

Lucy felt strong enough for the journey. Tancred left some directions for the disposal of the remains of Frink. Berengar's friends saw to the disposal of his remains. Tancred now set forth with Lucy—a far different companion from the one with whom she had been of late, and on her last eventful journey. It was not more than ten miles to Vicari, and they reached the place before evening. Here they put up at the hotel. The next day they reached Palermo.

Here Tancred gave to Mrs. Henslowe and to Pauline Garth's message. Pauline heard it with feelings of joy and intense relief. This message from his lips was a declaration of his perfect innocence of the charges laid against him by her mother. She would see him in England. That was enough.

Mrs. Henslowe had now to explain to Tancred the true cause of Garth's departure. At first Tancred tried to pooh pooh her charges, but after further discussion with her he began to feel very serious about them. He could not deny that Garth must be Earl of Landsdowne. The recollections of his mother, together with other incidents within his own knowledge, all combined to make him feel convinced that this must be so. But as to the other statement it was different. He was acquainted with Lady Landsdowne, and could not bring himself to believe that she could be the wife of Garth. His conviction about this arose from his knowledge of her character and also partly from the questions which Garth several times asked about her. These questions were put very innocently and with all the appearance of interest and curiosity. In an ordinary man such questions would have meant nothing, but in Garth they meant that he knew nothing about her nor wanted to know. For Garth was utterly guileless and sincere, and was incapable of any kind of deceit or dissimulation, even if it amounted to nothing more than feigned ignorance about something well known to him.

But in the midst of all this Lucy made a revelation of another secret, which was more astonishing to them than anything else. She had kept silent for some time, and had made up her mind to say nothing about it until she should see Tancred. Now, therefore, the time had come, and she told all about the death-bed declaration of her old nurse. The discovery that Lucy was no longer Lady Landsdowne, heiress of the vast Landsdowne estates, produced a wonderful effect on all of them. Upon Tancred the effect was one of unmixed pleasure. Although the disparity between them had been removed by his own wealth, still he could not help being swayed by his old feelings; and to make her his wife now, when she was only the humble, penniless girl, seemed sweeter to him than wedding a great heiress.

Pauline, also, was delighted. Part of her mother's charge was that Garth was the husband of Lady Landsdowne, and also the father of Lucy. To her the first had been horrible, and the second preposterous. But now this revelation of Lucy showed that she was no relation whatever to Garth, and Pauline could not help believing that, as the latter had been so easily disproved, so would the former be.

Lucy's information produced upon Mrs. Henslowe's mind a different effect, and led to an expression of opinion which was characteristic.

"Well," said she to Tancred, "that'll be all the better for you, you-know."

"Oh, yes," said Tancred, "I think it's better—don't care about having such a swell for a wife."

"Oh, but I don't mean that."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean that you'll be the next heir of Landsdowne. Garth has no heirs."

"Oh, bother that," said Tancred. "I don't care; I've got as much as I want."

"But there isn't any reason why you shouldn't get the earldom. Then Garth has a wife, but won't live with her. It's a pity about Pauline; but I hope she'll get over it in time. Garth can't marry her; and since she can't become Lady Landsdowne, why, I should like to see you Lord Landsdowne. And Lord Landsdowne you must be, sooner or later, for Garth of course will never have any heirs."

"Oh, you don't know about that," said Tancred.

There was now no reason why they should stay any longer in Sicily, and they began their preparations for going back to England. They merely waited long enough to give to the ladies that rest which they needed, in order to recover from the fatigues consequent upon their recent life. One week was sufficient for this. All

that time they were making preparations for the return. At first Pauline indulged in a feeble hope that Garth might be on board the same vessel, but on embarking she was disappointed, for she saw no signs of him whatever; for in fact Garth had hurried off at once to Palermo, and had arrived just in time to catch the steamer. He had thus left Palermo more than a week before the ladies.

Tancred took his party by water in the P. and O. Company's steamer. The voyage was a pleasant one, and all looked forward with eager hope to a return to their native land, which now was doubly dear to them on account of their bitter experience of foreign lands. But of all, none looked forward to a return with such bright hopes as Pauline.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE EARL OF LANDSDOWNE.

GARTH arrived in England without any delay, and at once set out for Landsdowne Hall. His purpose in making this visit was one which he had communicated to no one. Mrs. Henslowe thought that this was a sure proof of his guilt, and asserted that if he was innocent he would certainly have said as much to Tancred, and that he would have confided to him the facts of the case. Tancred scouted his mother's insinuations, and asserted that she knew nothing about Garth.

Garth, meanwhile, kept his own counsel and followed out his own plans. The first of these plans was to reach Landsdowne Hall as soon as possible and bring matters to a crisis. Accordingly, he hurried there without delay, and on reaching the Hall he at once sent in a request to see Lady Landsdowne.

This request was answered by the appearance of Drury. Drury did not recognize Garth, but seemed struck by his appearance and impressed by a sense of his importance. Unable to conjecture anything as to the reason of this visit, he could only think that it might refer to Lucy, or perhaps to Tancred. He pleaded Lady Landsdowne's ill health as an excuse for her not appearing in person, and tried to induce Garth to confide his business to him.

All these statements, however, were abruptly pushed aside by Garth, who reiterated his request to see Lady Landsdowne.

"Tell her," said he, "that I have come on important business referring to events connected with her first advent to this place. She will understand that."

Upon this Drury shrunk back into his boots. He now felt sure that this man was Frink's confederate, who had come to finish his game, and perhaps to avenge him. There was therefore nothing more for him to do but to prepare Lady Landsdowne for this interview. He told Garth that he would acquaint her ladyship with his wishes, and went away full of the darkest apprehensions. In such a state of mind he went to acquaint Lady Landsdowne with this new portent. Lady Landsdowne was unable to make any preparation. She knew not for what she was to prepare, and therefore could only come down to see this new-comer for herself.

In this state of mind she entered the room, full of curiosity and apprehension. Garth had not seated himself, but remained standing in the center of the room, from which position he had amused himself in looking around. Here he stood, a tall, rough figure, but with an air of authority in his face, and dignity in his mien. Lady Landsdowne entered and regarded him fixedly with the same feeling of apprehension. Garth greeted her with a cold inclination of his head, and then regarded her in silence for some time.

Lady Landsdowne looked at him in the same silence. Drury, who came in after her, looked with dismay at her, turning his gaze first upon her, and then upon her visitor. He saw her face grow pale, and still paler, and a look of deadly terror come over it. She had recognized this man, and the discovery had thus overcome her. What was this? Who was he? What was he to her? Drury could not answer.

"Do you know me?" asked Garth, in a harsh voice.

Lady Landsdowne gasped, and said nothing. "Do you know me, I say," repeated Garth. "Answer me, Ann Holder!"

At the mention of this name Drury turned ghastly white, and staggered back with a start of terror and a look of despair.

"Yes," said the woman, whom he called by

the name "Ann Holder." She spoke in a scarce audible whisper.

"Who am I?"

At this the wretched woman looked wildly around, and then sunk upon her knees.

"Mercy!" she gasped. "Mercy, my lord, mercy!"

"Pooh! nonsense!" said Garth; "first do what I say. Answer what I ask, and speak the truth."

"Oh, my lord!"

"Who am I?"

"Lord—Lord Garth, my lord: Lord Landsdowne—Earl of Landsdowne, my lord," stammered the woman.

"And what do you mean by calling yourself Lady Landsdowne?"

The wretched woman groaned.

"You are Ann Holder. You were lady's-maid to my poor wife, that died nearly twenty years ago in France. My wife died, and my child died, and I, a broken-hearted man, became a wanderer over the earth. I forgot my country, and I forgot my family, and now I come back at last to find that some one has been living here all these years as my widow—personating my lost wife, with a false child used to personate my poor infant; and you—you are the woman. You, a common creature—Ann Holder—my wife's maid. Great canopy of Heaven!"

At this grand climax the woman, who had been crouching in the dust all along, now collapsed utterly, and fairly writhed at his feet in an agony of terror and remorse. Incoherent words escaped her, prayers for mercy, attempted excuses, confessions of guilt, deprecations of anger.

Garth turned away in contempt.

"Pooh! Get up," he cried. "Your offense is so abominable, so utterly infernal, that no punishment is adequate. Burning alive might do, but the law don't allow it. Your case is utterly beyond me. If it had been a smaller offense I might have had you hanged or transported for life; but as it is, I give up. Stand up and answer my questions, and then if you speak the truth you may go and take this blathering humbug with you. Only be careful to speak the truth."

At this the woman got upon her feet, and stood trembling. Garth now asked her a number of questions which need not be repeated here. The substance, however, may be given, which will also explain the whole plot.

The marriage of Garth Landsdowne has already been spoken of. It was as Mrs. Henslowe said, nor had her memories been incorrect. He had been a dashing young guardsman of London. During a visit in the country he had fallen in love with the daughter of a poor half-pay officer and married her. They had gone off to France and there lived for some time. In order to obtain the means of subsistence, Garth sold out of the army. His future was somewhat cloudy, for there was no prospect whatever of his inheriting the Landsdowne estates; but he was young and hopeful, and took no thought for the morrow.

At length his wife gave birth to a daughter. Not long afterward she died, leaving Garth utterly overwhelmed. For his daughter's sake, however, he still bore up. But the child was not long spared to him, for in a few months she followed her mother to the grave. This final blow fell with tremendous force upon Garth. He lost all pleasure in life. By one of those impulses common to men of strong passions, he went forth into the world at large to seek that distraction of soul, which may be more easily found in lawless communities than in the well-ordered centers of civilization. He cut himself off altogether from his old haunts and vanished completely out of the memory of man. Africa, Asia, and America became by turns the scene of his restless wanderings, and at last returning to Europe, he had found in Sicily a congenial sphere of action for his restless spirit. During all these years he heard nothing about the affairs of the Landsdownes, and even on his visit to Liverpool he did not take sufficient interest in them to make any inquiries about them. Circumstances had occurred, however, which, if known to him, would have excited his deepest interest, especially at the time when he was in such need of money.

At the very time when Garth was meeting with his deep afflictions, events of immense importance were transpiring at Landsdowne Hall. The Earl had died. This was George, Garth's cousin. Garth never heard of his death. The next heir was George's brother, Paul. He died in the following year. After this, the next heir