

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RENT VEIL.

THE sisters had not met for four months, and though letters had passed between them they had hardly been of an intimate kind.

Tibbie was conscious of an acute interest, almost bordering on apprehension, as the train slowed down at Birtley station on the evening of that day, and she looked out for Alison. But she was not there. Instead, she beheld what Janet Aiken might have called a most purpose-like young woman in a very short leather-bound tweed skirt and a shabby jersey walking up and down the platform with her hands in her pockets.

It was Madge Crewe, just returned from a tramping tour in Ireland with a couple of college chums. Madge was the plainest of the Crewe daughters, but there was something undoubtedly attractive about her frank manliness. It was the only word to apply. She was what her comrades, men and women, called a thoroughly good sort. Since she had obtained her desire, a definite object in life, she was thoroughly content and a credit to everybody concerned. She worked like a Trojan at her studies, and would certainly obtain her degree with distinction.

Afterwards she intended to earn her living. Her scorn of conventionalities, in which dress was included, was merely an excrescence on a fine and wholesome character. Tibbie had always liked her, and though she did not want particularly to see her just then,