THE HEIR OF SANTLEIGH

OR THE STEWARD'S SON

CHAPTER IV.

The owner of the voice which Norah had heard, under such peculiar and mysterious circumstances, felt his way down the steps to the lower terrace and from thence to the lawn, and there almost stumbled over a young man who was sitting on a bank with his knees clasped in his hands.

"Hallo, what the deuce—— Why, it's you, Jack!" he exclaimed in amazement. "Where on earth did you come from?"

His friend stared at him, then laughed shortly. It was a pleasant laugh, that matched the voice and the face, which was strikingly handsome and manly.

"Why, you were up there just now!"

"Was I? Then I was quite unaware of it. My dear Cyril, I have never left this bank. I know a bank."

"Do you mean to say you were not up there?" interrupted Cyril incredulously. "Why, man, I heard you."

"Did you? Extraordinary! I give you my word I haven't opened my lips."

"What!" exclaimed Cyril. "Oh, come now, Jack, you are playing it a little too low down. I tell you, I heard you quoting that line about the moon from Romeo and Juliet!"

The other turned his spectacles up to the handsome face with slow and profound surprise.

"Upon my word, Cyril, this business, or the moon, has been too much for you. I quoted Shakespeare! My dear fellow, I have sat here since you left me, and I haven't opened my lips! In fact, I've sat here long enough to grow a crop of the very finest kind of rheumatism. This midsummer madness of yours is growing serious. For Heaven's sake, let us get away while we've a chance. About Shakespeare! Why, my dear fellow, I've been in too much of a funk all the time, for every moment I've fancied I heard an 'honest watchdog' or a keeper or a gardener, or something of the kind. Come along!" and he rose and stretched himself.

"But—but if it wasn't you who were up there and spoke, who was it?" demanded Cyril.

"Ask me another," responded his friend with a stifled yawn. "Cyril, you have been star gazing or moon raking until you have lost your senses. Who should be up there. Do you think if any one had been he would have stopped to talk poetry with you? Not he? He'd have rung the alarm bell, sprung a rattle or riddled you with a revolver; and that's what will happen to both of us if we don't clear out," and he almost yawned his spectacles off.

"Stop chaffing for a moment, Jack. I tell you that I saw—no, heard some one up on the terrace! I went up there in the dark and was sitting on the top step waiting for the moon to clear, when a voice—yours, as I thought, imitating a woman's—said: 'Swear not by the moon!'—you know the lines. And I answered. I went on talking to you, as I thought and though I got no reply I fancied you were too frightened to carry on a conversation in such dangerous nearness to the house—and—and——" he put his hand to his brow—"Great Heaven!" a blush rose to his tanned face, "I—I, thinking you had gone down, uttered some nonsense. No, it was not nonsense; but, Jack, I was not alone! Some one was there! Who was it?"

"Who's to tell! A woman's voice, you say? Are you sure?"

"Quite sure now."

"A housemaid, probably."

"Well, my dear Cyril, it's the only suggestion I can make. Why shouldn't a housemaid quote Shakespeare? I tell you she is as likely nowadays to know him as her mistress is."

"Bah! it was the voice of a lady."

"Thanks; you said just now you thought it was mine."

"I said——" retorted Cyril; then with a stifled sigh he allowed his companion to draw him away.

Keeping in the shadow of the shrubbery they made their way through the ornamental grounds, crossed the park and reached the village, and stopped at The Shequers as the inn was called. Inn is rather a dignified name for the little place, which was a rambling cottage owned by a widow of a former Court servant, who let two or three of the rooms as lodgings, and sold beer, candles, tobacco and peg-tops, and other articles too numerous to mention, in one end of the tiny place.

The two young men entered the sitting room and Jack turned up the paraffin lamp, while Cyril dropped into a chair and stared thoughtfully into vacancy.

Jack got a pipe from the mantel shelf and lit it; then, adjusting his spectacles, gazed reflectively at his musing companion.

Now that they were in the light one could see the contrast between the two men. The one, Cyril Burne, was tall and straight, strong-limbed, with the peculiar bearing of a man who has gone in for athletics, and with a face that was not only handsome, but possessed of that winsome ease and grace which one is accustomed to associate with good birth and high training. His hands were small, yet strong-looking; his clothes sat upon him after the fashion which bringeth delight to the heart of the tailor, and there was an air of command about the dark eyes and clean-cut mouth, noticeable even when, as now, he was in repose.

The other, Jack Wesley, was, of a more commonplace type. He was rather awkward in appearance, with bent shoulders, and there was that look about him which belongs to the brain-worker. It was a good-natured, shrewd face, though the eyes behind the spectacles had acquired something of a cynical expression.

These two young men were fast friends. Jack thought Cyril the perfection of manhood, and admired him for all the qualities which he (Jack) lacked; and Cyril regarded his friend as a genius unrecognized as yet by the world, but as one whose light would shine out brightly some day.

And yet as Jack regarded his silent companion there was a certain curious questioning expression in his eyes.

"I am reluctant to disturb your meditations, on which no doubt the fate of nations depends," he said in his slow, good-naturedly cynical tone "but my more material nature is craving for a whisky and soda, and the cupboard is immediately behind you."

Cyril Burne started slightly and wheeled his chair aside, then got up and began pacing the room with quick, restless steps.

Jack Wesley mixed a couple of drinks with deliberate precision.

"Walk up, walk up!" he murmured, "the lion is now about to be fed—or rather drinked. I wonder how much Mrs. English, the landlady, will charge for the carpet; perhaps if you'd take a 'lap' round the other side of the table——"

Thus adjured, Cyril stopped short, and taking up his glass, seated himself on the table.

"That's better," remarked Jack Wesley, dropping into the chair; "now we can talk—that is, if you can tear your mind away from the romantic episode of the mysterious voice on the terrace; and I should just like to ask you, my dear Cyril, what you intend to do?"

"What I intend to do?"

"Exactly," said Jack, puffing at his pipe and nursing his knee, a favorite trick of his. "When a week ago you came into—burst into would be the more exact expression—my chambers with the proposal that I should accompany you on a trip to Santleigh, County Berks, you asserted, in response to my question 'Why?' that you wanted me to startle the artistic world, and blazen your name on the head roll of Fame. You also remarked that it would be a capital chance for my getting a few rustic ideas for a poem, a novel, or a play. Is not that so?"

Cyril nodded with a half smile.

"In a weak moment, a very weak moment, I consented. I may remark that I always do consent to your proposals, and that I never fail to rue my weakness. This instance is no exception to the general rule. We have been in this secluded spot two whole days. Your sketches are represented by that insane outline of a tree," he pointed his pipe at a canvas on an easel, "and my rustic ideas have not yet suggested themselves. 'Instead of which,' as the magistrate observed, we have perpetrated a sample of mad trespassing which ought to have landed us in the village quod, or obtained for us a charge of shot or a revolver bullet apiece. I like adventures—for other persons; as for me, writing about 'em is good enough; and I beg to state that I politely, but emphatically, refuse to accompany you in any further exploit, whether it take the shape of prowling like burglars at midnight about a noble mansion, or breaking into a church. And I would also like to ask, when are you going to return to town?"

Cyril Burne laughed slowly again.

"Jack, if you'd been born dumb you'd have been as nearly perfect as a man could be," he said.

"Thanks for your kind appreciation but allow me to remark that that is not an answer to my question. Please—I ask it as a special favor—don't begin to prance up and down again!" For Cyril had got off the table, and threatened to resume his restless pacing. He desisted, however, and went and leaned up against the mantelshelf, and looked down at the spectacled face with a curious expression, half-sad, half-wistful.

"Jack, you are the only friend I have in the world, and sometimes I am sorely tempted to tell you, to confide——" He stopped, and Jack Wesley regarded him seriously.

"Never give way to temptation, Cyril," he said, succinctly.

"And yet I have vowed to keep my secret."

"The fool makes a vow, the wise man keeps it," murmured Jack.

"Did it ever occur to you, Jack, that though you and I have been close friends for nearly a twelvemonth, you know as little about me as you did the night we met. You remember? The night you found me sauntering over Waterloo Bridge, and looking at the water?"

"Yes, I remember," assented Wesley.

"I was without a penny, with the key of the street."

"And generally miserable. Having been in the same condition myself, I knew the signs and felt a fellow-feeling."

"You stopped and spoke," resumed Cyril, his voice so full of music that it stirred the heart of the listener, "and insisted upon my coming home with you and sharing your supper. You asked no questions, and therefore got no fibs. And you have asked none from that hour to this."

"Which proves that I have not inherited my Mother Eve's crowning fault—curiosity," put in Jack under his breath.

"You took me on trust, helped me to gain my living—were, in short, that rarest of all rare things, a friend in need; and, as a return for all your kindness, I refuse to confide in you!"

There was silence for a moment, then Jack Wesley looked up.

"Why should you confide in me?" he said. "Keep your secret, whatever it may be, my dear Cyril. I am quite content with my ignorance concerning it. A man's a poor kind of friend who wants to pry into his chum's private affairs. And now, will you come back to London tomorrow?"

"No, Jack, I cannot."

"Then I must go alone. All play and no work will make Jack a hungry boy. You paint down here as well—better than in town; I must be near my books. Yes, I'll return; but—" He paused, and getting up, regarded the handsome, pensive face with a shrewd, kindly smile. "You didn't see the lady—old or young—who quoted Shakespeare on the terrace to-night, Cyril?"

"No, I know what you mean, and I plead guilty. Jack, I'll tell you what keeps me here. You will laugh—I can't help it. You'll think me mad, even if you don't say so; perhaps I am. Well, then, this afternoon when I left you for a stroll I sauntered toward the court gates to get a view of the house. As I was standing there a carriage came up. It stopped while the lodgekeeper was opening the gates, and I saw an old man and a girl inside. She looked out for a moment. I only caught a glimpse of her face, but"—he paused and looked straight before him, his eyes glowing with a look which Jack Wesley had never observed in them before—"I see her now! Jack, it was the most beautiful face I have ever seen. I stood rooted to the spot. She did not see me, and her eyes——"

He paused again. "Do you know that picture in the left-hand corner of the large room of the National Gallery, Jack?"

Jack Wesley nodded. He was not smiling now.

"They were like the girl's in the picture, but lovelier. Her hair——" He stopped again. "If I were to talk for a month I should give you no idea of the face that haunts me," he went on in a low voice; "of its sweetness, its purity, its nameless charm! The carriage went on, and I—just woke!"

"And found yourself in love with a face."

"Yes, I fell in love with a face! Why don't you laugh?"

"I was wondering whether youjd mind my crying," retorted Jack Wesley, in a low voice; "for, believe me, my dear fellow, love is more of a crying than a laughing matter. Did you discover who she was?"

"No. I asked the lodge-keeper, and he could not tell me. I came home, and the face hovered before me." His head drooped, so that his eyes were hidden.

"And it was on the bare chance of getting a second glimpse of the face that you ventured on the burglarious expedition to the court to-night?"

"It was," he assented grimly. "I would go through fire and water to see her again!"

"And you imagine, suspect, that the voice you heard was hers?" suggested Jack Wesley.

"Yes, I think so. Now you know why I cannot go back with you, Jack."

"I think I understand," said Wesley, gravely, "and you make a great mistake if you think I am going to try and persuade you; but you'll let me say that, if I were indeed the friend you call me, I should secure you by main force and convey you as a lunatic out of harm's way; that is to say, miles away from Santleigh Court and the girl who resembles the De Vinci picture. Cyril what good can come of this? For all you know she may be engaged—perhaps married!"

Cyril almost started, and bit his lip.

"At any rate she is on a visit to an earl. She may be no end of a swell herself——"

"And I am a miserable painter," broke in Cyril. "I know. There is nothing you can say that I have not thought of, and yet I cannot go. Leave me here, Jack, for a few days at least. I know it's madness, but—well, knowing it won't cure it."

"I understand, old fellow, that artistic nature of yours has caught fire, and I'll leave you to blaze it out. Is there anything I can do before I go? Anything in the shape of"—he hesitated and colored slightly—"well, to put it bluntly, anything in the exchequer line?"

"That's just like you, Jack. No, thank you. I've enough for my most modest wants, and I shall work—no, you needn't smile; I mean it."

"Well, then, I'll go to bed," said Jack. "Good night."

"Stop! We—we shan't want to talk over this again to-morrow, and I've remembered one thing you can do, or rather refrain from doing. It's this: I've an idea that possibly someone may hunt you up and make inquiries about me. It's not very probable, but it's possible. If anyone should do so, will you tell them as little as you can?"

"The Sphinx shall not be more discreet. I'll forget that such a person as Cyril Burne exists."

"That's just what I want," said Cyril. "Good night, old fellow, and pleasant dreams."

Left alone, he resumed his seat on the table, and fell into deep thought. Presently he took some money from his pocket, and counted it out on the table. It was anything but a large sum, but he appeared satisfied, and returned it to his pocket. In doing so his hand came in contact with a small fusee box, and he drew it out, and looked at it thoughtfully. It was of silver, and bore an elaborate monogram, and it seemed to suggest some idea to him, for, holding it still in his hand, he opened the door and went into the street. There was a horse-pond close by, and he walked to it and flung the fusee case into the middle. It fell with a little splash, and he stood absently looking at the circle it had made in the water.

"I don't think there is anything else," he murmured, feeling in his pockets. "No, that was the last link, and it is gone to the frogs." Then he was turning to retrace his steps to the cottage, when he heard a voice, a woman's voice, in the lane on the other side of the pond.

"You are hard—hard! Why do you treat me so? Do you think I am made of stone?"

Then a man's voice came in response.

"Nonsense! I am prudent for both our sakes, that is all. Trust to me and be patient. Go home now, and don't fret over nothing."

The woman's voice murmured complainingly for a moment, then all was silent.

Cyril Burne smiled to himself.

"I'm in for adventures to-night," he mused. "A lovers' quarrel, I suppose."

At that moment he heard a step, A man's quick, firm step, coming toward him, and instinctively drew back into the shadow.

A tall, thin young man passed him rapidly, and went down the road, glancing to right and left as if he were anxious to avoid recognition.

Cyril Burne looked after him with a faint wonder and speculation.

"If I were the young lady, I should think twice before I trusted you, my friend," he said to himself; "you are too cautious and careful in your movements."

Then he went back to the cottage, and the incident vanished from his mind. The canvas at which Jack Wesley had pointed attracted his attention, and, going up to it, he took up a piece of charcoal and rapidly sketched an outline of a woman's head.

Quickly as it was done, it bore a striking resemblance to the head that he had seen at the carriage window, to Lady Norah Arrowdale.

He looked at it for a moment with heightened color, then muttering "A libel!" smudged it out impatiently, turned out the lamp, and went to bed.

(To be Continued).

LARGEST HOSPITAL.

Berlin will shortly be able to boast that it contains the largest hospital in the world. The new institution, which is to be called after the famous physiologist, the Rudolf Virchow Hospital, will be fitted with accommodation for 2,000 patients. When fully equipped it will have a staff of 650 physicians, nurses, attendants and servants. In connection with the hospital there will be a pathological and anatomical laboratory, bath-house with medico-mechanical institute, section for Rontgen appliances, and a separate building also for apothecaries. Hitherto the largest German hospital was that at Eppendorf, near Hamburg, with accommodation for 1,600 patients. The size of the new Berlin hospital may be best shown when compared with the London Hospital, with 780 beds, and the Marylebone Infirmary, with 744.

PAVEMENT OF WHALEBONE.

A curious memento of the whaling industry of Monterey, in Mexico, remains in the pavement leading up from the street to the west door of the church of San Carlos de Borromeo. This is one of the churches founded by the Spanish missionary fathers, and is still in excellent repair. The round, mushroom-like objects in the pavement are the vertebrae of the great mammals. The pavement is in good condition and seems to wear well.

HER BUSINESS.

"What business is Miss Gaddie in?"

"O! she's in everybody business."

"Ah! Wholesale, eh?"

"Yes, except when it comes to a scandal. She retails that."

IN MERRY OLD ENGLAND

NEWS BY MAIL ABOUT JOHN BULL AND HIS PEOPLE.

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

The largest deer park in Britain covers 2,500 acres. It is in Cheshire.

The Admiralty have decided that the whole of the guns of the navy shall be re-sighted.

Aliens who cannot read, speak and write English moderately well will not in future, it is said, be accepted for naturalization.

Lord Haddington, who has sat in the House of Lords for thirty years as a Scottish representative peer, owns estates in four Scottish counties which extend to 27,790 acres.

Beer in the United Kingdom contains 8 per cent. of proof spirit, while the lager beer of the continent contains only 4 per cent.

Shunters are most liable to injury of any class of English railway workers. One in twelve is injured in a year; of station masters only one in 617.

Women teachers, especially those uncertificated and without friends in South Africa, are warned by the Colonial Office against going to that country in search of employment.

The Catholic Herald states that plans have been passed for a new Roman Catholic church, to cost about £30,000, the gift of the Marquis of Bute to the Catholics of Rothesay.

A strange effect of the religious revival in the north of England is the increased activity of the Mormons. This is especially noticeable in Sunderland, where a Mormon community has existed for over thirty-five years.

Gambling amongst the paupers has led the West Ham Guardians to stop card-playing in their workhouse and infirmary. Betting news has been blacked out of the papers, and the inmates are to forfeit all sums of money exceeding a shilling found on them.

Between sixty and seventy pounds of honey was obtained when a swarm of bees had been removed from a recess near the signboard of a well-known hotel in the neighborhood of Dulwich.

The name of Grace Darling stands forth prominently among British heroines. The cape she cast about her shoulders when she went to the rescue of the survivors of the Forfarshire is to be exhibited at the forthcoming Naval Exhibition in London.

There is to be a Nelson relic exhibition this year at the Royal United Service Institution. The Lords of the Admiralty have consented to lend the Nelson relics at Greenwich, and Lord Nelson will contribute his interesting collection of relics which is kept at Trafalgar, the family place near Salisbury.

In the grounds of Luval, Haslemere (Surrey), a green woodpecker was found hanging out of a hole in a tree. The bird had been accidentally killed through its long tongue having become fixed to a crevice of the trunk.

Leicester hosiery manufacturers find that the competition of Germany and America grows keener every month. The Germans are able to produce hosiery at smaller cost than English makers, and now the Americans are following in their wake.

Methods of dealing with the wounded on British warships have been under consideration by a special committee appointed by the Admiralty. As a result the newer vessels are being fitted with lifts to work up and down the large torpedo hatches, with facilities for discharge between decks.

SULTAN'S KITCHEN.

The private kitchen of the Sultan of Turkey is a veritable fortress, consisting of a small chamber situated to the right of the great entrance, and is guarded by barred windows and an armor-plated door. The cook officiates under the ever-watchful eye of the kelardjhi bachi, one of the most weighty functionaries in Yildiz Palace at Constantinople, for the health, the very life, even of the ruler is at his mercy. When cooked, each dish is fastened with red wax, bearing the official seal of the kalardjhi, and remains hermetically closed until the seals are broken in the Sultan's own presence. His Majesty's life is passed in a long series of elaborate precautions. However, in spite of the care he takes of his health, Abdul Hamid, after a reign of twenty-five years, looks prematurely old and broken. His weakness is extreme and his body so thin that it is little more than a skeleton.

ENGLISH STATURE.

Statistics have recently been collected of the height of 10,000 English boys and men. At the age of seventeen these averaged 5ft. 8in.; at the age of twenty-two, 5ft. 9in. At seventeen they weighed 142 lbs.; at twenty-two, 153 lbs. No nation is increasing in height and weight so rapidly as the British. In fifty years the average has gone up for the whole nation from 5ft. 7½in. to 5ft. 8½in. The average height of the British upper classes at thirty years of age is 5ft. 8½in.; of the farm laborer, 5ft. 7 3-8in. The criminal class brings down the average, and their height is but 5ft 5 4-5in.