

# The Good Red Earth.

## CHAPTER I.

### JACKDAWS AND HEROES.

**S**HINING upon the lap of Spring like a grey pearl, there lies an ancient and fortified manor house amid red Devon fallows, green hills, and orchard lands in full splendour of June. The hamlet of Lower Marldon straggles through a fertile valley of the west country hard by the sea; and at the confines of this village, where a sheaf of fir trees rises and tall elms ascend about the way, shall be found Compton Castle, whose time-stained face and crown of ivy appear above an old-world garden spread with flowers. Trim plots of familiar things lie smiling beneath the front of the ruin, and fragile blue and purple, crimson and gold, of immortal blossoms yearly renew their glory before this perish-