

THE JESSOPS:

AN EMIGRATION STORY.

BY THE REV. E. N. HOARE, M.A.,

Vicar of Stoneycroft, Liverpool; Author of "Child Neighbours," "Jasper Rentoul," etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.

THE DIE CAST.



IF Tom Playfair had designed to disgust the Jessop family with the idea of emigration, he certainly succeeded in so far as Reggie and his mother were concerned.

After the expedition described in the last chapter Mrs. Jessop was prostrated for several days by an attack "on the nerves." As soon as she recovered, she frankly announced that no power on earth would induce her to put up with the discomforts—including noise, crowding, and publicity—of an emigrant ship. If the journey could be performed overland she was ready to undertake it; but as a passenger on board the *Peruvian*, or any similar craft, she would not embark. She knew it would be the death of her, and she did not see why she should go out of her way to court the fatal issue.

In his heart of hearts Reginald was in thorough sympathy with his mother; but he felt keenly the awkwardness of drawing back. He had given up his last situation with something of a flourish of trumpets, and he did not now want to look like a fool among his friends. Still, had any decent excuse been available, he would gladly have reconsidered his position.

But such an excuse Sybil was determined he should not have, if she could help it. After some demur, she was brought to admit that it might be expedient for her mother and "the children" to remain in England for the present; but that would not affect her own already settled plans. To Quebec she was going by the *Peruvian* on her next trip. If her brother accompanied her, well and good; if not, she would have to go alone—that was all about it.

"Don't you think, Syb," suggested Reggie, as a weak compromise, "it might be a good thing for us all to wait till next year? The children would be older, mother might be stronger and more accustomed to the idea, and you and I would be none the worse."

"I don't think it would be a good thing at all," was the emphatic response. "When one has made up their mind to a thing it's foolishness to put off. Besides, we have both given up our places, and told everybody we were going out."

"That is true," assented Reggie dolefully. "We've burnt our ships, and must go on."

Sybil laughed, "I shall not burn my ship till it has taken me to America."

Thus it came to pass that when Tom Playfair returned he found that two, and only two, "intermediate" berths had been booked in the name Jessop for the next voyage.

We need not dwell on parting scenes. There is always something solemn and momentous in the breaking up of a home, by whatever means it is brought about. Even the humblest and poorest home possesses a certain inherent sanctity. It is a shrine wherein the sacred fire of domestic love has been kept aglow. Human lives have intermingled, and lessons of forbearance, helpfulness, and sacrifice have been taught and learned. The stream may have been sluggish or turbid, shallow or deep, bright or gloomy, but hitherto it has flowed as one within its barriers; but now the sluices are raised, obstacles are removed, the flood of life is divided,