The Heir?

CHAPTER XXXVI.

(Concluded.)

good--almost as good as they are in

The poor woman stammered, and

pulled herself up; but Geoffrey was

too engrossed in Cottie's movements

to notice; and wi'h a curt 'Thank

you,' he marched off to the fern

As Mrs. Sefton had said, whist par-

ties were being formed; and Cottie

who had been helping her guardian.

was free for a moment or two, and,

not knowing that Geoffrey had gone

to the fern-house, she fled to it for

refuge, as much from her own

thoughts as from the exigencies of

the party. She came upon Geoffrey

standing in a corner, amongst the big

fronds, with his hands thrust in his

pockets, his chin upon his breast, his

brows knit grimly. He raised his

head as her light footfall fell upon

his ears, and looked at her, and she

saw that his face grew paler even than

'Have you come here for a cigar-

ette, Mr. Bell?' she asked, with

smile which masked her throbbing

heart, and moving her fan to and fro

with the graceful, easeful motion

which seemed to Geoffrey the per-

Sure

it had been at dinner.

tection of grace.

Aus_'

house.

TAT OULD you like to see my

stance says they are very

ferns?' she asked. 'Con-

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'May I smoke here?' he asked.

Don't you mind?'

'Not in the very least?' she r He took his cigarette-case from hi pocket with the air of a drowning man who makes for a spar floating on the wild ocean on which he is cast.

'I suppose you smoke a great deal Australia?' said Cottie, sinking on a rustic seat under a palm.

He threw himself down beside

'Yes, one smokes all the time,' he said. 'It is the only thing to do when one is not at work.'

'And do you work much?' she ask 'Yes, pretty much,' he replied.

'It is a delightful country, is it not?' she remarked, 'I suppose you are quite anxious to get back therh. You find England very tame and uninteresting after Australia?'

'I am anxious to get back there, in a sense,' he said. 'I only came over here, Miss Sefton, on a-on a kind of mission. I came in search of my partner,

'The boy?' said Cottie, forcing little laugh. 'How strange it seems -to have a boy as a partner.'

'Yes, it is strange,' said Geoffrey



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So strange, that it sounds like a ronance. I wonder whether you'd mind f I told you about him-whether it would bore you?'

the quivering of her lip. 'Not in the least. I am sure I should be very interested. I love ro-

She smiled over the fan that hid

Geoffrey gnawed at his lip and threw ings of smoke into the scented air of

the fernery. 'I don't know where to begin,' he said. 'I was living alone in Austra liaf on the edge of a big forest. The boy came to me one day -he was in trouble-had lost his sister, who had ust died. He lived with me, in the hut I had built, for months, andand I grew very fond of him. It was he who discovered the claims about which I told you at dinner; they were his, really and justly; but he was a generous hearted boy, and he insisted upon my sharing them. We were rich, and I felt that he ought to come to England to make a

for him to come--' 'Why didn't you come with him?' she asked.

career for himself, and I-I arranged

Geoffrey frowned.

'There were reasons,' he said, 'I started him off for England in good hands, as I thought; but all my plans went awry. He fell into bad company, threw all my plans askew, and reached England alone, helpless, and friendless. I did not learn this until some time after he had started. Then I followed him--'

'And found him?' said Cottie, with smile, while her heart was beating nineteen to the dozen.

'No; I've not found him,' said Geoffrey, grimly. 'And I want him -I want to find him very badly, for I-I am fond of him, and auxious about him. I don't know why I tell you all this-but yes, I do. Do you know, Miss Sefton, that . you are strangely like him? In fact, when I saw you this evening, the resemblance house. you bear to him was so marked that it quite upset me.'

Cottie, behind her fan, caught her under-lip and gasped for breath.

'Really?' she said. 'Was he so very much like me? What sort of a boy was he?'

ot a description.

'Oh, a wonderful boy, I assure ou, Miss Sefton, he said. 'He was good-looking young devil-I-I really beg your pardon! But he was was in love with her, that it was love nore than that. He was the sweet- at first sight; he only knew that he est-tempered and the bravest boy I have ever known. Why, he saved my Montague Square before the regulalife in the pluckest way you can im tion hour, but he haunted the parade agine-I won't bore you with the during the morning, and about twelve story-and I owe him- Ah, well! | o'clock he saw Mrs. Sefton and he we were more than friends-we were brothers. You see we live together sympathy and-'

His voice broke, and he snatched another cigarette out of his case and lit and pulled at it with feverish excitement.

gainst her heart, her breath coming in painful little gasps. 'And I am so like him?' she asks.

'So like,' he said, earnestly, 'that if were to call you Ronnie-

so wistfully, she grew white, and her hand-for the moment she forgot Eva Rashleigh-stole near to him; it would have touched him, and all would have been told and understood without another word; but at that moment Mrs. Sefton entered the fern-

'Are you there, Cottie?' she asked 'Yes,' replied Cottie, faintly.

She arose, looked at Geoffrey, stand ing knawing his lip, his dark eyes glowing with the fire, the source of which he did not understand, and, in a low voice, murmured, 'Yes,' and left

Geoffrey sank back into his seat and drew a long breath. His brain was in a whirl, his heart was beating with an emotion which bewildered him. He forgot his manners, the etiquette of the world to which he had been newly introduced, and, striding into the hall

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got his hat and coat and left th

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Geoffrey rushed away from Mrs

Sefton's house and strode up and down the parade for hours. . For the first time his thoughts were divided -divided between the boy of his heart and this lovely girl with the Geoffrey laughed as he despaired deep violet eyes and the soft voice whom he had just left. He dream both of her and Ronnie that night and he woke in the morning with the devouring desire to see her again.

It never occurred to him that he wanted to see her, that he wanted to be with her. He could not call at ward driving towards him.

Cottie was the first to see him, and she clenched her hands in her effor in the little but in the midst of an to keep the blood from rushing to her Australian solitude, each depending face, while her heart beat nineteer on the other for companionship and to the dozen. Oh, shame! a man who was in love with another woman Geoffrey snatched off his hat, his eyes flashing, his still pale face flushing at the meeting.

'Oh, dear! there he is!' whispered Mrs. Sefton, as she bowed and smiled Cottie leant back, one hand pressed sweetly. 'Oh, I wish he would go!' Cottie said nothing, because she At the name, spoken so lovingly, first moment at which he could de-I posite Post Office.—jan.3,tf.

cently call; and when it arrived, strode off to the house. He was shown into the drawing-room, and Cottie came to him, and as he rose and looked at her, he thought her more beautiful in her plain morning-dress even than he had thought her the previous night, if that were possible. Cottie said that Mrs. Sefton was lying down with a rather bad headache; Geoffrey was sorry for her headache, but glad of her absence; and yet for some minutes he could scarcely find anything to say.

He was not a goodtalker at any time-was of the reserved and reticent order of man; but now he was almost speechless, and it was Cottie who started the talking. She appeared perfectly self-possessed and at her ease. You see, she had been preparing herself for the interview-and a woman forewarned is indeed forearmed! She drew him to talk of himself, and gradually and artfully led the conversation towards his past life with Ronnie. On this subject Geoffrey proved himself fluent and eloquent enough, and Cottie had hard work to keep the tears from her eves and her voice steady while he spoke of the lad's many virtues and their mutual love. It was a relief when the maid brought in the tea. As Cottie gave him his cup and watched him out of the tail of her violet eves, she remembering their many meals together, had still harder work to concea!

Presently some other of the guests of the preceding night dropped in to pay their duty call. Geoffrey found himself separated from her, and, after drifting about the room aimlessly, took his departure. Cottie felt his hand burn as he shook hands with

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