

THE KNIGHTS OF MAPLE WOOD.

CHAPTER I.

"A PASSENGER TO CANADA" ARRIVES.

Clear Indian-summer sky over an horizon of pinewood, which surrounded, like a sea, a considerably large island of cleared land-field, where the charred tree stumps still maintained their forest rights against the ploughshare—in the distance the silver of a river and the tin of a church steeple—for tin it assuredly appeared to be, and looked not unlike an inverted funnel. Such was the landscape which met the eye from the avenue leading to Maple Wood, a house of some pretension near the village of Douglassville, Nether Canada, up which avenue, one fine afternoon of a Saturday, in the fall of 186— "two travellers" might be seen advancing. But, alas! for the dignity of this magazine, they were not mounted on stately steeds, nor even on one of the waggons procurable at the neighboring town of Match-brooke; one was a railway porter, laden with several boxes, and a large black trunk, labelled "Miss E. Sorrel, passenger to Canada." The other was the proprietor of the luggage, and of the name inscribed thereon—a young lady, who, from the length of her plain mourning dress (which was just short enough to reveal a glimpse of stockings purple as a Cardinal's, and ringed with black, after the manner of certain dangerous serpents), might be about the age of sixteen, that border-land of young ladyhood which forms a kind of interregnum between the nursery and the drawingroom, between the last doll and the first lover. Her face was what most women would call plain—that is to say, the features were not regular, and the thick masses of dark brown hair plainly, almost carelessly, arranged. But the clear hazel eye looked honest, and the lips were lips that might smile very winningly upon occasion. It was a face that had a character of its own—a face where there lurked, perhaps, tenderness—perhaps sarcasm; certainly not conventional missish prettinesses and aimiabilities. This, with an indefinable something of girlish archness, which seemed not out of keeping with the firm step and slight graceful figure, were what a stranger might read in the face of Edith Sorrel.

Now, as this young lady is to supply the dynamic or feminine element in our present narrative, we may be allowed to digress for a moment, while she is walking under the autumn reddened maples, in order to tell what little there is to be told of her former history. It belongs to a very different scene from that in which we meet her—a wilderness, but of high-built streets—a forest, but of chimney tops, church spires, and palace pediments, in smoky London.

Those who remember much of Temple society in London ten years ago, will recall the name of Dycroft Sorrel, often spoken of with admiration, sometimes with pity, never with respect. He was one of those men who have genius, or, at least, the power of conveying that impression to others, but whose genius has not vitality enough to produce any result. Dycroft lived in dingy chambers in Grey's Inn, No. 10, garret story—that is, the rent of the apartment was yearly

eyed the poor
aled that fatal
l, returned no
In storm and
of sorrow; the
rushing of the

P. M.