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**The Mystery of Rutledge Hall**

— OR —

**"The Cloud With a Silver Lining"**

CHAPTER VII.

The rectory household was an early one; but Sidney was the first down the next morning, and Isabel found her standing in the dining-room window, looking out into the snow-covered garden, her thoughts evidently so far away that she started when Isabel wished her "Good morning." She recovered herself immediately however, and was her own bright charming self again when the rector came in, rubbing his hands and complaining of the cold in a good-humored grumbling manner, pook-pooking the girls' assertions that it was charming seasonable weather, but evidently enjoying the bright cheery morning.

"What time does the post come around?" Sidney asked, as they sat down to breakfast, Bell officiating behind the urn—for Mrs. Bevis was somewhat of an invalid, and did not make her appearance until later in the day.

"At about nine o'clock," answered the rector. "I dare say he will be a little late this morning," he added, smiling. "The snow will make it rather heavy walking, and he will not know how impatiently he is looked for."

"Do you expect a letter, Sidney?" Bell asked, her pretty blue eyes brightening at the thought that she had been mistaken after all, and that Sidney must really care for her fiancée or she would not be anxious to have a letter from him so soon after leaving home.

"I thought perhaps papa might write to me," was the unexpected answer. "I was obliged to leave home without seeing him yesterday morning and I think he will send me a few lines."

"Oh!" said Bell, in a dissatisfied tone, retiring behind the urn once more.

"I suppose a doctor's time is even less his own than a clergyman's," Mr. Bevis remarked, in his gentle kindly way. "Your father, like myself, cannot count upon a quiet hour, I dare say."

"No, indeed," Sidney answered, smiling as she thought of her father's busy life compared with the rector's quiet existence. "It is very trying sometimes. Just as we are going out to a dinner-party or a dance papa is called away, and we must either go so late that I am ashamed to put in an appearance at all or else send some excuse and not go."

"You talk of dances and dinner-parties as if they were of every-day occurrence, Sidney," Isabel remarked.

"Is Ashford a very gay place?"

"I don't know," Sidney answered, laughing. "It is certainly very gay when compared with Chapone House; but I should think, when contrasted with the London season, it must be the acme of dullness."

"But you do have parties sometimes?"

"Oh, yes—dances in the winter, and garden-parties in the summer, and dinner-parties all through the year!"

"Oh, you lucky people!" Bell exclaimed, ruefully. "Our gazettes are restricted to a school treat and a choir outing—and tea-fights of course!"

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but this impatient father of mine takes all the correspondence. There are the papers, however, and we will console ourselves by a perusal of the description of the Hunt ball. Which will you have, the Ashford Chronicle or the Stroud Herald?"

"You had better keep the Chronicle," said Sidney, laughing. "No doubt it will contain the best account of the entertainment. I dare say they will have all the dresses wrong; they always do."

"Then, if any sound dubious, I will come to you for correction," remarked Bell, opening the newspaper looking eagerly for the column devoted to fashionable society; while Sidney took the wrapper languidly of the Stroud Herald and glanced down its columns. Bell, devouring the description of the ball with all the eager curiosity of a country girl debarred from such gayeties, was immersed in a glowing account of the entertainment, and delightfully picturing to herself how exquisite Dolly Daunt's dress must have been, and how superb Mrs. Rutledge's, when a faint, startled, gasping cry made her look up suddenly.

Sidney was half leaning forward on the table, her eyes dilated with fear and horror, her lips utterly colorless, the newspaper crushed in her hand.

"Sidney, what is it, dear?" Bell cried hurrying to her and putting her arms round the slender drooping figure. "Are you ill? What is it?"

"No, no!" Sidney answered, rising feebly and gently putting aside Bell's tender arms, the look of horror and fear deepening on her face. "No, not ill; but I must go home—I must go home. Don't try to keep me, Bell; I must go—I must go!"

"You shall go, dear," Bell said, gently, trying to soothe her. "What has happened? Is Dr. Arnold ill? They would surely telegraph it."

"It is not that," Sidney answered, pitiously, swaying to and fro in her weakness—"not that—but—Mr. Bevis, will you read it? I do not know whether I understand it rightly. Perhaps—perhaps—"

Her voice failed her as she sunk down upon her knees by the table, looking at the two startled faces with feverish lustrous eyes, and pointing with her little trembling hand to a paragraph in the newspaper headed in large capitals, "Mr. Bevis took the newspaper, his hands a little unsteady as he hastily adjusted his spectacles, and read as follows:

"The town of Ashford was yesterday thrown into a state of great excitement, alarm, and consternation by a report circulated early in the morning, which unfortunately later in the day proved to be only too true. Squire Rutledge, of Rutledge Hall, a gentleman well known and greatly respected in the country was found in his library, by one of his servants, lying across his writing-table, quite unconscious. Assistance was immediately procured; but Dr. Arnold found, on arriving at Rutledge Hall, that the unfortunate gentleman was quite dead, and had been so for some hours, death having resulted from his having been shot through the heart. This distressing event has caused the greatest consternation in every circle, and every inquiry is being made to discover the murderer, for the doctors agree in declaring that the wound could not have been self-inflicted. Indeed, such a supposition would be a very wild one, since Squire Rutledge had everything to make life pleasant, and had lately added considerably to his happiness by marrying a young and beautiful lady who has won general admiration. Squire Rutledge was a keen huntsman and enjoyed excellent health. He was in his forty-ninth year."

And underneath was another short paragraph headed "Latest particulars:"

"We understand that the mystery of the terrible event at Rutledge Hall grows apace. Mrs. Rutledge, the beautiful young wife of the unfortunate gentleman, has disappeared. Rumors of the disappearance also of a gentleman well known in Ashford, whose name was mentioned in connection with Mrs. Rutledge before her marriage, are also afloat; but nothing is yet known for certain. Our readers may count upon having the fullest and earliest particulars in to-morrow's issue."

(To be continued.)

**Replace the Trees**

Calling for the curtailment of forest waste in various forms—such as destructive logging methods, forest fires, etc.—the substitution of other materials for wood and a sound policy of reforestation, as practical methods to insure a future supply of wood and wood products in the United States, the Guaranty Trust Company, of New York points out that less than one-third of the original supply of timber in the United States remains. The original stand estimated at 5,500 billion board feet has been reduced to about 1,600 billion feet and this supply is being drawn upon at the rate of about 25 billion feet annually, offset by an equal growth of approximately 6 billion feet. Intensive methods of forestry are urged in order to bring the annual growth up to annual consumption.

From the experience of the United States.

**And What is Your Mother's Maiden Name?**

The chances of a stranger forging another man's name to a check and getting the money from the teller are very much reduced when he has to tell the man in the cage what his mother's maiden name was. Not that this is often asked by the average teller, but it is one of the safety devices used by the Huron and Erie Mortgage Corporation in its daily business in London, Ontario.

On the sample signature card which all depositors fill in is a space for the maiden name of the mother of the depositor. In this way the office has a check on the individual which is practically foolproof. There is not a chance in a hundred thousand that the man who might forge a name should have a mother with the same maiden name as the man whose signature he is copying.

The assistant manager of the head office branch of the Huron and Erie said that, while there were very few occasions in which the teller was forced to fall back on this means of identification, it was a measure of safety which the company felt necessary in the interests of its customers.

"It is very useful," he said, "where a staff is changing from time to time and where a new teller may not know some of the depositors by sight. It is generally recognized as an almost infallible remedy for misrepresentation, and we would not do without it."

Banks in London, interviewed for the local papers, however, did not attach much importance to this. They simply ask for the signature of the depositor on the cards. They are content to rely on the ability of their staff to tell the difference between genuine and false signatures. They argue that an expert teller can recognize both a genuine signature and a faked one and that if he has any suspicions he can ask whatever questions may be necessary in any case.

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**The Market in the Baltic**

It is a noteworthy fact that whereas about a year ago German industrial products reigned practically supreme on the Lithuanian market, they are now being gradually supplanted by French, Belgian, English and Czecho-Slovakian goods. Apart from the credit of £1 BILL, granted by the British Government to the Bank of Lithuania for the purchase of railway materials in Great Britain, Sweden has placed at the disposal of Lithuania for the purchase of breed cattle and agricultural implements a large long term credit. Germany is not showing nearly such willingness to grant credit, and as the prices of German goods are considerably higher in many instances than the French and Belgian the latter are being increasingly favored in Lithuania.—Danzig "Zeitung".

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**The Celtic Mecca**

**PROPOSED GREAT GATHERING OF GAELS IN GLASGOW.**

Simultaneously with the holding of the Celtic bazaar in Glasgow next summer it is proposed that the city should be the Mecca of representative Scotch Gaels, not only from all parts of the Empire but from all over the world. The Duke of Atholl is president of the movement, Mr. Angus Robertson (president of An Comunn Gaidhealach) is vice-convenor, and Mr. Murney-Campbell of Ormidale is convenor of committee; and the object, of course, is to find ways and means for a more vigorous prosecution of the objects of An Comunn—the preservation of Gaelic as a spoken language, the popularizing of its music, the development of its literature, and the study and practice of Celtic art.

In a letter sent to Scottish Associations in all parts of the world, it is pointed out that the existing revenue of An Comunn Gaidhealach is not sufficient to meet its expenditure, but "the circumstances of the time seem propitious for an onward movement. A greater interest is being manifested in Celtic matters by the general public than ever before; old prejudices are disappearing, and new values are being set on racial mental inheritance.

"The establishment of a centre of Gaelic culture," continues the statement, "somewhere in the Gaidhealach, has become one of the great ambitions of An Comunn. While it may not be practicable all at once to set up such an institution, a beginning might be made by establishing an annual summer school, which, if carefully fostered, would gradually develop into a Celtic College, in which Celtic literature, music, and art would receive continuous and systematic study.

"An Comunn Gaidhealach proposes to hold a great Fèil in the summer of 1926 in Glasgow to enable it to carry out in their entirety the objects for which it exists, and it confidently hopes that the response in money and goods from Scots and Gaels at home and abroad will be generous beyond all previous experience. It is proposed at the same time to convene a Cochrunnneachadh mor nan Gaidheal—a great gathering of Gaels—and invitations will be issued to representatives of all known overseas Scottish and Highland societies to attend this Celtic conference, at which opportunities will be afforded for friendly meetings, and greetings, interesting discussion, and interchange of opinions as to the best means of securing a mighty revival of interest in the study and practice of the old Gaelic tongue—the common language of their forefathers and ours."

The last organized effort for raising funds secured for An Comunn Gaidhealach a sum of £7,000, and while the original idea of founding a Celtic College at Iona is abandoned, the idea of having such a scholastic establishment in some part of Scotland is being maintained and kept in view. It is understood that Mr. Angus Robertson, the president of An Comunn, received a promise when over in the United States from Gaels there that they would endeavor to raise some hundreds of thousands of pounds for the preservation of Iona and the establishment of a Gaelic College in Scotland, and it is hoped that the conference and bazaar in Glasgow next June will be not only the means of providing substantial funds for the regular work of An Comunn, but enable it to fulfill those other more tangible aspirations.

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