

SIR DEREK NORWOOD'S DISCOVERY.

"JACK will be here at five o'clock to-day," announced Mrs. Brooks, looking up with a beaming smile on her pleasant face.

The news was received with a chorus of delighted exclamations by the party assembled round the breakfast-table.

"How nice," cried Dorothy, the eldest daughter. "We shall have Jack all to ourselves for a whole fortnight before our first shooting party arrives."

"Hurrah!" shouted Tom, a young gentleman just home from his first term at school. "Jack's a real stunner."

"And it will be someone to amuse Derek, too," said Mrs. Brooks. "I am sure you will soon be great friends," she added, turning to the young man at her side.

"Thank you, my dear aunt," he replied; "but I assure you I do not in the least want anyone to amuse me. I only feel quite sorry that our delightful little party is going to be invaded by a stranger—a stranger to me, at least—for you forget that I have been so long abroad that I do not know your friends now."

"It is very nice of you to say you like being here alone with us, my dear boy," answered his aunt, affectionately; "and it is just like old times, having you back again. I forgot you did not know Jack. Be quiet, Tom, I can't hear myself speak if you make that noise! Let me see, what was I going to say? Oh! did you meet old Lady Verner when you were in town? She was a Frenchwoman, you know, and Lord Verner was a cousin of my husband."

"My dear aunt becomes more delightfully inconsequent every day," murmured her nephew to himself. Aloud he said: "I believe I was introduced to her one day—but you know I only arrived in time for a fortnight at the far end of the season, and during that time I went to such a succession of parties, and met so many people, that I really have not a very clear recollection of any of them."

"We all know that Sir Derek Norwood, the great explorer, was quite the lion of the season," exclaimed his pretty cousin Mary, teasingly.

"That is too bad of you, Mary," said Sir Derek, reproachfully; "especially when you consider that I have been your devoted slave ever since you were as high as this table."

Mrs. Brooks rose and gathered up her letters.

"What are you all going to do to-day?" and she nodded at her two elder daughters. "We shall have to go to this party—the Ingram's; but if we hurry away, we shall just get to the station in time to meet Jack."

"I think I will go out fishing and take my luncheon in my pocket; it is just the very day for it," remarked Sir Derek, as he sauntered to the window and stood looking out. He was a tall, good-looking man, with a naturally fair complexion tanned to deepest brown by constant exposure to a tropical sun. Just now, however, there was a decidedly gloomy expression in his kindly grey eyes, and he shrugged his shoulders impatiently as he glanced over the sunny garden.

"What a fool I am," he muttered to himself, "to feel annoyed about such a trifle; but it really has been jolly, being here alone, after all my wanderings, and now to have some young cub of a boy to spoil it all; and I can imagine how insufferable he will be after a week of the spoiling which my aunt and cousins seem inclined to bestow upon him." Then he smiled at his own thoughts. "Why, anyone would imagine I was jealous; and now to the fishes and to forget Master Jack."

That afternoon, as Mrs. Brooks and her daughters were standing at the hall-door ready to start for their party, Sir Derek came striding by, fishing-rod in and.

"Have you had good sport, Derek?" asked his aunt. "You are back earlier than I expected."

"The sun has come out too bright for fishing," answered Sir Derek; "so I think, if I may, I will take the dog-cart and drive to the station to see if they have this week's *Spectator* at the book-stall yet with my article in it."

"Of course, you can take the dog-cart, or anything you like," replied Mrs. Brooks, and Sir Derek passed on to the stable-yard.

"Is Brown Bess in?" he inquired, when he had summoned a groom.

"Yes, sir," the man answered, doubtfully, "but she has not been out for some days, and I'm sure she'll be awful fresh."

"Oh, all right; put her in the luggage-cart, she won't do much damage if she does kick a bit in that," said Sir Derek. Then he drew out a pipe, and leant against the stable wall, smoking and dreaming in the sunlight.