THE HEIR OF SANTLEIGH

OR THE STEWARD'S SON

CHAPTER XXXVI.—(Continued).

"What do you think has become of her, Jack?"

Jack Wesley shook his head.

"I think——" he began, then he stopped and took up the paper again. "But it's not of much consequence what I think. If any one knows where she is, depend upon it that person is Guildford Berton."

They were all very silent, thinking this over, but presently Jack broke in upon their reverie.

"Any way, it's no use making yourselves unhappy over the question tonight. I really think you deserve a little felicity. So, young people, let us have another small bottle of Pommery and—be merry."

Cyril and Norah were only too ready to dismiss all unpleasant subjects from their minds; they felt that they had been living under clouds so long that they were entitled, as Jack said, to a little sunshine.

After dinner they went out for a walk, and, leaning on her lover's arm, Norah saw for the first time something of the humors of that lively thoroughfare, the Strand.

It was nearly midnight when the two young men escorted her to the hotel, and Jack considerately crossed the road and left them to bid each other goodnight unobserved.

"I'm the happiest man in this great city!" exclaimed Cyril, when he and Jack were alone in Jack's chambers. "The very happiest! Jack, did you ever know anything so extraordinary as this meeting and—and—reconciliation? There's only one thing I want to complete my satisfaction, and that is to meet Mr. Guildford Berton and give him a piece of my mind——"

"Meanwhile," said Jack, thoughtfully, "is Miss Norah to go on living by herself in an hotel off the Strand, eh?"

Cyril pondered this question.

"No harm can come to her——"

"No one will run away with her, certainly," said Jack, "but it's scarcely within the strict lines of propriety. She must have some friend upon whom she could rely—I mean some lady friend——"

"Of course!" said Cyril, promptly. "Lady Ferndale!"

"Exactly," said Jack, who had been thinking of her all the evening. "I will tell you what will happen: Lady Ferndale will be one of the first to hear of Miss Norah's flight, and you may depend upon it that the first thing she will do will be to come posthaste to London, thinking that Miss Norah may chance to go to the Ferndale's town house. Now, my lad, here is the plan of campaign. To-morrow we will go to the old lawyer's, Mr. Petherick's, and if he should have returned, you can tell him Miss Norah's story, and she can formally give up all claim to the old earl's money. That will leave her free, and absolutely her own mistress, to do as she likes, and if I were in your place, I should take care that she liked to marry me in—well, as soon as you can get the license. Of course, you'll have to take Lady Ferndale into your confidence, and perhaps the old lawyer, too; but I'd keep the lawyer in the dark if I could. He'll be sure to put some spoke in your wheel; lawyers love delay as mice love cheese, and if he learns that you are the Earl of Arrowdale, he'll stand out for all sorts of legal forms and ceremonies."

The two men sat far into the morning talking and planning, and after breakfast, Cyril was over at the hotel conferring with Norah. She agreed, at once, to the whole plan of campaign as elaborated by Jack, whom she regarded as a perfect Solomon of wisdom, excepting the item of the speedy marriage. Covered with blushes, she assured Cyril that it was impossible.

"Why, dear," she murmured, hiding her face upon his broad chest, "no one would be, no one ever has been, married so—so suddenly!"

"Oh, haven't they?" said Cyril. "Well, we'll inaugurate a new departure. Look here, dearest, I really think we'd better follow Jack's advice. I've always found myself in trouble when I've disregarded it, and I've always come out all right when I've taken it. And, to tell you the truth, Jack is apt to cut up rough when you ask him for his advice and don't take it——"

"It seems to me," said Norah, almost inaudibly, and smiling, "that Jack—I mean Mr. Wesley—treats us like a couple of children."

"So you are," said that gentleman, entering at that moment. "I've engaged a perambulator—I mean, hansom—by the hour, and I think the sooner you see Mr. Petherick and Lady Ferndale, the better. I'd offer to accompany you," he added, with a faint smile, "but the cab only holds two, and it is a case where decidedly two are company and three none."

It was the first time Norah had ridden in a hansom, and the journey to Mr. Petherick's office seemed all too short. As for Cyril, he made a mental vow that he would spend part of their honeymoon riding beside his wife, and holding her hand under the splash board.

The old clerk announced that Mr. Petherick had not returned, and they were about to leave the office, when that gentleman entered.

He was considerably startled at sight of Norah, and more than startled when he heard all that she had to tell.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, staring from Norah to Cyril, in a kind of amazement. "Catherine Hayes married, and you—you her daughter! Let me see those papers! I don't believe a word of it! Strange! I've always had my doubts about Mr. Berton—always. And yet he was invariably kind and businesslike. Let me see! Mind, before I look at 'em, I express my opinion that they are bogus!"

But his face lengthened as he examined the certificates and compared the dates with the notes he had taken during Norah's recital.

"I—I'm afraid," he said, reluctantly, "I'm afraid—— Why, confound it, every penny will go to the present earl!" and he looked from one to the other. But Norah did not appear at all heartbroken by the loss of her wealth, and even Mr. Cyril Burne showed very few signs of grief and regret.

"I suppose you have found the young earl, sir?" said Cyril, demurely.

Mr. Petherick shook his head with a frown of annoyance.

"No, I have not. I thought I had got a clew to him, and followed it up as far as Paris, but it turned out to be another man altogether. I—I can't understand why he keeps in hiding unless he is dead."

"Even his death would not restore this money to Miss Norah," said Cyril.

"Oh, as to restore," said the lawyer, pugnaciously, "she hasn't lost it yet. We shall make a fight of it, of course; and we are just as likely to win as lose."

"But—but I don't want to fight," said Norah, in a low voice. "I wish to give up all claim to it."

Mr. Petherick shook his head.

"That's all very well, my dear young lady," he said, severely, "but perhaps this gentleman," and he looked at Cyril, "may have something to say to that; and—ahem!—you should study the wishes of your—er—future husband; eh, Mr. Burne?"

"Her wishes are mine," said Cyril, quietly. "If Miss Norah is bent on resigning all claim to this money, I am more than willing to let it go without a struggle."

The old lawyer stared at them gravely.

"Dear, dear!" he said. "Tut, tut! Do you mean to say that you are going to resign half a million of money without a fight for it? You'll forgive me, sir; but I think if you were, say, twenty years older, you'd adopt a different course."

"No, I shouldn't," said Cyril, with some difficulty suppressing a smile. "I am quite willing that the earl should have this money. We shall get on very well. I—I don't know whether you can tell me how soon I can get a special license."

They talked for some little time longer, and Mr. Petherick's last words, as they rose to go on to Lady Ferndale's, were:

"I think you are two very foolish—and happy—young persons, and I'm going to do the best I can for you, in spite of yourselves. The least the earl can do, if we relinquish all this money without a fight, is to hand back a portion of it; he can very well spare it, confound him! What do you think, Mr. Burne?"

"I don't know, sir," said Cyril, shaking his head, gravely. "From my short experience, I'm inclined to think that men are not so ready to hand back any coin; but we'll hope for the best. You will let us know, Mr. Petherick, directly the earl turns up?"

"Yes, I will," said the old gentleman, with a kind of grunt; he was getting rather tired of the hunt for the young peer, and rather inclined to consider that a man who kept out of reach of an earldom did not deserve to be sought for. But all the same, he meant finding him, and one of the first pieces of business he transacted with the young earl, he resolved, should be to gain the best terms he could for the beautiful girl who was no longer an earl's daughter and the mistress of half a million.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

There was another delicious drive to Lady Ferndale's house, during which the two "foolish—but happy—young persons" discussed the situation in all its bearings.

If anything could have increased Norah's love for Cyril, his indifference to the loss of her fortune, and his cheerful assent to the surrender of it without a struggle, would have done so. To her he seemed the very type of all that was noble in man, and Cyril felt extremely uncomfortable as she nestled against him and whispered her praises in his ears.

"What on earth will she say when she learns the truth?" he thought.

They reached the Ferndale's house and were shown into the drawing-room, and in a minute or two Norah was in her friend's arms.

"My dear Norah! Why, what has brought you up to London so unexpectedly? And Mr. Burne, too!"

Then she smiled and held out her hand to Cyril.

"I suppose I've got to congratulate you, Mr. Burne?"

"Yes, Lady Ferndale, Norah has consented to make me the happiest of men."

"And you've come to tell me," she said. "Now, that is what I call really good and kind. Come and sit down—what is the matter?" she broke off, for Norah clung to her and began to cry quietly.

"You tell her," she said to Cyril.

It was comparatively easy to tell Mr. Petherick, but Lady Ferndale was quite another person.

"Or rather there was," said Norah. "It has all gone now."

Cyril unfolded the strange story, and Lady Ferndale listened with scarcely an interruption; then she drew Norah's head down to her own bosom and stroked the soft, bronze hair.

"If I were to say that I'm not surprised, Mr. Burne, would you believe me?" she said at last. "But it is true. I can say I actually suspected that Norah was not the daughter of the earl and countess, but I can say that I am not astonished. From the first moment I saw her, her unlikeness to the earl and the Arrowdale family struck me, and I remarked upon it to him. Will it be very wicked to say that I am—am rather glad? Oh, wait, though, there is all that money."

Lady Ferndale looked rather grave.

"I can't say that I am pleased at that," she said. "But perhaps the earl will——"

"Why should he?" said Norah, smiling. "I am no relation of his, dear Lady Ferndale. And, indeed, we don't want any of the money!" and she glanced shyly at Cyril, who hastened to corroborate.

"We don't want a penny, I assure you, Lady Ferndale," he said. "The earl may keep it all for what we care; eh, Norah? All I want is Norah."

Lady Ferndale smiled.

"He seems a very bold young man, dear," she whispered to Norah.

"And we have come to ask you if you think we could be married in four days?"

Lady Ferndale almost jumped.

"It is impossible!" murmured Norah. "Tell him so!"

"Good gracious me, why do you want to get married so quickly?" exclaimed Lady Ferndale.

"He will not give me the reason," said Norah, blushing.

"Because I can't," said Cyril, almost bluntly. "But I'll tell you what I will do. I will tell Lady Ferndale, and if she agrees with me that the reason is good enough, will you consent?"

"As I'm sure she will not—yes," said Norah.

"Very well, then," said Lady Ferndale, very much amused and puzzled. "Now, you go upstairs—of course you'll remain with us. I'm going to send to that hotel for your luggage directly—and Mr. Burne shall persuade me, if he can, that there is any rhyme or reason in his absurd proposal."

Norah left the room, and Cyril sprang the truth upon Lady Ferndale as if it had been a bombshell.

"You see, Lady Ferndale," he said, with a half smile, "I'm Lord Arrowdale, and I naturally want to marry Norah before she knows who I am."

Lady Ferndale did jump this time.

"You—you are——" Then she burst out laughing. "Well, of all the stupid people, I have been the stupidest. I told Norah the first time I saw you—you remember the day she and I were driving together?—I told her that I was certain I had seen your face before; and so I had, or something very like it, in the portrait gallery at the Court! And so you are the new earl! And you have been hiding it from her, and from all of us, all this time! And it's to you all this money of the poor girl's will go!"

"Just for a day or two," he said, with a smile. "I am going to make it over as a deed of gift to her, of course."

"Of course!" said Lady Ferndale. "And what you are afraid of is——"

"That Norah's pride, if she learns who and what I am, will be aroused, and she may put all sorts of obstacles in the way of our marriage. And I can't run even the slightest risk of that, Lady Ferndale," he said, with a shake of the head. "So, if you'll please to regard me as Cyril Burne, the not altogether unsuccessful artist, and let her continue to so regard me, I think she will marry me out of hand."

"Well, I think she will," admitted Lady Ferndale, with a naive smile. "But," she said, with sudden gravity, "have you thought of what the world will say when it hears that you and she have married so soon after the death of the late earl, your uncle, and her supposed father? Have you thought of that, Mr. Burne?"

"No, I haven't," he said, quietly and coolly. "You see, since we met, yesterday, and—and were reconciled, I have not had time to think of anything or anybody, but herself; but if you'll stand by me and get her to consent, I don't care one brass farthing what the world says," and as he confronted Lady Ferndale, his face lit up with a smile which won that lady's heart over to his side in a moment.

"You shall have her, Mr. Burne—Lord Arrowdale—oh, dear!"

"Mr. Burne, please!" he said, laughing warningly.

So it happened that when Norah came in, and going up to Lady Ferndale, said, with downcast face:

"Well, dear, have you explained to him how impossible it is?"

Lady Ferndale replied demurely:

"Mr. Burne has convinced me that the marriage should take place within the week, dear, and I've promised him it shall!" and to Norah's little cry of dismay she vouchsafed nothing but a laugh.

It was useless for Norah to attempt to argue or protest. She was one against three, for Jack, to whom she appealed to help her fight against Lady Ferndale and Cyril, basely deserted her and went over to the enemy, and at last Norah gave in, only stipulating that the wedding should be as quiet as it could legally be.

"We'll be married in the coal cellar and swear the clergyman to secrecy, if you like," said Cyril. "As for me, I can dispense with bridesmaids and best man—no, I can't, I must have Jack; but I'll let the cake and the cards go."

"And I must have the cake," said Lady Ferndale. "And now, Mr. Burne, as Norah and I will have to work really hard for the next few days, I shall be glad if you will go down to your club, and—stay there as much as you can. Stop, though," she added, suddenly, as if something had occurred to her; "now I think of it, Norah will have to do some shopping, and if you will promise to bring her back to dinner, you shall go with her. I'll give you till dinner time."

A more delightful proposal for both of the infatuated young persons she could not have made, and very soon they had gone off in one of Norah's beloved hansoms.

(To be continued).

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31st December, 1905.

ASSETS.		LIABILITIES.	
United State and State Bonds	$ 157,118.00	Capital Stock	$1,500,000.00
Dominion of Canada Stock	65,350.00	Losses under Adjustment	175,359.86
Bank, Loan Company and other Stocks	425,698.05	Dividend payable Jan. 5th, 1906	43,697.50
Company's Buildings	110,000.00	Reserve Fund	1,742,020.42
Municipal Bonds and Debentures	1,128,949.32		
Railroad Bonds	403,533.64		
Cash on Hand and on Deposit	329,379.98		
Bills Receivable	98,480.89		
Mortgages	20,100.00		
Due from other Companies (Re-assurances)	150,340.33		
Interest Due and Accrued	21,786.96		
Office Furniture, Maps, Plans, etc.	54,125.47		
Agents' Balances and Sundry Accounts	515,714.66		
	$3,461,077.28		$3,461,077.28

Capital $1,500,000.00
Reserve Fund 1,742,020.42

Security to Policyholders 3,242,020.42
Losses paid from the organization of the Company to date $43,012,687.45

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Hon. Geo. A. Cox, President; J. J. Kenny, Vice-President and Managing Director; Hon. S. C. Wood, H. N. Baird, Geo. R. R. Cockburn, W. R. Brock, Geo. McMurrich, J. K. Osborne, E. R. Wood.

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We published in another section of this paper the advertisement of the Union Trust Company. This Company has large holdings of land along the line of the Grand Trunk Pacific in our Northwest.

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The Union Trust Company is to be congratulated on securing Mr. Hodson for this position, as his mere connection with their land business will undoubtedly secure the confidence of the entire farming community of the country.

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HAD TO DO IT.

Mary—"Oh, you dirty boy! Look at this coffee all over your new suit. What will your mamma say?"

Tommy (hopelessly)—"I don't know; but she won't let me have any fun in these clothes until I get 'em spoilt."

UNMISTAKABLE SYMPTOMS.

Mr. Tyle-Phist—Jagway was trying to borrow money from me a little while ago. He seemed to be drunk.

Mr. Ardfax—If he was trying to borrow money from you he wasn't drunk. He was crazy.

Most men who are willing to do good are not in a position to make good.

Happiness has been described in so many different ways that a number of people have doubts as to its existence.

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WESTERN ASSURANCE REPORT.

Annual Statement Shows Company to be Enjoying Prosperity.

The annual statement of the Western Assurance Company will be found in another part of to-day's issue, and will be seen to be one that does much credit to this progressive company. The year's transactions resulted in $86,340.12 being devoted to dividends, and $133,254.69 added to the reserve fund, which now amounts to $1,742,020.42. The liability for unearned premiums on unexpired risks is estimated at $1,322,183.46. By deducting this sum from the reserve it is seen that there is a surplus over capital and all liabilities amounting to $419,836.96. The fire premiums during the year amounted to $2,888,590.34, and the marine premiums to $705,764. The fire losses were $1,547,906.20, and the marine losses $665,157.57. The excellent list of assets which is published in the annual statement shows that almost one-third of them consist of municipal bonds and debentures.