

to continue the design of their mullions and tracery right down to the level of the church roof. Now this is very peculiar, and is, as far as we know, only found elsewhere in the thirteenth-century churches of Normandy. The belfry windows, instead of having the ordinary louvre arrangement, are filled in with stonework arranged in elegant tracery patterns, a very lofty and elaborate pierced parapet also richly adorned with tracery surrounds the top platform of the tower, and there are four very large square pinnacles of pierced tracery-work, one at each angle; sometimes little flying buttresses rise from the large projecting gargoyles\* and support the angles of the pinnacles. There are generally also four, eight, and sometimes as many as twelve smaller intermediate pinnacles attached to the parapet; although the latter is embattled, the battlements are purely ornamental, as they are pierced all over with tracery-work, in fact, the Somerset towers were never intended, like those of Middlesex, Hertfordshire, or Kent, to serve for purposes of defence; they were purely ecclesiastical, and the object appears to have been, in addition to containing the bells, to add to the church a singularly beautiful and attractive feature. Just as the mediæval

\* A "gargoyle" is a piece of stone carved in the form of some monster; this is pierced and discharges the rain-water from the gutters of the roof through its mouth.

architects of Northamptonshire crowned their church towers with graceful spires, so did those of Somerset finish them off with magnificent pierced parapets and pinnacles. Nor was this the case with large town churches alone, for many of the humbler village churches have most noble towers. The small church of Huish-Episcopi, for instance, possesses one of the most beautiful towers in the whole country, and scarcely less elegant are those of Kingsbury, North Petherton, Ile-Abbots, Long Sutton, and Lydiard. Spires are uncommon in Somersetshire, and are not specially remarkable. The best is at Congresbury and the worst at Bridgwater; it is true that the last named example was rebuilt in the seventeenth century, and in all probability it does not reproduce the original design. The spire of St. Mary, Redcliffe, Bristol, was left incomplete and only carried up some forty years back. The church to which it is attached claims to be the most magnificent parish church in England, and that claim can scarcely be disputed as it is a truly noble building, very large, cruciform in plan, vaulted throughout (we believe it is the only large parish church in England where this is the case), and every portion is adorned with most sumptuous detail. Somersetshire is rich in noble parish churches. St. Mary Magdalen, Taunton, with its superb tower, is perhaps the most characteristic and local example, but St. Cuthbert, Wells, Martock, Wrington, St. John's, Glas-

tonbury, Dunster, Ditcheat, Yeovil, Frome, High Ham, and Bridgwater, are all noble churches.

Now it will at once be asked how are these costly churches, and especially the sumptuous towers adorned (as they frequently are) with rich parapets, open-work pinnacles, niches, carving, and statuary, to be accounted for? Well, the very fact that they are there points to a high state of civilisation and prosperity, to a fruitful soil and mineral wealth; but in addition to this, Somersetshire still retains marks of very early civilisation. Glastonbury, moreover, is the only spot in England which can trace back to the days of primitive Christianity, and no doubt when surrounding counties were a howling wilderness, Somersetshire was enjoying the blessings of Christianity and civilisation. Another fact which had of course great influence upon its architecture, especially at a later period, when its magnificent towers rose up all over the county, was the excellent stone procurable for building purposes. The Corsham Down and Hamhill quarries are still worked, and to this day provide stone which is durable, beautiful in colour, and can be worked with ease. Of course we naturally expect to find architecture well developed in a county which possessed such advantages, and these expectations are not disappointed when we contemplate such structures as the Somersetshire towers.

## IN SPITE OF ALL.

By IDA LEMON, Author of "The Charming Cora," "A Winter Garment," etc.

### CHAPTER XXII.

MICHAEL was not a person to let the grass grow under his feet. He had arranged with Norah to spend the following afternoon at the Rectory, and he determined if he had any opportunity of speaking to Beattie quietly to find out exactly what was the case with regard to her engagement. In his impatience he was a little earlier than the time appointed, and was told that both Mr. Gilman and Norah were out, but that Miss Margetson was in the drawing-room. It was so long since he had had the opportunity of seeing her alone that Mike felt he had been especially favoured, and was inclined to take the propitious circumstance as a good omen.

Beattie, who was doing needlework, came forward to meet him, smiling happily. She liked Mike no less than she had done of old.

"Norah will not be very long," she said. "She has gone up to the church to do a little tidying."

"I am rather early, I know, but Norah must send me away a little sooner."

"She won't do that. She has been getting all her Saturday duties over, because she wanted you to stay a long time, and she knew you wouldn't if you thought you were hindering her."

"Norah spoils us all," said Mike, taking the chair which was always supposed to be his peculiar property. "I am not interrupting you in the performance of your duties, am I? You look very industrious."

"Lazy people always look industrious when they are at unwonted occupations," said Beattie, laughing. "Now if Norah were at work you would not notice her. As a matter of fact this is her work, only I was doing a few stitches to help her; Norah is always so busy."

"Miss Margetson," said Mike, "I am generally quite willing to talk about Norah, and especially in her own house, but just now I am conscious that our time is very short, and I want, if I may, to talk a little about you."

"Me!" said Beattie. "I am afraid I am not a very interesting person for purposes of conversation, and I certainly can't start the topic, but if you ask me questions I will answer them."

"Will you?" said Mike, his voice sounding almost stern in its earnestness after its light tones. "And you promise not to think me impertinent?"

Beattie looked a little startled. She could not imagine what was coming.

"You would be very different from what I think you, Mr. Anstruther, if you need ask that question," she said gently.

"Then I will trust in your forbearance and say what I feel I have hardly the right to do. Miss Margetson, is it true that you are engaged to be married?"

Beattie paused before answering, her head bent low over her work, and she put a few stitches in Mr. Gilman's sock very badly. Then she said, in a low voice—

"I am not engaged."

Mike gave a great sigh of relief. It seemed as if a dark cloud had rolled

away, and the sunshine were streaming down upon his life. Involuntarily he rose and came nearer to her. Then, her manner betraying that his words had in some way moved her, it occurred to him that he was touching a painful chord.

"Forgive me," he said. "Don't be angry with me; but it means so much to me. I would not for worlds say anything to make you unhappy. But is it—has it been broken off?"

Beattie was surprised and somewhat uneasy at poor Mike's evident earnestness.

"I don't know what you are talking about," she said. "I have never been engaged at all. Who told you such a thing?"

"Mrs. Swannington," replied Mike, looking at her anxiously, as if not quite sure that she was not keeping back the truth from him.

"Aunt Ella! But she knows I am not engaged! Besides, when did you see her?"

"Last summer, at Crabsley."

"Last summer! No; it was the summer before that we were there. And surely then you knew I was free."

"No; it was last summer. I came to Crabsley on purpose to see you. But I met Mrs. Swannington, and what she told me made me think it was better to go away at once."

"But how strange! Auntie never said anything about this to me. And why didn't you stop and speak to me if"—hesitating—"you really came to see me again?"