

THE MORTLAKE PEERAGE.

(From Chambers's Journal.)

CHAPTER III.

'The Marquis of Swindon was a constant guest at my father's table, and he was very kind to me. You may imagine, situated as I was, how grateful I was for any scrap of kindness and sympathy. He did not in the ordinary sense make love to me; but he saw that I was unhappy, and he tried to soothe and comfort me. I experienced the greatest consolation in his society. I liked him, but could not of course love him. He asked me, nay, urged me to marry him; but I told him it was impossible—that my affections were engaged. When my father came to know that I had refused him, he gave way to such passion that it brought on a fit of apoplexy, of which he died. He had threatened that he would disinherit me in his will; but he had no time to carry out his threat; and thus I found myself, as I supposed, free, and possessed of great wealth. As soon as my father was buried and my business affairs arranged, I proposed to start for India in search of my husband, and I told Miss Onslow of my project; but she laughed at it. I tried to get rid of her; but she refused to go. She used all sorts of threats; and as I knew her to be capable of anything that was diabolical and wicked, I let her remain. Shortly after this, she one day brought me an old *Times* newspaper—she said that her sister had accidentally discovered it—and she pointed to the death column, and showed me the name of my husband. As near as I can remember, the announcement ran thus: "STANHOPE—March 16th, at Bombay, after a short illness, GEORGE SPENCER STANHOPE, aged 31."

'After this, I had another long illness. Liberty I had none; and the thralldom in which I lived was more galling than ever. The only real friend I had was the Marquis of Swindon; his kindness affected me deeply, and I longed to tell him the story of my wrongs; but Miss Onslow had acquired such an influence over me, that I dared not.

'To show you the abject state into which they had brought me, I may state that though I knew that during my illness a large part of my income had disappeared, yet I had not the courage to complain, or to ask what had become of it. These facts, all of which are substantially true, will, I think, show you that I have been more sinned against than sinning.'

'What about Miss Onslow? Where is she now?'

'About two years since, she married a cousin of hers, a lawyer. When this took place, I thought that I should get my liberty, and for some months I was left in peace; but I soon found that I had only exchanged masters. This man came to me one day and threatened me. He said I was living before the world as a single woman, that I had had a child, and that unless I gave him a thousand pounds, he would expose me. Money was no object to me, and I weakly consented; and since that, I have been subject to a series of exactions and annoyances which I feared would bring on my old disorder. But I thank God I have been enabled to bear up against it. Still, it has been a sore trial to me.'

'But when your husband returned from India,' I said, 'why did you not communicate with him?'

'I knew nothing of it. I was then in Florence, I suppose.'

'Did you not read of his coming into the title?'

'No, I was never in those days allowed to see an English newspaper. Besides, I was almost entirely ignorant of my husband's family and connections, and did not know that he had succeeded to an earldom; so much so, that afterwards, when I heard of the supposed death of the Earl of Mortlake, I was not aware that he was in any way related to me.'

We had some further conversation; and then she said suddenly: 'You have not told me how you became possessed of that letter.'

'I got it from the elder Miss Onslow. Previous to her death, she sent for me—she, I am sure, repented of the part she had played in this matter—and after placing this packet in my hands, was about to make some disclosure; but she died before she could make it.'

'Poor thing!' said the Countess, with some feeling. 'I am glad to hear this; for, bad as she was, she was not so bad as that other horrid creature; indeed, I don't think she would have been bad at all, if it had not been for her. Are those the letters?' she asked, pointing to the packet I still held in my hand.

'Yes,' I replied. 'Would you like to take them home and read them?'

She accepted the offer eagerly; and I gave her the packet of letters, but cautioning her, whatever she did, not to let them go out of her possession, and stipulating that when she had read them, she would return them to me. This promise she gave me, and I dismissed her. The case had assumed an entirely new aspect, and I wanted time for consideration.

The great Mortlake Peerage Case, as the newspapers called it, was set down for hearing. All the leading members of the bar were engaged on one side or the other. The witnesses from Knutsfield and Ramsgate were waiting to be summoned, and it was expected that in a few days the trial would be commenced. The public were greatly excited with regard to its probable termination, and popular feeling ran very high. There were partisans of both sides, and each argued vigorously for his own point of view. At first, public opinion was rather against than in favor of my protégé; but the appearance of

the Countess, with her son, in deep mourning, excited great sympathy. In short, no sooner did the lady appear upon the scene, than the current of public opinion, which at one time was strongly in favor of the new claimant Mr. Stanhope, turned, and was now running as vigorously in the opposite direction. The extreme beauty of the Countess, her great wealth, and the romantic story of her marriage, had great influence with the British public. It was very satisfactory to have the public with me; but those good people, who were very much inclined to make a hero of the young Earl, were not the people who had to decide the case; their opinion would have no influence with either judge or jury. Still, though things looked in a very satisfactory state, and while it was gratifying to me that the truth was beginning to make itself felt, I must confess that it was an anxious time with me. The opposition story was not without point and cogency. They did not charge me or the Countess with an attempt at fraud; they merely said that we had been imposed upon by people more clever than ourselves, who had made us their dupes. They further said that the plot was not of recent origin, but had been conceived many years since; that my protégé was not the son of the Earl and Countess of Mortlake, but the offspring of a Sandgate fisherman. It will be easily seen that there was room for these suggestions, and that in the hands of clever counsel much might be made of them.

Matters were in this state, when suddenly, without any warning, the whole case collapsed—burst like a bubble. There was no trial, no verdict. The woman Onslow and her husband suddenly disappeared from the scene. What brought about this extraordinary state of things was a letter from the Earl of Mortlake, dated from New York, to say that he was alive and well!

From his letter, it appeared that, after crossing the Rocky Mountains, he made his way to the valley of the Rio Puerco, a splendid country, lying between two ridges of the Sierra de los Comanches. It was a spot which was rarely visited by Europeans, and was inhabited by a savage tribe of Indians called the Comanches. For some time he eluded their vigilance; but ultimately he was taken prisoner, and remained in captivity more than a year. Eventually he escaped, reached New York, and finally landed at Liverpool, where I met him and explained everything. We proceeded to London. Lady Mortlake sat in the drawing-room with her son, anxiously awaiting our arrival. As soon as she saw her husband, she uttered a cry of joy, and sprang forward to meet him, the whole pure unrestrained joy of her heart beaming upon her face—a face always lovely, but now, in the maturity of her beauty, more lovely than ever.

'My wife!' said the Earl, as he returned her embrace, 'my own dearest wife—long divided, but ever loved! I thank God we meet again, never to separate till death us do part.'

'Amen!' I responded reverently.

'And this is our boy?' he continued, as he kissed the youth, and folded him in his arms.

'And now,' he said, 'let us thank our good and generous friend to whom we owe all this happiness.'

'No, no!' I cried; 'I want no thanks. I have only done my duty.'

'True! and if we all did that, the world would be a paradise.'

My story is ended. The trials and sufferings through which these two had passed were not without their effect, but happily it was a beneficial one. The Countess, whose heart had hitherto known only endurance, was now filled with an exuberance of joy. She found in her son, and husband a vent for all the deep and passionate longings of her soul.

As for the Earl, sorrow, anxiety, and privation had not altered his generous nature or daunted his fine spirit, though it had made him more grave and thoughtful than of yore; but that did not render him less amiable in the eyes of her who, through all the vicissitudes of her eventful life, had ever been faithful and true.

Let us now leave them as they sat, with hand clasped in hand, happy once more in each other's love.

[THE END]

LONDON FOSSILS.

That living lions once roared where Landseer's stone ones now do their silent sentinel duty, is strange, but true. The discovery of fossils at Charing Cross, on the site where Messrs. Drummond's new premises stand, brings this fact home to the mind. The fossils are about a hundred in number, representing for the most part the ponderous animals that roamed among our primeval forests, when as yet man was not, or was just making his appearance, although a few of the remains were found in later deposits. Among the earlier specimens are bones of the cave lion and the rhinoceros, tusks and bones of the mammoth and of two different species of extinct elephants, besides remains of red deer, extinct Irish deer, and extinct oxen. They also include remains of a species of deer closely allied to the fallow deer; and these are of special interest to the naturalist, being, we believe, the first fossils of this species that have been unearthed. But the most interesting object to the unscientific mind is a prodigious mammoth's tooth, which is of itself quite large enough to effectually block up the mouth of the largest animal in these degenerate days. Beside the owner of this dental monstrosity the great Jumbo would look a puny whipster indeed.—*Land.*

RARE HONESTY.—There is a feature worthy of special notice in the career of Mr. Christopher Newton, a leading merchant of Sydney, New South Wales, who has lately been entertained at a complimentary banquet by the merchants of London. Twelve years ago he became

seriously embarrassed in business, and was forced to seek settlement with his creditors on a basis of fifteen shillings to the pound. This was accepted, and he was released from further obligations. By untiring energy he at length retrieved his fortunes, and, all unexpectedly to them, a few months ago paid to his creditors the full amounts due them, with interest, aggregating more than \$200,000. In recognition of his sterling honesty, his creditors have now presented him with a steam yacht, and his wife with some costly diamond jewelry.

NEW WATER FILTER.—Prof. Bischoff's system of water filtration has been for some time before the public. The use of spongy iron has now been applied on a large scale to the water obtained from the River Nette for the supply of the City of Antwerp. Dr. Frankland has visited the Antwerp water-works at Waelheim, about fifteen miles above that city, and reported on the results of his inquiry. He attaches especial value to the fact that spongy iron filtration "is absolutely fatal to bacteria and their germs," and he considers it would be "an invaluable boon to the metropolis if all water supplied from the Thames and Lea were submitted to this treatment in default of a new supply from unimpeachable resources."

HOW HE SAVED THE TRAIN.

The usual crowd of autumn liars were gathered together in the store, occupying all the grocery seats—the only gross receipts that the proprietor took no pride in—when a little, blue-eyed, weazen-faced individual sneaked in by the back door and slunk into a dark corner.

"That's him," said the ungrammatical bummer, with a green patch over his left eye.

"Who is it?" asked several at once.

"Why, the chap who saved a train from being wrecked," was the reply.

"Come, tell us about it," they demanded, as the small man crouched in the darkness, as if unwilling that his heroic deed should be brought out under the glare of the blazing kerosene lamp.

After much persuasion, reinforced by a stiff horn of applejack, he began:—

"It was just such a night as this—bright and clear—and I was going home down the track, when, right before me, across the rails, lay a great beam. There it was. Pale and ghastly as a lifeless body, and light as it appeared, I had not the power to move it. A sudden rumble and roar told me that the night express was thundering down and soon would reach the fatal spot. Nearer and nearer it approached, till just as the cow-catcher was about lifting me, I sprang aside, placed myself between the obstruction and the track, and the train flew on unharmed."

The silence was so dense for a moment that one might have heard a dew drop. Presently somebody said:

"What did you do with the beam?"

"I didn't touch it," he replied; "but it touched me."

"Well," persisted the questioner, "if you couldn't lift it, and didn't touch it, how in thunder did the train get over it?"

"Why, don't you see," said the sad faced man, as he arose from his seat and sidled towards the door; "the obstruction was a moon-beam, and I jumped so that the shadow of my body took its place, and—"

Bang! flew a ham against the door; and if it had struck the body of the retreating hero, there would have been a much larger grease spot frescoed on the panel of the door.

MYSTERIOUS THOUSAND DOLLAR BOND PLATE.

Says a Washington despatch to the *Chicago Herald*: Samuel Felker is looming up again. He never relinquished his theory that the face of the thousand dollar bond plate, for the alleged counterfeiting of which Boyle was convicted, was genuine. Felker's first proposition to the Treasury officials was that he be paid \$100,000 for the plate, which he said he had obtained by honest means. There was some haggling over this. Danger and scandal would follow an admission that a genuine plate had been stolen, and it was therefore decided to call in experts, who, in an elaborate report, pronounced the plate a counterfeit and undoubtedly the work of Doyle. This report, Felker says, was got up with the object of misleading the public. Felker, according to an agreement, was allowed to retain the plate, and within a short time has also obtained the back plate and other pieces from persons in New York, constituting the whole paraphernalia for printing the thousand dollar bonds. He has effected a compromise with the Treasury Department for a large sum of money the definite amount of which your correspondent has been unable to ascertain. The face of the plate has been surrendered and part of the money received by Felker, who will be paid the rest when he delivers the whole of the back plate and pieces. The whole transaction will be completed in a few days.

NEW RAILWAY LIGHT.—A novel method of lighting cars by electricity was experimented with on the Royal railway of Frankfurt, Germany, October 11. The power used was generated directly from the locomotive, no other motor being used, and the secondary batteries were charged so strongly that during the stoppages at stations, when, of course, no electricity was being generated, the power stored was found to be sufficient to keep the lamps burning brightly. Thirty-three accumulators became sufficiently charged in a four hours' run to keep twenty-two lamps burning for over one hour. The experiment was regarded as a complete success, says the *Chicago Staats-Zeitung* from which this account is condensed.

TRAFFIC RETURNS OF THE NORTHERN AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAYS for the week ending November 8th, 1882, and the corresponding week of 1881, was:—1881, \$36,830.83; 1882, \$33,235.56; increase, \$3,595.27.