

THE
CANADIAN MONTHLY
AND NATIONAL REVIEW.

Vol. XII.]

AUGUST, 1877.

[No. 2.

GREEN PASTURES AND PICCADILLY.*

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CHAPTER XXIII.

A CONFESSION.

ON the morning of his departure for London, Balfour would take no notice of the marked disfavor with which Lady Sylvia regarded his setting out. It was hard on the poor child, no doubt, that he should leave her in the midst of these few Christmas holidays, and for the sake of some trumpery Parliamentary business. He might have remonstrated with her, it is true; might have reminded her that she knew what his life must be when she married him; might have recalled her own professions of extreme interest in public affairs; might have asked her if a single day's absence—which he had tried to avert by a proposal which she had rejected—was, after all, such a desperate business. But no. He had no wish to gain an argumentative victory over his beautiful young wife. He would allow her to cherish that consolatory sense of having been wronged. Nay, more; since she had plainly chosen to live in a world apart from

his, he would make her life there as happy as possible. And so, as he kissed her in bidding her good-by, he said,

'By-the-way, Sylvia, I might as well go round by the Hall and see your father. If he is in all that trouble—this is Christmas-time, you know—perhaps he will let me help him.'

Well, she did look a little grateful.

'And I shall be down as soon as I can to-morrow forenoon,' he added.

But as he drove away from The Lilacs in the direction of Willowby Hall, he did not at all feel so amiably disposed toward his wife's father, whom he conjectured—and conjectured quite wrongly—to have been secretly soliciting this help from Lady Sylvia. But at all events, Balfour said to himself, the relations between himself and his wife were of more importance than his opinion of Lord Willowby. The sacrifice of a few thousand pounds was not of much concern to him; it was of great concern to him that his wife should not remain unhappy if this matter of money could restore her usual cheerfulness.

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