Time Heals Most Wounds

A Tale of Love and Disappointment

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued).

"I am afraid we must defer this discussion, Cyril; but I warn you that nothing will move me from the position that I have taken up. Think over what I have said, and prepare to make a sacrifice."

Harecastle stared perplexedly at his father, was about to speak, but changed his mind and left the library. In the hall he was greeted most effusively by Joel, who shook him warmly by the hand.

"Glad to see you have managed to get down at last. Your father has been very anxious for your presence."

They moved aside to allow Ackrowd to pass. Harecastle greeted him with a surprised nod, as he recognized his fellow-traveller.

"I know that man," said Joel, when he had passed out of hearing. "Who is he?"

"I've not the least idea. We travelled from town together. That is all I know of him, save that he gave me an excellent cigar."

"I shall place him soon," Joel said confidently. "His face leaves rather an unpleasant impression upon my mind. But come along, my daughter and sister will be delighted to see you."

Joel would take no refusal, but linked his arm in that of the younger man and led him on to the terrace. Rebekah was looking her best. The walk had given her a color, or was it the pressure of Harecastle's hand? He seemed unfeignedly pleased to see her.

He would have given anything to be alone to his thoughts, but he did not care to be guilty of rudeness, so he did his best to be pleasant. But even Joel seemed to notice his absent-mindedness, and locked at him curiously.

"Is there any truth in Harecastle's engagement to Ethel Fetherston?" Joel asked himself, but he found that he could not make up his mind as to the answer to the question.

After a while Harecastle excused himself and retired to his own room. He was utterly bewildered at his father's action in refusing to consent to so suitable an engagement, and he wracked his brain to think what could be animating him in his opposition, but without success.

CHAPTER V.

The Earl was thankful to have been able to put an end to the interview with his son, for he realized that the attitude that he had taken up must appear inexplicable. He decided to consult with Joel. He did not intend to be absolutely frank with him, but merely to hint that there was a difficulty with regard to the projected marriage.

He had quite forgotten the announcement of a visitor, when Ackroyd was ushered into his presence. He looked at him with indifference, and decided to get rid of him at the earliest possible moment, for he felt sorely in need of a rest after the strain of the recent strenuous conflict with his son.

"I am very busy this afternoon Mr.—Mr.—ah—Ackroyd, and I hope that you will make your business as short as possible!"

"That is my intention, my lord. But I fear that I shall have to detain you for some little time. May I take a seat?" Ackroyd asked suavely.

"Certainly. Very remiss not to have asked you. Now tell me what I can do for you," he asked with cold courtesy.

"I must first trouble you with a little of my private history. Quite recently I have been engaged by Mr. Felix Shelby to assist him in sorting the private papers of the late Prime Minister."

Ackroyd carefully watched his victim, but the Earl had not wholly lost the self-control given to him by his diplomatic training, and he looked calmly and coldly at his visitor.

"Among these papers I have found certain letters, which I think your lordship will find interest you personally."

"In what way, Mr. Ackroyd?"

"These letters refer to a matter which took place some thirty years ago."

"Rather ancient history, is it not?" the Earl interrupted. His manner was calm, but his face had suddenly grown very white, and his eyes were strained with anxiety.

"I am afraid that I shall not find to a base calumny, and I can only it interesting, and I really am extremely busy. I am sorry to cut short our interview."

The Earl rose from his seat, but his knees trembled, and he was forced to reseat himself. Ackroyd looked at him steadily, and a faint smile twitched his mouth.

"I regret to have to cause you inconvenience, but I am unable to leave you until we have arrived at an understanding. I say this in your own interest, Lord Wolverholme," he said, with ominous gravity.

Indecision was depicted on the Earl's face. He longed to turn the man out, but he dared not do so. A dread fear clutched him that his sin had found him out; his heart throbbed wildly, and he pressed his hand to his heart.

For a year or two after his treason, he had lived in dread of the world gaining knowledge of his dastardly sale of his country, but time had lulled him into security, and it was only at rare intervals that he ever thought of the black deed of his life. He gasped for breath, and rising unsteadily, half filled a tumbler with neat spirit and gulped it down.

"I really do not understand you, and I am not well enough to prolong this interview," he managed to say at last.

"I see that your lordship is indisposed, and I can well understand it." Ackroyd rose with a pleasant smile, and walked slowly towards the door. He had not miscalculated, for as soon as his hand touched the knob, the Earl called to him peremptorily.

"Perhaps I had better hear you," he said feebly, waving him once more to the chair.

Ackroyd was in no haste to begin. He leant back comfortably.

"Would your lordship mind if I smoke? I can think so much better with a cigar in my mouth, and I am desirous of dealing with you as gently as possible."

The Earl motioned to the cigars, and with dry lips and strained eye watched his visitor slowly light one.

"As I was saying, some forty—or thirty, I believe, is correct—some thirty years ago your lordship was intrusted by the British Government with the charge of an important negotiation at St. Petersburg. Am I right?" Ackroyd asked cheerfully.

A nod of his head was his only answer, for he was incapable of speech.

"You carried out your work successfully, that is from the Russian point of view. It appears that about this time you were engaged to be married to a lady of wealth. Your own affairs were very much involved; and you found that it would be quite impossible to carry through this marriage without a very large sum of money. Your estates were entailed, and you could not raise the money in any direction; even the Jews failed you. Accordingly it became necessary to smother your conscience, and you decided to accept an offer made to you by the Russians."

Ackroyd ceased speaking, and looked gravely at the Eearl. There was menace in his voice as he continued:

"That offer was nothing more or less than the sale of your country."

The Earl shrank back as though struck by a blow. His color came and went; his fingers clutched the palm of his hand, and his body trembled violently.

His tormentor waited for him to speak, but in vain.

"How do you know this?" he at last managed to utter, but his voice quavered, and he appeared to have aged suddenly by years.

"You received the price of your treason, your affairs were arranged and the marriage took place. But Nemesis was on your track; the transaction came to the knowledge of our Russian Ambassador. It was confided by him solely to the late Prime Minister. He sent for you, and I can well believe that the interview must have been painful to you."

The Earl shuddered, and clutched the arm of his chair.

"You were allowed to retire, and since then you have lived and enjoyed the respect of your many friends."

The Earl summed up all his courage and rose from his seat.

"I have listened with calmness think that this is an attempt to blackmail me. But you will not succeed; the whole story is a figment of your imagination."

Ackroyd smiled pleasantly.

"I speak of what I know to be the truth," he answered quietly.

The Earl laughed scornfully. He had decided to fight; for he felt it extremely improbable that the Prime Minister could have left evidence to convict him, and what else had he to fear?

"I think it unnecessary to prolong this interview," he said with an effort at calmness.

"Just as you please. It is a matter of perfect indifference to me; there are those who will receive it with welcome arms. Good afternoon, my lord."

As he rose, he took the letters from his pocket.

"What have you there?" the Earl demanded eagerly.

"At the outset of this interview, I told you that I had found certain letters. I did not lie, here they are."

He held them forth, and the Earl eagerly stretched forth his hand.

"I am afraid I cannot part with them, even for a moment, they are of value to me. You may look at them if you wish, but I thought your lordship declared that the whole affair was a figment of my imagination," Ackroyd said jeeringly.

But his face wore a triumphant expression. He felt that he held the whip hand, and the the Earl would eventually pay.

"But they are gibberish," the Earl cried as he looked at the letters which were held up to his view.

"Merely a cipher."

He took another paper from his pocket, which he handed over.

"I have carefully decoded the letters, and here is an accurate copy. I can make you a present of it if you like, but stay. You knew the Prime Minister's handwriting; you had better satisfy yourself that the originals were written by him."

A fear that was pitiful had seized hold of the Earl, and it was with difficulty that he read the paper, owing to the violent trembling of his hands. The document fluttered to the floor, and the Earl fell back into his chair. His face was ashen white, and his breast heaved spasmodically.

"Quick," he gasped, "in that drawer—get the bottle."

Ackroyd ran to the drawer.

"Pour out . . . a dose . . . or I shall die . . . my heart!"

Ackroyd did as he was bade, and his victim drank the medicine.

He anxiously gazed at the Earl, but there was no pity in his concern, for he only thought of the money that he was to gain. Death, or even a serious illness, would ruin his plans, and he would have to go empty away.

He watched the effect of the drug, and the color gradually returned to the Earl's face, but his lips were grey.

"I am beaten," the Earl said, noticing. "What is your price?"

"I am sorry to have caused you all this distress. I would that I could have entirely avoided the necessity of this interview. I am a poor man, my lord; my life has been full of vicissitudes, and I am on my beam ends."

"For God's sake, cut the cackle. How much, man?" the Earl said fiercely.

"I want fifty thousand pounds," the other said with deliberation.

"You are mad—mad," the Earl shrieked shrilly; "I am a poor man."

"That is my price," he said firmly.

"You low blackmailer! Get out of my house! I will send for the police. You are only fit for gaol, you coward!"

"Softly, my lord, you are not one who should throw stones," Ackroyd said in a silken voice.

"If you had said a thousand pounds, I might have been able to manage it," the Earl said more calmly. "I am sorry to have called you names, but you drove me to it. I will give you a thousand pounds."

Ackroyd rose to his feet and laughed contemptuously, as the Earl produced a cheque book.

"It is more than I can afford. I am in debt, and have had to borrow money myself."

"That sum would not last me six months, and I have made up my mind to get from you a sufficiently large sum to keep me in comfort for the rest of my life. You must really be more generous, Lord Wolverholme. I am not asking for a tithe of the sum that you received for your treachery, and you have had the use of that for more than thirty years. They did not make you disgorge, you know. You must really be more generous."

"I cannot sustain this interview much longer. I have had an agitating day, and I am far from strong. I will give you five thousand pounds," he said desperately.

"I have named my price, which is a moderate one, when you think what I am selling. It means your good name—more than that. Your son, too, would be ostracized if this were known. There would be a public outcry, for the last thing that the British public will endure is treason. You will be hounded from the country, and the name of Lord Wolverholme would be synonymous with everything contemptible. You would not have a friend in the world. Salvation from this is surely cheap at the price I ask you to pay."

(To be Continued.)

ON THE FARM

DAIRY FARMING IN HOLLAND.

President J. H. Worst, of the North Dakota Agricultural College, who recently made a tour of the dairy countries of Europe, reports that in Holland the most remarkable of all dairy countries, the farmers support an astonishing number of cows on a very small area. In some cases the land is made to carry two or three cows to the acre. For the entire country the land will carry a half to whole cow to the acre. The ordinary 20 acre farm carries 10 to 20 cows, with the horses necessary to do the farm work, and three sheep to each cow.

On the best soil the 20 acre farm will carry 20 cows, three to four horses and 60 sheep, with the usual flocks of poultry. This means pasturage and soiling for the animals in the summer and grains, roots, hay and roughage in the winter. The cows are the gigantic "black and white," known there as Friesian and here as Holstein-Friesian cows, and their average production for the country is over 9,000 pounds of fine milk per head. Evidently the Hollanders must practice intensive farming and gilt edge of the most intense stripe. At all events such farming figures as those quoted cast a lurid light on the American 150 acre farm that carries at a loss 15 to 20 cows, several horses and no sheep or poultry.

The Holland land sells at $600 to $2,000 per acre, while the American land is rated at $5 to $30 per acre. The tenant farmer in Holland pays a rent of $50 to $100 per acre, and by intensive culture and great yield of cows he makes a living, clears the heavy rental, maintains or increases the fertility of his soil and lays up some money.

President Worst reports his visit to the Leeuwarden co-operative creamery. That creamery receives milk from 2,000 cows and makes cheese and butter and sells milk. In the year ending May 12, 1906, the creamery made 373,554 pounds of butter that was sold for $85,726, with 257,251 pounds of cheese that sold for $25,512, a total of $161,446 for the year. The farmers, who are the shareholders of the creamery received $143,228 for their milk. That means an income of $7.16 per cow for milk, while the fertilizer produced by the cows, and the value of their calves either to sell or rear, swelled the average earnings of their cows considerably.

THE BUTTER MAKING.

The oily flower that is found in so much of the cream-gathered butter is due to keeping the cream too long at, and churning at a high temperature, says an exchange. When the cream is cooled and churned at once this flavor is never noticed. It also helps to overcome the sour rancid flavors due to old and over-ripe cream by getting the cream into butter as soon as possible. By using the pasteurizer, the best all round satisfaction is given, especially if the cream is not too sour or over-ripe and testing over twenty-five per cent. fat. Where cream can be obtained under these conditions a pasteurizer certainly should be installed and used. A good culture is also essential, but owing to the difficulty of getting skim or whole milk, and the extra care that a cream culture takes, few of the makers use one continually. The cream in the vat should be stirred often to get an even temperature and acidity. If left without being stirred, the cream around and next to the cold water and ice will be colder and thus develop less acid than the cream in the centre of the vat, which will be of a higher temperature, thus not giving an exhaustive churning.

DAIRY NOTES.

Quebec is the largest producer of creamery butter of all the provinces in Canada. During the seven years, 1900 to 1907, Quebec increased her production of butter by 26 per cent. and the value of her butter products by 48 per cent. In the same period, Quebec decreased her production of cheese by 15.37 but the value only decreased 0.87 per cent.

During the year 1900 to 1907 the production of creamery butter in Canada increased 27.35 per cent. The value of the creamery butter made in 1900 was $7,240,972, as compared with $10,940,062 in 1907. In 1900 the average price per pound was 20c. and in 1907 24 cents.

There were four milk condenseries in Canada in 1900 as against seven in 1907. The value of the product of these condenseries increased from $265,520 in 1900 to $910,842 in 1907. In 1900 the value of condensed milk imported into Canada was $254,176. In 1907 the value of the imports was only $4,846.

SHE KNEW.

"Have you any letters for me?" inquired old Mrs. Brown, bustling breathlessly into the village post-office.

"No letters," replied the postmaster.

"Dearie me!" said Mrs. Brown. "I was expecting a letter or a postcard from my daughter Martha to say when she was coming."

"Well, I'll see," said the postmaster.

Then he called to his wife in the kitchen, "Here's Mrs. Brown wanting to know if there's a postcard from her daughter Martha telling her when Martha's coming."

"Yes, there is," replied the postmaster's wife. "Martha is coming next Tuesday."

WHY THE NEIGHBORS SMILE.

Little Willie was a perfect "dear"; at least, so thought his mother till recently. She missed the youngester one day for some time, and when he reappeared she asked:

"Where have you been, my pet?"

"Playing postman," replied the pet. "I gave a letter to all the houses in our road. Real letters, too."

"Where on earth did you get them?" questioned his mother, in amusement.

"They were those old ones in your wardrobe drawer, tied with ribbon," was the innocent reply.

Willie now wants to know what he was spanked for.

SCORED OFF TOMMY.

A young Irish lad on a market day in an Irish town was minding an ass attached to a cart awaiting the exit of his parent from a business establishment.

His arm was thrown around the neck of the animal when two recruiting sergeants passed by. One of them seeking to make fun of the youth, said: "What are you hugging your brother so tightly for?"

"'Cause," was the ready rejoinder, "I was afraid he'd 'list."

It keeps some men busy postponing things.

Amber is found colored black, white, brown, and green, as well as yellow.

The film of a soap-bubble is the 2,500,000th part of an inch in thickness.

The total tonnage of ships now being built in the United Kingdom is the lowest since 1896.

The Frieburg silver mines, in Saxony, after being worked for 700 years, are about to be closed.

In some parts of Germany glass telephone-poles, reinforced by wire, are in use.

Grapes are still trodden with the bare feet in many vineyards of Italy and Spain.

The crown worn by Queen Wilhelmina on State occasions cost about $600,000.

The thickness of a razor-edge has been reckoned at about one-millionth of an inch.

Sometimes a man accomplishes great things by getting other men to do them for him.

Manager—"My stock-in-trade is brains." Principal Girl—"You've got a funny-looking sample case."

When a young man goes around looking as though he hadn't a friend on earth it is either a case of love or indigestion.

Anxious Mother—"How is it that you have so much trouble with your housekeeping? You told me your wife could cook." Adult Son—"She can." "Then what is the matter?" "She won't."

Tommy—"Pa, what is an equinox?" Pa—"Why, a, -it is—ahem! For goodness' sake Tommy, don't you know anything about mythology at all? An equinox was a fabled animal, half horse, half cow. Its name is derived from the words 'equine' and 'ox.' It does seem as if these public schools don't teach children anything now-a-days!"