# THE HEIR OF SANTLEIGH

OR

THE STEWARD'S SON

CHAPTER XXI.—(Continued).

Perhaps, he thought, he might offer her money, but there was not much encouragement in the idea. Becca was not the kind of girl to be bought off; but still, he might try it.

He put her out of his mind after a few minutes, and walked on slowly, smoking his cigar—a very good one—and building castles in the air.

What a fortune and a career lay before him! As the husband of Lady Norah and the owner of the Arrowdale wealth he would be almost the most important person in the country—he, who had been looked down upon by the swells. He would pay them back in some way when his day came!

He would show them that the steward's son could be as good and as grand a gentleman as any of them.

He was enjoying himself in this fashion when he reached the small door in the high wall of his cheerless cottage, and had inserted the key in the lock, when he felt a touch upon his arm, and a voice said:

"Guildford!"

He turned and saw Becca standing in the shadow beside him; and with difficulty repressed the oath of impatience and annoyance which rose to his lips.

The touch and voice of the girl he had deceived knocked down his castles in the air like a house of cards, but his voice was as composed and suave as usual as he said in a tone of pleasant surprise:

"Ah, is that you, Becca?"

"Yes, it's me. I—I want to speak to you, Mr. Berton."

"All right, Miss South. Why Becca why am I 'Mister Berton,' instead of 'Guildford,' eh?" and he tried to take her hand and draw her to him, but Becca put her hand behind her and drew back. "What! In one of your tantrums again, Becca?" he said, smiling. "What's the matter now? Are you offended because I didn't dance with you to-night?"

"No!" replied Becca.

"Well, I'm glad of that, because it would have been unreasonable. You know how careful we have to be, Becca. We don't want all the world in our confidence, do we? We don't want all Santleigh and Parkham chattering about our little affairs, eh?"

Becca looked at him with a mixture of distrust and anxiety. Her face was pale, and her eyes were swollen with crying, but there was an expression of determination in them which Guildford Berton did not fail to notice.

"What is it you want to say to me, Becca?" he asked after a moment's pause, during which he was wondering how he could get rid of her.

"I want to speak to you, to ask you a question."

"Ask me anything you like, Becca," he said, pleasantly. "But don't let us stand here; it's rather cool. Come inside."

"I'm not cold," she said, curtly.

"But I am. Come, don't be disagreeable. You may as well come in and talk comfortably as stand outside here, you silly girl."

He unlocked and opened the door as he spoke, and walked into the garden, and Becca, after a momentary hesitation, followed him.

Then the door closed with a clang which should have found an answering echo in Becca's heart.

He led the way to the house, and struck a match.

"Sit down, Becca," he said, and he set the lantern on the table and closed the shutters, yawning as he did so.

"Are you very tired, Becca? I am. It has been a confoundedly long day, and I've wished it over hours ago."

Becca did not sit down, but stood by the table, upon which she leaned with one hand.

"Now, what is it? But I wish you'd sit down. Here"—he rose, and went to the sideboard—"let me give you a glass of wine."

"I don't want any," she said in a low voice.

"Nonsense! Well, if you won't," as she repeated the gesture, "I will. You don't mind my smoking?" He lit another cigar. "Now, Becca, let's hear what's the matter," and he seated himself at the table near her, and looked at her with a smile. "But I know what it is before you tell me. You've taken it into that foolish little head of yours to be jealous. That's it, isn't it? Oh, I know you, Becca, you see. You think I ought to have paid you a little attention to-night, and you're riled because I didn't choose to let everybody know how fond I am of my pretty little Becca!"

"I—I want to ask you a question, I want to ask you if you have forgotten what you promised me?"

"What a question to ask a man at this time of night!" he said, with a laugh. "Have I forgotten what, you silly child?"

"That you promised to marry me."

"Have I forgotten it? What a question! Is it likely that a man would forget such a thing, my dear Becca? Of course I promised! But what makes you come and ask me on this of all nights?"

"Because—because I can't trust you. I haven't trusted you for weeks past. You've changed to me."

"Oh, nonsense," he broke in lightly.

"You've altered since—since—she came."

"She? Who? Oh, you mean Lady Norah, I suppose! Don't be absurd, Becca."

"Since she came you've kept out of my way, and—and put me off. It's not my fancy; I'm not blind." Her voice grew more hurried and excited, but she still spoke in a low tone. "I've seen it, and—and others have seen it, and—and to-night more than ever!"

"There, I told you you were jealous! My dear Becca, if you knew a little more of the world you'd understand that I am obliged to be attentive to the daughter of my best friend. Of course I danced with her and—and talked to her. Why, Becca, you don't want me to lose all my friends when I marry you?"

"No. I understand quite well, though I am only a poor, ignorant girl. It's not me you want, but Lady Norah!"

"Tut, tut! I don't want to marry Lady Norah. I want to marry you, and I mean to."

"When?"

"When?" he repeated, but she stopped him with a gesture.

"You needn't trouble to tell me any more lies. I don't believe them. I've been a fool to believe them before, You won't marry me, and I know it. It's Lady Norah——"

"Now, be sensible, Becca. You think you are very sharp, but you don't seem to see all that goes on under your eyes nevertheless. My dear child, if I wanted to marry Lady Norah ever so badly I haven't a chance. There's some one else before me. I'm not the favored individual. Lady Norah doesn't give a thought to me. It's Cyril Burne—who, by the way, seems a special favorite of yours."

"Mr. Burne's nothing to me, and I know he'd like to marry her, and he ought. Yes, I know that, and you are trying to come between them."

"Nonsense!"

"Yes, I'm not blind now, if I was before. But—but he's a gentleman and he shall have her. I know you've been trying to do all the day—to come between him and her, and you think you've done it!" Her voice grew louder, and the old spirit of defiance gleamed in her black eyes. "But you shan't! You think because he's gone that you'll be able to poison her against him and have it all your own way. You forget he could write——"

"Oh, so he has written to Lady Norah? and you are carrying the letter to her, eh, Becca?"

Becca could not keep her hand from straying to her bosom, and the involuntary action revealed the presence of the hidden letter to him as plainly as if he had seen it.

"Well, Becca," he said, "you are perfectly at liberty to act as postman for Mr. Cyril Burne if you like, and I wish him every success in his wooing."

"You'd like him to marry her! You'd—— But I don't want to talk about Mr. Burne. I want an answer to my question. When—when are you going to marry me, Mr. Berton?" and she eyed him with a curious look, half determined.

"You're in a great hurry, Becca, and so am I, but for both our sakes I should have liked to put it off a little longer; but as you are in such a hurry——"

"That's enough! Don't trouble to tell me any more lies! You don't mean to marry me, Mr. Berton, and if you did I wouldn't marry you!"

He was startled out of his affected composure.

"No! I might have done so once. I'd have done so now if you'd met me fair and honest to-night; but you ain't fair or honest. I know what you are now! You speak against Mr. Cyril! You! He's a gentleman, while you—you are only a sham! I know you now, and—and I wouldn't marry you if you went down on your knees to me!"

Her voice broke and she pressed her clinched hand against her bosom to still the beating of her heart, and he watched her with close attention, as a keeper watches some furious animal.

But you shan't marry Lady Norah, you shan't come between her Cyril and her! You shan't do that!"

"What will you do, my little Becca?"

"What will I do?" she repeated. "I'll go to her to-morrow—yes, to-morrow—and I'll tell her how you've served me. Perhaps she thinks you are honest and straight like Mr. Cyril; she shall know what sort of a man you are! You thought you would serve me as you liked and treat me like dirt, and get rid of me when you pleased, and that I'd hear it, and do nothing!" she laughed, harshly. "But you can't, Mr. Berton! Lady Norah—ah, and his lordship—and everybody shall know how you've treated me, and to-morrow, if I'm alive!"

She drew her shawl around her with shaking hands, and moved toward the door.

Guildford Berton's face had gradually gone paler and paler during her passionate outburst; but the smile still remained—a ghastly mockery of a smile—on his tightly compressed lips. With a laugh he got up from the table, and stretched himself, still watching her from beneath his half-closed lids.

"Well, you've worked yourself into a nice temper, Becca," he said. "You silly child, you'll be sorry for it long before you get home. Come now—let us make friends and talk sensibly. We'll be married as soon as you like; we'll go away together to-morrow to some pretty place, and be married on the quiet——"

"It's too late," she said sullenly. "I don't want to marry you. I wouldn't if you went down on your knees and begged me to."

"And you'll cry the whole business over the place to-morrow?" he asked with a smile. "Oh, Becca!"

"Yes," she responded, doggedly, "I'll tell Lady Norah everything the moment I see her."

"You mean it, Becca? You mean to make a scandal of our little love affair——"

She put her hand upon the door, and vouchsafed no reply.

"Well," he said, "I don't know why I should care. After all, perhaps"—he went on talking incoherently to gain time as he approached her—"after all—here, you have dropped your handkerchief, Becca."

She turned, and saw that he had wound his handkerchief over his own mouth, and as she stood wondering, half fearfully, at his action, he sprang upon her, clipped her arms with one hand, and held the phial to her face.

One cry, and that only a faint, gasping one, rose from her lips, then her head fell forward, and she slipped limp and helpless to the ground.

Guildford Berton, after a glance at her, let her lie as she had fallen, until he had carefully recorked the phial and put it in his pocket; then he slowly removed the handkerchief from his mouth and bent over her.

"Almost instantaneous," he muttered, with a grim smile; "a wonderful discovery. Now, my good Becca, just let us have Mr. Cyril Burne's letter."

He took it from her dress, and, leaving her lying on the ground as if she were no consideration whatsoever, he carried the letter to the lantern and read it.

"Gone for months, perhaps!" he muttered. "What a chance for me! Leaves the field open for months. What could I not do in that time if—if—I could keep her from hearing from him, and silence this silly little fool! Heaven and earth, what a chance!"

He stood with the letter in his hand for a minute or two, staring before him, then he put it in his pocket, and almost with a start, as if he had forgotten the presence of the unconscious girl, turned and knelt beside her.

"Almost time she came to," he muttered; "and when she does? The little fool is like a wild cat, and will carry out her threats. Good-by, then to all my hopes and ambitions! Oh, Guildford, my friend, what an insensate ass you were to be led away by a fancy for a pretty face! What shall I do to persuade her to hold her tongue? If I could only keep her quiet for, say, six or eight weeks, while this fellow was out of the way——"

While he was muttering and musing he was fanning the face of the unconscious girl, and suddenly a change swept over the moody expression of his face, and he bent lower and placed his ear to her lips. Then he started to his feet, and, snatching the lantern from the table, knelt down and held the light close to her face.

He peered into it keenly for a couple of minutes; then, with an inarticulate cry, shrank back, and, still staring down at her, with horror imprinted on every feature, gasped:

"My God! She's dead!

(To be Continued).

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# YOUNG FOLKS

## FAIR PLAY.

There was a very decided frown on Larry Thorpe's face as he stood in front of the fire, staring at the picture of his grandfather on the opposite wall. He tried to smooth it out when he heard a step in the hall and a hand laid on the door-knob; but the attempt was not a very successful one, so that Aunt Harriet, after a single glance from her bright eyes, asked without ceremony:

"What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing," said Larry, in a tone that would indicate the loss of all the good things of life.

"I thought," said Aunt Harriet, "that you seemed just a mite cross. But I must have been mistaken."

"Well, I am," Larry burst out, "and I think I have a right to be. I don't see why Worth can't take a little trouble now and then. Most girls do for their brothers."

"Doesn't Worth?"

Larry did not see fit to regard this question.

"I wanted to have some of the boys around to-morrow night, to give Charley Ritter a little send-off. He is going away the next day. I talked to Worth about it, and she made as much fuss as if I had asked for the moon. Of course she'd have to make a cake, and do a few other things; but I think she might put herself out for me a little. I told her so, too."

"What did she say?"

"Why, she flared up and talked back, the way girls do. Why can't they see how weak that 'you're another' kind of eloquence is? She asked me why I oughtn't to put myself out for her sometimes, and a lot of such things."

"That doesn't strike me as so weak," said Aunt Harriet.

Larry looked at her doubtfully. He and she were great friends.

"Girls ought to be willing to help their brothers," he said.

"Of course," agreed his Aunt Harriet, promptly. Larry was reassured.

"When do I ever look black at Worth. When she asks some little favor of me?"

"When did she ask you last?"

Larry tried to think, then had to content himself with saying, somewhat vaguely:

"But we are more dependent on the things that girls can do."

"You mean that you boys have an idea that girls should be servants. When you want a cake you ask for it and feel abused if there is any hitch about it. When Worth wants an escort to take her to see somebody at night, she treads as softly as if on egg shells; and, if she has to stay at home, nobody is much surprised."

Larry looked guilty.

"Worth must sew on missing buttons, and make a copy of a stylish necktie and pick up odds and ends all over the house, and she must do it in good season. But when she wants a picture hung or a little hammering done, after waiting and waiting, she climbs the step-ladder and does it herself in spite of the fact that 'a girl never knows how to drive a nail.' And all the stray errands, dear, where do they fall? Don't you honestly think that Worth does more than her half? Even I find myself inclined to 'favor' the boy, as a horse does its lame leg."

When Aunt Harriet went upstairs, Larry continued to stand on the rug and to look at his grandfather with a frown. But it was a different frown.

"Well, if I am really a lame leg in the family. I don't mind owning to you—(to his grandfather)—that I do hanker considerably after being all-round good."

As usual, having thought matters over, Worth came round, and announced that she could manage the "cake and a few other things." And as usual, Larry declared that she was a "dear," and hugged her like an amiable bear. Then the domestic skies were bright again. It was after all this that the unusual began to happen. For, Larry's eyes being opened, it was wonderful how clearly he saw. And, when Larry saw, he acted.

It would be a long story to tell now matters shifted in the Thorpe household. Suffice it to say that now-a-days Larry has no need to complain of any want of alacrity in Worth's sisterliness. And, as for Worth, she never tires of the consideration of Larry's merits.

"You are a dear!" she said to him the other day. "Brothers are such nice relations."

"Especially when they are reciprocal relations," said Larry.

## HERE AND THERE.

### Bits of Information About 'Most Everything.

In the Amazon there are known to exist at least 2,000 species of fish.

Judging by the insanity returns, sixteen cases in 1,000 are caused by love affairs.

Holland is the European country where coffee can be imported free of duty.

A caterpillar in the course of a month will devour 600 times its own weight in food.

The biggest wheatfield in the world is in the Argentine. It covers just over 100 square miles.

The Japanese strictly enforce a law forbidding boys under twenty years of age to use tobacco.

A Birmingham, England, man named Batchelor has just married a young lady named Widdow.

Tobacco seeds are so minute that a thimble will contain enough to sow over an acre of ground.

It is estimated that eighty millions of British treasure lie sunk along the route from England to India.

Workmen attending the pans in salt-works are never known to have cholera, smallpox, scarlet fever, or influenza.

In Austria a man and a woman are supposed to be capable of conducting a home of their own from the age of fourteen.

In Iceland horses are shod with sheep's horn; in the Soudan a kind of sock made of camel's skin is used for the purpose.

Trains in Spain are certainly slow. A rate of ten or twelve miles an hour is considered a good average speed for everyday travellers.

In every 1,000 marriages in England, twenty-one are solemnized between first cousins. Among the nobility the rate is much higher, amounting to forty-five in 1,000.

Lion-tamers frequently perfume themselves with lavender. There is, it is said, no record of a lion ever having attacked a trainer who had taken the precaution of using this perfume.

## HELD UP BY BRIGANDS.

### Englishman's Odd Adventure on a Mountain.

Mr. Charles H. Hawes, who has returned to England after a four months' scientific tour in Crete, has narrated the following exciting incident:

"My servant and I were with difficulty getting the mules down the precipitous side of a great gorge when we were ambushed by two armed men, wild shepherd folk from the mountain. I was absolutely unarmed and rather taken aback when my servant called to me in Greek, "They are going to fire, sir," and looking up beheld two muzzles pointed at me at a distance of about a dozen yards.

"It was money they wanted; a hundred napoleons (£80) they demanded; but as I was not inclined to negotiate and it was impossible to escape, I adopted the obvious alternative and continued the difficult descent. It was slow work, and after a few yards, calls, followed by stones, and then bullets, were sent after me. The first four shots were wide, and three times they clambered down to get nearer aim, and with better effect, for the last six fractured rocks at my elbow, and the splinters brushed my forehead. Their shooting was certainly bad.

"Finally, after sundry disputes and renewals of our journey, they brought their demands down with Oriental suddenness to £1, which I met with an offer of 8s. 4d. Unfortunately my servant, who was ahead, was made to disgorge his purse, the other robber meanwhile covering me with his rifle at six yards and daring me to move."