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Ye Ballad of Lyttel John A.

FYTTE YE THIRDE.

I.

When shawes are sheene and shraddes full fayre
And leaves both large and longe,
It is merrye walking on the fayre forrest
To heare ye smalle birdes songe.

II.

Butte in Ottawa towne it is ill to hyde
Amonge ye dirte and duste,
I wis that men would never there dwelle
Onlye thatte they muste.

III.

And at ye barre of ye Russell House
Ye Grittes doe mustere thicke,
And sucke ye drinkes both short and longe
Butte allwayes with a stricke.

IV.

For as ye birdes in ye deserte
Doe gather as men saye,
Soe they didde docke to have a digge
At ye carcase of John A.

V.

Yette if they hadde noe more meate
Butte from thatte carcase alone,
I wis thatte they were verye hongrie
When that they gotten home.

VI.

And nowe ye session daye is come
And on ye Commons floore,
There stoude Blake and Huntingstone
And neare a hundred more.

VII.

Butte of Mynsters there were butte few
Because soe some doe saye,
Sir John he hadde tolde to them
Quietlye at home to staye.

VIII.

Then ye Speakere tooke ye chaire
And Mackenzie hee uprose,
Welle I weene thatte poore Speakere
Searce hadde tyme to blowe his nose.

IX.

Before Mackenzie pitchèd in
And loude ye Mynstree abused,
He sayd hee dyd demaunde a session
As if hee would notte be refused.

X.

And hee would trye ye Mynstere,
There uponne ye Commons floore,
Butte just as he gotten uppe ye steame
A knoocke came at ye doore.

XI.

And inne dyd come ye lyttel Blaque Roddis
Sorelye fryttened at ye dynne,
Men doe saye hys slendere legges
Trembled at hym.

XII.

And he called ye House to come
In ye Senate barre straitwaye,
Ye Speakere quicklye jumped uppe
Ryght gladde to sette awaye.

XIII.

Butte alle ye Grittes remayned behinde
As madde as they could bee,
Men saye that for many a yeare
Such a sight they ne'er didde see.

XIV.

Butte ye Mynstere to ye barre dyd gye
And Lorde Dufferene drewe nixte,
Where hee satte in hys cocked hatte
And hys glasse stooke in hys eye.

XV.

And hee tolde them how hee had le seene it
That a Commission shoulde issued bee,
Into these charges to enquire
Made agaynst hys Mynstree.

XVI.

And thatte to hym they should report,
And to both Speakeres speedilye;
Soe then he bade them alle farewellle
And back to the seayde hurried hee.

XVII.

Ye angrie Grittes dyd meetynge call
And made a greate adoe,
They rowed ye traytour Premiers
Hys perfidie should rew.

XVIII.

And thatte ye Gouvernour alsoe,
Ye people's wrathe should feelee,
Because thatte hee hadde made attempte
Their pryvilege to steale.

XIX.

Butte after they hadde sayd their saye,
Home they sadlye wente;
Another Fytt of ye Premiers
The telle litle is my intent.

(To be continued).

TAKEN AT THE FLOOD.

A NEW NOVEL.

By the Author of "Lady Audley's Secret," "Strangers and Pilgrims," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

DEEP in the green heart of one of the most pastoral shires in England nestled the village of Hedingham. It was a hilly country, and Hedingham lay at the bottom of an irregular basin, nor in all the parish could you have found half-a-dozen acres of level ground. Orchards—and the Hedingham orchards were many and glorious—gardens, meadows, common lands, all sloped and undulated, as if the mighty waves of a storm-tossed ocean had suddenly been transformed into solid earth. Great must have been those volcanic convulsions which resulted finally in Hedingham. Geologists had their various theories on the subject, but the Hedingham people troubled themselves not at all thereupon. So long as cherries and apples ripened in the orchards sloping to the southern sun, or fronting the later glory of the west—so long as all went well in farmyard and barn, piggeries and hen-coops, Hedingham was content.

It was a prosperous-looking, well-kept village, important enough to blossom into a town perchance by-and-bye, under favouring circumstances. Sir Aubrey Perriam, who owned the greater part of the land hereabouts, was a rich man, and a liberal landlord, but a strict one. The plaster walls of all the Hedingham cottages were as white as frequent whitewash could make them. The fences and gates of Hedingham knew not dilapidation. In Sir Aubrey's absence—and he was very often absent from the vast and gloomy pile which called him master—his steward's keen eye overlooked Hedingham, and seemed ubiquitous as the eye of Providence itself. Nothing ever escaped that searching gaze, and thus dirt and disorder seemed unknown at Hedingham.

There was no pleasanter spot than this village of Hedingham on a summer's day. Through the village street there ran a broad, swift stream, into whose clear waters weary steeds plunged their tired limbs, and the very sight and sound of which gave freshness to the exhausted pedestrian. One might write a chapter about the green lanes that surrounded Hedingham, and the far-spreading curtain of shade afforded by ancient chestnuts and mighty elms, which gave a park-like aspect to the meadow-land hereabouts, the Hedingham farmers having happily not yet been awakened to the necessity of stubbing up every decent tree on their land.

This green and fertile village was not far from the barren sea. From the summit of yonder hill, now golden with gorse and broom, the eye might sweep across another fair valley to the wide expanse of ocean. In this west of England the very sea shore is verdant, and the rich wealth of the land seems almost to run over into the water.

Look at Hedingham this evening, by the low light of the setting sun, sinking gloriously behind that dense screen of yew and cypress yonder in the churchyard. The first scene of this drama opens in a garden only divided from the churchyard by a low stone wall and a thick hedge of neatly-trimmed yew, which rises tall and dark above the gray stone—the garden of the village school. Mr. Carew, the schoolmaster, says it is a hard thing to live near the churchyard, and to look out of one's window the first thing every morning upon crumbling old headstones, skulls and crossbones; but then Mr. Carew is a gentleman not prone to take life pleasantly. A painter could hardly imagine anything more picturesque than that old Norman church, to whose massive walls and stout square tower time has given such rich variety of hue; that spacious churchyard with its different levels, its noble old trees, and its crumbling mausoleums, through whose loosened stone-work the sinuous ivy creeps at will, a green, living thing pushing its fresh growth into the secret chambers of decay.

James Carew has no eye for the picturesque, or it may be that though the picture is fair to look upon, he may have had just a little too much of it. For fifteen slow years he has been schoolmaster at Hedingham. He has seen the boys he taught when he first assumed the office grow into men; and marry, and rear some of their own for him to teach. He is grinding the elements of knowledge into a second generation, and in all those fifteen years his own life has grown no whit brighter. The passage of time has not profit-d him so much as an increase of five pounds a year to his scanty wage. Long service counts for very little with the authorities of Hedingham. Indeed, there are some who grudge James Carew his meagre stipend, and begin to wonder whether the parish schoolmaster is not getting past his work.

Still, there has been one change in those fifteen years—a change which would have brightened life for some men, although James Carew has been indifferent to it. His only daughter—his only child, indeed—has grown from a child to a woman. She was a plump, fair-haired lassie of five years old when he brought her to this quiet home. She is now a woman, and the acknowledged beauty of Hedingham. She might reign by the same right divine in a much larger place than Hedingham, for it would be hard to find a rarer beauty than that of Sylvia Carew.

She stands by the rustic garden gate in the sunset, talking to her father, owing no factitious charm to costume, in that well-washed lavender muslin, and plain black straw hat, but peerlessly beautiful. Perhaps the greatest attraction of her beauty lies in its supreme originality. She resembles no other woman one remembers, but in looking at her one has a vague recollection of seeing such a face somewhere in an old Flemish picture. The features have the delicate regularity of a Greek statue. The nose, straight and finely chiselled, the upper lip short, the mouth, a cupid's bow, but the lips somewhat—the veriest trifle—thinner than they should be for perfection; the chin short, round, and dimpled, the forehead low and broad, the shape of the face of an oval. So much for features and outline which belong to an established school of beauty.

The colouring is more striking. Sylvia is exquisitely fair—that alabaster fairness—with no more bloom than the heart of a blush rose—which is in itself almost sufficient for beauty. But this complexion, which by itself might be an insipid loveliness, is relieved by eyes of darkest, deepest hazel; that liquid brown which the old Italian masters knew so well how to paint; eyes of surpassing softness, of incomparable beauty. Her hair is of a much paler shade, yet a shade of the same colour. But here the rich warm brown has a tinge of reddish gold, and her female critics aver that Sylvia has red hair. They do not deny her beauty. That is beyond criticism. They merely allege the fact. Sylvia's hair is red. "Miss Carew is pleasant and soft-spoken enough," says Miss Bordock, the baker's daughter, "but I never did trust no one with red hair. They're almost always double-faced." Whether Sylvia was double-faced or not time must show.

Her father stood beside her at the wooden gate, a newspaper in his hand. There was little resemblance between them, and one could see that if Sylvia inherited her beauty from any mortal progenitor, it must have been to the maternal line she was indebted. Mr. Carew had a hooked nose, a somewhat receding chin and faded gray eyes, which may have once been handsome. He had a worn look, as of premature age, and one could imagine him the ill-preserved ruin of a handsome man. His dress was slovenly, but the delicate white hand and taper fingers, the small foot, the general air and bearing, were those of a man who, whatever he might be now, had once written himself down gentleman.

"Where are you going, child?" he asked, in a tone that was almost a complaint. "It's strange that you must be always gadding just at the time that I am at leisure."

"You don't seem to care particularly about my company, papa, if I do stay at home," replied Sylvia, coolly. They were not a very affectionate father and daughter. "And it's dull indoors on such an evening as this. One might as well be in that ivy-grown old tomb yonder, of the de Bossignys, and life over and done with."

"You might read the newspapers to me at least, and spare my poor old eyes a little. They're tried hard enough all day."

"Other people are almost young at fifty."

"Papa. Why is it that you seem so old?" asked the girl, in a speculative tone, as if she were considering a fact in natural history.

"Compare my life—for the last fifteen years—with the lives of other people's, and you won't be so foolish as to repeat your question, Sylvia. I should feel young enough and seem young enough, too, I dare say, if I were as rich as Sir Aubrey Perriam."

The father sighed, and the daughter echoed his sigh, as if the very mention of the lord of the soil were provocative of melancholy thought.

"Yes, it must be a grand thing to be rich," said Sylvia, "especially for people who have had some experience of poverty. Those people who are born rich seem to have a very dim idea of the enjoyment they might get out of their money. They dawdle through life in a sleepy sort of way, and fritter away their wealth upon a herd of servants, and on some great ugly house, in which they are little more than a cypher. Now, if I were rich, the world would hardly be big enough for me. I'd roam from country to country. I'd climb mountains that no one ever climbed before. I'd make my name famous in half a dozen different ways. I'd ———" breaking down with a sudden sigh, "but I daresay I never shall be anything but a village schoolmaster's daughter, or a village schoolmistress, so it's worse than foolish to talk of happiness or riches."

The hazel eyes had brightened while she talked of what she would do with wealth; they were clouded now; and she looked at the rosy light beyond that dark screen of cypress, with a face that was full of gloomy thought—strangely beautiful even in its gloom, though with a sinister beauty.

"You need not be a village schoolmistress unless you are a greater simpleton than I take you to be," said her father, who had been in no manner disturbed by her rhapsody. He had unfolded his newspaper while she was speaking—a London paper which reached this remote world at sunset. "With your good looks you are bound to make a good marriage."

"What, at Hedingham?" cried Sylvia, with a scornful laugh. "Pray, who is the wandering Prince who is to find me at Hedingham? I'm afraid princes of that kind only exist in fairy tales."

"Nonsense, Sylvia. Every pretty woman has her chance if she has but patience to wait for it, but ten out of every dozen wreck themselves by marrying scamps or paupers before they are out of their teens. I hope you, Sylvia, have too much sense to make that kind of mistake."

"I hope so," said Sylvia, "indeed, I mean to be prudent myself, and wait for the Prince. Have I not drained the cup of poverty to the very dregs? Believe me, papa, I don't want to wear washed gowns and last summer's bonnets quite all my life."

She looked down at her faded muslin contemptuously, as she spoke. She had all the feminine longing for bright colours and fashionably-made dresses—though the finest shops she knew were those in Monkhampton, the neighbouring market town, and the best dressed woman she had ever seen were the Misses Toynbee's, the retired woollen manufacturer's daughters, who, it was faintly rumoured, had once had dresses straight from Paris.

"By the way," she resumed presently, after a pause, "talking of good marriages, I wonder if you would call Mr. Stenden a good match for anyone. I am not speaking of myself, of course."

"I'm glad you're not," retorted her father, sharply, but without lifting his eyes from the newspaper, "for Edmund Stenden would be a very bad match for you. His father left every acre and every sixpence he had to leave to his widow—for her to dispose of it as she thinks best; and her son is entirely at her mercy. He's an only son, you'll say, and to whom else could she leave her money. She might leave it to her daughter—who, I have heard, was always the favourite; and depend upon it she will leave it to the daughter if the son offends her."

"By a foolish marriage, for instance."

"By marrying anyone she disapproves of. And she's a starched madam—bigoted like all your evangelicals—and will be uncommonly hard to please. I daresay she means him for that little girl who lives with her—Miss—Miss Rochdale."

Sylvia shrugged her shoulders, and made a wry face, as if Miss Rochdale were a very inferior order of being.

"I shouldn't think he would ever marry her," she said, "even to please his mother, whom, I believe, he worships."