

THE SECRET OF HER POWER;

Or, A TRUTH NEVER OLD.

CHAPTER III.

Let it not for an instant be supposed that the guests of Surrenden are people looked in the least coldly or shyly on by society. Not they. They go to drawing-rooms, which means nothing; they are invited to state balls and state concerts, which means much. They are among the most eminent leaders of that world of fashion which has of late revolutionized taste, temper, and society in England. Mrs. Wentworth Curzon sails a little near the wind, perhaps, because she is careless, and now and then Lady Dawlish has been "talked about" because she has a vast number of debts and a lord who occasionally makes scenes, but with these exceptions all these ladies are as safe on their pedestals as if they were marble statues of chastity. That their tastes are studied and their men asked to meet them everywhere is only a matter of delicate attention, like the bouquets which the housekeeper sets out in their bedrooms and the new novels which are laid on their writing tables.

"I like my house to be pleasant," says Dorothy Usk, and she does not look any further than that; as for people's affairs, she is not supposed to know anything about them. She knows well enough that Iona would not come to her unless she had asked the Marquis de Caillac, and she is fully aware that Lawrence Hamilton would never bestow the cachet of his illustrious presence on Surrenden unless Mrs. Wentworth Curzon brought thither her fougons, her maids, her collie dog, her famous emeralds, and her no less famous fans. Of course she knows that, but she is not supposed to know it. Nobody except her husband would be so ill-bred as to suggest that she did know it; and if any of her people should ever by any mischance forget their tact and stumble into the newspapers, or become notorious by any other accident, she will drop them and nobody will be more surprised at the discovery of their naughtiness than herself. Yet she is a kind woman, a virtuous woman, a very warm friend, and not more insincere in her friendships than any one else; she is only a hostess of the last luster of the nineteenth century, a woman who knows her London and follows it in all its amazing and illimitable condonations as in its eccentric and exceptional severities.

The guests are numerous, they might even be said to be miscellaneous were it not that they all belong to the same set. There is Dick Wootton, who believes himself destined to play in the last years of the nineteenth century the part of Charles Greville in the earlier. There is Lord Vanstone, an agreeable, eccentric, unsatisfactory valetudinarian, who ought to have done great things with his life, but has always been too indolent and had too bad health to carry out his friends' very large expectations of him. There is the young Duke of Whitby, good-natured and foolish, with a simple, pleasant face and a very shy manner. "If I had that ass' opportunities I'd make the world spin," says Wriothlesley Ormond, who is a very poor and very witty member of parliament, and also, which he values more, the most popular member of the Marlborough. There is Lord Iona, very handsome, very silent, very much sought after and spoiled by women. There is Hugo Mountjoy, a pretty young fellow in the guards with a big fortune and vague idea that he ought to "do something"; he is not sure what. There is Lawrence Hamilton, who, as far as is possible in an age when men are clothed, but do not dress, gives the law to St. James street in matter of male toilet. There is Sir Adolphus Beaumanoir, an ex-diplomatist, admirably preserved, charmingly loquacious, and an unconscionable flirt, though he is 70. Each of those happy or unhappy beings has the lady invited to meet him in whom his affections are supposed to be centered, for the time being, in those tacit but potent relations which form so large a portion of men's and women's lives in these days. It is this condonation on the part of his wife which George Usk so entirely denounces, although

he would be very much astonished and very much annoyed if she made any kind of objections to inviting Dulcia Waverley. Happily, there is no act of parliament to compel any of us to be consistent, or where would anybody be.

Sir Hugo and several other gilded youths there present are all exact patterns of one another, the typical young Englishman of the last years of this curious century; the mashers pure and simple; close-shaven, close-cropped, faultlessly clothed, small of person, small of features, stiff, pale, insignificant, polite, supercilious, indifferent; occasionally amusing, but never by any chance original; much concerned as to health, climate and their own nerves; often talking of their physicians, and flitting southward before cold weather, like swallows, though they have nothing whatever definite the matter with them.

These young men are all convinced that England is on the brink of ruin, and they talk of it in the same tone with which they say that their cigarette is out, or the wind is in the east. The throne, the church, the lords, and the thirty-nine articles are all going down pell-mell next week, and it is very shocking; nevertheless, there is no reason why they should not be studious of their digestions and very anxious about the parting of their hair.

And then they wonder that Mr. George has replaced Sir Roger de Coverley, and that Joseph Chamberlain's voice is heard instead of Edmund Burke's.

Their host could kick them with a sensation of considerable satisfaction. Their neatness, smallness, and self-complacency irritate him excessively. The bloods of George IV's time at least we men—so he says.

"You'd do these poor boys injustice," says Blanford. "When they get out in a desert, or are left to roast and die under the equator, they put off all their affectations with their starched cambric, and are not altogether unworthy of their great-grandfathers. Britons are still bad ones to beat when the trial comes."

"They must leave their constitutions at the clubs, then, and their nervous systems in their hat-boxes," growls Usk. "If you are like those namby-pamby fellows when you are 20, Boom, I'll put a bullet through your head myself," he says to his heir one morning, when that good-looking and high-spirited boy has come back from Suffolk.

Boom laughs. He is a careless, high-spirited, extravagant lad, and he does not at present lean toward the masher type. Gordon is in his head, that is his idea of a man. The country had one hero in this century, and betrayed him, and honors his betrayer; but the hearts of the boys beat truer than that of the House of Commons and the new electorate. They remember Gordon, with a noble, headlong, Quixotic wish to go and do likewise. That one lonely figure standing out against the yellow light of the desert may, perhaps, be as a Pharo to the youth of his nation, and save them from the shipwreck which is night.

"Curious type, the young fellows," says Blanford, musingly. "I don't think they will keep England what our fathers and grandfathers made it. I don't think they will, even if Chamberlain and company will let them, which they certainly won't."

"Tell you what it is," says Usk, "it all comes of having second horses hunting, and loaders behind you out shooting."

"You compound cause and effect. The race wouldn't have come to second horses and men to load if it hadn't degenerated. Second horses and men to load indicate in England just what pasties of nightingales' tongues and garlands of roses indicated with the Romans—effeminacy and self-indulgence. The Huns and the Goths were knocking at their doors and Demos and Debauchee are knocking at ours. History repeats itself, which is lamentable, for its amazing tendency to tell the same tale again and again makes it a bore."

"I should like to know, by the way," he continues, "why English

girls get taller and taller, stronger and stronger, and are as the very palm of the desert for vigor and force, while the English young man gets smaller and smaller, slighter and slighter, and has the nerves of an old maid and the habits of a valetudinarian. It is uncommonly droll, and if the disparity goes on increasing the ladies will not only get the franchise, but they will carry the male voter to the polling place on their shoulders."

"As the French women did their husbands out of some town that surrendered in some war," said Boom, who was addicted to historical illustration and never lost occasion to display it.

"They won't carry their husbands," murmurs Blanford. "They'll drive them and carry somebody else."

"Will they have any husbands at all when they can do as they like?" says Boom.

"Probably not," says Blanford. "My dear boy, what an earthly paradise awaits you when you shall be of mature age, and shall have seen us all descend, one by one, into the tomb, with all our social prejudices and antiquated ways."

"I dare say he'll be a navy in New Guinea by that time, and all his acres here will be being let out by the state at a rack-rent which the people will call free land," says the father, with a groan.

"Very possible, too," replied Blanford.

The boy's eyes go thoughtfully toward the landscape beyond the windows, the beautiful lawns, the smiling gardens, the rolling woods. A look of resolution comes over his fair, frank face.

"They shan't take our lands without a fight for it," he says, with a flush on his cheeks.

"And the fight will be a fierce one," says Blanford, with a sigh; "and I'm afraid it is in Mr. Gladstone's 'dim and distant future'—that is to say, very near at hand, indeed."

"Well, I shall be ready," says the lad.

Both his father and Blanford are silent, vaguely touched by the look of the gallant and gracious boy, as he stands there, with the sun in his brave, blue eyes, and thinking of the troubled time which will await his manhood in this green, old England, cursed by the spume of wordy demagogues and hounded on to an venomed hatreds and causeless discontent, that the professional politician may fatten on her woes.

What will Boom live to see?

It will be a sorry day for the country when her wooded parks and stately houses are numbered with the things that are no more.

Blanford puts his arm over the boy's shoulder, and walks away with him a little way under the deep boughs of the yew.

CHAPTER IV.

Meanwhile, let the country be going to the dogs as it may, Surrenden is full of very gay people, and all its more or less well-matched doves are cooing at Surrenden, while the legitimate partners of their existences are diverting themselves in other scenes, Highland moors, German baths, French chateaux, channel yachting, or at other English country houses. It is George Usk's opinion that the whole thing is immoral; he is by no means a moral person himself. His wife, on the contrary, thinks that it is the only way to have your house liked, and that nobody is supposed to know anything, and that nothing of that sort matters; she is a woman who on her own account has never done anything that she would in the least mind having printed in the Morning Post to-morrow.

"Strange contradiction!" muses Blanford. "Here is George, who's certainly no better than he should be, hallooing out for Dame Propriety, and here's my lady who's always run as straight as a crow flies, making an Agape of her house to please her friends. To the pure all things are pure, I suppose, but if purity can stand Mrs. Wentworth Curzon and Lady Dawlish I think I shall select my wife from among les jolies impures."

However, he takes care audibly to hold up his hostess' opinions and condemn her lord's.

"The poor little woman means well and only likes to be popular," he reflects, "and we are none of us so sure that we shan't want indulgence some day."

(To be continued.)

"I went to stop on a step that was not there," a man with a much bruised face explained at the Highgate Police Court, "and in falling my face struck the step that was there."



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IN MERRY OLD ENGLAND

NEWS BY MAIL ABOUT JOHN BULL AND HIS PEOPLE.

Occurrences in the Land That Reigns Supreme in the Commercial World.

King George has become patron of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club.

"I have no mother or father," pleaded a man of fifty at Tottenham court.

All the prizes at a baby show held recently at Tonbridge, were won by little girls.

A copy of the rare 1640 edition of Shakespeare's poems has been sold in London for £106.

The peal of 13 bells for Liverpool's new cathedral, to be cast at Loughborough, will cost £7,000.

The War Office is organizing bodies of motor cyclists to improve communication between the army corps while in the field.

"It was my husband's place to thrash me," said a woman at Hull Police Court. The couple were fined for being disorderly.

For selling cocoa which was principally composed of sand, a canvasser named Alfred Prince has been sent to prison at Wakefield.

The Cunard Line gets an annual subsidy of \$340,000 from the British Government for carrying mails between Liverpool and New York.

The Blonde, an unarmed cruiser of the Boardice type, has been launched at Pembroke dockyard and the keel plate of a sister vessel laid.

When Capt. Scott was leaving England last week to join the British South Polar Expedition, Sir Ernest Shackleton led in three rousing cheers for the explorer.

Mr. Frank Lascelles who has had charge of several important pageants in England has left for South Africa where he will organize the South African pageant.

The new twenty-six-knot ocean-going destroyer Harpy, of the Beagle class, built by Messrs. J. S. White at Cowes, is practically ready to be handed over to the naval authorities.

Londoners who ride in taxicab No. 6848 usually give Frederick Hitch, the chauffeur, a penny or two beyond the usual tip because he wears the bronze Victoria Cross which he won for valor at Rorke's Drift in the Zulu war.

Collapse, following a meal of ice cream, cheese, and currant cake, was declared, at a Stephney inquest, to have caused the death of Catherine Giller, a girl aged twenty.

The Jonathan Holt, the first mosquito-proof ocean steamer, has arrived from the Clyde shipyards. All the doors, windows and port-holes are fitted with copper gauze, to prevent the entry of the malaria-bearing insect.

FOOD OF THE WORLD.

Potatoes, Rice, Wheat and Rye the Chief Agricultural Staples.

Now that Russia has entered on a career of ownership farming with the ownership incentive to increase her agricultural output her agronomists, as the scientific exponents of land cultivation style themselves, have compiled a table of what fruits of soil are the principal foods of humanity.

Bread grain, potatoes and rice form the staple sustenance of mankind. Two years ago, the date of the statistics, the leading countries of the world produced 129,000,000 tons of potatoes, 74,000,000 tons of wheat, 39,000,000 tons of rye and 8,000,000 tons of rice.

Wheat is the chief basis of the national nourishment of Englishmen, French, Spaniards, south Italians—in north Italy maize takes precedence—and Hungarians, and it holds complete supremacy in North America and Australia.

In German speaking central Europe wheat has a large consumption, but not to the extent that it is used in the lands named; the principal food is rye bread, not because of the poverty of the people, but because its taste is better liked. In Russia, rye bread has a decided lead.

Germany is the land of potatoes and rye. In 1908 she raised 46,000,000 tons of potatoes, more than a third of the world's crop and more than any other single country—even Russia, whose crop in her European territory was 29,000,000 tons. Austria and France had each a 14,000,000 ton potato harvest. The inhabitants of Celtic countries, in north France and Ireland, and also Belgium and Holland are great potato eaters. On the other hand in England, Italy, Spain and America, and in Asia and Australia, the potato is a subordinate article of diet.

Rice is overwhelmingly ahead of any other food in Asia. In Europe it is scarcely raised. Germany used in 1907 not quite 300,000 tons. Millet was once the daily food of the masses in Europe, but has gradually been dropped and is eaten now mostly by the Slavs beyond the eastern frontiers of Europe and by the negroes in Africa.

OPEN.

"My life," he boasted, "is an open book."

"Yes," replied one of the men to whom he owed money, "an open account book."

THE OUNCE OF PREVENTION.

Birmingham, England, with a population of 500,000, has only six fire engines, and the fire loss there last year was \$222,000. They do not build fire-traps in Birmingham.

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A flavoring used the same as lemon or vanilla. By dissolving granulated sugar in water and adding Mapleine, a delicious syrup is made and a syrup better than maple. Mapleine is sold by grocers. If not send 50c for 2 oz. bottle and recipe book. Crescent Mfg. Co., Seattle, Wa.

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