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The Mystery of Rutledge Hall
— OR —
"The Cloud With a Silver Lining"

CHAPTER XLIV.

"Mr. Milner is going to sing," said Lady Knight's pretty gay voice. "He sings so well, and with so much pathos, that I always feel inclined to cry."

"You stop at the inclination, I suppose?" Stephen interrogated languidly, glancing over at his wife, who was talking to Mr. Daunt as he bent over the sofa on which she sat.

A soft sweet melody in a minor key was stealing through the room, and the gay chatter had ceased. Even in a mixed company people were always silent when Lloyd Milner sang or played even those who professedly disliked music in general could not fail to like his; and the room was very still as his tender tenor voice rose, singing some pathetic passionate lines which he himself had set to music.

"As the last tender chords died away there was a little rustle of silken skirts and the sound of a closing door. "I am afraid Mrs. Daunt is ill," Lady Knight said, in a subdued tone. "She looked so white as she left the room. Shall I go to her?"

"I will go," Stephen answered hurriedly. "I will go to her."

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CHAPTER XLV.

There was a little sitting-room opening on to the hall at Lambwood which was Dolly's exclusive property, a pretty dainty room paneled in light-colored shining wood and full of the pretty trifles with which girls like to surround themselves. There was a profusion of china, of photographs, of pretty brackets and ivory frames, and the furniture was upholstered in pale-colored chintz dotted with flowers.

It was hither Sidney Daunt came when she escaped from the drawing-room at the close of Lloyd Milner's song; she had hastened out of the room fearing lest her self-command should forsake her, for the words, even more than the music of the song, had touched her keenly, and she felt that she might give way and cry aloud.

She had not been there long when Stephen entered.

"You are better?" he said gently, bending toward her.

"Yes," she answered, faintly.

"Will you go back to the drawing-room?"

"Not yet," she said, raising her eyes

Lord Wharton's Niece
— AND —
The Heir to Regna Court

CHAPTER I.

Mrs. Lexton stared.

"To you? To you? The whole village!" exclaimed Mrs. Lexton.

"Yes," said Claire, calmly. "Every house; a great many of the boats

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said, in a subdued, but harsh voice. "I have driven over to see you about the least of Westcroft; but you are engaged, I see."

"My friend, Mrs. Lexton, has but just arrived," said Claire.

He raised his hat in acknowledgment of the introduction.

"I will come over to-morrow," he said. "Oh, perhaps, Mordaunt will come; he knows all about the lease."

"Very good," said Claire. "But will you not stay and dine with us?"

"Thank you, no, Miss Sartoris; there are one or two things I wish to see to, and I want to get back; thank you all the same. There is nothing I can do for you? No? Then I will wish you good-evening. Good evening, madam."

And, raising his hat again, he bowed and stood aside to allow them to pass.

"What was that, Claire?" asked Mrs. Lexton, when they had got out of hearing.

"Mr. Sapley, the lawyer and agent."

"What an odd-looking man!"

"Odd?" said Claire.

"Yes," said Mrs. Lexton, reluctantly, but as if she were forced to explain. "Don't you think he has a most unpleasant face?"

"Did it strike you so?" asked Claire.

"Yes," said Mrs. Lexton. "It reminded me of a serpent's; it was so broad at the top, and his eyes glittered so. But, forgive me, Claire, it is like my presumption to criticise your friends so harshly—and within a few hours of my arrival, too."

Claire smiled.

"I don't know that Mr. Sapley is exactly a friend of mine, Mary," she said. "The Sapleys have been agents to the estate for ever so many years, and Lord Wharton placed the fullest confidence in him—though he never made a friend of him. But he made no friends of any one. And you did not like Mr. Sapley's face?"

(To be continued.)

themselves; those donkeys may be mine; certainly every inch of the land is. I do not know whether the vessels pay a toll to the pier, but if they do, it is mine."

"Oh, I cannot realize it, Claire."

Claire smiled.

"And now you can understand how I fall to realize it," she said gently.

They walked on, and presently they came to another clearing from which they could see prosperous farms dotted among the neatly-hedged fields.

"And these?" asked Mrs. Lexton.

"Are mine, also," said Claire. "That large farm is Westcroft, and that Low Barton, and that one over there Fallby, the farm near the house, just beyond the stables, is the Home Farm. It supplies us with butter and cream and eggs, and it costs a small fortune to keep up."

"Those woods over there in the distance, surely those are not yours?"

"Indeed, yes!" replied Claire. "The estate stretches farther than you can see."

Mrs. Lexton drew another long breath.

"I am growing bewildered, Claire," she said. "I cannot take it all in at one view. I must come up here and look steadily at one part of it, and when I have realized that, that belongs to you, I must turn to another part, and so on."

Claire laughed softly.

"We will go down this way," she said, "and look in at the stables; you will not have time to see the whole, but we will just walk through."

They went down by a winding path, similar to that by which they had ascended, and, passing under a lofty arch of stone, entered the paved stable yard. Grooms and stablehands touched their caps and stood expectant and ready to obey Claire's command. With a word to one and the other, she led Mrs. Lexton into the stables. They were lofty, and constructed on the most scientific principles and the horses of Court Regna were better housed than many a human being.

Mrs. Lexton marvelled at it all, and marvelled still more at the familiar and fearless way in which Claire went from stall to stall and patted and caressed the horses.

"This is my special mare," she said, drawing the sleek head of the beautiful animal down to her cheek.

"You ride—but, of course?" said Mrs. Lexton.

"I spend most of my time in the saddle," said Claire; "or driving this pair of cobs. I will take you for a drive to-morrow, and you must learn to drive yourself, you shall begin with that dear old pony there; he has been petted so much that he is almost human, and indeed, he is more trustworthy than most humans."

As they passed out by a door at the lower end of the stables, a gentleman came toward them, as if he had just left the house. He was an oldish man, tall and gaunt, his broad shoulders stooped slightly, and his long arms swung in a peculiar manner at his side; his face was big-featured with beetling brows, from under which gleamed small and cunning-looking eyes. The mouth was huge and coarse, though the lips were thin. He was dressed in dark and sober clothes, and looked every inch a professional man. At sight of him, Mrs. Lexton was conscious of a feeling of repugnance, and as the small eyes darted straight from Claire to her, she drew back timidly.

CHAPTER II.

He raised his hat, with a smile that was at once obsequious and self-assertive.

"Good-morning, Miss Sartoris," he

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The Bicentenary of Robert Clive

Rarely has the occasion more significantly produced the man than was the case with Robert Clive, the bicentenary of whose birth occurred this autumn, writes Hearn Law in the Sunday Observer. Born September 29th, 1725, the son of an old established, but impecunious Shropshire squire, he went to India at the age of eighteen as a writer in the civil service of the East India Company. His boyhood had been turbulent and unpromising, but he had already shown among his school fellows that natural capacity for leadership, that high courage, and that daring originality of design which were to make him the founder of the British dominion in India.

He arrived at Madras in 1744, after a voyage which had occupied nearly twelve months. The time was a critical one. That very year the formal entry of Great Britain into the War of the Austrian Succession had involved the French and English East India Companies in conflict. The English were not prepared for the struggle; the French were. They had as their leader the great Duplex, whose genius had foreseen the coming clash, and whose consummate administrative abilities, had made ready for it. Already Duplex had enjoyed fourteen years of authority—eleven as Governor of Chandernagore, three as Governor of Pondicherry. He had clearly perceived that the condition of India was such as imperatively to call for the establishment of European control.

The Mogul Empire, seated at Delhi, which for two centuries had maintained some sort of order in India, had broken up. Invaders were pouring over the North-Western passes. Immense hosts of mountain bandits and marauders were holding the peaceful inhabitants of the plains to ransom. Everywhere was chaos, violence, and misery. The only question was whether the task of restoring good government and security to the distracted peninsula should be undertaken by the English or the French. This question Duplex had realised could ultimately be determined by the sword alone. Hence he had quietly devoted himself to the task of accumulating a fighting fund, fortifying his company's factories, and training a native army in the modes of European warfare.

Clive was not destined long to remain in ignorance of the meaning of the great Frenchman's activities. In 1745 Madras was attacked and captured, Clive himself made prisoner, the English East India Company distinguished in the Carnatic. Clive, fortunately, soon succeeded in making his escape. He had learned the secret of Duplex, and in order that he might put his new knowledge to the proof he at once sought and secured transfer from the civil to the military service of the East India Company.

His military career, brief, but within its limited sphere of a Napoleonic brilliance, fell into two periods. First, he played the leading part in establishing the English as the dominant power in the Carnatic. Secondly, having been called to Bengal by urgent necessity, he brought that great province (with a population five times as large as that of England) under the Company's authority. In the Carnatic his chief enemy was the French East India Company, together with the native rulers, or pretenders, subsidised by the French. If it be asked how a young Englishman with a handful of extemporised forces could secure success against an experienced and well prepared veteran like Duplex, the answer is twofold. On the one hand, Clive had the genius of command and his troops had none; on the other hand Clive was cordially supported by the Company at home, while Duplex, whose activities swallowed up all the dividends of his Company was recalled in disgrace by the French Government, to whose exhausted treasury the Company was expected to contribute, and under whose direct control it performed its functions.

The most striking event in this first period was Clive's defence of the citadel of Arcot for seven weeks (1751), with a force reduced to 230 efficient men, against a besieging host num-

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bered at 10,000. In Bengal, although the French continued among his enemies, it was the native ruler, Suraj-ud-Dowla, against whom Clive was called upon to direct his skill and force. This man signalled his accession to authority in 1756 by attacking, under French inspiration, the English Company's settlement at Calcutta, carrying off £2,000,000 worth of booty, and causing 123 English captives to perish in agony in the notorious "Black Hole." Clive was sent northwards from Madras as soon as news of this appalling tragedy reached the Carnatic. He speedily restored matters by his spectacular victory at Plassey (June 23, 1757) in which, with a force of 3,200 men, he overthrew a native army of some 68,000. This victory not only drove the guilty Suraj-ud-Dowla from power, but also left his long-misgoverned province of Bengal (to the dismay of the Company) in the hands of the English for protection and administration. Almost greater than Clive's conquest of Bengal was his organization of its Government during the years 1765-1766.

On his final return to England in 1786 he had to face a trying ordeal of vilification and impeachment, not unlike that which his disciple Warren Hastings had to suffer a quarter of a century later. From this ordeal he emerged triumphant, but with broken health and shattered nerves. In a fit of profound depression he ended his days on November 23, 1794. He was at the time a Member of Parliament for Shrewsbury, and a peer of Ireland since 1762. If you seek his monument, behold the British Empire in India.

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