

# HEART TO HEART;

OR, LOVE'S UNERRING CHOICE.

## CHAPTER I.—(CONTINUED.)

By the time Hilda had finished her sad story the cab stopped at a shabby six-roomed house in one of those dismal streets that abound in the immediate neighborhood of the palaces of the "upper ten." The door of the house stood ajar, and Hilda sprang in, and darted up the dirty, rickety staircase, lit by a flaming jet of gas. The door of the second-floor-back was open, and the child entered, closely followed by Deloraine. The interior of the room was close and ill-ventilated, a smoky fire burned in the rusty grate; a small deal table, a couple of broken cane-seated chairs, and a wretched iron bedstead were the entire furniture it contained. The room was feebly lighted by a flickering tallow candle, set in a medicine bottle in lieu of a candlestick. Upon the miserable flock bed, covered with a tattered shawl which had once been woven in India's priceless looms, lay a woman, whose long raven hair, thickly streaked with silver, streamed over the pillow; her arm, worn almost to a skeleton, was flung over her face, and the deep-drawn laboring breath plainly bespoke her sufferings. As the child entered and stole round to the side of the bed, softly kissing the frail hand, the mother moved, and unclosing her eyes, held out her arms to the little creature, her last tie to life, who clung fondly to that dying mother with all the force and passion of her nature.

Deloraine, who had paused a moment on the threshold to request the landlady, who had joined him, to send immediately for a doctor, now entered. When his eyes fell upon the poor woman and her child, he uttered a cry of anguish, exclaiming, in tones of horror:

"Great Heaven, it is Katie!"

Roused by his voice, the sufferer turned round, and in broken, husky tones said:

"And so we meet once more, Mark?"

"Oh, my poor Katie," said Deloraine, flinging himself upon his knees by that wretched couch, and clasping the feeble hand which Katie extended to him. "My poor girl, why did you ever leave me, and for this?" looking round at the sordid room as he spoke.

"I thought," said the dying woman "that you had ceased to love me, and wanted neither me nor our child. I have been true to you, Mark," she said eagerly, "true to my vows. I worked for our child as long as I could, and then—I lay down to die. Now all is well, you will care for her, for the sake of our early love, our happy youth."

"My poor Katie, my little wife," he said fondly, "I never loved any woman upon this earth as I have loved you. Ah, why did you not trust me?"

"Because I was always a jealous fool," gasped Katie; "but all will be well now I have seen you again, and you will take care of Hilda," looking tenderly down, as she spoke, at her child, who, wearied out, had fallen asleep, her head, with its tawny gleaming tresses, pillowed upon her mother's bosom. "Perhaps 'tis better as it is; I was never half good or clever enough for you, Mark—I am very tired now—I could sleep I think"—then, after a pause, came in broken words, faintly uttered in the listener's ears, "I am glad, so glad, Mark, that you never loved Lady Grace, never cared for her as you did for your little Katie;" and then Deloraine, bending over her, drew the slender form into his arms, and thus again, after long, weary years, she slept with her head pillowed on the bosom where it had so often lain.

A step upon the creaking stairs, a rustle at the door, and the landlady, followed by the hastily summoned doctor, entered the room. He looked keenly at Deloraine, whose stately form, clothed in faultless evening dress, with diamond studs and fading stephanotis in buttonhole, looked so entirely out of place in the mean room with its sordid surroundings. After a brief examination of the patient, who seemed in a sort of stupor, he raised his head, and said to Deloraine:

"Not a chance of saving her—vital power completely exhausted; she cannot possibly last long"—then, as Mark tried to ask the nature of her illness, he added, "consumption of long standing, accelerated by want; no power on earth can save her, she will probably pass away during sleep."

"You will not leave me," asked Deloraine hurriedly, "any remuneration I shall be most happy to—"

"Very well," returned the other; "I will stay till the end," and going to the other side of the bed, he gently drew the sleeping child from the arms of her dying mother.

Together, through the long hours of that sad night, Deloraine and the medical man watched beside that dying bed; and when the first faint rays of dawn were stealing in through the unshuttered window, Katie opened those exquisite blue eyes, which still retained their former beauty, and said, faintly, "Lift me up, Mark," and, as he raised her up, she put her wasted arms round his neck and said: "Kiss me once more, darling; take care of Hilda."

Pressing his lips passionately to hers, which were growing cold, he exclaimed: "Forgive me, my poor, dear Katie, for all I have made you suffer."

A smile peaceful and pure, flickered over the dying face; the clasping arms relaxed their hold; the white lids closed over the lovely eyes, and with one faint sigh, her spirit winged its way to "where, beyond these voices, there is peace!"

## CHAPTER II.

"AFTER LONG YEARS."

Set in the midst of spreading lawns and fertile meadows, upon the banks of the

silver-winding Thames, half-way between Windsor and Henly, stands Marham Abbey, which has been for the past hundred years in the possession of the Deloraine family; Mark Deloraine's great uncle, General Deloraine, having bought the Abbey, and its rich lands from the widow of Sir John Herbert, whose ancestors had received it from Edward VI., it having been seized by the rapacious hands of bluff King Hal at the dissolution of monasteries for his own use and benefit. Tradition affirmed that since this act of sacrilege, the broad lands of Marham Abbey had never descended in a direct line from father to son. An Elizabethan dwelling-house had been built round the remains of the old Abbey, which had often been honored by the presence of the "Virgin Queen" herself. The drawing-room was still called Queen Elizabeth's council chamber, and in one of the mossy glades of the park rises a crystal stream of water named "the Queen's spring," where there is still remaining the marble walls of the bath which Her Majesty is said to have used. The magnificent hall, larger than the nave of a church, was hung round with shields of the proud race to whom it had belonged. Exquisite gardens, thickets of azaleas and rhododendrons, wide-spreading lawns, ornamented with rare and costly American forest trees, girdled the old stone Abbey, which, standing in the midst of the fascinating scenery—for which this neighborhood is celebrated—was the home of Hilda Deloraine.

Ever since the day when Mark Deloraine had taken Hilda from the side of her dying mother, her life had passed like a happy dream. Deloraine seemed as if he could never do enough for the child whose early childhood had been so sorrowful. It was impossible for him to atone to poor Katie for all she had suffered, but their child was left to him, and upon her he poured out all the love and devotion of his nature. And Hilda, on her part, absolutely adored her father, who never left one wish of that idolized daughter ungratified. A kind and elderly governess was engaged to superintend her education, but for study Hilda had little love. To ride to hounds with her father, to sit beside him in his mail phaeton behind the two thorough-bred horses which he drove so recklessly up and down the hills of that lovely county, to pull her light skiff upon the gleaming river, to play lawn tennis; or, even to accompany Deloraine and the keeper as they beat the covers for pheasants, or tramped for long hours through the turnips for partridges—these were Hilda's favorite pursuits, and she yawned dolefully over German exercises, and considered the hours spent in her pleasant study a terrible nuisance, and when, at nineteen, her kind governess left her, Hilda had, it is to be feared, profited but little by her instructions. She could sing beautifully and play her own accompaniments, sketch dogs and horses, waltz to perfection, but of real solid attainments Hilda possessed but few. She had a noble, unselfish disposition, was truthful and upright, a firm friend and proud, almost to a fault of her noble name and unstained lineage. Her father occasionally took her to London for a week or two, but they were both far happier in their lovely country home, among all the old friends whom Hilda had known ever since Deloraine had brought her to the Abbey on her mother's death, which occurred when she was ten years old.

Let us resume our acquaintance with Hilda, as she sits surrounded by some of these old friends upon the lawn one sunny afternoon in June, busily engaged in making tea. The gown of India muslin, richly trimmed with costly lace and ornamented with knots of roselined ribbon, suited her peerless beauty and tall and stately form to perfection. The wavy tresses of her tawny, gleaming hair were wound round her graceful head; dainty features, a pure, creamy skin, with magnificent eyes, blue as violets, completed her claims to admiration, and, indeed, in all the fair county of Berks, Hilda Deloraine had long borne off the palm for beauty. Sitting on a low wicker chair, close by the tea table, was the tall figure of a young man. Roger Montacute stood six feet two in his shooting boots, and was the beau ideal of an English country gentleman. His close-cropped hair was of light brown, so were also the bold, keen eyes; his complexion was tanned by exposure to wind and weather; his kindly, genial mouth, unshaded by a mustache, had ever a frank smile for all around him. He was Hilda's greatest friend and firm ally. He was the nephew and reputed heir of Mrs. Palmer, a widow lady, whose estate stretched far away upon the opposite bank of the river, and who was the Deloraine's nearest neighbor, though her beautiful house, the Temple stood in the adjoining county. Roger was the only child of Mrs. Palmer's dead sister, who had greatly offended her family by her clandestine marriage with a young officer whose glittering uniform had captivated her fancy at a ball at Windsor. The spoiled and petted girl had paid dearly for her disobedience, her father crossed her name from his will and forbade her to be mentioned in his presence. She did not long survive her young husband who fell in the Crimea, and Mrs. Palmer, who was many years older than that once idolized sister, sought out the little orphan and brought him home to the Temple. Proud and cold though she was, she loved Roger with a depth of affection of which he was quite unconscious. He had been educated at Eton and Oxford, where he had gained much notoriety as "stroke in the university eight" and other feats of prowess, but "the schools" knew him not, and his education completed, he returned to the Temple to fill the post for which he was so well fitted—namely, to hunt, to shoot, to row and to be, in all but name, master of the broad acres and fertile lands belonging to Mrs. Palmer, all share in which his mother had forfeited when she renounced all for love and considered "the world well lost."

Seated upon a tiger skin rug upon the mossy turf, busily engaged in demolishing a plateful of strawberries and cream, was a young lady, slight, graceful, and pretty, with brilliant dark eyes, rose-leaf complexion, a tiny impudent little nose, laughing lips and dimpled chin. A very short skirt of white serge permitted a view of the most exquisite feet and ankles in the world, clothed in scarlet hose and square-toed Cromwell shoes. The tight sleeves of her scarlet and white striped Jersey showed the beauty of her arms to advantage. Altogether, Maria Healthote, the only daughter of the Vicar of Marham, and Hilda's most particular friend, was a little damsel calculated to turn the heads of most of the male population of that neighborhood nor was she ignorant of the fact. She was dividing her attention between the strawberries on her lap and a gentleman who stood by her, and, it truth must be spoken, the little coquette was rather indignant at the scant measure of notice he was according to her lively sallies. But the attention of Nigel Wentworth was differently engaged. While he stood by the side of Miss Healthote and listened to her gay remarks, his deep gray eyes were watching Hilda and Roger, and a bitter feeling of hatred for the young man possessed his soul as he noted Hilda's downcast looks and lovely blushes. What would the calm, worldly lawyer have given if he had had power to move her thus? Unfortunately for himself if there was one person in all the world whom Hilda instinctively disliked it was the cold, worldly man in whom her father put such abundant trust. And yet Nigel Wentworth was a man whom many women admired and some had dearly loved. He was a man of excellent family, some private fortune, and the head of a firm of London solicitors whose business was a large and flourishing one. For the rest, he was tall and of a stately presence, with deep-set gray eyes, haughty features and close-cut dark hair and whiskers. He had long been an intimate friend of Mark Deloraine, though so many years his junior, and Mark admired and trusted him more than any one else in the world.

"And do you really mean to say, Mr. Wentworth, that you have never heard of the Abbey ghost so intimate as you are, too, with the Squire?" Maria was asking, in her gay young voice.

"Hilda, love, here is Mr. Wentworth, who has positively never heard of your haunted room."

"Well, tell him the story, dear," rejoined her friend, "but I can easily understand why Mr. Wentworth has never heard of it for papa hates to hear it mentioned. They say that the appearance of Lady Frances always bodes woe to our family."

"Really, Hilda, that seems hard lines," here put in Roger Montacute. The horrid creature has no business to disturb innocent people like you and the Squire."

"But pray what did this ancestress of yours do, Miss Deloraine?" asked Wentworth, in his gravely satirical voice.

And Hilda replied:

"She was the widow of an ambassador who died in France in 1566, leaving her the sole guardian of her only son; she must have been an awfully severe and cruel woman, for the story goes that she beat the poor little creature to death for refusing, or perhaps being unable, to learn to write; they say she still haunts the chamber where she killed her son, and when any will is about to happen to one of the inhabitants of the Abbey she may be seen, dressed in her weeds, coif and wimple, endeavoring to wash her hands in a self-supposed basin. The legend adds that her ghost will not be laid until the blotted copy book is found—but hush! here comes papa."

Well, dear" springing to her feet and greeting her father affectionately, "do you come to have some tea? It is almost cold, I fear."

"No, dear, I do not want any tea. Parkes brought some into my study."

"What is the matter, papa, dear? You look so worried," asks Hilda, as she laid her hand tenderly on her father's arm.

"Nothing, Hilda; I am rather vexed, that is all, child. I have had a letter from your Uncle Reginald to say he cannot come to your birthday festivities next week."

"Oh, papa, dear, I am sorry; I know you will be disappointed, you have not seen Uncle Reginald for so long."

"Twenty years, Hilda," said her father sorrowfully; "he came to see me just before he started for India; you were a baby then." Then, as the dressing-bell pealed out through the still air, and the ladies rose to go indoors, Deloraine turned to Nigel Wentworth and said: "Come into the library after dinner, there's a good fellow; I want to ask your advice upon a matter of some importance."

Wentworth, looking at his friend, was surprised to see that he was looking very pale and seemed greatly disturbed. He took no notice of this, however, and, saying, "Very well, Deloraine, I will be there," followed his host into the hall.

## CHAPTER III.

"SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED."

"Thank Heaven! that's off my mind," exclaimed Mark Deloraine, as he contemplated his signature which, followed by those of three witnesses, he had just affixed to the parchment deed which lay open before him on his study table.

"Yes," replied Nigel Wentworth, drily, "it's quite as well that you were disturbed by the tone of Colonel Deloraine's letter, if you wanted any incentive before executing that"—pointing to the parchment. "I cannot think why it was not done years ago."

"I could not bear—I did not wish it," replied Mark, hesitating strangely as he spoke. "Hang it all, man, it's done now, never mind inquiring into the why and wherefore of its remaining so long unattended to; there was no great hurry, after all, I am still in the prime of life, and—"

"That is very true," replied his friend, gravely, "still, life is so uncertain, and this was so obviously your duty; had I known all the circumstances I should have given you no peace, I can assure you, Deloraine."

"I can well believe that," replied the other, with a short laugh. "Well, I will put this away now," unhooking, as he spoke a fire-proof chest that was fitted into the wall by the side of a huge carved mantelpiece. "You will know where to find it, Wentworth, in case it is needed," he added, handing the will to his solicitor and giving him the key of the safe.

Wentworth had already prepared a parcel to resemble the will. He quietly and quickly substituted one for the other and concealed the true will in the breast of his frock coat.

"I must be off now, Deloraine; my train leaves at half-past four. I shall be down again next week to pay my respects to Miss Deloraine on her coming of age."

Mark looked sharply at his friend. Was

it a fancy, or did a sneer curve Wentworth's lips as he spoke?

The lawyer mused long and deeply as the express train to town bore him through the pleasant landscape, and the result of his meditations was satisfactory, to judge from the expression of his face, as he looked out of the carriage window on the lovely landscape before him.

"Ah, my peerless Hilda! I think I have you in my power now," he muttered to himself with a smile. He little knew what that day would bring forth.

A truck on the line was not sufficiently quickly shunted to escape contact with the express train which carried the lawyer, and a smash ensued, though without much damage to the travellers.

Wentworth received a severe fracture of the ankle, and so severe was the pain that he was carried out of the carriage in a dead faint.

Among the people crowding round and looking on were, as usual, several roughs. At the feet of one of these fellows fell the will from Wentworth's coat.

Quick at seeing a chance of making something out of the document, the finder quickly concealed and made off with it, and no one was better able to appreciate the value of the "find." He was an attorney's clerk, dismissed for speculation and selling information out of his employer's office. He took a good mental photograph of the injured man before he left the scene.

It was not until Wentworth had been twenty-four hours at home that he thought of the will, intending to destroy it. When he discovered its absence he became almost dazed with disappointment and fear. Had he left it behind him, or dropped it en route to the railroad?

One thing was certain—it was gone and now was in somebody's possession. He was confined to his chambers and unable to take any active steps for its recovery. He felt utterly helpless. Well, it could not be helped, and he must trust to chance.

In a week he recovered from his sprain and spent hours in useless reflection as to the measures he should adopt, and in this dilemma we must leave him at present.

The sun had sunk to rest, leaving a glow of rosy light behind. The sky was a faint sea green, melting into the twilight gray; a faint star glittered here and there in the darkening sky as Hilda Deloraine took her way across the park, after strolling as far as the vicarage with her friend Maria, who had been helping her over the numerous arrangements for the gay doings on the morrow, when the coming of age of the petted young heiress was to be celebrated on a somewhat magnificent scale. The villagers were to be feasted in one marquee upon the lawn, the servants in another, while "the county" were to be entertained in the grand old hall, under the drooping banners of that proud race whose very name was almost forgotten now. Hilda walked slowly along till she reached the Queen's spring musing dreamily over other things than the coming gaieties. The evening was delicious; the air, perfumed with the scent of a thousand blossoms, fanned the girl's fair cheek and ruffled the golden masses of her gleaming hair. She sat down to rest upon the moss-grown steps that led to the marble basin, and dipped her hand in the cold, pellucid water. She made a fair picture in her white gown, leaning back against the broken marble balustrade of the bath, with the masses of tangled foliage around her, the glittering sky above, and the gleaming water, half hidden by water lilies, at her feet.

And so thought Roger Montacute, as he crossed the park and saw her sitting there, so still that in the gloaming she might have been taken for a woodnymph.

Lifting her eyes, as she heard his footfall upon the mossy turf, a lovely color flooded her cheeks, and as he eagerly clasped the hand she extended to him, her eyes fell beneath the ardent glances of his.

"You look like a dried, sitting here in the dark, Hilda," said the young man. "What brings you so far from home?"

"I have been home with Maria, Roger," she replied. "Papa is gone to town, and we have been so busy preparing for tomorrow; I am tired," she added.

"Busy!" laughed the young man. "Now, confess, you and Maria have been getting in everybody's way all day, and that has been your share of the work."

"Indeed, Roger," said Hilda, earnestly, "we have been working quite hard. I cannot tell you how many basketfuls of roses we have made into wreaths to decorate the ballroom."

"I know who will be 'Queen rose of the roses,'" said the young man tenderly. Then, as he took her hand in his, he said, very low, and in a voice shaken by intense feeling: "Hilda, I have loved you for years, darling. Do you think you could be happy with a stupid fellow like myself, whose only merit in your eyes would consist in the passionate love he feels for you?"

And as Hilda raised her eyes to his, he read his answer in their clear depths, and, taking her in his arms, kissed her, oh, so tenderly; and then, drawing her hand through his arm, they walked together through the glades of the park, as bonnie a pair of lovers as was to be met with in all that fair county of Berkshire that night. That the course of their true love would run smooth might be easily prophesied, and earth and sky alike seemed to smile upon the youthful pair as they lingered in the dewy flower-perfumed garden under the light of the gleaming stars.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## A Criticism.

It's terrible, said Plodding Pete, de way folks wastes time. It hurts me feelin's ter see it goin' on.

G'wan! replied Meandering Mike; ye ain't goin' back on yer profession an' wantin' work, are ye?

Nope. What I has reference to is de way folks loses precious hours workin' w'en dey might ez well be puttin' in good chunks o' time doin' nothin'.

## That Will Give Him Exercise.

Man on horseback—Hello! old man; given up riding.

Man on foot—Well, the fact is, my doctor says that I am getting too fat, and advises me to take short, quick runs during the day. But I want some object to run for.

Man on horseback—Buy a straw hat.

## PURELY CANADIAN NEWS.

INTERESTING ITEMS ABOUT OUR OWN COUNTRY.

Gathered from Various Points from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The Ontario hay crop will be light. Leamington's assessment is \$393,613. Kingston wants to have a dog show. The Halifax drill shed will cost \$200,000.

The Texan horn fly is abroad in Ontario.

G. T. R. earnings show weekly increases.

A shoe factory is to be opened at Oshawa.

Manitoulin Island wants a Patron organizer.

In May 768 immigrants arrived at Winnipeg.

Middlesex county must raise \$71,000 this year.

A cannery for vegetables is to be built at Winnipeg.

A steamer runs between Port Stanley and Cleveland.

A large pulp mill is being erected at Chatham, N. B.

The Cuenong branch of the G. T. R. is open for traffic.

Lane's bakery, Welland, has been destroyed by fire.

The T. O. & B. Railroad is within ten miles of Bancroft.

One Winnipeg agent recently sold 100 lots in the suburbs.

A number of land buyers are in the Manitoulin district.

Listowel will have its fall show September 19 and 20.

The Public school building at Merrickville is to be enlarged.

A new sash and door factory will be established at Pembroke.

A woolen mill and bobbin factory will be erected at Sundridge.

Buchanan is the name of a new post-office in Renfrew county.

It cost Middlesex county \$470 for one case of small-pox, at Lobo.

The Wallaceburg glass works will not be opened until September.

Leonard's foundry, London, has increased its wages five per cent.

There are 25 new cheese factories in Western Ontario this season.

Litigation about the big lumber trust, Rat Portage, is not yet ended.

More than \$6,000 worth of bicycles have gone into Kingston this season.

The Catholic Order of Foresters has formed a provincial organization.

Rev. Mr. Godden has been inducted into the parish of Acton and Rockwood.

The wheat area of Manitoba has been increased 130,000 acres this year.

Woodstock's telegraphic companies have abandoned the local call-box system.

Killaloe village offer \$1,500 to any one who will build a rolling mill there.

Truro, N. S., has now two condensed milk and general canning companies.

A Toronto tenderer will re-build the Port Hope Church School for \$14,350.

The late Robert Jahn, Hamilton, left a \$30,000 collection of postage stamps.

Last week New Westminster shipped 15,000,000 feet of lumber to California.

An offer for 110 for city debentures is before the city of New Westminster, B. C.

A Woodstock apiarist has an English order on hand for 4,000 pounds of honey.

Stringent laws are being passed in various towns of Ontario regulating bicycle traffic.

The Oxford County Council will take a plebiscite as to the abolition of statute labor.

Rev. E. P. Hannington, of Johnston, has been called to the English church at Norton, N. B.

Mosquitoes and black flies are unusually numerous throughout the country in the north.

James Aylsworth, Tamworth, has been appointed Police Magistrate for Addington county.

Port Hope is agitating a by-law to prevent any one from voting who has not paid his taxes.

A French syndicate has just bought 320 acres of valuable mining land in Cariboo county.

A young woman of Kingston dresses in men's clothes and thus masquerades about the town.

A large summer hotel is to be built at Erieau, terminus of the Erie and Huron Railway.

The sinking fund of St. John, N. B., is \$298,415, and the debentures outstanding are \$3,616,640.

The fourth annual meeting of the Union Choirs of western Ontario will be held at London, July 10th.

The Texas Lake Ice Company has put up cold storage works at New Westminster, B. C., costing \$30,000.

A fire at Dartmouth, N. S., destroyed the residence of R. Russell, Q. C., and badly damaged his \$4,000 library.

The duty collected at Westminster and Vancouver in May is \$15,000 more than collected in May last year.

Hon. J. C. Aikins, ex-Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, and Mrs. Aikins have just celebrated their golden wedding.

Great quantities of grain come from Chicago via Midland, and go to the Maritime provinces and the New England states.

A business house of Nelson, B. C., last week took in a ten dollar bill of the Imperial Bank of Canada. On its back the following words were written in ink: "Beware of fast women and strong drink. This is the last of a large fortune."

## Hard Rhyme.

Huh! sniffed the boarder, "can you Give me a word to rhyme with hush? The landlady smilingly answered him: Suppose, sir, you try cash."