THE HEIR OF SANTLEIGH

OR THE STEWARD'S SON

CHAPTER XII.

"You are hurt!"

Only three words, but surely never were three simple words more eloquent.

Norah stopped as she spoke, and looked at Cyril, and there was consternation and tender reproach in her beautiful eyes, as well as in her voice. The glance and the words made his blood run riot in his veins, and his face was no longer pale.

"It is nothing," he said, trying to speak carelessly, and smiling.

"But it is something," she persisted, her brow wrinkled with anxiety and remorse. She had thought of the horses, the coachman, the footman, even a little of herself, and had bestowed no thought upon him who had come to the aid of all of them. "It is something! You winced when I—I touched you," and she stood still as if she declined to go on until she was satisfied.

"Well," he said, hesitatingly. "I think I must have strained my arm, or ricked it or something of the kind; but it isn't of the least consequence, I assure you, Lady Norah."

"You strained your arm?" she said utterly refusing to accept his tone of levity and indifference. "When? When you were trying to drag the carriage out of the way?"

"I dare say."

"No! I remember, you scarcely tried; it must have been before that? Why"—the blood rose to her face, then left it pale and remorseful, and she came closer to him—"was it you who stopped the horses?" She let her eyes run over him. "You are all dusty and your coat is torn? Oh, how blind, how blind I have been! You did stop the horses, did you not and you are badly hurt?" and in her sorrow and anxiety her hands went together almost piteously.

Cyril gave up trying to smile the question away.

"Well," he admitted, almost as if it were something to be ashamed of, "I was lucky enough to get hold of them, and it was clumsy of me, but they got me down, and I suppose I just twisted my arm."

Norah shuddered. She had a keen imagination, and she saw it all; the terrified, plunging horse struggling in his grasp, and eventually forcing him to the ground and dragging him under their hoofs. She saw it a great deal worse than it really had been, and a faint moan broke from her now pale lips.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she said, almost inaudibly.

"I assure you that it is nothing."

"Ah, I cannot trust you! You have made light of it, and I cannot believe that you are not hurt. Is there anything, anything I can do?"

"Nothing, nothing, Lady Norah," he managed to interpose.

"And I was so selfish I thought of nothing but myself and the—the others," she said, penitently. "I might have known that you would have tried to stop them! Oh, I wish —I wish I had not let you come with me! Will you go home now?"

"That I certainly will not," responded Cyril, with a smile. "If you knew how glad—how proud I am to be with you——" He stopped, conscious of the intensity in his voice, and that its intensity had brought the color to her face and caused her to lower her eyes.

"I mean that I could not think of letting you go alone."

"And yet it is such a little way," she remonstrated.

"Yes, a very little way."

"Could you not bathe it? Is it broken!" she asked.

"No, no," he said, with his short laugh. "That I am certain it is not, and there is no water here."

"If you will come," she said, "let us get to the Court as quickly as possible," and she set off.

"There is no need for hurry on my account," he said, pleadingly; "and do take my arm again."

"No," she said, firmly, "it is you who should take mine. I ought to help, who need help more than I do. Shall I, can I, help you?"

"I could walk twenty miles. My arm is a little stiff, that is all."

"Let us hurry. You do not know what you have done to it—or will not tell me," she added, with a reproach that was ineffably sweet and serious. "And yet you would not let me rest until you had found out that I was not hurt:"

"The cases are altogether different, he said. "If you had been hurt——" He stopped. "Don't let us think of anything so horrible."

"What would it have mattered? I am only a useless girl, while you—— Will you be able to paint?"

"As well—or as badly—as ever. It's the left arm."

"Upon my word, you make me feel mean," he said, with a laugh. "I don't believe there is anything the matter with me."

"I do not believe a word you say."

"Well, then, don't let us say anything more about it," he remarked. "What a lovely night! I think the moon shines more brightly at Santleigh than at any other place I have ever seen her."

"I wish we were home," said Norah disregarding his rhapsody. "And even then there will be no doctor!"

"That's something to be thankful for," he retorted, determined to dispel her anxiety if he could.

She was walking a few paces in front of him, and stopped suddenly before a small gate with a little cry of dismay.

"The gate's locked!" she said.

"The keeper must have locked it," he said.

"Oh, what shall we do?" she exclaimed under her breath.

"Don't be alarmed," he said, with a smile; "from trespass to burglary is a very easy step. The other day I was on forbidden ground, now I am about to make forcible entry." He dislodged a big stone from the hedged bank and smashed the padlock.

"Rather a rough kind of 'Open Sesame!'" he said.

Norah looked at him. It seemed to her that he was prepared for any kind of emergency, and, little thing though it was, it brought a subtle kind of admiration into her eyes.

"You think of everything. I should have walked round."

"Well," he responded, "ladies are not supposed to break open padlocks; it's a man's privilege. I wonder whether the gamekeeper will shoot me, or only insist upon my getting six months?"

He held the gate open as he spoke for her to pass through, and in doing so, his hand chanced to touch hers. Her pity and tenderness had given him courage, and he took advantage, man like; his hand closeed on hers, and he drew it within his arm.

"You see, my right arm is all right," he said, pleadingly.

Norah's lashes hid her eyes, but she allowed her hand to rest where he had placed it.

"What will you do when you reach home? Will you send for a doctor?"

"No. Do you really wish to know, Lady Norah?"

She did not answer, and he went on after a pause:

"I shall light a pipe and throw myself into my armchair, and think over all the incidents of this eventful night."

"Sadly eventful," she said.

"Sadly? Not to me. If I had my way, if the gods had offered me my choice of a night, I should have chosen——" He stopped in time, remembering that she was under his protection, and an accident had compelled her to be his companion at this unusual hour, and alone, and he could not take advantage of it to lay bare his heart. But the temptation—ah, the temptation was terrible!

"You would have chosen to break your arm?" said Norah, scarcely knowing what she said, but trying to speak banteringly and make light of his words.

"No, I should have chosen to be of some slight service to you," he answered, in a low voice. "Do you know what it is that makes me so happy?"

"No. Are you so happy?"

"Very, completely happy," he answered. "It is just the reaction. When I saw you lying there so still, I thought—never mind what I thought; and now I have you walking by my side quite unhurt I feel like—like a man who has escaped the loss of a fortune, or come out well from an awkward scrape."

"Then it is all on my account," she said, "and there is no thought of yourself."

"It is all on your account," he assented. "Don't spoil my pleasure by speaking of myself. Ah, there is the house!"

He broke off with something like a sigh as the great place, shining in the moonlight, loomed before them.

"And now will you go?" she said.

"Would you rather that I did not go with you to the house?" he asked.

"No," she replied, in a low voice. "I was thinking of yourself. I wanted you to get home. I would like you to come, that my father may know all you have done, and thank you as you deserve."

"Then I will come," he said. "But you have thanked me more than enough, Lady Norah!"

"I have not thanked you at all. What could I say?"

"Do you really wish to thank me?" he asked.

They had reached the steps, and he stood with one foot on the bottom one, looking at her with a light in his eyes which she seemed to feel under her lowered lids.

"If you do, don't say one word, but just give me the rose you wear."

His heart smote him the moment he had made the request, and he was prepared to see her draw herself up and reprove him with a look of maiden dignity.

But she stood and looked down at the flower which Lady Ferndale had picked for her and placed in her girdle, and he saw the color come and go in her lovely face.

"It is a poor guerdon," she said, with a flickering smile that seemed to make her face more serious. "It is all dusty and faded."

"I would rather have it than the freshest and finest!"

Slowly she took the flower—it was dusty and faded—from her belt and held it out to him, standing with downcast face.

He took the rose and pressed it to his lips; then, carried away by the thought that she had worn it, feeling that it was, so to speak part and parcel of herself that she gave him, he took her hand, and bending over it, kissed it passionately.

Norah went white to the lips. It was her hand only he had kissed, but it was the first kiss of love, and it stirred her maiden heart to its depths.

With a long breath she thrilled throughout her whole being, and stood looking at him, half fearfully, wholly entranced.

He looked up at her, his face almost as white as hers.

"Ah, forgive me! Forgive me! I—I did not think! I—ah, you would not be angry, you would forgive me if you understood, if you knew how I love you!"

She shrank back slightly, and drawing her hand away, pressed it unconsciously against her heart.

"Ah, I've said it!" he murmured, desperately, as if he saw that he had lost her forever, but that it was useless to try and recall his words. "I love you, Lady Norah! I love you! Don't speak to me yet! You are angry, offended! I have behaved badly! I ought not to have said it! But——"

A sound broke the silence of the night. It was the opening of the great door. He stopped, and Norah, with a start, looked toward the house. Two figures stood plainly revealed against the light in the hall.

Cyril raised his head and passed his hand over his forehead.

"Lady Norah, don't cast me off until you have seen me, heard me——" He could say no more.

They had gone up the steps, and stood before the earl and Guildford Berton.

Guildford Berton darted a dark look from under his brows at each of them in turn, then dropped his eyes and stood with tightly-drawn lips in sinister silence. The earl regarded them with haughty surprise on his cold face, and in a tone of ice, disregarding his daughter's presence, said:

"Mr. Burne! To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

"Papa!" she said, hurriedly, "there has been an accident! Lady Ferndale's horses ran away, and the carriage was upset, and Mr. Burne——" she stopped a moment for breath, "Mr. Burne stopped the horses at great peril."

The earl calmly took her hand and removed it from his arm.

"Excuse me," he said, coldly. "Do I understand that Mr. Burne has rendered you a service?"

"Yes, yes," she said, "Mr. Burne stopped the horses—the two great horses—think, papa!—and," her voice grew lower, and was meant for his ear alone, "and he is hurt!"

"That Mr. Burne is hurt I very much regret," he said, stiffly, "and I trust that the injury is not a serious one. Where did you—er—leave the carriage; I do not see it?"

"The carriage is a wreck, papa. We left it in the lane.

"And you have taxed Mr. Burne's kindness to the extent of accompanying you home!" said the earl, in a tone of rebuke, intended as much for Cyril as for herself. "Why did you not send one of the servants here for a carriage?"

"I did not think—there was no time! Oh, papa, are you not going to thank him for all he has done?"

"I trust Mr. Burne will do me the justice to acknowledge that I have attempted to thank him in my poor way."

"No thanks are needed, my lord," said Cyril, quietly. "I am afraid Lady Norah puts far too high a value on the poor service I was fortunate to render her. I was lucky enough to be passing at the moment of the accident, that is all. I trust Lady Norah is not hurt. It was I who should have thought of sending for a carriage, but there were difficulties in the way. I sent one man with the horses, and the other was left with the carriage. I wish you good-night, my lord. Good-night, Lady Norah," and he raised his hat.

Norah stood, her face white and red by turns; her father's coldness and hauteur filled her with shame; she was tingling from head to foot.

"Papa, papa!" she murmured, almost piteously.

"Will you not step in Mr. Burne!" said the earl.

"No, thank you, my lord."

"Thank you, thank you, thank you!" she said, slowly, her large eyes full of emotion, as if she meant to make up for her father's shortcomings.

Cyril took her hand and pressed it, and with a bow that included the earl and Guildford Berton, turned and went down the steps. The great door closed behind him. He walked down the drive nearly to the lodge, then stopped suddenly and sat down.

He had ignored and made light of his hurts while Norah had been with him, now the pain in his arm was so acute that he felt giddy and sick from it.

He leaned against the smooth-shaven bank of turf, and tried to feel the injured limb, but he could scarcely bear the touch of his own fingers. Was he going to be idiot enough to faint, he thought? Angry at the idea, he struggled to his feet, thinking he would reach the lodge and ask for a glass of water; but the lodge and the trees and the sky executed a peculiar kind of dance before his eye, and he fell back on the bank.

He had lain there in delicious unconsciousness for a couple of minutes, when Becca Louth came through the gate. She was walking with a light, careful step, as if she wished to avoid attracting the attention of the people at the lodge, and her pink dress flitted like an overgrown moth against the dark trees.

She saw Cyril, and stopped with a little cry of alarm, then cautiously and fearfully approached him.

"Why, it's the painter gentleman!" she exclaimed, with a surprise which intensified as she saw how motionless Cyril lay. At first she thought —well, Becca thought that he was intoxicated, and grew alarmed when, bending over him, she saw that he had fainted.

Her first idea was to run to the lodge and call the keeper, Jobson, to her aid; but she did not do so.

Eve, the mother of us all, was not more curious than her daughter Becca, and Becca's little mind was all agog to discover the reason why the strange gentleman should have fallen down in a fainting fit in the Court avenue.

So she knelt down beside the still form, and with hands that trembled a little, unfastened his collar, and held her hand, cold and wet with dew from the long grass, upon his forhead.

He looked very handsome, Becca thought, as he lay there and her black, glittering eyes scanned his face and clothes minutely.

"Has he been fighting?" she asked herself, as she noticed the dust and the rent in his coat.

But there were no marks on the clean-cut, sunburned face, and, still puzzled, Becca thought that perhaps he had been knocked down and robbed.

Burglars and footpads were not of common occurrence in Santleigh, but occasionally tramps passed through, and petty larcenies followed in their trail.

But if he had been knocked down and left for dead, his assailants had left him his watch, for the chain was glittering in the moonlight.

(To be Continued.)

THE TEMPTRESS.

MUSHY.

Pearl—"I hear that Jeanette and Harry were about the softest couple that were ever married in this town."

Ruby—"I should say so. Why, they were so soft that their friends boiled the rice before they threw it at them."

SPOILED IT ALL.

Smoothleigh—I agree with you entirely.

Old Hunks—Shucks! Then what's the use of arguing!

YOUNG FOLKS

JUST A BOY'S DOG.

No, siree, that dog won't bite;
Not a bit o' danger!
What's his breed! Shure I don't know;
Jest a 'boy's dog,' stranger.

No St. Bernard—yet last year,
Time the snow was deepest,
Dragged a little shaver home
Where the hill was steepest.

Aint't a bulldog, all the same,
'Twouldn't do to scoff him.
Fastened on a tramp one time—
Couldn't pry him off him.

Not a pointed—jest the same,
When it all is over,
Ain't a better critter round
Startin' up the plover.

Sell him? Say, there ain't his price,
Not in all the nation!
Jest a 'boy's dog'; that's his breed—
Finest in creation.

CHOOSE A LIFE VOCATION.

There comes a time when every growing boy must face the question: What shall I do for a life work?

It is an important question, one that is as important to the parents as to the child. It is one that must be faced squarely and answered wisely.

And yet there are many who shirk and turn away, trying to avoid a direct answer, leaving the solution to what they hope will be a happy chance.

Then there are sons who leave the solution entirely to their parents; and there are parents who leave it all to the sons.

Each should consider the matter with diligence and frankness and come to a determination agreeable to both.

In considering the problem it will be well to remember several things. In the first place all real success must be founded in the economic principal of becoming a producing member of the great industrial scheme. There is no room in the world for a drone.

Everybody must produce something The man who produces what is most needed and most wanted receives the largest rewards.

As a general rule it is wise to try to produce something of which the supply is scant. In any case, it is prudent to avoid those occupations in which there is already a surplus of the product. For instance, the world is not crying for lawyers, doctors, preachers, or accountants. The so-called professions are overcrowded. There is a large surplus stock of legal advice on the market; also medical advice and of bookkeeping. Consequently the rewards are diminishing.

The kind of man that is most plentiful in the market is the one who knows no business in particular and wants something in which he can wear good clothes while at work.

The man most in demand and least plentiful is the one who has had actual experience with some occupation which soils the hands and the clothes and who, at the same time, has the capacity for planning and directing.

A railway manager who has tramped the ties and built a trestle, a book publisher who has set type; a lumber dealer who has served as a lumber jack: a contractor who has "measured in" and "checked out"—in a word, the man most in demand and hardest to find is the one who has learned some line of business from the basement to the 'front office." The men who want to learn a business from the top down are plentiful

This is a great industrial era. There are opportunities for all. Every ten or twenty years the great industrial army must be recruited anew. The time has passed when it was not "respectable" to be anything but a "professional man." Science and learning have become the handmaidens of the industrial arts.

To-day anything is honorable that is done well. Produce something—give something to the world, and the world will pour its blessing into your lap.

A CAUTIOUS CRITIC.

"Don't you think that Miss Spriggs plays the piano beautifully?"

"Well," answered the musician who is both conscientious and polite, "let us rather say that Miss Spriggs is beautiful when she plays the piano."

RING IT IN.

"He made quite a little speech when he proposed last night," confided Helen, blushingly.

"Sort of a ringing speech, I presume?" laughed Katherine, noticing the glitter on her chum's hand.

Connoisseur—"I tell you what it is, M'Daub, those ostriches are simply superb. You shouldn't paint anything but birds." Artist (disgusted)—"Those are not ostriches; they are camels."

Elderly Lady—"This toilet soap I have bought here has stained my face all over, and your master told me it would not harm the most beautiful complexion in the world." Youthful Shopboy—"Yes'm; but yours ain't the most beautiful complexion in the world, is it'm?" K