

## A CROWN OF FAITH

### CHAPTER XIII.

The world of Abbotshold and its neighborhood rolled on for three months. May came—sunny, warm, wreathed with white flowers, orchards abloom, woods dressed in living green, butterflies flaunting, dragon flies darting. There was glad music and gay color everywhere in the fields and woods; life, in every green bud, in the flowing sap of the strong forest trees, in the frisking gambols of the lambs, in the noisy music of the thrush and blackbird, and the loud voice of the lark.

"Singing at heaven's gate. Is that heaven's gate, Mr. Leigh, that large, white, sun-polished cloud, with edges of black, like rich point lace? I think there is storm within that cloud, for all its sheer and beauty—electricity, Mr. Leigh. I seem a bright, gay thing enough; but, oh! I am charged with the thunder of war often, and often, and often, when I am grinning and bearing it, when mamma is storming, and Miss Worthington preaching. Don't you hate Miss Worthington, Mr. Leigh? Please say yes, and I will love you ever after!"

She was such a mocking bird, Ella—such a bright, fascinating little wag, such a satirical creature. Lionel did not flush at her words. He was getting more accustomed to these startling speeches, for Ella Wycherly made them to him every day, and sometimes every hour of the day.

All the arrangements proposed had been carried out. Lionel had given his month's notice, passed over his pupils to another professor, and had been established at Wycherly as the tutor of Master Graves Power—who was to take the name of Wycherly—for two months.

His duties were light; lessons from nine till eleven in the school room with Master Power, and then Ella Wycherly appeared on the scene for her German lesson, which lasted one hour. After that, Lionel and his pupil went riding, or walking, or boating on the river, taking their luncheon with them, and returning in the afternoon, when Master Power was left to his own devices, and he usually improved the shining hours in the society of Ella Wycherly, who had conceived an extraordinary liking for him.

The boy himself was completely fascinated with his beautiful, daring cousin. He used seriously to tell Lionel that he hoped she would wait for him, since it was his intention to marry her when he grew up.

"I don't care about her being nine years older than I am, Mr. Leigh; but what a splendid wife she would make! I should have her always spangled over with diamonds, and dressed like the queen of the fairies I saw at the 'pantomime. She shall never wear bonnets and hats; only crowns and wreaths."

Lionel taught Ella every day, talked to her every day; sometimes he even rode with her, for the colonel had lent him a good horse, and he was at liberty to ride it. Had his heart and fancy been free, his position at Wycherly might have been considered enviable, with two hundred pounds salary, rooms to himself, liberty, and courteous consideration from all the family, save Miss Worthington.

That lady had always strenuously opposed the advent of the German tutor. She was civil to him now, but her civility was of the coldest and her interruptions of his tête-à-têtes with Ella were constant.

One lovely afternoon Lionel was reading Shakespeare. His back rested against the stem of a large, fragrant lime. At his feet was a cool, clear pond, where the fish were darting round in the sunny water ripples; lily flags ornamented one side of the pond; but where Lionel sat the water was clear. All at once came a song—a sweet melody, chanted in a high, clear soprano.

He looked up. There she was—Ella Wycherly, heiress and witch, belle and romp, aristocrat and tomboy, perched up amid the branches of an elm, sitting with her feet resting on a lower branch, her head reclining against an upper one—an attitude of nonchalant, luxuriant repose.

"Do I look nice and comfortable up here?" she asked. "Now for a leap! One—two—three, and away!"

Down she came safe amid the grass and ferns. Her pure white dress, made high to the throat, was scarcely rumpled. She picked up her hat, and put it on her head.

"Now, Mr. Leigh, pick up the basket, and let us trot down to Woodmancote, and lecture the old women and the young girls, and all the folks. I've heard Miss Worthington do it. I can do it beautifully."

He stared in amazement. He knew that if he committed the indiscretion of taking a stroll through the village with Miss Wycherly, the Woodmancote world would gossip. True, he had accompanied Miss Ella in her rides, but there had always been his pupil with them.

"Won't you come? That basket is heavy. I was supposed to bring Chatterly, the housemaid, with me; but I hate Chatterly, as much as it lies in a young lady to hate a housemaid. Will you carry the basket?"

What could Lionel do but pick it up and follow Ella to the village? Woodmancote lay about a mile from the pond. They led through the woods—a wide path, bordered with fern and blue bright bird's-eyes. Overhead chanted the birds, round about buzzed the bees, hither and thither flaunted the flies.

Ella walked a little ahead of the tutor. She was inexplicably provoking that day. Her escapade in climbing the tree seemed to have satisfied the exuberance of her spirit that afternoon. She was a dignified damsel as she walked on in white, her head aloft, her furbelowed parasol between her eyes and the sun.

Lionel trudged after, carrying the basket, which should have been Chatterly's task. He felt strangely humiliated, inclined now and then to fling down the basket and run to Miss Wycherly, and tell her that he would not be treated as an errand boy, even by her.

She did not look once over her shoulder, she just kept on, now and then striking a lower bough with her parasol, but never

turning round. At length the village was reached. The road was bordered on one side with a box hedge, cut and clipped with punctilious neatness. On the other side were little cottages and little gardens—gaudy gardens, starred with sunflowers, with here and there a pear tree, on which hung in those late May days bunches of tiny fruit. Ducks waddled about the road, quacking loudly.

Yellow-haired children frolicked about the tiny garden gates, but stood still to stare at Miss Wycherly, their round eyes wide open, their round faces aflame with heat and exercise. Ella stopped before such a group and shook her parasol at it. "Hello!" said Miss Wycherly.

The children smiled, put their fingers in their mouths, but answered nothing.

"I have come instead of Miss Worthington," pursued Ella. "I want to see your grandmother, Letty Harrison; she is indoors, I suppose?"

Letty, a very sunburned child, with straight, yellowish hair about her ears, and a brown-holland pinapone covering an old blue dress, opened the little gate, and ran up the garden, where the sunflowers were coming out gaudy and awkward, like overgrown school girls. Ella now looked round at Lionel; she nodded at him.

"Please to bring the basket," she said. And he obeyed.

### CHAPTER XIV.

Ella and Lionel went down two steps into a little, dark, brick-floored kitchen, with raftered ceiling, a low, wide fireplace, pots and saucers hanging over the chimneyplace; a little, quaint, wooden dresser, with queer little cups, and mugs, and jugs, hanging on brass nails. Before the smoldering fire, a very old woman was seated, knitting a stocking. She got up with some alacrity when the young lady entered, turned round, and showed a smiling, old, brown face, surrounded by a clean cap border. She bobbed a curtsey.

"Please to take a chair, missie."

"No; I think I would rather stand, Mrs. Harrison; I can't stop long. I've only brought half a pound of tea. Don't you think it's very good of me?"

"That 'tis, missie, bless your pretty heart! and send you the finest nobleman in London for a husband!"

Lionel Leigh looked down at the brick floor, and smiled. Ella saw the smile—saw the bitterness and the sadness which formed its elements.

"Mrs. Harrison, I wish I was to be married to-morrow. Coach and four milk-white horses, two little bridesmaids, a box of diamonds, a great iced cake, a ball in the evening, and the next day to be whisked off to France or Spain on a wedding trip. Wouldn't it be jolly?"

She wheeled about as she spoke, and then began to inspect the little jugs, and mugs, and cups, which hung upon the wooden dresser. Then, passing close by the side of Lionel—who, having placed the basket on the ground, was standing with folded arms, following with a somber smile the movements of Ella—she said, in a whisper:

"Am I not a delightful, angelic creature? My sentiments express a superb intelligence, a sympathy with what is noble and true, an appreciation for the poetry of life."

Ella ran out to where all the children were gathered about the gates. She took out her purse, and straightway dealt them sixpences apiece all round.

"Ginger-bread, bull's-eyes, and oranges," said Miss Wycherly. "You like those better than spelling and multiplication. Come on, Mr. Leigh. There is one more old lady to whom we must dispense provisions; but she is bedridden and deaf. Don't you think that I am an instructive kind of young person, just the one to visit these poor ignorant creatures, and teach them on their shortcomings and misdoings; she would have threatened them with the terrors of the law, both human and divine. Not a hole in their pinapores, not a smudge on their little faces, would have escaped her criticism. Don't you think they must like me a great deal the better of the two?"

She did not wait for his answer, but led on to the next cottage, where the bedridden patient received her thankfully.

"Now, Mr. Leigh, we must go home," said Ella, looking at her watch. "It is four o'clock, and we dine at seven. A short cut across the park will take us home in less than an hour. No more woodland rambles, and the empty basket is light, and I am in a very good temper. It has done me good to see those children delight over their sixpences."

Mr. Leigh, how very silent you are! I have been trying to distinguish myself in your eyes and you look as glum as if you considered me stupid and uninteresting. If not a most orthodox and imprudent young person. Why don't you talk, Mr. Leigh?"

"I have nothing to say, Miss Wycherly."

"That is a fib. You have a great deal to say, only you are afraid to say it."

She looked at him as she spoke, dangerously, out of her dark eyes. Lionel's heart trembled within him. What did this girl mean? What was this odd, flashing, beautiful creature, with her smiles, and her sallies, and her somber moods?

It seemed to him at times that an element of evil mingled with the atmosphere that surrounded her. Where it was and what was it, he could not say. When she looked at him so dangerously, and dared him to speak, there was in his soul a strange feeling. Was it fear or sudden revelation? What was it that made his heart quake, and his blood run cold?

They had entered a shady alley in the park. Ella suddenly stopped, clutched him by the shoulder, and looked him in the eyes. Her beautiful face was close to his own, the red lips terribly near. The man's whole soul was stirred within him.

"I have made up my mind to tell you

everything," said Ella. "I must have a confidant—I must have a friend. You know that night Arthur Calthorpe."

"What—what?" cried Lionel, in wild excitement.

"Hush! don't speak so loud! But I know how he was struck, and why. I will tell you all. Listen!"

She held up her finger. She was very pale.

"You will never betray me?"

Her clutch upon his shoulder was so desperate, that he carried the marks for months, and her eyes were filled with a light that made them beautiful with an unearthly beauty.

Lionel, looking into the white face of the girl he loved, read there a story, mystic, perplexing, full of a shadowy horror.

It seemed that for Ella Wycherly the summer day had no brightness, no heat. Her eyes were fixed upon vacancy; she shivered in the fervent sunbeams; she was, so it appeared, half-unconscious of the presence of Lionel.

He, meanwhile, looked upon her face with a certain nameless, intangible awe. What was it that he dreaded? He had had his doubts before now in regard to this most fascinating young creature—doubts vague, yet persistent. Was she as noble, as truly innocent as she seemed? Was there some latent evil or cruelty lurking within her soul? Why was she so curbed and coerced by her mother and her governess? There was a something, a secret; and wherever there is a secret there is a wrong, thought Lionel. At last he spoke.

"If you would trust me," he said gently, "I would devote my life to do you service. And," he added, half-blithely; "but you know that, Miss Wycherly."

He was right. Ella knew that she held complete sway over his inmost thoughts, that his heart, his hopes, lay all within her power. Her lips moved, but she did not speak; still her dark eyes were fixed on the far-off sunny landscape. Had Lionel believed in second-sight, he might have fancied that this beautiful creature saw a vision. He ventured to lay his hand on her arm.

"Miss Wycherly, will you trust me?"

She gave a great start, as though awaking from some painful dream.

"Yes, I ought to trust you," she said, looking at him fixedly, "because I know you love me. I will not coquette about that any more. Mr. Leigh, there has been a crime in the long past, and reparation is demanded. I have suspected this long. I listened at doors. Yes, I have even opened letters addressed to my mother. You will blame me! Do I deserve blame? Put yourself in my place, and have a little pity upon me. I have known for two years that my mother designed me a life of privation and constant penance—a life between the walls of a gloomy prison house. I am to go barefoot, I am to wear sackcloth; I am to live on bread and water—I, who love life, warmth, gay clothing, dainty repasts—I, who have had my love dreams, my imaginary hero in the future, like other girls; this is the life designed for me by my mother."

"My mother has found a sect, Miss Wycherly is the priestess. It is a sect which the sisterhoods would term heretical simply. Mamma has bought an old tumble-down house near an Italian village. She is having it repaired and prepared for my reception. Seventeen women, with Miss Wycherly at their head, are to dwell in that house, and pass the years in fasting and penances. An old man—an enthusiast, belonging to no special church, but calling himself Peter the Preacher—is to live in the house and conduct the services of the chapel, which is being built. These seventeen women belong to various nations—English, Dutch, French, German and a few Italians. My mother and Miss Wycherly and old Peter have sought out these people, and converted them to their way of thinking."

"But such a thing is preposterous!" cried Lionel. "It would not be allowed."

"Not in England, Mr. Leigh. But in Italy, since the place will be paid for, and kept in good repair, nobody will interfere. They will only be considered as a few crazy women. I have found out that I am to be shoeless, to live only on bread, to sleep on a hard bed of straw, and never during all my life to stray beyond the grounds of La Maison."

"And your father?" said Lionel, who had listened to this account in wild amazement. "What does your father say?"

"He?" cried Ella. "He is the bond slave of my mother. Her will is his law."

(To be continued.)

### Compromise.

Wifey—But why don't you want me to buy your neckties any more?

Hubby—Well—er—I'd rather buy them myself than have you go to all that trouble.

Wifey—But I like to do things for you.

Hubby—Oh, in that case I'll let you look after the furnace this winter—Judge.

### Just a Dig.

Nell—I don't see why you call her spiteful. I thought she was paying you a compliment.

Belle—Oh! you don't know her!

Nell—Why, didn't she tell you you were looking quite yourself again?

Belle—She said quite my old self, with the accent on the adjective.—The Catholic Standard and Times.

### On an Angel.

Small Boy—Say, mister, dere's a sign in yore window readin' "Boy Wanted."

Wot kind uv boy does yose want?

Merchant—A nice quiet boy that doesn't use naughty words, smoke cigarettes, whistle around the office, play tricks or get into mischief—

Small Boy—Gwan! Yous don't want no boy; yose wants a girl. See?

### Sure to Have Them.

Mifkins—It is said that aggressive, impulsive people usually have black eyes.

Biffing—That's right. If they haven't got them at first they get them later.

### Just as Good.

The hammock and porch chair are gone, And summer's sky is blue—

But there's the parlor sofa that's Just large enough for two!

## DWINDLING OF ARMY GIVES CUE TO CRITICS

Military Men Say Force Is Reduced Beyond Point of Safety for the Nation.

## NEED OF REFORM IN SERVICE.

Low Pay and Requirement of Hard Practice Marches Are Main Points of Attack.

## THE WEEKLY HISTORIAN



123—The Alhambra, a famous Moorish palace near Granada, founded by Mohammed I.

1651—First school opened in New England for instruction of Indian children.

1698—Whitehall palace, London, destroyed by fire.

1719—France declared war against Spain.

1731—First issue of the South Carolina Gazette at Charleston.

1750—George Washington married Martha Custis.

1765—Stamp act passed the British Parliament.

1775—First provincial assembly of South Carolina met at Charleston.

1777—Elizabethtown, N. J., evacuated by the British.

1770—Lafayette sailed from Boston to aid France in her war with England.

1781—French attack on Jersey.

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