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The Romance of a Marriage.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"That I certainly didn't," says Bob, cheerfully but respectfully; "quite the contrary."

"Don't argue with me, sir!" shouts Mr. Palmer. "Let that young lady go, sir, and leave my premises!"

"I don't want to argue, sir. I wish you'd have a little patience," says Bob.

"Hadn't you better come inside and plead your cause?" says Sir Herrick, calmly, and his voice seems to have some little effect upon the infuriated parent.

"It's no use, Sir Herrick. I won't hear of it. If he comes in it can't make any difference." And he stamps up the steps.

"That will do for an invitation, my dear Bob," says Herrick. "Come on!" And he links his arm in Bob's while Paula goes to May.

They follow Mr. Palmer into the dinner-room, and he reopens the battle at once.

"Look here!" he says, thumping the table, "one word is as good as a hundred. I don't want no had blood and no hard words. As I said to Sir Herrick, I'm a reasonable man, but I ain't going to have this match, and that's settled. And I think it would have been far better if Master Bob had remained where he was, wherever that may be, instead of upsetting my gal."

"What have you to say to that, Bob?" says Sir Herrick to Bob, who stands with folded arms and a serene countenance.

"Well, I suppose I must take Mr. Palmer's word," says Bob, but with a quiet smile. "Anything for peace."

"Bob!" exclaims Paula, indignantly; but May, whose eyes have never left Bob's face, smiles curiously.

Mr. Palmer grunts.

"Well, if that's the way you take it, I'll go further, and say that I'm glad to see you back, and—and as a friend—only a friend, mind, not a son-in-law—you're welcome. What will you have to drink?"

"Thanks," says Bob, calmly, "I'll take a little whiskey-and-water."

May files to the sideboard; but Mr. Palmer shrieks out:

"You sit down! There's servants in the house, I suppose?" and he rings the bell.

Paula creeps close to Sir Herrick. "What does it mean?" she whispers, and he shrugs his shoulders.

"I don't know. Quite a little comedy; but Bob and May understand it, I suppose."

The servant puts the whiskey-and-water on the table, and Bob looks round with upraised glass.

"Here's health and happiness to all," he says in his blunt, outspoken fashion, his eyes lingering on May, who watches him as if her life depended upon it.

"Hem!" says Mr. Palmer. "Sit down. Hope you're well. What have you been a-doing?"

"Sheep-farming," says Bob, not overcheerfully.

"Ah!" exclaims Mr. Palmer, prophetically. "And ain't done much good at it?"

Bob shakes his head.

"I thought not," says Mr. Palmer, with a grunt.

"No," says Bob, "tuck was against me. I think you said that it would be before I started."

Mr. Palmer nods.

"My first lot of sheep got the disease, and my next got astray. I was brought down to a— Don't cry, my dear Miss May."

"Never mind Miss May," says Mr. Palmer, sharply. "She's no business of yours. Well!"

"Well, then I had a chance. A man offered me his stock and run—that's his land—for a thousand pounds, and, thanks to Paula, I bought it; but the man had taken me in. The land was poor, and the sheep had got the disease, and there I was again."

"Ah!" says Mr. Palmer, in the tone of "I told you so."

"But I stuck to the land, and I've got most of it now—as much as I could hold. It wasn't good for sheep. The only thing that flourished there was stones. I brought some of them home to show you, thinking you would be interested, sir."

And he takes a canvas bag from his pocket and hands it to Mr. Palmer.

The sugar-baker eyes it with superior contempt, and unties the string.

"Stones," he says—"sto—" Then he springs to his feet. "Why, powers above, it's gold!"

Bob sits quite quietly, looking up at the old man's changed face with a curious air. Paula is for rushing forward; but Sir Herrick, who is enjoying the comedy too much to permit it to be interrupted, holds her back.

"Gold!" echoes Mr. Palmer, sinking into his chair, and pouring the rough and ugly looking lumps out of the bag on to the table.

"Yes," says Bob. "So my hired man said. I didn't know; but he had seen it before."

"And—and," stammers Mr. Palmer, sheepishly, "did you—that is—bless my soul—was there much of it? Did you get—"

"We got as much as we could quietly, before the crowd came, and I've got a big claim there now. My men are working it."

"Then—then," gasps the astonished sugar-baker, "you are—"

Bob nods, not proudly, but with his old, quiet, unassuming way.

"Yes, sir, I'm pretty rich, I suppose."

"This isn't all!" demands Mr. Palmer, suspiciously.

Bob shakes his head.

"I deposited it at the bank as I came through. Nine months' hard work, sir."

"How much—how much?" demands Mr. Palmer, feverishly.

Bob smiles this time.

"Somewhere about fifty thousand pounds, sir," he says, quietly.

"Bless my soul!" gasps Mr. Palmer. (To be continued.)

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CHAPTER I.

THE CASE FOR THE DEFENSE.

A hush, not merely of ordinary interest, but of an interest mingled with something like respect, fell upon the crowded court when the counsel for the defense arose to begin his address to the jury. It was by no means an ordinary case, for more reasons than one, and therefore it had attracted not only a large but a brilliant and representative audience.

The accused was not called the "prisoner," because, for certain technical reasons, the case was being heard, not at the Old Bailey, but in the lord chief justice's court, in the royal courts of justice. He was a man very well known in society, a man of stainless honor and distinguished position. He had made the mistake which too many such men make, and had permitted himself to become chairman of a group of companies which had not only appeared to be perfectly sound, but had for some few years paid large dividends.

The managing director had died somewhat suddenly, if not suspiciously, and within a few months had come revelation and ruin.

Only a few months before this a notorious company case had roused the public into unwonted indignation, and now that the scandal had been repeated, the public demanded another victim, and this victim had been found in the chairman.

The facts, as they were brought out at the police-court proceedings, certainly looked very black against the accused. His name, his position, and his stainless public and private life, all went for nothing. On the contrary, they seemed rather to inflame the popular thirst for vengeance, for here indeed was an important victim, one whose sacrifice on the altar of commercial morality should be a fitting warning to others tempted to delude innocent investors by the glamour of their wealth and position.

But when it became known that the case for the defense had been undertaken by Kenneth Markham, a very decided change came over the public mind, for this was not an ordinary knight of the long robe, no advocate who simply took any brief that was offered to him provided the figures on the front of it were satisfactory, and without thought or care as to the moral rights and wrongs of the case. He was rather a knight-errant of justice, as distinguished from mere law. He was, in short, a lawyer practically unique among his class, for no matter what the figures on a brief were, he invariably declined to undertake the case until he had satisfied himself as to its merits.

Markham had been tempted many a time, for he was admitted to be the most brilliant junior lawyer of the day. Indeed, it was only a question of the ordinary lapse of time as to when he should have a judgeship for the

asking. But he had declined many a hundred-guinea case because he had convinced himself that the proposed client was in the wrong, and then taken up another for a trifling fee, to save a poor man, whom he felt to be innocent, from financial loss or social ruin.

Of course, at the beginning of his career, this devotion to mere justice, although admired by his friends and ridiculed by his rival and enemies, had proved a very serious obstacle in the way of his progress; but he was the son of a rich man, and could afford to wait for recognition and reward. Yet his genius rapidly won his way to the front, in spite of the eccentricity which every one said at first would retard his advancement.

In this particular case he had taken more than the always great interest with which his belief in the justice of a client's cause inspired him, for his father was himself a great figure in the world of finance, and a man who had proved that it is possible to trade in money, and become wealthy, without earning a sovereign by questionable means.

He had had against him an array of the most brilliant counsel at the disposal of the crown, and it so happened that the leader was Nevil Jarvis, the youngest of the lawyers, who had reached the front rank, who was not only his tacitly acknowledged rival in the legal arena, but also for a prize more priceless to both of them than fame and fortune—a prize which could only be bestowed by a certain sweet-faced, brown-haired, hazel-eyed English girl, who was perhaps the most interested of all the spectators of the battle which was being waged between them, and this fact by no means blunted the shafts of his wit or lightened the weight of his arguments.

His speech was a brilliant one, perhaps the most brilliant he had ever made, and it was a fitting sequel to all the facts in favor of his client. The deadly destructiveness of his cross-examination had already convinced judge, jury, and audience that the real criminals had been in the witness box, and not in the place of the accused.

He wound up with a gravely dignified appeal to their feelings of honor, justice, and common sense, which not a man in the jury box could resist after what he had already heard; and when he sat down, amid a low but eloquent murmur of applause, Nevil Jarvis knew that he was beaten.

With wrath in his heart and a smile on his lips Jarvis got up and intimated to the judge that he would waive the right of counsel for the crown to reply and leave the matter in the hands of his lordship and the jury.

(To be continued.)

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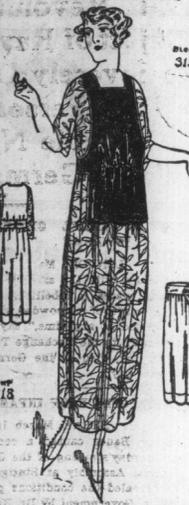
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