see what an emigrant ship is like? I'll be happy to show you round."

This suggestion, thrown out casually, as it were, by Tom, as the two families were having tea together on the eve of his departure for his next run to Quebec and Montreal, became the subject of an animated discussion. For a time there was some hanging back. Mrs. Jessop, though willing to

dream about a journey of several thousand miles, at a distance of a month or six weeks, doubted whether she could stand the racket and fatigue of a trip to the north end of Liverpool on the following morning. Reginald talked mysteriously about "his engagements," and Sybil hesitated, not feeling quite sure whether or not she fancied the idea of being "shown round" by the stoker, as she was pleased to designate Tom Playfair when in one of her haughty moods. Finally, however, the matter was arranged, chiefly in consequence of the enthusiastic advocacy of Polly and Dick.

At eleven o'clock the next morning the Jessop family found themselves standing, a somewhat forlorn little group, at the shore end of the gangway that led from the quay-side to the crowded deck of the *Peruvian*. There was a short interval of embarrassed hesitation. Dick, who, in his eagerness, had rushed on in front, had been invited by one of the sailors to say who he was and where he was going. And Reginald, to whom the others naturally looked for direction and leadership, was a little shy of venturing on board lest he should be turned back in the presence of a jeering throng of onlookers and emigrants. However, the tension of the situation was quickly relieved by the appearance of Tom Playfair. Recognising his expected friends from the deck, he hurried on shore with outstretched hands and words of hearty welcome.

"Well up to time. That's right. Take my arm, Mrs Jessop. Don't hurry. That's it. You'll make a first-rate sailor."

They now stood on the main deck, and Sybil noticed how smart and handsome Tom looked in his neat uniform. He was quite clean, and was apparently off