

IN SPIRE OF ALL.

By IDA LEMON, Author of "The Charming Cora," "A Winter Garment," etc.

CHAPTER XIX.



R. GILMAN and Norah accompanied the Anstruthers to Cornwall in August, and to the young girl that was perhaps the happiest month she had ever spent. She lived in the present, and the absence of

home cares and anxieties, not the least of which was the making a little money go a long way, seemed to make her younger, brighter, and more girlish than usual. She was glad, too, to see her father looking better, for sometimes she grew uneasy lest his health should fail; he, like his daughter, seemed to have put off the weight of his responsibilities, and he fully entered into the delights of boating and coaching, and excursions over the breezy moors. Even Sir John seemed less grim, and to have grown softer and gentler away from his usual haunts. Or it may be that old memories revived in him when he and his wife were left alone by the sea, and he realised that he loved her no less in reality than he had done in the days when they were full of present gladness and happy expectations, instead of being saddened and tired with the journey of life. At any rate, to Lady Anstruther, as to Norah, those days of rest and sunshine and companionship were almost ideal in their satisfaction. And afterwards, looking back, there was one day which brought such wonderful joy that all those that followed were irradiated with gladness. Indeed it is not generally a place which in itself brings happiness or the reverse to people, but that which happens there, or a mood induced by other things invests it with a charm or a sadness not its own. There are dreary slums which have been homes of keenest joy, and there is here and there an earthly paradise where men have known such utter anguish that, when they have gone forth, their minds shrink from dwelling on the memory thereof; and they would fain forget how the flowers bloomed and the birds sang, and the air was fragrant and sweet and warm, since to remember that is to recall a tortured spirit that these things mocked.

For some reason the promised visit to Moorwinstow had not taken place, though Mr. Gilman, who was a keen admirer of the author of the *Cornish Ballads*, both as man and as poet, had set his heart on going there. But one morning Lady Anstruther announced that it was her intention to go further afield than she had yet done, and that Sir John had "given her a holiday"—a piece of praiseworthy unselfishness on

his part, as to be left alone was generally a cause of grievance which everyone who had neglected him was made to feel. His wife, especially, he liked to be at his beck and call, even although he might not avail himself of her society when it was at his disposal. It was part of the general improvement in him that he showed during this visit a disposition to consider the pleasure of others independently of himself; and when Norah offered, after an inward struggle, it is true, to take Lady Anstruther's place, she was told in quite genial tones that this was not the season for self-denial, and she had better go and enjoy herself with the others.

Of course, if the four of them went, Lady Anstruther and Mr. Gilman were sure to pair off and leave Michael and Norah together, and to the latter that was all that was necessary for absolute contentment. The change in Michael made him more in sympathy with Norah than he had ever been, and sometimes he found her companionship a refuge from the loneliness which he felt when he remembered Beattie. But he was far too steadfast for it to be possible for him, at any rate at present, to take, as some men would have done, the love which might be his as solace for that which he had lost. Indeed Michael was not a particularly sentimental person. He had not many illusions about matrimony, and his attachments for the most part were to things rather than to people, though where he gave affection once he never wavered afterwards. So that though he would have given everything he possessed to call Beattie his own, yet, if she were denied him, he was more likely to concentrate his powers on those other interests than to find consolation in some person not herself. Still, he was very fond of Norah, and, although he hoped she did not care for him too much for her own peace of mind, he could not fail to be touched by her un-failing gentleness, her patience with him in all his moods, and her unaffected and unassuming interest in all that concerned himself. So that when at the end of the long drive Lady Anstruther and Mr. Gilman, with the ardour of the tourist and the antiquarian, made their way at once to the grey and venerable church, the young people lingered in the interesting burying-place where in nameless graves rest the shipwrecked sailors, some beneath the figure-head of their ship which met its fate as they did in the stormy waters. And there Michael told Norah stories of the rescues effected by Hawker, and of the difficulties he had to fight with and overcome in the lonely and perilous place, where the wreckers took advantage of the storm to lure their fellow-creatures to their doom on the rock-bound, inhospitable coast. He told her how the apostle of light, amid darkness

and ignorance, had to show the value of human lives by risking his own to save them, and to teach reverence for the dead by his endeavours to recover the bodies of the unknown men who were dear to someone, that they might have decent Christian burial.

And as he talked to her, kindling with the enthusiasm which most men worthy the name feel for any who have fought, and not just let life slip by in self-indulgence, something he said revealed to Norah that he and she were now as one in the ideal which they had set before them. She did not ask him what had altered him, but she knew that, if he might differ from her in details, the great aim of his existence would be the same as hers; and that if it were ordained they should pass their lives apart and not together, yet they would be one in a sense deeper and more abiding than even marriage can guarantee.

When Lady Anstruther came out she rebuked them for their want of interest in what ought to have been the object of their visit, and sent them in to inspect the church itself, calling their attention especially to the moulding of the Norman arches which divide the north aisle from the nave.

"Do you know what Hawker said of that?" said Mr. Gilman. "Baring-Gould spoke of it as zig-zag moulding. 'Zig-zag!' said Hawker with indignation. 'Do you not see that it is near the font that this ornament occurs? It is the ripple of the lake of Genesareth, the spirit breathing upon the waters of baptism. Look without the church—there is the restless old ocean thundering with all his waves; you can hear the roar from here. Look within. All is calm; there plays over the baptismal pool only the Dove, who fans it into ripples with His healing wings.' It seems a curious thing," he added, turning to Lady Anstruther, "that men of poetic faculty and imaginative power are so often placed among ignorant and unlettered people, where their special gifts are not apparently appreciated, or even useful, and where practical unvisionary men would do better ministerial work."

"In the case of Hawker," said Lady Anstruther, "the practical and the poetic seem to have been combined. But I have often felt what you say myself. Men with a strong literary faculty are not usually gifted with a power to manage the ordinary affairs of life in a way that commends itself to the general mind; and it is not often either that you find literary people have the knack of dealing with their fellow-men. They live too much in theories to grapple with facts, especially such facts as obstinate human beings. Still, the world gains if they are thrown back upon themselves. No doubt the very limitations they find to their intellectual side lead to a concentration of that