

swept through a park of stately beeches, with herds of fallow deer knee deep in fern and bracken, and drew up before a fine Elizabethan house.

My ring was answered by a portly butler, grown grey in the service of the Chesleys.

'Is Major Chesley at home?' I inquired.

'Yes, sir,' he replied, and led the way through a hall, with polished oaken floor, knocked at a door, and announced my name as he ushered me into the library.

I found myself face to face with a bright, genial-looking man, who was standing toasting his back before the fire.

I plunged at once *in medias res*, related the story of my first meeting with his daughter, my love for her, the search, and how I chanced that day to travel with her and to trace her home. I apologised for my abrupt declaration of my passion, and said I had come to explain my present position—my prospects—and to ask him to favour my suit.

'Well, this is amusing!' he exclaimed, with a hearty laugh; 'but you're evidently in earnest, and as you probably saved her life, you have the best right to her, if you can win her love.'

My financial statement was satisfactory. 'I was once in Canada and am much attached to it,' he said. 'I am a thorough Liberal, and have not the slightest objection to your being in business; so all you have to do is to win Hilda's love, and then, I think, you'll have your hands full. I'll speak to her, and see how she feels towards you.'

Excusing himself he left me, racked with anxious thought as to my fate, and pacing to and fro. I heard his

returning footstep at the door, and wakened as from a dream.

His face bore an amused expression. 'Hilda, of course, remembers the assistance you rendered her in the railway-carriage,' he said; but she has not thought of you except as a kind stranger, and has even forgotten your personal appearance.'

'I am afraid, then, my fate is sealed?'

'I am afraid so, too,' he replied; 'but I tell you what I'll do. We commence shooting the pheasants to-morrow. I expect four or five men to help us, and if you'll stay and join our party, you'll be heartily welcome. I am under a lasting obligation to you, and Hilda feels at least gratitude.'

What could I do but accept so generous an invitation?

I became a guest at Chesley Hall. I met Hilda in the drawing-room, and had the honour of taking her in to dinner.

I stayed and shot, and did my share of slaughter among the pheasants. The party broke up in a few days, but still by invitation I stayed on. There was no doubt of Hilda's love for me now, and one evening, when the air was as warm as spring, as we walked beneath the beeches, I put my fate to the test.

'Yes, I will go anywhere with you through the wide world.'

We are to be married after Christmas, and our wedding-tour will be my return trip to Canada. There we shall live for a while; but when my uncle, old Darley, shuffles off this mortal coil, I shall come in for an estate in Wiltshire only second to Chesley Hall.

Then we must return to the green fields and hedges of 'Merrie England.'