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The.... Laird's Secret

CHAPTER XXIII.—(Continued).

"This is a surprise," he cried, taking off his hat. "What brings you so far from home?"

"I often come here in summer time," she replied, "and I thought I would like to come over now. I rode over on Branwell."

"I'm glad to see you, anyhow," said Roberts, looking at her in admiration. "The mountain has brought the color to your cheeks, missie, and you look as pretty as a picture."

Despite his assumption of a rough manner, there was something curiously gentle in his tone. For the first time it struck her that he was very handsome. Tall, erect, and strong, with his hat set boldly on his brows, and a staff in his hand, he looked like some young Greek shepherd, in the times when such shepherds drew their descent from gods.

"All well?" he asked, walking by her side. "No news, I reckon?" She shook her head.

"Why have you come here?" she asked.

"Oh, I'm a kind of wandering Jew, and am found everywhere. I like quiet places like this. I like to be alone with the great Spirit that made the mountains and the sea."

She looked at him in surprise. His tone, his very accent, seemed changed; there was not a trace of his old rough manner.

"I am used to solitude," he continued; "but there where I live, the prairies stretch round us like the ocean. Watch them when the wind blows, and you would think they were great blue billows rolling. You may gallop for days, and see nothing else but waves and waves of moving emerald grass. That sort of thing makes a man feel small."

"You have lived there all your life?"

"Ever since I was a boy. Did I ever tell you I was Scotch by birth?"

"Yes, you told me that."

"Mountain-bred, you see. I had an old teacher, a sort of schoolmaster, who first taught me to think about religion. I should amuse you if I quoted some of his sayings; but they sank into me, and many a time they kept me straight when I was going crooked. Do you know, Miss Marjorie, there are folks in this world who think that no God made us, and that it came by chance?"

"They must be very foolish," she answered; "or, maybe, just mad."

"Mad with their own conceit—idiots that think to sail the great ocean of life without a compass. To think that a man can stand up before you sky, and see the stars coming and going like ships of fire, and say that there is no God!"

She looked at him in deepening surprise. His face was bright with reverent thoughts, his voice full of resonant vibrations. He no longer talked like a common and comparatively uneducated man, and not a vestige of the backwoodsman remained. She thought him very strange. Seeing her intent and wondering look, he laughed merrily.

"You think I'm qualifying for a preacher," he said; "but whenever I come into such places as this, and think of the mean souls that are to be found in the world, I feel I could almost rival Willie Macgillivray, and set up for prophet by profession. I'll prophesy one or two things right off, if you will let me."

She answered his smile, and he proceeded—

"You'll never find the rightful heir of Linne, unless I help you!"

"But you have promised."

"Of course I have. Well, that's prophecy number one—see if it comes true. Prophecy number two is—you'll never marry a worldling like Mr. Edward Linne."

"How do you know that?" she asked, blushing.

"Why? Because I won't let you there!"

His bright eyes were fixed on hers, and her face grew quite hot beneath the gaze.

"How can you prevent me?" she said, laughing.

"I don't quite know, but I shall try my best. To you care for this fellow?"

"I like him very much," she replied. "He is my guardian's nephew."

"Has he reminded you of the condition in his uncle's will?" asked Roberts, eagerly.

"We have spoken about it," said Marjorie simply.

"You'll never marry him, I prophesy again."

"Why not?"

"Because when you marry you'll marry for love, like the birds—and that reminds me, does not mate with daws, Miss Marjorie?"

"You talk very strangely," said Marjorie. "Sometimes you speak like a common man, uneducated and most rude; sometimes you speak as if you were a gentleman."

"Well, I'm not that," returned Roberts. "I'm only a poor man. If I were rich now—ah, if I were rich!"

"What would you do?"

He paused and looked her full in the face in fearless but respectful admiration. Despite her habitual composure, she blushed like a rose under his gaze, and turned away her eyes.

"Ask me rather what I would say?"

"Well, what would you say?"

"This: I have wandered up and down the world for many years, but I have seen only one woman

[the men were taken there.]

ADRIFT IN LAKE HURON.

Sarnia Tug Picks up Five Men in Exhausted Condition.

A sarnia despatch says: When about 70 miles from Sarnia the tug James Reid, belonging to the Reid Wrecking Company, of Sarnia, picked up a boat at midnight Thursday night adrift on Lake Huron, containing five men. The men had been fishing near Port Hope, Mich., and had been blown 25 miles out of their location, and were in an exhausted and helpless condition. The point at which they were found was 15 miles from Harbor Beach, and the men were taken there.

FLASHES FROM THE WIRE

The Very Latest Items From All Parts of the Globe.

CANADA.

The Quebec Legislature will meet on January 18th.

Dominion finances show a surplus of \$6,000,000 for the last five months.

Last season's output of creamery butter in Alberta was 1,034,900 pounds.

The Provincial Treasury has received \$20,000 from an Algoma Mining Company, arrears of taxes.

Wentworth County Council is considering the erection of an Industrial School for its poor.

The Hamilton City Council have refused to submit the license reduction by-law to a vote of the people.

The Corby Distillery Company will spend a million dollars on improvements to their distillery at Cobeyville.

Preparations are being made to erect elevators in Vancouver to send Alberta grain to Oriental markets.

The War Department property at Halifax has formally been handed over to the Canadian Government.

Rich discoveries of gold, copper, asbestos and nickel have been made in the Lake St. John district, Quebec.

Homestead entries in the west for November totalled 3,481 as compared with 2,657 entries for November last year.

John Nathaniel Charles Rothschild has been elected a director of the Grand Trunk Railway, in place of the late L. J. Seagran.

Ontario lumbermen will ask the Dominion Government to impose a duty of \$2 a thousand foot on rough dressed lumber.

"I scarcely know you sir," said the girl; "you are almost a stranger."

"Have you ever seen two ships from the same land, after voyaging for weeks asunder, meet suddenly at sea? No, you have not. Well, when first we met, our meeting was like that. We had both led lonely lives in yonder castle, with only the old man to watch over you; I out in the west, with the rolling prairies on every side. I was like a rough trading craft, rudely put together; you were like a white-sail'd pleasure yacht, trim and bonnie and newly launched." Well, when you can run up your flag, I knew you were a friend; but when we came nearer, and we exchanged greetings, I struck my flag—ever—to the queen I had been seeking since first I left the shore."

If Roberts was not a duly qualified lover, he was certainly an audacious one, yet his freedom was not offensive and his candor was very far removed from disrespect. What woman does not appreciate the courage of a lover who, overlapping all barriers, attempts to win by one bold coup? Marjorie was a little alarmed, but not offended. It was the first time that any living man had spoken to her in such a strain. How different, she thought, from the calm, almost cold-blooded profession of attachment advanced by Edward Lime? Yet she felt that she must promise me that, if we meet, you will never talk so again."

"I have promised already. Parson my folly. I only wished you to know the truth. From this moment I am dumb—unless you bid me speak."

"Love-making and such folly are not for me," said Marjorie. "If I marry, it will be to fulfill the laird's wish; but I have no time for foolish or foolish talk."

"You think love foolish?" cried Roberts. "By heaven, it is the one wise thing in a foolish world—the one divine thing in a world of wickedness—the one spark that shall fly upwards when all the world is turned to dust and ashes!"

"Good-bye, sir," said Marjorie, holding out her hand. "Please do not stay."

"Your wish is my law," he answered. "If you were to bid me take a leap from yon Craig into the lake, and end my life, I'd do it."

"You would kill yourself?"

"For a wave of your little hand, when I swear allegiance, I swear it body and soul. I see you think me mad. I never was sicker in my life. But remember my prophecy. Come weal, come woe, you'll never marry Edward Lime."

"How do you know that?" she asked, blushing.

"Why? Because I won't let you there!"

His bright eyes were fixed on hers, and her face grew quite hot beneath the gaze.

"How can you prevent me?" she said, laughing.

"I don't quite know, but I shall try my best. To you care for this fellow?"

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TO CHECK EMIGRATION.

Catholic Bishop of Ireland Issues Circular to People.

A despatch from Dublin says:—The Catholic bishops of Ireland are making another attempt to stem the tide of Irish emigration. A circular signed by Cardinal Logue and Bishop Sheehan, of the Diocese of Waterford,

A PATHETIC APPEAL.

A Young Girl Writes the Superintendent of Neglected Children.

An Ontario despatch says:—An orphan girl of sixteen, living in the northern part of Ontario, with disreputable people, was having a hard time of it, when someone told that there was a man named J. J. Kelso living in Toronto, who looked after neglected children. She immediately got an old piece of wrapping paper and wrote him the following letter:

"Dear Sir—I would like for you to help me if you please. I would like for you to get me a place close to where you are or I will come and stay with you and your misses for good, that is, if you want me, I cannot stay near you I am so I rather be with you than to stay here. I cannot go outside the door for I am not safe to go and if you want me to go I will right away for I rather be where you could look after me or I'd rather stay with you and your misses. I don't want to tell you that I have not got the money to go to Toronto, but be sure and write and tell me if you will let me come and stay with you and your misses, or if not, if you would get me a place. This is all for this time, good-bye."

Needless to say, Mr. Kelso sent the girl a telegram and although she is not working for him or his "misses" she is under good influences and is now a happy and contented young woman.

HEAVY FINE WAS LEVIED.

Justice Club's Opinion of the Toronto Plumbers' Bonuses.

A Toronto despatch says: In announcing his decision to impose a fine of \$5,000 each upon the Master Plumbers and Steamfitters and the Central Supply Association, at the conclusion of the famous conspiracy trial on Friday, Mr. Justice Gladwin said in part: "One hardly knows how to express one's self in reference to disclosures such as we have had in regard to the bonus system. A number of hitherto reputable men meet around a table and, under the pretence of sending in invited tenders, deliberately adopt a method by which, without apparently the slightest compunction, they took from that portion of the public who happened to be interested, money to which they had no possible claim; not one man claim that any person meeting another upon the street had, indeed, robbed him of what he had. Indeed, I think that offence rather the least offensive. Here they adopt a system of misrepresentation and fraud in order to induce persons inviting tenders to believe that the tenders were reasonable and fair when for at least two or three years it was admitted that not one man's bonus had come from this association."

THE DAIRY EXPORTS.

This Year Shows an Increase of Ten Million Dollars.

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UNITED STATES.

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An appropriation of \$11,000,000 was voted in the United States House of Representatives toward the construction of the Panama Canal.

A retrieved bag belonging to George Adams, the embossing cashier of the Federal Assay Office, Seattle, Wash., was detected to \$10,000 in gold dust concealed in his home.

The resignation of Robert H. McCurdy, General Manager of the Mutual Life Insurance Company, was accepted by the Board of Trustees.

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