THE HEIR OF SANTLEIGH

OR

THE STEWARD'S SON

CHAPTER XXXIV.

If Guildford Berton had expected his ominous words to produce any effect upon Norah, he was mistaken.

She looked at him with the same calm surprise and displeasure. To her the question sounded like an outburst from a frenzied man, nothing more, and she tried to remain patient and restrain her anger.

"I don't understnd you," she said, quietly enough. "Perhaps you do not understand yourself."

"You will soon understand," he said, with a sinister smile; then he seemed to make an effort to control his temper, and said, more softly: "Will you not sit down, Lady Norah? I—I spoke more warmly, precipitately, than I intended, but——"

Norah declined the chair with a gesture, and stood schooling herself into patience. She would listen to what he had to say; she was, if the truth must be told, just a little curious. She glanced at the bell again; it was within her reach, and she could dismiss him in a moment if she chose. But she intended to listen to all he had to say.

Guildford Berton laid his hand upon the mantelshelf, and looked down thoughtfully for a moment; then he commenced:

"I fear I shall cause you some pain, Lady Norah. Heaven knows I would have avoided this revelation, but you have forced it upon me. If you had listened to me, if you had consented to be my wife, the story I am going to tell you would have been locked within my bosom, and I should have remained silent till death."

Norah did not speak, and he went on, slowly and impressively.

"You remember your mother, Lady Norah?"

Norah inclined her head slightly.

"You are aware that she and the earl separated soon after their marriage?"

Norah's face burned, and her eyes began to flash.

"Please do not misunderstand me," he said. "I am not going to speak disparagingly of either the earl or the countess. The separation was caused by no graver reason than the impossibility of their living happily together. I do not wish to speak ill of the dead, but I do not think any woman could have lived with the Earl of Arrowdale. That is all I intend to say on that point. As you are aware, the countess was accompanied in her exile by a faithful servant, Catherine Hayes. She was devoted to the countess; it was one of the instances of affectionate fidelity which are as rare as they are touching. You were born after the separation, and saw nothing of the earl until the death of your—shall I say adopted mother, Catherine Hayes? I fear I am taxing your patience rather sorely; you are wondering why I should repeat all this, which you know already. Bear with me a little longer, please, Lady Norah. I am right, am I not, in stating that a very strong affection existed between you and Catherine Hayes; in fact, that after the countess' death, she took the place of a mother to you?"

Norah assented by a gesture. His words recalled the quiet, peaceful life in the cottage at Norton, and all the dead woman's devoted care of her, and the tears were very near her eyes; but she specially desired to repress any emotion in Guildford Berton's presence, and forced the tears back.

"Can you tell me where you were born, Lady Norah?" he asked.

Norah started slightly.

"No," she said, answering her own thoughts rather than his question.

He suppressed a smile.

"Nor when—the day, the month?"

"No," said Norah, a faint surprise rising.

"Did it ever occur to you that there was something strange, unusual, in your ignorance of these facts?"

She shook her head.

"Why do you ask me these—these questions?" she replied coldly.

"My reason will be obvious directly," he responded. "Did you know that Catherine Hayes was a married woman?"

"I do not know," replied Norah.

He unbuttoned his coat, and, taking the photograph from his pocket, held it out to her.

"Will you take that in your hand and look at it carefully?"

Norah took it after a moment's hesitation, and looked at it.

"Where did you get this?" she demanded with a start.

"I found it," he replied, quickly.

Norah's eyes flashed unbelief.

"It is mine!" she said.

"I am very glad to be able to restore it to you," he said, suavely. "Will you tell me whose portrait it is?"

"You know whose it is," she said, "it is Catherine's—Catherine Hayes'. I do not believe that you found it. It—it has been stolen."

"Very likely," he assented, coolly; "it is of little consequence—you have it again. Doubtless you will treasure it far more preciously and carefully than you have hitherto done, now that you know it is the portrait of your mother.'

For a moment the words did not convey their proper significance to Norah, and she looked at him vaguely—she was thinking of Catherine; then she started, and her eyes opened upon him.

"What was that you said?" she asked.

"I said that it is the portrait of your mother," he repeated, with a sinister smile, and a gleam of triumph in his eyes.

"My mother! This is Catherine Hayes, not my mother, not the Countess of Arrowdale!" she exclaimed.

"It is not the Countess of Arrowdale," he said; "but it is Catherine Hayes, your mother."

Norah held the portrait tightly, and looked at him.

"Are you—are you mad?" she gasped.

He smiled.

"It is not an unreasonable question. I can appreciate your astonishment, and I sympathize with you; indeed and indeed I do. I am not mad, and I am speaking the sane and sober truth; that is the portrait of your mother you hold in your hand, Norah."

She did not notice his intentional omission of the "Lady;" she was too amazed, too overwhelmed. She sunk into the chair, still looking at him as if she were waiting.

"It is a terrible shock," he said, in a tone of gentle sympathy, "for one who has always regarded herself as of noble birth, to find that instead of being the daughter of an earl she is only the daughter of a commonplace lady's maid, companion——"

Norah began to tremble.

"It is not true," she said, almost inaudibly. "Why have you told me this falsehood?"

"It is quite true, alas!" he said; "and it is better that you should hear it from me, who love you and can sympathize with you, than from the lips of strangers, who would simply enjoy the romance of your disappointment."

"I do not believe it," she faltered.

"I am not surprised at that," he retorted, in the same slow voice, easy, cool as that of one confident in the truth of what he asserts. "I do not ask you, expect you to believe it without proofs. I have come prepared for your incredulity; though, if you ask yourself what purpose I could hope to effect by telling you a string of falsehoods, you will find it difficult to find an answer. In a word or two, the facts—the lamentable facts!—are these: Just before the Countess left the court and went into exile, Catherine Hays committed the folly of marrying. She married a man—a gentleman—named Woodfern, James Woodfern," he added, taking a paper from his pocket, and glancing at it. "Catherine had asked and obtained a holiday, and had spent it in Plymouth. There she met this gentleman, Woodfern. He was a lieutenant in the navy, on a few days' leave from his vessel"—he looked at a paper again—"the Enchantress, then stationed at Plymouth. It was a case of love at first sight. Mr. Woodfern wooed with the ardor of a sailor, and Catherine Hayes, being presumably as much in love as himself, consented to marry him after the short period of courting which the exigencies of Her Majesty's naval service permitted him. They were married—this Lieutenant Woodfern and Catherine Hayes—at St. Stephen's, Plymouth. Permit me to hand you a copy of the church register. The original I have seen within the last week, and I can testify that this is a correct copy."

He placed the slip of paper in Norah's hand and waited.

She looked down at it, and mechanically read the formal document.

"What—what has all this to do with me, with my mother, the countess?" she asked, with a catch in her voice.

He raised his eyebrows, as if astonished at her dullness of perception.

"You will see presently," he replied. "Lieutenant Woodfern's leave was a short one, and the husband and wife separated. He went on board the Enchantress; she who was Catherine Hayes, but now Catherine Woodfern, returned to the Court and the service of her mistress, the countess. They had agreed to keep the marriage a secret. Possibly the lieutenant wanted to prepare his relatives for the surprise in store for them. It was not a very good marriage for him, and he thought that he would break it to them gently, and present his wife when he came back from the voyage on which the Enchantress started a few weeks after the wedding. It was a close secret. Only one man was admitted to his confidence, the first mate of the vessel, a man named Furlong. You will find him duly set down in the certificate as a witness to the marriage. They parted. Catherine went back to her mistress, and when the earl and countess separated—which they did soon afterward—Catherine accompanied the countess. They went to London. Some months afterward a child was born, a girl, the daughter of Lieutenant Woodfern and Catherine, his wife; in fact, yourself, dear Miss Norah!" and he inclined his head gravely.

Norah caught the arm of the chair and grew deathly white. In the space of a moment, even as he had been speaking, the scene of Catherine's death rose before her. She understood now what those words of anguished parting meant. She realized now the meaning of the dying woman's oft-breathed question: "Dou you love me, Norah? Have I been really like a mother to you?"

Her head fell upon her hands, and her bosom heaved with choking sobs.

"Do not cry," said Guildford Berton. "It is all so long ago. Shall I go on?"

She raised her head and set her teeth hard.

"Yes,' go on," she said.

"Your mother had very little difficulty in winning the countess' forgiveness for the concealment she had been guilty of, and very soon the countess grew as fond of the little girl as her own mother was. Indeed, the solitary lady clung to the child with a loving tenderness which seemed to surpass that of the mother; and I can imagine how easy it was for the countess to believe that if the child had been her own and had been born before the earl and she had separated, no separation would have taken place. It must have occurred to her that if the earl could be made to believe that the child was his own—you see? Yes! So these two women conspired in all affection; the little girl was to be regarded as the daughter of the Countess of Arrowdale, and when they left London and took up their abode in the country, it was as the young lady Norah that the Child of Catherine Woodfern was presented to the world. There was no limit to Catherine's devotion; she even relinquished her child! It was very feasible. No one knew of the marriage excepting the man Furlong, and he would not have known of the birth of the child if he had not chanced to meet Catherine in London before the two women had decided upon the exchange of mothers, and heard from her that the lieutenant had a daughiter.

Norah caught her breath.

Her father! He knew—he must have been written to! flashed through her mind.

Guildford Berton seemed to divine the thought.

"Yes, the lieutenant would have known, of course; but, unfortunately, he contracted yellow fever at St. Kitts two months after his marriage, and died there. The man Furlong was with him when he died. There is the certificate," and he handed her another paper.

"I have nearly come to the end of my story, Miss Norah," he said, wiping his lips, and eyeing her white face with a watchful keenness. "The plot was not a bad one. If the earl had only possessed the smallest of hearts, the announcement of his child's birth would have touched him and brought about a reconciliation; but the earl—well, you knew him long and intimately enough to render it unnecessary for me to say anything further. He declined to hold any communication with his wife; he declined to receive her back or see the child. This was a startling disappointment, no doubt, and if it could have been effected, you would have been restored by the countess to your mother and acknowledged as the child of the widow of Lieutenant Woodfern; but, you see, that could not be. What was done could not be undone. The countess had presented you to the world as the daughter of the Earl of Arrowdale, and the daughter of the Earl of Arrowdale you had to remain. I don't think it mattered very much to Catherine; perhaps she consoled herself for playing the part of nurse instead of mother by reflecting that her child would figure as the daughter of a peer. That is very likely to have been her feeling. Any way, she died keeping the secret, and it was buried with her. Only one man could have revealed the truth—the sailor, Furlong; and he had disappeared, as sailors do. Probably she thought he was dead. But he is alive; it is from him that I have learned this interesting story of your birth, and it is in my power to compel him to remain silent or tell the story in a court of law. That the proofs may be complete, I have got from him a plain statement of the case; here it is. You will like to have it, I have no doubt."

He crossed over to her and placed it between her unresisting fingers. Then he went back and leaned against the mantelshelf again, and looked down at her.

Norah, with the papers in her hand, sat with her eyes fixed on the ground. She was scarcely conscious of his presence. She was simply crushed and overwhelmed by the revelation. Of its truth she did not doubt for a moment. Even if he had not produced the certificates and other documents, she would have been convinced of the truth of this story. Catherine's—her mother's—last words were testimony enough. She was not the daughter of the Countess of Arrowdale, but of her companion, Catherine Woodfern.

And at that moment there was only room for one feeling in her heart; an overflowing love for the woman who had hidden the secret of her maternity in her bosom even to the gates of death! She raised the portrait to her lips and kissed it, and her tears fell upon it.

Guildford Berton accepted the action as her acknowledgment that he had spoken the truth.

"You are satisfied?" he said, in a low voice. "I thought you would be. But I fear you have scarcely realized the difference, the change, in your circumstances which this discovery must cause."

Norah scarcely heard him as she wiped her eyes and stifled her sobs.

"You have to realize, Miss Norah," he went on, "that you are no longer the Lady Norah, daughter of the late earl; that you are not the mistress of his immense wealth."

Norah raised her head and looked at him, and put her hand to her brow.

"Why have you told me this?" she said. Was it for the sake of revenge? I do not understand—I do not care. I feel that you have told met he truth; that I am not the daughter of the countess, but that Catherine"—her lips quivered—"was my dear, dear mother! But I do not see—it is all dark." She held out her hands like one striving to put aside a veil.

"You do not comprehend that not only are you not the daughter of the Earl of Arrowdale, but—penniless, and to all intents and purposes a beggar?" he said, suavely.

Norah's face flushed, and she rose.

"I do not care—it is nothing!" she said, wearily. "But you forget that the earl has left me money——"

"Pardon me," he interrupted her broken words. "It is a natural mistake in the confusion of your thoughts; but the late Earl of Arrowdale has not left a penny——"

"I do not care, I do not wish to speak or think of it; but your revenge cannot go so far," she said, as wearily as before; "the earls's will——"

"Left his vast wealth to his daughter,' he said, with a sinister smile; "to his daughter, not to a person named or known as Norah! Do you not remember the blank in the will? If he had written your name there I think—I am not sure—you would have been secure; but he did not. Only to 'my daughter.' You are not his daughter, Miss Norah Woodfern!"

(To be continued).

THE DOMINION BANK

—PROCEEDINGS OF—

The Thirty-Fifth Annual General Meeting of the Stockholders

THE THIRTY-FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE DOMINION BANK was held at the Banking House of the Institution, Toronto, on Wednesday, January 31st, 1906.

Among those present were noticed:

Dr. Andrew Smith, Messrs. J. G. Ramsey, Barlow Cumberland, W. R. Brock, R. T. Gooderham, H. C. Hammond, Cawthra Mulock, E. B. Ostler, M.P., J. J. Foy, K.C., David Smith, R. J. Christie, J. M. Bond, A. W. Austin, F. J. Harris, Ira Standish, E. C. Burton, A. R. Boswell, Jno. T. Small, J. Bruce Macdonald, W. Mulock, Jr., Sidney Small, H. Gordon Mackenzie, J. Gordon Jones, F. J. Stewart, Wm. Ross, W. G. Cassels, Geo. D. Scott, N. F. Davidson, W. H. Cawthra, J. A. Proctor, David Kidd, F. D. Benjamin, J. F. Kavanagh, S. Samuel, W. C. Harvey, W. Dixon C. Holland, F. J. Phillips, Wm. Davies, H. W. A. Foster, W. C. Crowther, E. W. Langley, H. S. Harwood, R. M. Gray, Richard Brown, Henry Johnson, Wm. Spry, W. Glenney, Frank H. Hill, Jno. J. Dixon, G. N. Reynolds, F. C. Taylor, F. G. Hodgins, W. C. Lee, F. E. Macdonald, Jno. Stewart, Thomas Walmsley, T. G. Brough and others.

It was moved by Mr. W. R. Brock, seconded by Mr. A. W. Austin, that Mr. E. B. Osler do take the chair, and that Mr. T. G. Brough do act as Secretary.

Messrs. A. R. Boswell and W. G. Cassels were appointed Scrutineers.

The Secretary read the report of the Directors to the Shareholders and submitted the Annual Statement of the affairs of the Bank, which is as follows:

To the Shareholders:

The Directors beg to present the following statement of the result of the business of the Bank for the year ending 30th December, 1905:

Balance of Profit and Loss Account, 31st December, 1904		$134,572.64
Profit for the year ending 30th December, 1905, after deducting charges of management, etc., and making provision for bad and doubtful debts		490,495.20
		$625,067.84
Dividend 2½ per cent. paid 1st April, 1905 ..	$75,000.00	
Dividend 2½ per cent., paid 3rd July, 1905 ..	75,000.00	
Dividend 2½ per cent., paid 2nd Oct., 1905 ..	75,000.00	
Dividend 2½ per cent., payable 2nd Jan., 1906 ..	75,000.00	$300,000.00
Written off Bank Premises		75,629.87 375,629.87
Balance of Profit and Loss carried forward		$249,437.97

With deep regret your Directors have to record the death, which occurred in October last, of Mr. William Ince, who had been a member of the Board since 1884. The vacancy was filled by the appointment of Mr. R. J. Christie.

Branches of the Bank have been opened during the past year in Hespeler, Ontario; in Winnipeg, at No. 643 Portage Avenue and at the corner of Notre Dame and Nena streets; and in Toronto at the corner of Dovercourt Road and Bloor street and at the Union Stock Yards.

Premises have been secured in Windsor, Ontario, and a branch will shortly be opened there.

All branches of the Bank have been inspected during the year.

E. B. OSLER,
President.

Toronto, 31st January, 1906.

The Report was adopted, and the thanks of the Shareholders were tendered to the President, Vice-President, and Directors for their services, and to the General Manager and other Officers of the Bank for their efficient performance of their respective duties.

The following gentlemen were elected Directors for the ensuing year: Messrs. A. W. Austin, W. R. Brock, R. J. Christie, T. Eaton, J. J. Foy, K.C., M.L.A., W. D. Matthews and E. B. Osler, M.P.

At a subsequent meeting of the Directors, Mr. E. B. Osler, M.P., was elected President, and Mr. W. D. Matthews, Vice-President, for the ensuing term.

GENERAL STATEMENT

LIABILITIES.

Notes in circulation		$ 2,651,956 00
Deposits not bearing interest	$ 4,390,832 67	
Deposits bearing interest (including interest accrued to date)	29,692,275 74	
		34,083,108 41
Balance due to London Agents		694,169 84
Total liabilities to the public		37,429,234 25
Capital stock paid up		3,000,000 00
Reserve Fund	$ 3,500,000 00	
Balance of profits carried forward	249,437 97	
Dividend No. 93, payable 2nd January	75,000 00	
Former dividends unclaimed	167 50	
Reserved for exchange, etc.	42,137 90	
Rebate on bills discounted	107,762 34	
		3,974,505 71
		$44,403,739 96

ASSETS.

Specie	$ 1,084,210 73	
Dominion Government demand notes	2,455,477 00	
Deposit with Dominion Government for security of note circulation	150,000 00	
Notes of and cheques on other Banks	1,842,022 49	
Balances due from other Banks in Canada	699,243 18	
Balances due from other Banks elsewhere than in Canada and the United Kingdom	968,345 25	
Provincial Government securities	91,019 25	
Canadian Municipal securities and British or Foreign or Colonial public securities other than Canadian	669,160 76	
Railway and other bonds, debentures and stocks ..	2,649,334 23	
Loans on call secured by stocks and debentures	4,417,263 70	
		15,026,076 59
Bills discounted and advances current	28,564,199 67	
Overdue debts (estimated loss provided for)	335 00	
Mortgages on real estate sold by the Bank	6,000 00	
Bank premises	800,000 00	
Other assets not included under foreign heads	7,128 70	
		29,377,663 37
		$44,403,739 96

T. G. BROUGH,
General Manager.

Toronto, 30th December, 1905.

"Look here," remarked the thrifty man to his extravagant wife, "you're carrying too much sail, my lady." "I don't know why you should bother about that," she retorted. "No?" said he. "I think I should, since I have to raise the wind."

Brother: "Yes, I like Jack well enough, Minnie; but how did you ever happen to marry a man a head shorter than you are?" Minnie: "I had to choose, Fred, between a little man with a big salary and a big man with a little salary."

Two friends meeting, one remarked, "I have just met a man who told me I looked exactly like you." "Tell me who it was, that I may knock him down,' replied his friend. "Don't trouble yourself," he said: "I knocked him down myself."