

garrulous eagerness, that Miss Spencelaugh had promised 'to try to like him a little', had been to seek an interview with Frederica, and with all the warmth and passion, real and simulated, which he could summon for the occasion, to lay himself, metaphorically, at her feet, and, if possible, to wring from her a further promise of one day becoming his wife. But when he saw one time after another, how persistently Frederica refused to give him the desired opportunity; how, by no scheming, would she allow herself to be left alone with him for a minute; and when at last it dawned on his mind that the promise she had given had been given entirely out of deference to her uncle's wishes and not in the least degree through any regard for himself; and that if he persisted in these violent attempts at commonplace love-making, he should frighten his bird beyond recall; he wisely determined to change his tactics, and to win his way to her regard through her intellect, before laying siege to the fortress of her heart.

Mr. Duplessis, while admitting the full difficulties of the task before him, never allowed himself to despair. His experience of the sex had unconsciously led him to form such a good opinion of his own qualifications, that he was not troubled with any doubts as to his ultimate success in the present instance. He was acute enough to perceive, what no one else suspected, that the shadow of some old love still lingered in the heart of Frederica; but he wisely kept his knowledge to himself, trusting to time and his own efforts to pull down the image of his unknown rival, and set up that of Henri Duplessis in its place. From the day on which he decided to change his mode of action, he no longer sought for opportunities of finding Frederica alone; and when Lady Spencelaugh once or twice attempted, good-naturedly, to make such occasions for him, he shrank from accepting them, and seemed unaccountably to have become as shy and retiring as his lady-love herself.

When, on the other hand, Miss Spencelaugh and he met in the presence of others, and better still, if there were only a third person present, and especially if that third person were Miss Craxton—ex-governess at Belair; middle-aged, snuffy, but still delightfully sentimental, and at present on a visit to her old pupil—then would Mr. Duplessis exert himself to the utmost to dazzle and fascinate Frederica.

Although the richest young lady in all Monkshire, Miss Spencelaugh had seen but little of London society, for the baronet and his wife had lost, years ago, all relish for town-life; and what little company visited at Belair was not of a kind to possess much interest for Frederica, chiefly consisting, as it did, of middle-aged country squires and their wives, with perhaps an insipid daughter or two, just emancipated from the boarding-school. Young gentlemen, wanting neither in manners nor education, were not more scarce in Monkshire than anywhere else; but after one or two of them had tried their fortune with the heiress of Belair, and had been repulsed; and when a rumour ran through the bachelor ranks that Miss Spencelaugh had bound herself by an oath never to marry, they fought rather shy of the solemn dinner-parties at the Hall, and carried themselves and their attraction to quarters where they were more likely to be appreciated. But, indeed, had any of the robust young squires of Monkshire—university-men many of them, with their honest homely country training overlaid with a thin lacker of London fast life—been foolish enough to enter into the list with Duplessis, they would soon have had cause to regret their temerity in so doing; for Mr. Duplessis had a hundred advantages on his side, such as no young man of twenty, however accomplished he might be, could hope to rival. In the first place, there was his age; and a man's age, up to a certain point, if properly managed, is an advantage rather than the contrary in a love-chase, especially if the Diana of whom he is in pursuit has to be won through the intellect as much as through the heart. Then, again, Mr. Duplessis had the advantage of a wide experience of the world. He had travelled much, and had seen life in various forms; he was an excellent linguist, and had supplied

an originally good education by sundry accomplishments picked up in different countries; and he knew how to present his knowledge in its most attractive guise before others. To all this, add the fact, that he was eminently handsome, and that his style was pronounced to be irreproachable, and it will at once be seen that Mr. Duplessis was not without reason on his side when he expressed his firm belief in the ultimate success of his suit.

That the Canadian was possessed of many attractive qualities, Frederica had been made aware from the day on which the Belair party had made his acquaintance so opportunely among the Pyrenees; and as time wore on, the friendly bond between the two assumed that easy, bantering, thrust-and-parry character which seems to be educated so naturally from the collision of two bright and well-polished intellects; which is essentially of the world, worldly; which rarely or never touches any of the deeper chords of feeling, nor desires, indeed, to do so; which is very ephemeral, and easily broken, but very pleasant while it lasts; and is, in fact, such a gay and sparkling apology for genuine friendship that many easy-hearted individuals prefer it to the real article, as less troublesome, and by no means so exacting. So long, then as the friendship between them—if friendship it could be called—moved pleasantly along to light music, so long did Miss Spencelaugh take pleasure in the company of the accomplished Canadian; but at the first whisper of love, the sunlight of laughter died out of her eyes; she turned on him in all her dark and haughty beauty, and shuddered as though a serpent had stung her.

It was not merely that Frederica's heart was already given to another; there was something beyond that—one of those nameless unaccountable antipathies, which caused her whole nature to rise in revolt against the idea of ever becoming the wife of Henri Duplessis. And yet, in the face of this antagonistic feeling, she had given that rash promise to her uncle! She had given it during the first sharp pain of her bereavement, while utterly indifferent as to whatever might happen to herself; how bitterly she regretted it afterwards, no one but herself ever knew. But when Frederica perceived that all lover-like advances on the Canadian's part had entirely ceased; that he no longer sought for an opportunity of finding her alone; and that his demeanour in no wise differed from that of any other gentleman who visited at Belair, she concluded, not unnaturally, that seeing how distasteful his suit was to her, he had silently abandoned it; and grateful to him for his forbearance, she began slowly, and almost unconsciously, to unbend towards him; and by degrees the intimacy between them came to assume its old easy laughing character, which was precisely the point to which Mr. Duplessis was desirous of bringing it, and from which he began to work afresh.

It was the old easy intimacy with a difference, as Frederica was not long in discovering; less bantering and satirical than of yore, but with more of the earnest feeling of real friendship, at least on the part of Mr. Duplessis; and based on a pleasant communion of intellectual tastes hitherto unsuspected by Frederica. It was strange to discover that Mr. Duplessis's favourite authors were hers also. His acquaintance with Dante, and Goethe, and Schiller, exceeded her own; and in English literature he was certainly much better read than she was. Then there were other happy points of contact between them. Mr. Duplessis, like Frederica, was passionately fond of sketching from nature, and wielded a free bold pencil, which seemed to rub in, with a few easy rapid touches, effects which only by much slow, painstaking study could she adequately shadow forth. What more natural, under these circumstances, than that they should occasionally find themselves among the beautiful Belair woods, sketching some picturesque nook together, with obliging little Miss Craxton to play propriety between them. Then, again, Mr. Duplessis was an admirable amateur-musician, and had a clear ringing tenor voice, which he knew how to use with excellent effect; and music, in such a case, is full of

dangerous fascinations, and has tones of hidden tenderness all its own, which can reach the heart that no other language avails to touch.

The health of Sir Philip Spencelaugh waned slowly as the summer advanced, but he still clung as ever to his pet of a scheme of a union between the man for whom he had contracted so singular a liking, and Frederica. He saw, with a sort of querulous satisfaction, that Frederica no longer displayed any signs of distaste for the company of Mr. Duplessis; and he was only dissuaded from urging his niece to name an early day for the marriage by the Canadian himself, who knew well that the baronet's persuasions would have an effect precisely the opposite of that which it was intended they should have, and would utterly freeze those pretty tender buds of liking which he saw creeping forth from day to day, and which he hoped, by patient and judicious cultivation, would one day culminate in the perfect flower of love. So the baronet, with some difficulty, was induced to keep his own counsel, and that of Mr. Duplessis, as far as it was known to him. He would sit for an hour at a time with Frederica's hand in his, patting it softly, and murmuring below his breath: 'Good girl, good girl,' and gazing with anxious eyes into that bright proud young face, which, when in his presence, always softened into a tenderness such as was rarely seen upon it at any other time.

Beyond the precincts of Belair, the news, unfounded as we know, spread quickly, emanating from what source no one could tell, that Miss Spencelaugh was positively engaged to Mr. Henri Duplessis, and that the marriage was to take place before Christmas—spread to Normandford and Eastingham; and thence, in an ever-widening circle, from one country-house to another, till it was known throughout the length and breadth of Monkshire; and so, after a time, it travelled up to town, and came to be discussed in west-end drawing-rooms, and to be a topic for brief comment at chance meetings in the crush on aristocratic staircases.

Such was the position of affairs at Belair, at the time when one of the most important characters in our history makes his first appearance on the scene.

To be continued.

LOSSES AT SEA.

IT is still to be proved whether iron or oak is the most buoyant and suitable material for ships, and whether the vessel of Benbow's time, or the mass of metal that now bears our English thunders over the waves, is to be the sea-conqueror of the future. The recent deplorable fate of the *London* has led to many such enquiries, and the thoughts to which it has given rise will long continue to ferment in the minds of our ship-builders and ship-buyers. In seeking greater speed and increased steam-power, we may perhaps have rather lost sight of other qualities equally valuable, and equally needful for the safety and comfort of our sailors. Following out a train of thought into which the late calamity has led so many Englishmen, let us briefly recapitulate a few of the chief shipwrecks and other losses at sea during the last century.

The loss of the *Royal George*, a fine 110-gun ship, in 1782, not in a storm, not by fire, or in the shock of battle, but in a sea calm and without a ripple, excited a great interest in England, and roused Cowper the poet to the production of a ballad that is still read. In her last cruise, the *Royal George* having sprung a leak, was ordered into dock to be examined, and to have some of her copper sheathing removed. She was to be "careened" at Spithead—that is, to have her guns removed to one side till the damaged part rose above the water. At 6 a.m. on an August morning, the work was begun; and at ten, to remove some more copper, she was lowered another streak. A great part of the crew (nine hundred men) had just sat down to dinner, when a sudden gust of wind coming, forced the vessel lower on her side; the sea poured in at the open ports, and she sunk in eight minutes. Admiral