

The mediæval architects never committed this mistake. If we look at Bristol, Norwich or York, we shall see their idea of an ordinary "town church;" but, if we want to see what they would have done in the way of church building in a town with buildings eight or ten storeys high, we must go to Lubeck, Danzig, or Landshut.

Another puzzling thing about the Northamptonshire churches is the fact that the spire is almost universal all over the county, and this is so marked because the adjoining counties are not remarkable for spires. Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, for instance, have very few spires, and those which they do possess are like Olney on the borders of Northamptonshire. Here and there exceptions may be found, such as Leighton Buzzard for instance.

The characteristics of the Northamptonshire steeples are these: In the first place the spire almost always grows out of the tower in such a way as to show that the tower was designed to support a spire; now, although the spire of Norwich Cathedral is a striking object, yet

it does not grow out of the tower, but is simply an afterthought cleverly superimposed. It will at once be seen that the example we give from Raunds Church, Northamptonshire, has a unity which could only have been brought about by the tower having been designed to receive a spire.

Secondly, the spire in Northamptonshire is far more developed than in other counties. At Raunds, for instance, if you divide the height of the whole structure into five, it will be found that the tower occupies two parts and the spire three! At Irchester, Bozeat, and Higham-Ferrars, etc., we find proportions almost similar. Some of the Northamptonshire spires, however, are equal in height to the towers which they surmount; such, for instance, as Oundle, Rushden, Kettering, and others slightly less in proportion, such as Finedon and St. Sepulchre, Northampton.

It is difficult to say which are the most beautiful, but certainly the first class mentioned is the most characteristic of the county, and for that reason we give a sketch of Raunds, though Rushden is quite as fine in its way.

It is impossible quite to account for the superiority of the Northamptonshire architecture over that of every other county, or for its strange individuality and incomparable elegance. That, in some way or other, there must have been a very refined school of designers and art-workers here, especially during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, that such a thing should have existed in a purely agricultural county free from surrounding or foreign influences bespeaks a high condition of culture and civilization.

If we had found one or two churches showing a superior workmanship and design to what we are in the habit of seeing, we should of course conclude that some architect or workmen had been called in from a distance; but when we find even the smallest village churches exhibiting a delicacy and refinement of detail as marked as the most important ones, it shows at once that the people were possessed in these early times of a cultivated taste and refinement to be met with nowhere else in this country.

(To be continued.)

"IF LOVING HEARTS WERE NEVER LONELY—";

OR,

MADGE HARCOURT'S DESOLATION.

BY GERTRUDE PAGE.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE "WHY" AND THE "WHEREFORE."



THE next day, as Madge sat alone reading, she was disturbed by a knock at the door. "Come in!" she called, and Elsie entered, and closed the door behind her.

"May I come and see you for a little while?" she said, advancing half-shyly. "Mother has a friend with her and I thought they might like to be alone for a little time. You won't think me very intrusive, will you?"

Madge rose at once, closed her book and held out her hand. "You are very kind," she said graciously, feeling pleased that this sweet woman continued undaunted by her coldness. She disliked people who were afraid of her, although she knew perfectly well how distant and unapproachable she generally was.

"I saw your husband go out, so I knew you would be alone," continued Elsie, "and I enjoyed talking to you so much yesterday."

Madge drew an easy chair to the fire for her, saying, "Do stay if you would like. I have not been out to-day and shall be pleased to have your company."

At first their conversation was only of a commonplace nature, but as each

quickly grew to know the other better, it took a more confiding turn.

"A public life brings one into contact with so many different people," said Elsie, after an allusion had been made to her profession. "One grows larger-hearted, I find, as time passes. There is so much more good in men's hearts than people think. I have received little kindnesses from people who are credited with no kind feelings whatever. There is so much hidden away which the world knows nothing about, and I think there would be more still if people oftener gave their fellow-creatures credit for being better than they seem. Instead, a doubtful character is often hardened and wrecked by censure. It is terrible to think what a degree of influence every human creature exercises over those with whom he comes in contact." She paused a moment, then said simply, "I expect you think a great deal; do you often sit alone?"

"Yes, I like it."

"I like it too sometimes, but not too often. Do you never feel lonely?"

"I have felt lonely all my life," answered Madge briefly. "More especially when I am in company with others."

"I know what you mean," replied Elsie thoughtfully. "That loneliness is, I believe, an inseparable feature of existence. But there is another loneliness, when we are tired of our thoughts and long for a kindly voice or friendly touch. Do you never feel this?"

"I used to many years ago; but I grew up practically alone. I never had a real friend, and I never met anyone whom I felt could fill such a post to satisfy me. I have always felt alone—

alone," and she repeated the last word, sadly, half to herself.

"You have seen a good deal of trouble?" asked Elsie gently.

"I don't know, I can hardly say. Possibly I have made my own troubles."

"And those self-made troubles are often the hardest to bear," replied Elsie, in the same gentle voice, "for we get no sympathy and it is bitter work, groping about for comfort, when we scarcely know what our trouble is."

"Yes, and never finding it," put in Madge, speaking quickly, "and at last we get sick of it and grow hard and bitter, and those who ought to help us, because they make a profession of a religion, that is supposed to be of love, look at us coldly and preach at us. They raise their hands in self-righteous horror at what they call our wicked unbelief, and we—well, some of us scorn them, and think no religion at all better than one which they make half a farce."

"But, Mrs. Fawcett, all are not so," said Elsie earnestly. "It is only a few here and there."

"I think it is the majority, or the world would be happier and better."

"I'm not sure if it would be good for the world to be happier," said Elsie, thoughtfully, after a pause. "If there were no sorrow, there would be no great noble souls towering above the littleness and pettiness that abounds; for it is sorrow that ennobles, and makes us 'more like God and less like curs.'"

"Or else drives us, blinded with tears, into darkness and unbelief," added Madge bitterly.

"From the lowest depth there is a