THE HEIR OF SANTLEIGH

OR THE STEWARD'S SON

CHAPTER XXIX.

Three days before the papers announced the "serious illness of the Right Honorable the Earl of Arrowdale," Cyril Burne sat at work upon the beach at Lorient.

Brittany was anything but a beastly place, as Jack Wesley had declared, and the prospect of golden sands, deep blue sea and sky, and rugged rocks ought to have filled Cyril's artistic soul with rapture.

But the expression on his face was anything but rapturous, and he worked at his picture with the stolid, dogged countenance of a convict pursuing his allotted task.

Every now and then he stopped painting and stared at the canvas as if he were looking through it, and at such times his head sank upon his breast, and what little light had been in his eyes died out, and a hopeless, sick-and-sorry look crept over his handsome face; a look which was not good to see on the countenance of a man young, clever, and with all the world before him

It is scarcely necessary to say that at these times he was thinking of Norah. It would be rather difficult to say when he was not thinking of her; and just as her thoughts of him were full of problems and unanswerable enigmas, so were his of her.

When a man falls in love with a girl, he flatters himself that at least he knows and understands her nature.

For instance: If any one had asked Cyril to describe Norah, he would have summed her up somewhat in this fashion:

"Beautiful, truthful, loving, honest as the day to all the world, and faithful to me unto death!"

And this girl, this pearl among women, had quietly and coolly jilted him; and, had either grown tired of him in a few days, or thrown him over at the behest of her father.

The more he thought of her and her desertion of him, the more bitter he became, the more puzzled and the more miserable. For, notwithstanding her treatment of him, he knew that he loved her still—that if she chose to turn to him and whistle him to her side he must fly to her, and kneel at her feet just as much her worshipper and slave as he had ever been.

In the words of the Persian poet Sadi, he had given his heart to her, and could not take it back.

Behind him, perched on the cliffs, was the house which Lord Newall had built for himself, but his lordship had gone away and left Cyril sole master. In fact, his lordship had found the young artist so gloomy and morose a companion that he could not stand him for longer than a week, and had flown in self-defense.

Cyril would have flown, too: quite a hundred times a day he had been assailed by an intense longing to kick his unfinished picture into the sea and start off somewhere, or anywhere; but he had learned something else beside the knack of painting, and that was that for his complaint there was no remedy half so efficacious as hard work. He could manage to forget Norah—say, for a quarter of an hour at a time—while he was painting, and he felt that if he threw up his work and wandered off nothing to do but brood over his trouble he should probably go mad.

So, he worked on silently and moodily. The good people of Lorient, who are sociable enough if you rub them the right way, could make nothing of the young painter who was staying at "milord's" house. The men got nothing to answer to their genial "Bon jour, monsieur," but a growl, and the girls—most of whom are terrible pretty—might as well have cast their smiles at the rocks and stones as bestow them upon the handsome young foreigner who did nothing but paint, paint, paint, or tramp, tramp, tramp, up and down the sea-shore."

They called him "The Silent Englisher."

On this particular afternoon he went on painting and thinking till the fading light warned him that it was time to leave off painting and take to thinking only, and he was just about to rise and put his things together, when he heard a step on the beach behind him.

He did not turn his head, because when he did so, the peasants, who had occasionally strayed from the fields across the beach, would persist in trying to talk to him, and he kept his eyes fixed sullenly before him until the footsteps came close behind him and a voice said:

"Good-evening, sir."

"Jack!"

"How doth the busy bee? Well, lad, how goes the picture?"

"Why, man, where did you come from?" he demanded. "What on earth brings you here?"

"I will be merciful and not reply the Havre boat and my own legs," said Jack, smiling. "Is there any law, French or otherwise, which forbids me to put foot on Breton shore?"

"I—I couldn't tell you how glad I am to see you if I tried!" said Cyril, his face flushed with the unexpected pleasure. "I was thinking of you not ten minutes ago, I was, indeed. How well you look, Jack!"

"And how unwell you look, Cyril!" he retorted, smiling still, but with a sneaking suspicion of tenderness in his voice, for the flush had died out of Cyril's face, and it looked pale and harrassed. "What's the matter, lad? Brittany air doesn't suit you?"

"Oh, I'm all right."

"And this is the picture?" said Jack, standing before it.

"Yes. What do you think of it?"

"Pretty, very. I like the composition. That piece of graygreen is good, decidedly good."

Then he stopped and looked hard at it, and went behind the easel and stared at the back of it."

"What on earth are you looking for?" asked Cyril.

"The heart in it," replied Jack, ironically.

"You may look all day and not find it," he said, bitterly, "because there is no heart in it. But never mind the picture. Here, help me with these things, and let us get up to the house."

They shouldered the easel and things and climbed the beach, talking as they went, and Jack noticed that Cyril talked continuously, as if he were afraid of a pause.

They reached the house, and were soon seated at the meal which served Cyril as dinner and supper combined.

"And now tell me all the news, old man," he said. "Try some of now you are hete, I know how I now you are here, I know now I have missed you!"

"That's nice. In absence the heart grows fonder. Yes, not a bad cigar. News—there is none. The House of Commons——"

"Hang the House of Commons! I've heard of your success, Jack, and I meant to write to you," he added, rather shamefacedly, "but though I haven't written, you know I'm glad enough. I always knew you'd be famous. The paper I saw the review of your book in said you were the coming poet, and for once a paper did not lie. And I suppose you are the lion of the off season, and will roar all through the next one, Dear old Jack!"

"Not much of a lion. I expect you'll do all the roaring, and none of the rest of us will be able to make ourselves heard."

"My roar will be a whine. I'm good for nothing; a failure of the very first magnitude. But go on.

Instead of going on, Jack, after a glance at him, looked round the room, which was furnished like a fashionable hunting box, but lined with pictures, among them being some of Cyril's earlier ones, showing that Lord Newall had taken a very solid fancy to Cyril's worn.

"Comfortable quarters you've got. But, by the way, where is Lord Newall, for of course, this is his place? I beg his lordship's pardon for not thinking of him before."

"Oh, he's gone. He was to have stayed for a month, but he found a week of my genial society sufficient. He fled the festive scene which my cheery presence was rapidly transforming into a third-class funeral."

"And how did he like the picture?" asked Jack.

"I don't think he liked it all, if I may judge from his remarks. He observed that it wasn't up to my usual form, and I could have forgiven him—if I hadn't felt that he spoke the truth!"

"A little off color?" said Jack.

"Yes, but I shall be all right now. I wanted a glimpse of you, old man, that was what I wanted. There will be some heart in the daub, now, you'll see."

"And when do you come back?"

"Never. That is, I'm not sure. I shan't hurry; I like Brittany. It suits me; it's lonely and quiet and——"

"Better than Santleigh? put in Jack, quietly.

"Yes, better than Santleigh. Jack, if you love me, don't mention the place—not to-night, at any rate. There are chords in the human heart——"

"What's the matter with Santleigh? I thought the presence of a certain young lady beautified it and made it a distinct and precious paradise."

"For God's sake, don't chaff me, Jack," he said, and his voice shook. "If you knew all——"

"Tell me all," said Jack, quietly.

"Man, I can't" broke out Cyril, in a smothered voice. "It's bad enough to think of; impossible to put into words."

"What has happened? Is she dead?

"That's a good word, Jack. Yes, she is dead—dead to me, at any rate. Jack, I've been almost mad. I think if you had not turned up this evening, I really should have gone melancholy silly. Don't say a word, and I'll tell you—I've lost her!"

Jack was silent a mement as he slowly refilled his pipe.

"You've lost her?" he said, quietly. "That bears rather a wide significance. What do you mean?"

"Do you want the proper word in all its vulgar brutality?" asked Cyril almost savagely. "Have it, then! She has jilted me! There, now you know what's the matter with me, and why you can't find any heart in my picture. I've no heart to put into it. Yes, she has jilted me, thrown me over as she would cast aside a worn-out glove, and I'm such a miserable imitation of a man that I'm wearing myself into a shadow over her."

He laughed bitterly.

"You know what the Spanish proverb says, that 'man was made for woman, and woman was made for herself.' And it is true by Heaven! For if she is false—and she is—there is not a true, unselfish woman in the world."

"That's rather a large order," said Jack, under his breath. "Why has she thrown you over, lad?"

"Ask of the winds that blow at even. Why shouldn't she, you mean? Why should the daughter of an earl be faithful to a man who she thinks is only a poor devil of an artist? I know it all, I can see it all. Heaven knows I've thought enough about it to enable me to arrive at the truth! It was all very well while I was with her, but when she was left to herself, to think of what she had done, to face the fear of her father—and yet—oh, Jack, I believed in her up to the hilt!"

"Why don't you write to her?"

"Why don't I? Oh, my good Caesar, what a question! I have written to her—twice. I put my heart into the letter, though I haven't into the picture. I implored her—there, that's enough! I begged her to write me one word, and—'the rest is silence,' as Hamlet says."

"She would not even write?"

"She would not even write a word," said Cyril, grimly. "Not even the word "Go!" Great Heaven, when I think of her I wonder whether I have not been dreaming; so true she seemed, so pure—the driven snow seemed not so pure, so unsullied as she was. And so brave—nothing should separate us, she said over and over again. I can hear her now."

He looked before him with fixed eyes, as if., indeed, he heard Norah's voice, and his head sank upon his breast.

"Yes, it was a dream, and sweet enough while it lasted; it's the awaking that is so bad. And it is bad, old man."

"And are you awake?" said Jack. "That's something; for Heaven's sake, keep so! I'm sorry for you, lad; but, after all, there's something besides love in the world. It would be a bad sort of world for all of us if there weren't. You've your art left you; that's the mistress who never betrays you, never! Stick to her, lad, pay your devotions at her shrine, and reap your reward."

"You are a good fellow, Jack, and I've reason for being fond of you, and I admire you. Yes, my admiration runs on all fours with my love and gratitude but when I hear you talk like that I want to laugh; I want to laugh badly. You talk like a book, but like a book that describes mountain scenery by a man who has never been higher than Primrose Hill. You're a poet, but you don't know what love means—you haven't the A B C of it even. Did you never see a woman who touched your heart?" he wound up, savagely.

"That's a straight question, and deserves a straight answer. Judge for yourself. You said just now that I was the lion of this off season. That may or may not be. Anyhow, for some reason best known to themselves, the people who collect lions in their drawing-rooms have done me the honor to ask me to go and roar—or bray—in them of late. Generally I refuse, but the other night I went to one of their confounded receptions. The card of invitation was marked 'small and early.' There was a terrific crush, and everybody came late. I poked my nose inside the door, and, not liking the prospect of being jostled in a hot room, was bolting, when a woman I didn't know from Eve, but who turned out to be the lady of the house who had asked me, came up, and after saying something pleasant, offered to introduce me to a young lady who was a lioness. She hadn't written a volume of poems, or committed any crime of that kind, but she was simply famous for her beauty and her—charms, as the old-fashioned writers used to put it."

Cyril sank into his chair and, leaning his head upon his hand, listened rather listlessly.

"I'm not a painter," went on Jack "and so I can't describe her I only know that—well, she took my breath away. I dare say there are many more beautiful women in the world. I haven't taken much stock of them in the flesh; mine are born in my imagination; but this young person 'fetched' me in a manner peculiar and strange. She was neither dark nor fair. I remember she had a kind of red-gold hair, and that her face had very little color in it—what we writers call ivory-white, if I mistake not; and her eyes—I don't think I can tell you their color. They might have been brown, but I am not sure they were not blue; let's say they were violet. And when she spoke, a faint, shadowy kind of smile came over her face like the play of moonlight upon water. I beg your pardon if I grow poetical, but this young lady deserved all the poetry a man could grind out. Her voice—I heard her before I spoke to her—was like music; not the loud, obtrusive kind of music, but soft and low; the sort that steals over you and sets your heart aching with pleasure and pain nicely mixed."

"Heaven and earth!"

"She was dressed, well, I suppose she was the best dressed woman in the room. I'm not a painter; but if I were, I'd try to paint that girl, and when I'd succeeded—but I never should succeed—I'd remark, 'Finis,' and lay down my brush."

"You are in love with her!"

"Just so. I was. I forgot all the rest of the people. I was deaf to the noise of the idiots cackling and laughing; I ceased to hear the man at the piano who had been making life a burden to me. I thought of nothing but this beautiful creature with the face of an angel—angel be hanged; a woman!—and I thought: 'Jack, my friend, if you ever fall in love, fall in love with some one like this, if you can find another like her. For here, enshrined in this lovely casket, is a heart of surpassing tenderness and truth. Here is the great prize for which mankind is ever and ever striving. Here is a pearl and a ruby, not to say a diamond, above price. If ever purity and unselfishness, and innocence of all sordid emotions dwelt in a human heart, they dwell in the heart of this exquisite specimen of womanhood. Her smile is as the perfume of Shiraz; her voice is like that of the turtle that flies over Damascus; her face is a dream and a delight——"

Cyril groaned again. Norah flitted before him.

"And then I spoke to her. And she smiled. I thought I would try and win her good grace, for—oh! my friend, I happened to know the man who loved her, and I thought cunningly, that his name would bring a blush to her face, and I said something like this: 'I trust you will not receive me altogether as a stranger, for I hold as friend the man who loves you, Lady Norah,—Cyril Burne.'"

"What! Have you seen her? It was Norah?"

"It was Lady Norah Arrowdale."

"And—what did she say?"

"She said—in her musical voice," he said, grimly, "you are mistaken; Mr. Cyril Burne is no friend of mine."

Cyril's hand fell from Jack's shoulder, and he dropped back into the chair and hid his face in his hands.

Jack rose and laid both hands on his shoulders.

"And then I knew that either some devilish work had come between this lovely creature and the man who loved her, or that a woman could be as fair as Eve, look as tender as a lily in the morning dew, and yet be utterly heartless, and I resolved to go to my friend and help him smash up his illusions, help him tear that Fata Morgana from his heart, and be a man again. I inquired about her afterward, and I heard that the man who won her heart—if she possessed one—was a certain Guildford Berton——"

Cyril started.

"I saw him before I came away. A good-looking man—just the man to touch a statue in the semblance of a woman; just the man to take effect upon—— Stop. Don't heed what I said, lad! By Heaven! even as I spoke the recollection of her face broke in upon me, and I cannot—I cannot believe her false, aye, even with her own words in my ears——"

"I know! Oh I know! She has cast her spell over you! But—but—oh, Jack, I'd written to her—I was going to send it to-morrow!" He took a letter from his pocket. "Here it is! See!" He tore it into fragments and tossed it into the wood fire burning on the open hearth. "I'm awake now, thanks to you, and there goes the great-the one sweet dream of my life! Fill your glass, Jack—fill it up, and let us drink perdition to all women."

(To be Continued.)

THE SPAN OF ANIMAL LIFE.

The span of human life seems of late to have been extending under favorable conditions, and it exceeds that of most animals. Camels live for forty or fifty years, cattle, at most, thirty, sheep eight or nine, and dogs about fourteen. Instances are on record in which elephants have lived 150 years in captivity, which were of unknown age at that time of their capture, and it is believed that they may reach 300 years. Whales have, it is thought, a still longer span, and there is the well-known instance of longevity in the tortoise which was captured in 1693 and was killed by an accident in 1753. Among birds the eagle and the swan seem to enjoy the longest spell of active life, and among fish the record seems to be held by carp, which have been known by authentic records to live 200 years. Pike and river trout may attain respectively to ninety and fifty years.

ASHAMED OF RELATION.

Ella—"You are always talking about your uncle Jim. It's strange I never see you with him."

Jim—"It would be stranger if you did. When I visit my uncle I look out that nobody sees me."

Ella—"Why, is he such a bad man?"

Jim—"Well, he has his redeeming features."

Lots of men are too busy trying to save the country to earn an honest living.

Young 'Un—I've had five thousand left me by an uncle who's never seen me? Old 'Un—That explains it!

DO ANIMALS USE BRAINS?

A Michigan Man Has Cat That Teaches Kittens to Climb Trees.

Apropos of the controversy as to whether animals teach their young, an Ypsilanti, Mich., man has a family of cats that prove the theory. The mother cat is an exceptionally intelligent animal—she has ingenious ways of opening doors and getting her own way generally. She never mews, but when she cannot make the family understand her wants by dumb begging she will sit down directly in front of her master or mistress and proceed to talk—an emphatic and peculiar sound that means business when accompanied by a reproachful and somewhat contemptuous steady gaze at the stupid human who does not understand.

This cat had a bright but somewhat timid kitten one summer, and when she thought it old enough to be trusted she taught it by example to climb a tree. The kitten learned to go up, but went too far and dared not come down. The mother went up to where the kitten was lodged, and after a few remarks backed down the tree and jumped off, looking back to see the kitten follow. It was too scared, so she tried it again. Again the kitten merely squalled and shrank from trusting itself away from its crotch. The third time the cat lost patience, and going up she grasped the kitten by the scruff of the neck and brought it down backward with her. After that the kitten had no further trouble in climbing down.

Her next set of kittens had two spared to grow up. One when shown how to come down from the tree by his mother, caught on the first time and was proud of his accomplishment; but the other was too afraid to follow. The other went up twice and came down to show the timid one how, and as the latter still hesitated, it improved on its mother's teaching by going up above where the timid kitten was perched and pushing it out of the crotch and down the tree. After that there was no further trouble.

A dog in the same household learned to catch moles, but when it tired of playing with them it would let them go alive. One day its master spoke to him, picking up the mole and saying: "Pat, when you are through with a mole you should kill it—so," shaking the mole by the back of its neck. Ever after that Pat remembered, and before leaving its mole would shake the life out of it.

Later a neighbor bought a young puppy which became Pat's playmate, and for whom the older dog often caught moles. The youngster in turn would let the little animals go when it grew tired of playing, and one day Pat was seen to pick up the escaping mole in his teeth, take it to the younger dog, sit down and look into the others eyes, and go through the process of shaking the mole to death. After that the younger dog always finished his play by shaking the mole precisely as his dog master had taught him.

HOW LETTERS ARE ENDED.

There is a large choice for endings of letters, ranging from the official "Your obedient servant" to the friendly "Yours truly," "Yours sincerely," and "Yours affectionately." James Howell, the historian (1720), used a quaint variety, such as "Yours inviolably," "Yours verily," "Yours really," "Yours in no vulgar way of friendship," "Yours, yours, yours!" Walpole wrote "Yours very much," and to Hannah More, in 1789, "Yours more and more." John Bright ended a controversial letter in the following biting terms: "I am, sir, with whatever respect is due to you." The habit of the old Board of Commissioners of the Royal Navy to subscribe their letters to officers, "Your affectionate friends," was discontinued when a disguished captain replied to them in similar terms. He was desired to discontinue the expression, and in consequence he ended his next communication, "I am, gentlemen, no longer your affectionate friend."

INTERESTING ITEMS.

The wedding ring is worn on the left hand because the right is symbolical of authority and the left of obedience.

Women of to-day are, on an average, two inches taller than they were twenty-five years ago.

High heels owe their origin to Persia, where they were introduced to raise the feet from the burning sands of that country.

While the wedding service is proceeding in Japan the bride kindles a torch and the bridegroom lights a fire from it and burns the wife's playthings.

The invention of the typewriter has given employment to 500,000 women.

It is believed to be bad luck to cut the finger-nails on Friday, and manicurists say their business is lightest on that day.

The average age at which women marry in civilized countries is said to be twenty-two years and a half.

TO BE REMEMBERED.

Be contented and prosper.

Be careful. Care prevents many dropped stitches and bad breaks. Be careful.

Be prompt. Slackness makes slovenly homes and weary world-wanderers. Be prompt.

Be cheerful. Cheerfulness tends to length of days and to days that are worth the lengthening. Be cheerful.

Be punctual. Punctuality is the queen of virtues. But remember that to be too early is sometimes worse than being too late.

Be thoughtful. Thoughtfulness is too tender a plant of blessed fragrance and beauty to be "born unseen." Be thoughtful.

Be good-humored. Good humor is better than medicine, no matter how well the ill-natured pill be sugar-coated. Be good-natured.