THE HEIR OF SANTLEIGH

OR THE STEWARD'S SON

CHAPTER III.

For a moment or two Norah felt giddy and almost faint. Surely no girl had ever before been placed in so extraordinary and trying a situation. Opposite her sat the father she had never seen before; the guests were all strangers to her. The magnificent room, with its air of mingled grandeur and refinement, would have been alone sufficient to overawe a young girl accustomed hitherto to the small and simple rooms of a country cottage.

But Norah possessed a spirit not easily cowed. Somehow or other she divined that the stately, patrician old man facing her at the bottom of the table expected her to display some confusion and shyness, and she resolved that he should be—well, disappointed.

So, though the room seemed to spin round and she saw the faces of the guests and the footmen through a kind of haze, she made no sign of the emotions that swept across her young heart.

The gentlemen, with true delicacy, carefully avoided looking at her for some minutes, and talked together with the kind of vivacity which is so palpably forced; and it was evident that though they talked of the coming hay harvest and of current politics, they were one and all thinking of the girl who had been introduced thus suddenly and strangely to her father and her home.

The footman brought her some soup, the butler filled her glass with wine, with countenances as expressionless as if they had been in the habit of waiting on her for the last twenty years, and Norah got through her soup and sipped the costly wine in silence.

She knew that they were all thinking of her and she felt the keen gray eyes at the end of the table glance toward her now and again; but though her heart beat tumultuously and her face was pale, her hands did not tremble nor her lips quiver. An Indian at the stake could not have behaved better.

Presently Lord Ferndale, who sat next to her, turned to her:

"I hope you had a pleasant journey, Lady Norah."

"Yes, thank you. It seemed rather long, but it was pleasant."

"Let me see," he said, as he thought, "A lovely young creature, with a sweet voice!"—"you came from—"

"Norton, in Devonshire," said Norah.

"Ah, yes; a very pretty place. I hope you will like Santleigh. I suppose I ought not to say that it is as pretty, but of course I think so. My wife will be so pleased to show you all our lions."

"Thank you," said Norah simply.

"I am one of your father's oldest friends," he went on, "and I am sure you and Lady Ferndale will get on together."

Only one person had not spoken to her—Guildford Berton, and she chanced to glance at him. The dark, penetrating eyes happened to be fixed on her and their gaze met. In that moment a strange feeling took possession of Norah, a feeling difficult to describe. It was not exactly repulsion, but a singular sensation, as if she felt that he was trying to read all that was passing in her mind, and she must at all costs thwart him.

She ought, by all ordinary rules, to have been attracted by the young man's handsome face, but there was something in it which jarred upon her, though she could not have told what it was.

For a space in which one could have counted twenty they looked into each other's eyes; then Guildford Berton withdrew his gaze and returned to his plate without uttering a word.

The dinner proceeded. To Norah the courses seemed endless. She had gone to one or two small dinners at the clergyman's at Norton, but the magnificence of this, her first meal in her father's house, as far surpassed them as a corporation feast surpasses a two-and-sixpenny ordinary. But through it all she made no mistake. If the earl had expected to see her eat with her knife or commit some similar vulgarity he was disappointed—or relieved.

If she had presided at the lordly table for years, instead of for the first time, her manner could not have been more perfect.

Every now and then Lord Ferndale or the rector spoke to her and her sweet, low voice made instant reply.

The costly dessert appeared and Lord Ferndale helped her to some hothouse strawberries, and, after she had eaten them, she knew that she could make her escape.

The butler entered, carrying a cobwebby bottle in a wicker cradle and Norah rose. Instantly all the gentlemen rose also and Guildford Berton went and opened the door for her. He raised his eyes for a second and fixed them on her as she passed, then dropped them to the ground again, still without a word.

A footman stepped noiselessly before her and threw open the door of the drawing room, and Norah went and stood by the window and looked out at the far-stretching lawns and flower gardens, and for the first time—now that she was alone—her eyes grew dim with tears.

The dining room had scarcely closed on her than Lord Ferndale exclaimed in a low and fervent voice:

"What a lovely young creature, Arrowdale!"

"I am grateful for your approval, Ferndale."

"Approval! Admiration, say. I think she is most exquisite. I know Jeanne"—that was Lady Ferndale—"will be in love with her at first sight. I congratulate you on the possession of such a daughter."

"Thanks, thanks. I think—I am not sure—that this wine is losing its color. Shall we have another bottle?"

"No, no! The wine's all right," said the squire bluffy. "I must say I agree with Ferndale. Lady Norah is most—most charming. Gad, she reminds me of"—he looked round as if trying to find some comparison—"of a picture."

"I thought you were going to say that she reminded you of one of the family, squire, and I was curious to hear whom you thought she resembled." He looked round at some family portraits which hung round the room. "I must confess that I see no likeness to any of them."

"For my part, I don't see one of them—begging your pardon, Arrowdale—half so beautiful as your daughter," exclaimed Lord Ferndale.

"No?"

"There isn't one with such beautiful hair," remarked the squire.

"Nor such eyes," said the rector. "They are very lovely and so full of expression."

"None of the Arrowdales have had hair of that shade."

"A bronze gold," murmured the rector.

"Not one," repeated the earl slowly. "We are, generally speaking, a dark race. No, she has not the Arrowdale face."

"Perhaps Lady Norah takes after her mother," said the rector.

The remark had slipped out unawares, and as the remembrance of the separation flashed across him he reddened to the roots of his hair.

But the earl turned to him with a perfectly serene and placid smile, though his thin, clean-cut lips were slightly compressed.

"A very natural suggestion," he said smoothly, "but Lady Norah is quite unlike her mother."

"Well," said Lord Ferndale, "at any rate, your family possesses a new type, of which it should be proud, Arrowdale."

"You all make me very happy. I had feared——" He stopped.

Lord Ferndale pushed his glass away with a movement half impatient, half indignant.

"Gad!" he said, "we must all try and make her happy. I'm sure she deserves to be. She must feel strange and—lonely." He, too, stopped, feeling that he had gone far enough in rebuking the earl for his coldness. "She'll make your life worth living, Arrowdale," he wound up with.

"My life has always seemed to me worth living, Ferndale."

"Did you go to the Swallow Farm to-day, Guildford?" he asked, and there was a peculiar tone in his voice.

"Yes, sir, and saw Farmer Goodman. The roof is out of repair, as he says, but I arranged that he should pay one-third of the cost."

"Thank you. It was very good of you to take so much trouble and on so hot a day—very good; and it is an excellent arrangement, far better than I should have been able to make."

"I'm glad you approve of it, sir. Being in the neighborhood, I rode on to Parkham about the timber. He has come to my—I should say our—terms."

"Say yours, for they were yours, and very good ones. Thank you again. Will you please help yourself and pass the wine? No wine, Ferndale? Will none of you take any wine? Ah, I see you are longing for your cigars!"

"We'll smoke on the terrace. It is a lovely night."

"Very well. Mr. Pethrick, who, like myself, alas! has not acquired the art of smoking, will take another glass with me while you are gone." He rose and courteously opened the French windows for them, saying: "Guildford, you know where to find the cigars."

Then he gently pushed the doors to, and returning to the table reseated himself and refilling his glass held it in his white, delicate hand and looked at the old lawyer with a keen scrutiny.

"You are waiting for me to say that I am surprised, Mr. Petherick," said the earl, with a half sarcastic smile.

"I am sure you are not disappointed, my lord."

"Yes," said the earl thoughtfully. "I am surprised. I had expected—" He stopped. "You found her living in a cottage? With no companions but the woman of the house? Where did she get that manner and tone?" He asked this question rather of himself than of the lawyer.

"Allow me to remind you that she is your daughter, 'the daughter of a hundred earls,' as the poet says."

"She is not like me in the very least. Is she—educated?" he asked, almost abruptly for him.

"That is evident, my lord. I should say that Lady Norah was not only educated, but accomplished."

"May I ask how you know?" was the courteous retort.

"Well, I saw a copy of Browning on the table; I saw drawings signed by her and I have spent some hours in her company, my lord."

"True. And she knows nothing of ——" The earl paused.

"She had never heard your name, my lord—was in complete ignorance that her father was living. It is evident that—that——"

"My wife, her mother, did not attempt to prejudice her against me. Did not poison her mind, in fact," said the earl. "Is that what you mean?"

"Well—yes, my lord," assented Mr. Petherick nervously.

"It is as well she did not; it will be difficult enough for us to live together as it is. And the woman, the nurse, Catherine Hayes, is dead, quite dead, and buried?"

"I saw her grave, my lord."

The earl was silent for a moment or two, then he fingered his glass and, without looking at the old lawyer, said:

"I wish to speak to you about that—that other matter upon which I instructed you."

"Your nephew, my lord?" said Mr. Petherick.

A flush of anger rose to the earl's face and he pushed the wine glass from him.

"Call him the viscount, if you please," he said. "I dislike being reminded of our relationship. You saw him?"

"No, my lord; he declined an interview."

"Characteristic insolence," he said smoothly. "Well?"

"I wrote him at some length, setting forth your lordship's views. I explained to him that if he would consent to cut off the entail you would meet his views in the matter of money—that, in fact, you would be willing to pay him a large sum."

"Yes," murmured the earl, "I would be willing to pay him a large, a very large sum if he would give up his right to the estate, which must otherwise be his when—when I die. You made it plain to him? He must want money. He is a spendthrift, has always been one. A large sum of ready money should tempt him! To free the estate from any claim he has upon it, to be able to do with it as I pleased, to leave it to whom I chose, I would be willing to sacrifice a fortune!"

"I made that clear to him, I think, my lord."

"Well?"

"I am sorry to say that he declined your lordship's proposal."

The earl's thin lips came together sharply, as if they had checked an oath.

"Oh, he declined," he said dryly.

"Yes, my lord. He remarked in his letter that he would rather starve than barter his birthright."

"His birthright! The profligate! He counts upon my dying shortly, I presume!"

"I—I think profligate rather too harsh a term my lord. The viscount has been wild, it is true, and—and, yes, extravagant; but of late he seems to have changed—reformed, as one may say."

"Indeed! And how is he living? I ask from mere idle curiosity."

"I don't know, my lord. I made inquiries, but I could not find out. Indeed, no one seems to know anything of his recent movements, excepting that he is not moving in the circles which he used to frequent."

"In hiding from the Jews and money lenders. We will give him a little more rope, Petherick."

"I venture to think that the viscount's decision is final, my lord. I have his letter here," he drew out his pocketbook, but the earl put forth his hand with a shake of the head.

"Thanks, but, pardon me, I would rather not see it. I have never seen the writer and have no desire to make acquaintance even with his handwriting."

"It—it is a pity, my lord, a pity that there should be—ahem—bad blood between your lordship and the viscount, especially as he will inherit, must inherit, this vast estate—"

"You forget that I might marry again."

"You are right. I should not marry, even to spite my—the viscount. But we are all mortal," he went on, in the softest of voices, "and, after all, he might die before me."

"He might, but——"

"It is not likely! Really, your candor is charming, Petherick! Oh, pray don't apologize," as the old lawyer grew red and stammering. "Let us finish our wine in peace."

(To be Continued.)

WONDER HOW SHE KNEW.

She—Harry, I am agreeably disappointed in you. I am the only girl you ever loved.

He—It's true, darling, but how do you know it?

She—You kissed me so awkwardly.

FROM BONNIE SCOTLAND

NOTES OF INTEREST FROM HER BANKS AND BRAES.

What Is Going on in the Highlands and Lowlands of Auld Scotia.

The new sculpture gallery at Aberdeen has been opened.

Licenses in Glasgow have been reduced from 1647 to 1635 at the Burgh Licensing Court.

Scottish subscriptions to the National Lifeboat Institution during 1904 show a substantial increase.

Mrs. Mary Munro or Scott has just died in the village of Craigrothie, near Cupar, in her 102nd year.

Mr. David Smith, Wester Balmanna, Marykirk, one of the best known farmers in the Mearns, has died at the age of 85 years.

Lieut.-General Sir Frederick William Traill Burroughs, of Ronsay, Orkney, a "Thin Red Line" and Indian Mutiny hero, is dead at the age of 74.

Dr. David Steele Moon, one of the best known medical practitioners in Dundee, died at his residence in that city recently. He had been laid aside from the active pursuits of his professional duties nearly a year.

Over forty persons were seized with illness, accompanied by violent vomiting in Dumbarton through following the Scotch custom of eating curds and cream in May week.

Duncan Macdonald, pensioner, died at his house in Bishopmill, Elgin, in his 80th year. Macdonald was for 21 years in the 93rd Highlanders, and went with his regiment through the Crimean campaign, being present at the battles of Sebastopol, Balaclava, and the Alma. He was thus a survivor of the famous "Thin Red Line."

An alarming explosion occurred at Glasgow Central Station. An accumulation of gas underneath No. 9 platform blew up just before three o'clock, and carried away sixty feet of the platform, besides shattering a number of windows in warehouses overlooking the station. Four men were injured, none seriously.

Edinburgh, through its Town Council, desires to have the National Gallery placed on the Calton hill. The existing rooms on the Mound are now inadequate for the demands on the wall space, and the Government have apparently leaned towards the acquisition of the High school, which occupies the south base of the hill.

Col. Samuel Edward Wood, late of the 93rd Highlanders, Colin Campbell's "Thin Red Line," died recently at Dumfries. He was a daring officer in the Indian Mutiny, and saved the life of Private Green, who was cut off from his regiment by natives before Lucknow by charging among them. Green was afterwards promoted sergeant, and now a one-armed veteran, was the gallant colonel's close friend.

In the course of operations in connection with the renovation of Kelso Town Hall the workmen the other day discovered an underground cellar. Exploring this cellar they came upon the ancient stocks in a fair state of preservation. The wooden frames are seven feet in length, and there are foot holes for four people.

The Dowager Lady Foulis, whose death has been announced, was one of the few surviving links with Sir Walter Scott. Her father, Robert Cadell, of Ratho, was a partner in the publishing house of Constable & Co., and after the failure of the firm he became the sole publisher of Sir Walter's works.

There has just died at his residence, Garneck Place, Kilbirnie, one who attained the 101st year of his age, in the person of John Kerr, a native of Coleraine. He was 11 years of age when Waterloo was fought, and remembered quite vividly the news of that event reaching his native place. Mr. Werr appears to have come of a long-lived stock, as he said his father was 105 when he died. He was the oldest member of the Masonic Lodge, "Royal Blues," No. 399, Kilbirnie, and perhaps the oldest Mason in the world.

NOT DISPOSED TO CAVIL.

Acquaintance—That old farmer is telling everybody that when he came out at you with a gun you ran away.

Railway Surveyor—Well, he's partly right. I ran a way right through his land.

AND THEN SOME.

"They have arrested him, have they? What is the amount of the defalcation?"

"No one knows, but it must be enormous. He can remember where $10,000 of it went."

CAUGHT WITH THE GOODS.

The Groom (at the first hotel)—"It's no use, Clara; we can't hide it from the people that we are newly married."

The Bride—"What makes you think so, George, dear?"

The Groom (dejectedly)—"Why, the waiter has brought us rice pudding."

REVIVES MEMORY.

"There's one good point about alcohol as a medicine," said old Doc Spriggins. "I never yet had a patient for whom I prescribed it who forgot when it was time to take a dose."

Little James—"Father, what are follies?" Father—"Amusements that we have grown tired of, my son."

YOUNG FOLKS

FOLLOWING THE BROOK.

Constance and Tommy were visiting Grandmother Gilman. Grandmother lived in a white house near the mill-pond, and she had often told Constance and Tommy about the brook which ran under the big beech-trees and across the pasture. The water from the pond turned the wheels of the mill, and emptied into Mill Brook. There was a big, solid gate to keep the water in the pond. When the miller wanted to grind corn into yellow meal the gate would be hoisted, the water would rush out, the wheel would begin to turn; and then the brook, which usually flowed so quietly over the rocks, among the alders and under the bridge would become a fierce, rushing stream. When this happened, Tommy would call out, "Constance, Constance, the mill is going!" and both the children would run across the pasture, and watch the water come leaping down over the rocks.

At the bottom of the pasture where the beechtrees grew, at the edge of the brook, was a sandy little cove, and here the children played at running a mill. Tommy would take the little wooden pail grandma had given him, and bring a pailful of pebbles for corn, and Constance would play that she was the miller, and turn the pebbles out and fill the pail with nice fine sand for meal.

"I wish I could follow the brook," Constance would say, as they played near the big rocks, where the stream turned and flowed under the alders, across a green field, under the high wooden bridge, and then wandered among big rocks, until it emptied into the bay.

"Some day, when the mill isn't going, we will," answered Tommy, boldly.

One warm summer day, when Tommy was tired of sailing boats in the little cove, he said, "Come on, let's follow the brook."

"Way down to the bridge?" asked Constance.

"Yes," answered Tommy. "I'll take the pail, because we'll go home by the road, and I'll take a big stick and go ahead, and find places for you to step."

Constance held her clean gingham dress up so that it would not get splashed, and they started out. One or two frogs hopped up on a big flat rock and croaked a little, but the children did not hear them.

"I guess our grandmother will be s'prised when we get home and tell her all the way we've been," said Constance, as they waded round the big rocks and "scooched" down to escape the overhanging branches.

"S'pose the mill should start up!" said Tommy, suddenly.

"O Tommy, what would we do?" said Constance; for to the little girl the rush of the water down the quiet stream was a dangerous and fearful thing.

"I only said 's'pose,'" replied Tommy. "Do you think anybody ever waded down this brook before, Constance?"

"Let's hurry, Tommy," said Constance.

Just then there came a rushing sound from dress. Round the curve in the stream, out from under the alders, and there was the green field and the sloping shore; right ahead was the big wooden bridge.

"Hurry, Constance!" called Tommy for right behind came the rushing water, and Constance hurried; but her foot slipped, and she sat solidly down in a shallow pool.

Tommy pulled her to her feet, and kept close hold of her hand. The brook began to swell in little tides about their feet; but now there was a chance to scramble ashore, and as they reached the bank the water came swiftly down with little white fluffs of foam upon its torrent.

"My!" gasped grandma, when the two drabbled figures came into her clean kitchen.

"We've been following the brook," said Constance.

Then grandmother smiled. "Why," she said, "that's just what your mother used to do when she was a little girl, and your grandmother, too," she added.

BURIED TREASURE.

There is plenty of buried treasure within the confines of the British Empire besides that which a noble lord has failed to locate. For nearly fifty years people have been searching for the ill-gotten hoard of Captain Melville, a famous Australian bushranger, who robbed hundreds of gold-diggers between Melbourne and Ballarat, and is supposed to have accumulated a pile of $250,000, which he so carefully concealed that nobody has so far been able to find it. He died in Melbourne jail. At the time of his arrest a curious map was found upon him, but even with its aid the most skilful detectives have failed to localize the spot.

BEST GERMANS IN STATES.

Professor Haeckel, of Jena, the great German Darwinian, declares that the best Germans have been driven to the United States, and that they have left behind a race of weaker men and women, whose offspring have proved incapable of giving the fatherland that mental and physical vitality which Germany contributed to the building of the mighty American Republic.