THE HEIR OF SANTLEIGH

OR THE STEWARD'S SON

CHAPTER XX.

As Cyril reached the horsepond the church clock struck two. The sound startled and roused him from his painful reverie. All the way along he had been going over the incidents of the miserable evening—the evening which he had looked forward to with such keen anticipations! And as he thought over it all he could scarcely realize what had happened. He had been in the company of Norah a whole evening, and they had only exchanged a few words, and those, on her part, of the coldest! What was the meaning of it? What had he done that she should treat him so? Had her father, the earl, been putting pressure upon her, and persuaded her to give him up? Was she so fickle that a few days' absence had been sufficient to bring her forgetfulness?

When he got to The Chequers he was surprised to find the little inn wrapped in slumber and darkness. He had not expected Mrs. Brown or the maid to sit up for him. Two o'clock a. m. was to the good folks of Santleigh an unearthly hour.

He knocked at the door, gently at first, then, as no response came, more loudly. He stood there for some minutes, five or ten, perhaps, but if The Chequers had been a tomb instead of an inn it could not have been more silent.

The time was going on, and the station was some distance. As he stood there in the quiet street the temptation to give up his journey to Brittany, give up everything, and remain to clear up the trouble with Norah, assailed him strongly; but he resisted it with all his mental force. To turn back now that he had got his hand to the plow and the first furrow cut, would be almost unmanly. Norah herself would be the first to regret it, if she did not even reproach him; and as for Jack Wesley—well, Cyril could almost hear his cynical voice girding at him for throwing away the first chance of winning fame and fortune.

He knocked again presently, as the clock chimed out the half hour, he resolved to leave his things in Mrs. Brown's care. He would write to her from London. After all, he could procure his artistic tools and some clothes when he got to town. It would be rather awkward traveling in dress clothes, but he had an overcoat, and he could keep it buttoned over his coat and gleaming shirt front. There was only just time for him to catch the train, and even if he succeeded in waking Mrs. Brown some time must elapse before she could get dressed. Yes, it would be much better to leave his things and catch the train. Delay was always dangerous—in his state of mind, exceedingly so.

He buttoned up his coat, and with a last glance at the windows of The Chequers, went quickly down the street.

Events were shaping their course as they have a habit of doing, and in leaving Santleigh without seeing Mrs. Brown, or any person who could testify to his presence there that morning. Cyril was but blindly following the distates of Fate.

The station was to the left of Santleigh Park, and Cyril left the road and struck into a bypath. As he did so he heard the voices of the village folk coming toward Santleigh, but he did not stop, and went on his way as quickly as possible.

The night was gloomy—the gloom that precedes the dawn—and Cyril's mood fully harmonized with it. Every yard he put between him and Santleigh Court seemed to lengthen itself ominously, and his spirits fell lower and lower as he neared the station.

There were no voices to be heard now, and the stillness of the weird hour was only broken by the shrill screech of a carncrake. He seemed so utterly alone and solitary in the stillness that it was with a start and an exclamation of surprise that he saw a man half-lying, half-sitting against a stile.

Cyril had almost stumbled over him and started back, eyeing him almost angrily. It is unpleasant to be startled.

The man seemed to be asleep, but as Cyril was hesitating whether to wake him or not, he decided the question by slowly rising, and shaking himself very much as a Newfoundland dog shakes himself when aroused from a short nap.

"Why, my good fellow, I nearly tumbled over you!"

"Did you?" said the man quietly. "I reckon that would have been as bad for me as for you."

Cyril started. He had heard the voice before somewhere, but he could not recollect for the moment where.

"Do I know you, my friend?" he asked, peering at him.

"It isn't likely, sir," he said, indifferently. "I'm a stranger in these parts. Have you got such a thing as a light about you?"

Cyril took out his matchbox and struck a light, and as it burned up he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Why, it's Furlong, isn't it?" he said.

A look of surprise came over the man's rugged face, and he stared under his bushy brows at Cyril.

"That's my name," he replied, "and you——? You are the young gentleman I saw at Mr. Wesley's?"

"I am," said Cyril. "This is a strange meeting, Mr. Furlong! This is the last place in the world I should have expected to see you in."

"The place isn't half bad," remarked Furlong, glancing round calmly. "I've seen worse, and I've seen better."

"But—but, if it isn't a rude question, what are you doing down here" asked Cyril, hurriedly glancing at his watch.

"I was trying to get a little sleep," replied Furlong, as coolly as if it were quite the usual thing to pass the night in the open air.

"Not a very comfortable bed, I'm afraid."

"I've had better, and worse," returned Furlong, as before.

"Do you know any one down here?" he asked.

"I see you're rather curious to know what brought me in these out-of-the-way parts, sir," he said.

"Well, I am, I confess," assented Cyril.

"And I'm hanged if I could tell you," said Furlong with a short, gruff laugh. "The fact is London and I don't agree together for long, sir. It's well enough for a town-bred man, but I've been a wanderer all my life, and after I've been shut up in one of your great cities for a week or two I—well, I just begin to suffocate."

"I know the feeling," said Cyril. "Look here, I've got to catch the market train, and my time's short; perhaps you won't mind keeping me company for a half a mile; that is, unless you'd rather go to bed again."

"No, I can put my snooze off," said Furlong.

"And so you have tramped down here for change of air?"

"Yes, and change of thoughts; more of the latter than the former, Mr. Burne. It's difficult for a man to leave off thinking in a big city, and I'm not so fond of my thoughts as to want 'em always with me."

Cyril remembered Jack Wesley's half-expressed hint as to the man's antecedents, and glanced at him rather curiously.

"But what made you choose Santleigh?" he asked.

"Is that the name of this place? I didn't know."

"The village lies the other side of the park."

"And the big house—what is that?"

"Santleigh Court, one of Lord Arrowdale's country seats," replied Cyril, and he stifled a sigh, for with the mention of the name back came the thought of Norah.

"Ah! Well, I didn't choose it in particular; all places are alike to me so that there are plenty of green fields and fresh air," said Furlong. "Somewhere I can breathe, and can lose the feeling that the houses are drawing together and coming on top of me."

"I understand," said Cyril. "And my friend, Mr. Wesley, does he know that you have fled from the houses?"

"Yes," replied Furlong. "I told him I was going to take a few days' holiday, but I didn't say in what direction I was going; I didn't very well know myself, you see. Perhaps, sir"—he hesitated for a moment—"perhaps, if it doesn't make any difference to you, you won't mention that you've met me?"

"Certainly not, if you don't wish it," he said; "but——"

"You're wondering why I should ask you, sir?" said Furlong.

"Well, it seems rather strange," said Cyril. "I don't see why you should care whether Mr Wesley knows or does not know that I have met you."

Furlong did not respond for a while, and Cyril felt, rather than saw, him looking at him sidways from under his bushy brows; then he said:

"Strange? Yes, I dare say; but I've got my reasons, sir, and they are not altogether whimsical ones. If you insist upon my telling you——"

"Oh, come, I haven't the least wish to pry into your private affairs. If you have good reasons for keeping your movements secret, that should be sufficient for both of us; it is for me, at any rate."

"Thank you, sir. I dare say I shall be back before Mr. Wesley misses me."

There was silence between them for a while, but Cyril every now and then found his companion glancing at him covertly; and he smiled to himself, as he thought that if Mr. Furlong was a bad character, how easily he could deal him, Cyril, a blow and case him of his watch and chain.

But the idea did not alarm him, and he could not get up any definite distrust of that gentleman.

"You're traveling by an early train," said Furlong.

"Yes," said Cyril, with a sigh, "I am going to leave England; for some time, I'm afraid."

"Yes, sir? On pleasure, I hope?"

"No; business," said Cyril.

"That's pleasure sometimes," remarked Mr. Furlong, philosophically. They were nearing the station lights and he stopped as he spoke.

"Going back?" said Cyril. "Well, thank you for your company; I wish you an enjoyable holiday"

"Thank you, sir," said Furlong; "and you won't mention to any one that you chanced to meet me?"

"Not to any one," said Cyril, with a smile. "Good-night; or, rather, good-morning."

They parted and Cyril hurried on, but, happening to glance back, he saw that the man had left the high road upon which they had been walking for some little time past, and had struck into the wood again.

When Cyril got to the station the train was just coming in. There were one or two persons on the platform, which was dimly lighted—a farmer or two, and two or three women going to the market town, and yawning emphatically.

Cyril was making his way to the booking office, when one of the women, who was carrying a couple of bundles and a basket, and was approaching the ticket hole, let one of the bundles drop.

Cyril picked it up for her, and she took it and thanked him, but in her efforts to get out her money let the basket drop.

Cyril's good nature was always to the front, let the circumstances of the condition of his mind be what they might

"Let me get your ticket for you. Where are you going?"

"Oh, thank you, sir. To London, please. A single."

"Two thirds single, please," he said.

The booking office clerk gave him one.

"Two," said Cyril.

"You said one," remarked the clerk with a sullen yawn.

"I said two, but it doesn't matter. I want two, anyway."

The man flung the other ticket down in the courteous manner for which the station agent is so justly famous, and Cyril looked round for the woman.

He found her just outside the booking office door, gave her the ticket, and helped her and her bundles into a carriage.

When he followed her he saw that she was a young woman of the humble but respectable class, and as he put the bundles on the rack for her he noticed on one of them a direction label, "Nova Scotia, by the ship Penelope."

"You have a long journey before you, I see," he said.

"Yes, sir," she responded. "I'm going out to join my sister in Canada. She's in service there, and have got a good place for me."

"I'm glad to hear that," he said in the frank pleasant way. Well, I hope you will have a good time."

Then he settled himself in his corner, and once more gave himself up to thinking of Norah.

CHAPTER XXI.

Guildford Berton had remained until nearly all the guests had gone; and after Norah had vanished he had, so to speak, transferred his attention to Lady Ferndale, hovering about her and rendering her little services in his peculiarly unobtrusive fashion, so that Lady Ferndale felt almost remorseful for her poor opinion of him.

Indeed, when at last he came up, hat in hand, to take his farewell, she smiled upon him more graciously than she had ever done before.

"You have been very kind, Mr. Berton," she said. "I don't know how to thank you enough for taking so much trouble,"

But even as she spoke she caught herself asking mentally what it was in Mr. Berton's dark, handsome face which jarred upon her.

"I have taken no trouble, Lady Ferndale, but have just enjoyed with the rest what has indeed been a delightful time. I only hope that you are not quite worn out with all your exertions. It is a pity that you could not have retired with Lady Norah, but that would have been impossible, I suppose? I trust Lady Norah will have recovered from her fatigue tomorrow."

"Oh, I hope so," responded Lady Ferndale, and she looked at him keenly, for there was something in the tone in which he spoke Norah's name which caught her ladyship's acute ears.

"So that is it," she murmured, as she watched him walk off in his leisurely, impassive manner. "Yes, he has been paying court to her all day. Poor man, I wonder how he would feel if he knew how much Norah dislikes him!"

Whatever his feelings might have been under such knowledge, Mr. Guildford Berton was in the best of humors with himself as he sauntered out into the cool, early morning air; and as he carefully chose a cigar from his case and cut it, a smile of satisfaction flitted over his dark face.

Every man in the game of life has occasional innings, and Guildford Berton had enjoyed some pretty successful innings that day. Indeed, as he went over it all as he walked along, he was conscious of a feeling of surprise at the good fortune which had attended him.

He meant winning Lady Norah, by fair means if possible, by foul if foul were necessary; and as to scruples—well, no such word as "scruples" was in his lexicon

Some natures delight in plotting and scheming, and Guildford Berton's was one of them. In the silent solitude of his gloomy cottage he had spent many an hour, since Norah's arrival at the Court, in trying to find some means of securing her; but to-day there had actually been no need for scheming. Everything had played into his hands; even Cyril himself, although unconsciously.

He had feared that when Cyril arrived he would seek out Norah and monopolize her; but events had occurred which, trivial in themselves, had kept them apart, and then had come the scene between Cyril and Becca.

If Guildford Berton could have "staged" it personally he could not have done so to greater advantage to himself. Not only to Norah, but to any one, the placing of the ring on Becca's finger by Cyril would have looked like love-making, and Guildford Berton looked up at the stars with an almost devout thankfulness that his luck had prompted him at that moment to ask Norah to come into the air. To her it must have seemed as if Cyril were carrying on at least a flirtation with Becca, and Guildford Berton knew how Norah would regard such a proceeding.

"I fancy that you have put a spoke in your own wheel, Mr. Burne" he muttered, with a sinister smile. "That little scene with Becca will require a great deal of explanation."

But still an explanation might be offered and accepted, and he knit his brows trying to scheme some way of preventing it. He did not know, as yet, that Cyril was leaving Santleigh by the early train, and might be absent for months, or Guildford Berton's spirits would have risen still higher.

He was a little uneasy, too, about his position with Becca.

Even clever men have their weak moments, and in one of these weak moments Guildford Berton had allowed himself to be smitten by Becca South's black eyes. He had begun by meeting her secretly and flirting with her, and almost insensibly he had drifted into promising to marry her.

She was pretty and fresh; her half wild, defiant manner had taken his fancy; but some time before Norah had appeared on the scene he had grown tired of Becca, and now she threatened to be very much in his way, notwithstanding that she had been unintentionally of such use to him to-night.

As he walked along he tried to think what he should do with her. Becca was not easy to get rid of. He might, if he had set about it earlier, have procured her a good situation in London, but Norah had, by taking Becca into her service, all unconsciously destroyed his chance of getting rid of her in that way.

As to marrying her! He smiled sardonically at the thought.

The person he meant to marry was Lady Norah, not Becca South, the village girl who had served to amuse him and while away a dull hour or two.

(To be Continued.)

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Common soaps fade the colors and injure the surface. Sunlight Soap cleans, freshens and preserves oilcloths and linoleums.

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Sunlight Soap is better than other soaps, but is best when used in the Sunlight way (follow directions).

Equally good with hard or soft water.

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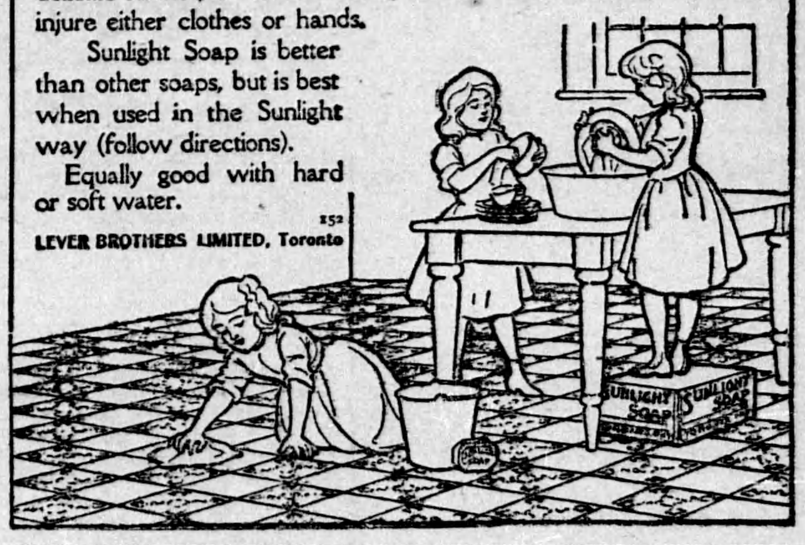
LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED, Toronto



THE DOCTOR WAS SOFTENED.

A city physician, who is described as possessing a "hair-trigger" temper, although he does not suspect it, tells of one of the many experiences which try his patience; but this one touched his sympathies too.

It isn't often that I get out of patience, said the doctor, but yesterday I was tried beyond endurance; worried by the senseless talk of women who make a fad of being invalids, and worried still worse over the case of a woman who has been smiling at death for months. Just as I thought my evening's work was over a stranger insisted on seeing me. She was young and elegantly dressed, and carried a covered basket on her arm.

"I want you to see Toby," she said. "He has such a cough." Here she opened the basket and took out an ordinary black and white cat. "I took off his collar to have it mended, and I'm afraid he took cold, poor dear. Can't you help him?"

I was angry all through. "I am not a cat doctor, madam," I said. I was going to ask her why she didn't find something better to take up her time than a cat, but she evidently didn't see that I was out of patience.

"But couldn't you do something for him?" she went on. "We're so fond of him. He was our little girl's pet, the very last thing she ever spoke about before she died, and we prize it for her sake."

Yes, I did. I treated that cat, and I'm proud to say I cured him.

"IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY, SAY IT TO BOTH OF US!"