THE HEIR OF SANTLEIGH

OR

THE STEWARD'S SON

CHAPTER X.

Norah ran down stairs, leaving the inquisitive Becca, to ask the earl if she might take that young person into her service. She knocked at the library door, but a footman informed her that the earl was in the drawing-room, and Norah, entering the room, found him seated with a lady of rather more than middle age, but still remarkably pretty. She was dressed in exquisite taste, and Norah as she stood still, was instantly attracted towards her, as the elder lady regarded her with a pleasant, welcoming kind of smile.

The earl rose and assumed his most graceful attitude.

"This is my daughter Norah, Lady Ferndale," he said.

Norah approached the pleasant-looking lady, and Lady Ferndale held out her hand; then she drew Norah toward her and kissed her very prettily.

"My dear, I am very glad to see you!" she said, and Norah thought how well her voice matched her gentle face and kindly eyes. "You have seen my husband," she smiled, "and have made a great conquest of him! I seem to have known you for years, he has talked so much of you."

"I hope we shall be great friends. I haven't any daughters of my own left," with a plaintive little cadence, "they have gone from me now; and I am so fond of young people, as your father knows."

"All the world knows Lady Ferndale's goodness of heart."

"It is never safe to give your father an opportunity of paying a compliment, my dear, but I mean what I said."

"And always, with charming sincerity, say what you mean, dear mean, dear lady," observed the earl, with another bow.

"Yes, that's the worst of me! Ferndale often says that my excessive candor will be my ruin, and that he is continually getting me out of scrapes into which my plain speaking has hurried me."

She held Norah's hand while she was talking, and looked at her now and again with the deepest interest and admiration.

"We must tell each other all about ourselves, dear," said she. "Suppose we begin at once?"

"But we can't, while the earl sits there listening, can we?"

"I take my dismissal."

"No, don't go; I've thought of another way, as the cookery books say; I wonder whether you would care to come back with me to dinner. Will you, Lord Arrowdale?"

The earl conveyed a courteous negative by a wave of his hand.

"I am sure you do not want me," he said. "But if you will confine your invitation to Norah——"

"That's just what I want!" remarked Lady Ferndale, with her refreshing candor. "I want to have her all to myself. Will you come, my dear? My ponies are at the door, and we will neither of us dress," she glanced at Norah's dress approvingly, "and, indeed, I don't think you have anything prettier than that frock!"

"I shall be very glad to come, Lady Ferndale."

"Then run away and put on your hat, and we'll start at once," said Lady Ferndale. Then, as Norah left the room, she turned to the earl with an exclamation of surprise and admiration. "Gracious, what a beautiful girl! I don't wonder at Ferndale's raptures! What a happy man you must be to have such a sweet creature for a daughter!"

"I am gratified by your approval of her, Lady Ferndale."

"Approval!" she exclaimed; "that isn't the word. I'm in love with her at first sight. Why, she will be a tremendous success and set the county agape. How you can possibly have—have kept her from you so long, I can't think."

The earl's face grew momentarily hard and cold, and Lady Ferndale hastened to add:

"However, wherever she has been, she has been well trained and cared for. That little air of repose and dignity she has is simply fascinating. I suppose she gets her manner from you?"

The earl smiled, and waved the compliment aside gracefully.

"I have not yet had time to criticise her," he said, "but I am delighted that you should see anything to admire in her. For my part, I thought her——" he paused a moment, "unlike any member of my family."

Lady Ferndale reflected for a moment, her head on one side; then she responded with startling candor:

"Yes, so she is, quite unlike, when I come to think of it; she is so much more beautiful than any of the Arrowdales."

"Thank you for us and for her," he said.

"Well, that hair of hers, and her eyes are simply wonderful, and I'm sure you have nothing in the picture gallery to equal them."

"You are quite right," he assented, coldly; "we have not."

"Very well, then!" she exclaimed, triumphantly.

As she spoke, Norah re-entered the room, and Lady Ferndale rose with the alacrity of a young woman.

"Come along, my dear," she said. "You have just come in time to prevent your father and me from quarreling. Never mind what it was about. We generally manage to quarrel over something, don't we, Lord Arrowdale?"

The earl smiled as if the idea were too absurd.

"To quarrel with Lady Ferndale one must be an utter barbarian!" he responded, readily.

Lady Ferndale drew Norah's arm within hers, and they went into the hall. A carriage of an old fashioned and remarkably comfortable appearance, stood at the step, and the sight of it seemed to remind Lady Ferndale of Norah's return.

"I'll send her back in a closed carriage," she said. "By the way, my child, I think you ought to have something warmer on, the nights are chilly."

Harman, was standing at a little distance waiting to attend the ladies to the carriage, turned and spoke quietly to some one on the stairs above her, and presently Becca came down with a soft Highland shawl.

"The very thing," said Lady Ferndale, and she looked hard at Becca as she followed with Harman and arranged the light run over the ladies' knees.

"I have not asked my father yet, Becca, but I am sure you may stay."

Becca, with the photograph in her pocket, dropped a half courtesy, and with a wave of the hand and a bow from the earl, the pair of ponies started.

"Wasn't that Rebecca South who came with your shawl, my dear?" asked Lady Ferndale, as she skilfully kept the high-mettled ponies in hand.

"Yes," said Norah.

"I didn't know she was in service with you."

"Well, she scarcely is," said Norah, and she explained the circumstances.

"I hope she will be a good girl. I know she is very clever and quick, but——" she hesitated, "I'm afraid you'll find her rather giddly and willful."

"Oh, I think she will be good. She seems reserved and shy at present."

"I shouldn't call that a fault, and it is not the character she generally bears; but don't think I am speaking against her. Girls will be girls, and you can't put old heads on young shoulders, especially when the heads are so pretty as Becca's. But don't let us waste time talking about her; I want to hear all about yourself—that is, all you care to tell me," and she slid her hand onto Norah's.

"I will tell you everything, but there is very little to tell," said Norah, and she began, shyly at first, to describe her past life and the little cottage on the cliff. Lady Ferndale drew her on, now and again bestowing a gentle pressure on the small hand, and before they had gone a couple of miles, Norah found herself taking to this new friend as if she had known her for years.

As Lord Ferndale often said, his wife would draw the heart out of a stone, if it possessed one.

"And you lived alone with this old servant with a strange name? You must have felt very solitary sometimes, dear. And what a change all this must seem to you!"

"Yes, it was lonely sometimes; but Catherine was not like a servant; she was a second mother to me," said Norah, in a low voice, her head averted. "The change!" she smiled. "It is like a fairy story. It is all so beautiful that it is like a dream. I only wish——"

"Well?" asked Lady Ferndale, with a smile.

"Oh, sometimes, I wish that it was not all quite so—grand. I am always afraid that I shall make some mistake."

"I am quite sure you haven't," retorted Lady Ferndale, shrewdly. "My dear, you behave as if you were born in the purple. As I told your father, you must have got your manner from him, the best of his. But it is a change! And it will be greater and more striking presently, for we mean to make a great deal of you. You are our latest acquisition, you know, and must expect to be treated to a little lionizing."

As she spoke, they entered a lane up a steep hill, and she pulled up the ponies into a walk.

"I shall be such a very poor kind of a lion, I'm afraid I don't even know how to roar. I——" She stopped suddenly, and Lady Ferndale glanced at her to see the cause.

Norah had happened to glance toward the left side of the lane just a little ahead of them, and saw a young man seated on a gate. An easel stood below him, but he was evidently taking a rest, and sat with his arms resting on his knees, and smoking, in deep thought.

She tried not to blush, but she felt the hot blood rising to her face, and she knew that Lady Ferndale's quick eyes had noticed it.

"Who is that, dear?" she asked.

"His name is Cyril Burne. He is an artist."

"Evidently," said Lady Ferndale. "What a handsome young fellow? Is he a friend of yours, dear?"

"Scarcely a friend—I have only met him once——" She paused, remembering the voice on the terrace. "He is painting bits of the park."

"Of course; I had forgotten that you only came the other day. Yes, he is remarkably handsome, and it's a nice face, too," said Lady Ferndale, dropping her voice as they came within Cyril's hearing.

He looked up, saw Norah, and dropping the gate, took his pipe from his mouth and raised his hat.

"Shall I stop?" asked Lady Ferndale, in a whisper.

"Oh, no," replied Norah.

"Very well," said Lady Ferndale, and the ponies walked on. "I'm rather disappointed," she said, with a little laugh, "for I wanted to hear him speak."

Lady Ferndale's disappointment was short lived, for they heard someone running behind, and looking back, she saw Cyril with a handkerchief in his hand.

"I've dropped my handkerchief," said Lady Ferndale, and she laughed. "It is a fortunate thing it is mine, instead of yours, or he would have thought——"

Cyril was up to them by this time, and stood bareheaded, the handkerchief extended.

"Yes, it is mine," said Lady Ferndale. "Oh, thank you so much. I am sorry you should have had so much trouble."

"It was no trouble," he said, in his frank, musical voice, which evidently pleased her ladyship, for she smiled upon him graciously.

"Introduce him, dear," she said, in a low voice, as she put the handkerchief in the carriage basket.

Norah bent forward and made the introduction, not blushing now, but with that sweet gravity which Lady Ferndale had noticed and been so quick to admire.

Cyril bowed, and waited to be addressed.

"Lady Norah tells me you are painting some views in Santleigh, Mr. Burne," said Lady Ferndale. "I hope you will not be too exclusive, and that you will not altogether neglect the rest of the locality. Santleigh doesn't monopolize all the picturesque; we have got some of it at Ferndale."

He looked at her, with the pleasant smile in his handsome eyes.

"Dare I take that as a permission?" he said.

"Oh, yes," replied Lady Ferndale, in her open-hearted way. "Lord Ferndale will be delighted if you will paint where you please. He is almost an artist himself."

"I am very fortunate," he said.

It was just the kind of response to gain Lady Ferndale's heart, and she gave a little nod of approval,

"Well, I think you are, to have such a lovely profession, and such lovely places for it," she said. "Good evening."

Cyril paused a moment to set a rein straight that had got crooked, then lifted his hat and stood back. As he did so, he raised his eyes and looked at Norah for a moment—not with the bold stare of the ill-bred, but with a respectful glance—which she responded to with a slight bow, and the carriage drove on.

"I daresay you think me a very eccentric person, to ask you to introduce me to a man who is almost a stranger to you, my dear," she said, with a smile.

"Was it strange?"

"Well, it was a little; but then, you see, I knew that he was a gentleman."

"Why, yes!" said Norah, below her breath.

"Yes; at my age, one is never deceived. One look is enough; and if his face had not proclaimed him, his voice would have done so. But I suppose it was wrong. My husband is always scolding me for what he calls my precipitancy. You mustn't follow my example, but rather take warning by me."

"Very well," assented Norah, laughingly.

"No!"

"No?" asked Norah,

"I beg your pardon, my dear; I was thinking aloud," explained Lady Ferndale. "I had an idea that I had met your Mr. Cyril Burne before—"

"'My' Mr. Cyril Burne!"

"Well, he's more yours than mine," retorted Lady Ferndale, naively. "But it was a mistake. I don't remember him, and I'm good at remembering faces; and yet his seemed familiar to me."

"Perhaps you met him in London," suggested Norah.

"Perhaps, but I don't think so. Have you made any other acquaintances?" she asked.

Norah told her of the bachelor dinner party on the night of her arrival.

"And I have seen Mr. Guildford Berton since," she said.

She said nothing of the scene between him and Cyril Burne. Somehow it seemed to her as if she had had no right to witness it, and therefore to speak of it.

"Hem! Mr. Guildford Berton," said Lady Ferndale, pursing her lips; "and how did he strike you, dear?"

"I was not very favorably impressed with him.

"Thanks," laughed Lady Ferndale; I agree with you. Mr. Guildford Berton is not a favorite of mine, and whenever I see him, I always wonder why on earth your father makes so intimate a friend of him. And yet it seems so unjust to express any opinion that's at all adverse, because Mr. Guildford Berton never does anything that one can complain of. And, really I ought not to prejudice you against him, for you will be sure to see a great deal of him."

So they talked, the elder lady as delighted with Norah as Norah was with her, and after a time they reached a rambling Queen Anne mansion in red, looking, as Norah thought, like a picture of Millais' rather than real brick and stone; with the ivy climbing over it, and setting every glistening window in a deep green frame.

"Yes, it's very pretty," said Lady Ferndale, in response to Norah's exclamation of delight; "and of course I'm very fond and proud of it, though it is not nearly so grand a place as yours. I have spent many happy years there," she added, with a little sigh and blush. "Mine was a love match, my dear, and, unlike some love matches, it has turned out very well. I am still in love with my husband, and I think he likes me a little," and she laughed.

They drove up to the house through a quaint garden in the Dutch style and Lord Ferndale came down the steps. He was dressed in a white linen suit, with a straw hat, and a smile beamed over his handsome face when he saw who it was his wife had brought home.

"Behold the captive of my bow and spear, Edward."

"This is a delightful surprise, Lady Norah," he said, taking her hand and holding it with a gentle pressure. "I'm awfully glad to see you."

The Earl of Arrowdale would have gone to the stake rather than utter such a word in his welcome to a lady, but to Norah it sounded deliciously hearty, and she looked at Lord Ferndale with a shy gratitude in her dark eyes.

Lady Ferndale took her to her own room, and began at once to make a daughter of her, insisting upon unfastening the long coils of red-brown hair with her own hands, and petting her to her heart's content.

The earl and countess were alone and all through dinner—which was less stately than the meal at Santleigh Court, and not in the least formal—they vied with each other in making her feel at home.

Lord Ferndale had seen a deal of the world, both the great and the small, and he had set himself to amuse the beautiful girl with whom he and his wife had fallen in love at first sight, and presently Norah forgot that she had known them for only so short a time, and talked, too.

Lord Ferndale glanced once or twice at his wife, and the glance said plainly:

"We have found a treasure; a young woman who is not only pretty, but clever and sensible."

"Now, while you are drinking your clareti Edward, Norah and I will have a quiet ramble; and if you are good, very good, we will give you some music when you come into the drawing-room."

"I will be virtue personified," he responded, as he opened the door for them, "and mind, I give you half an hour."

Lady Ferndale took Norah into some of the old, time-honored rooms, her arm round Norah's waist, and they sauntered among the flower beds in the delicious evening until Lord Ferndale came out of the drawing-room window and called to them.

"Time's up," he said, "and tea's waiting."

Just as if Norah were, indeed, a daughter of the house, Lady Ferndale drew her gently to the chair in front of the little table and intimated that she was to preside over the delicate service of antique silver and Sevres; and Norah, filled with happiness and gratitude for the affection they were lavishing upon her, poured our Lord Ferndale's cup of tea and gave it him with a smile and a blush.

(To be Continued.)

THE STRAWBERRY.

Despite the Tradition, Some Say That They are Curative.

That strawberries are injurious to rheumatic persons is as old a tradition as that tomatoes (love apples) are conducive to love. But against science no tradition is safe. It is now asserted that the strawberry is the "real thing" in food for rheumatics. Linnaeus, it is said, kept himself free from rheumatism by eating strawberries. Fontenelli, another naturalist, attributed his longevity to strawberries. He resorted to them as a medicine and would frequently say: "If I can but reach the season of strawberries!"

Borheave is said to have classed the strawberry with the principal red fruit remedies containing iron as well as phosphorous, salt, sulphur and sugar.

It has long been a tradition that the chief demand for horse chestnuts has come from persons who believe in their efficacy as a cure for rheumatism, or at least a palliative in rheumatic affections. Strawberries have heretofore been barred, but if they have all the merits now claimed for them, or indeed any of the merits, the bars will be down and will stay down permanently.

He—"I am told he has more money than he knows what to do with." She—"Has he really! Such ignorance must be bliss."

ABOUT PEOPLE.

Notes on all Sorts and Conditions of Men and Women.

The first foreign language taught to the King of Italy was English.

Sir Edward Clarke was at one time regarded as an excellent comic singer.

Mr. Selous, the hunter, declares that pies made of lion's flesh are as palatable as veal pies.

The Countess of Dudley is acknowledged to be one of the best amateur vocalists in the United Kingdom.

A diamond buckle, worn by the German Empress, belonged to Napoleon I., and was found among his baggae captured at Waterloo.

Few people remember that Lord Curzon is the eldest son of a peer, as well as being a peer in his own right. His father is Lord Scarsdale.

The Duke and Duchess of Bedford might claim to be zoological experts. They have the finest private collection of animals in the world.

One of the curiosities in the possession of Queen Alexandra is a tea service, every piece of which bears a view photographed by Her Majesty.

General Kuropatkin is so short that it is questionable whether he would have been able to enter the British Army had he been a native of that country.

King Edward makes it a rule to have the contents of his waste-paper basket burnt every day, so that none of his papers shall get into the hands of outsiders.

Mr. Justin M'Carthy says that his three objects in life have been attained. They were: To write books, to be a member of Parliament, and to live in London.

One of the treasures of the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg, is a collection of china which comprises all the sets used by Russian Royalties since the time of Catherine II.

Eastern Royalties on cycles in their own dominions must indeed seem a strange sight to the staid Orientals, yet the Queen of Siam may often be seen cycling, attended by the ladies of her suite.

The Poet Laureate, Alfred Austin, has followed several callings. He was a barrister, although he never practised; he became a journalist and a war correspondent; then a poet and playwright.

When Mr. Isaac Zangwill has finished one sheet of manuscript he throws it on the floor and goes on with the next. At the end of the time allotted for writing he has to gather them up and put them in order.

Adelina Patti's explanation of keeping youthful is that she never loses her temper. Another fact in connection with this great singer is that she owns a parrot which amuses her by trying to imitate her singing.

Queen Wilhelmina has so fine an ear for music that on one occasion, as a girl, she rushed from the room when a violinist was playing before the Queen Mother and herself by command because she said she could not endure the discord.

Miss Balfour, Britain's Prime Minister's sister, can give him all the general information about South Africa that he is likely to want. She knows the country well; she has travelled 1,200 miles in a waggon, and has chatted with every tribe in that vast region.

The Emptess Eugenie has been engaged on a diary for many years, and every line of it has been written with the diamond pen used for signing the Treaty of Paris in 1856. It is a quill from a golden eagle; richly mounted in gold and studded with numerous brilliants.

Lord Rosebery in his youthful days was an amateur actor, but he admits that he was not a shining star. He lost his red wig while playing a character in Rob Roy on one occasion, and when he managed to recover it he convulsed his audience by putting it on the reverse way.

Earl Percy, eldest son of the Duke of Northumberland, is one of the younger aristocrats who has earned distinction. He is an authority on matters connected with Asia Minor, where he has travelled extensively, and he has had the honor of lecturing to a learned audience at the Royal Institution on that subject.

Baron Brampton, when plain Henry Hawkins, Q.C., declined the biggest fee ever offered to a barrister. He was asked to go to India, and the brief was "marked" with 20,000 guineas; he declined, and the fee was raised to 50,000 guineas, but he again refused, because he did not wish to interrupt his lucrative practice at home.

THE POPE'S INCOME.

It is impossible to fix the exact income of the Pope, because the sources by which his settled income is largely augmented are subject to great fluctuation. Such is the annual subsidy called "Peter's Pence," and the innumerable thank-offerings which he receives every year from all parts of the world. It is thought probable by authorities who have the best means of judging that, taking one year with another, the average annual income of the Pope cannot fall short of $3,000,000.

CRAB AND SPARROW.

On the sands near Markse-by-the-Sea, Yorkshire, England, the other day, a crab was seen running along the beach with a sparrow in its claws. The crab had caught the bird by the leg, and so much was it struggling to get free that once it lifted the crab several inches off the ground. The crab eventually let the bird go and ran off.