



A QUEEN UNCROWNED

THE STORY IN THE LONE INN.

CHAPTER XIX.

"How cruel of you, Miss Macdonald," said Lord Austrey, "to wish to deprive us of the pleasure of looking at the work of your fair hands! I am sure both Earncliffe and I will be delighted to criticise the drawing, and point out its defects."

"How very gallant! I presume you are about as good a critic as I am an artist. But, indeed, I would rather aunt would not show you this. Emily was reading an American novel the other day, and attempted to sketch a scene it described, and I assisted her, and I am afraid Lord Earncliffe, who has been over there, will laugh at our poor efforts."

"How can you suspect me of anything so shocking, Miss Norma? Ah! you ought to see those American scenes and draw from life. I am certain, if you are a lover of nature, and have not quite outlived all your old enthusiasm, you would be delighted with them. If you only could see Fontelle!"

"Fontelle!" exclaimed Lord George. "There's a Fontelle there, too?"

"Yes—my uncle's residence," and the very moral, as my old nurse used to say, of Fontelle Park—minus the park. Well, my dear Mrs. Tremain, did you find the drawing?"

"Yes, my lord; here it is."

She handed him the drawing, and he uttered an ejaculation of amazement as he looked at it. For it was the "Mermaid" and the scenery around it to the very life! There was the river, the shore, the long, straggling deserted road, the solitary inn, the hills and woods in the distance. And there, too, out in the river, was the low, dark schooner of Captain Nick Tempest, as he had seen the first evening he had ridden that way.

"Why, what is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed, looking up; "that is the Mermaid Inn for a duca!—that is the Hudson River, and that schooner is the Fly-by-Night, as sure as my name's Earncliffe. Why, Miss Norma, are you a magician?"

She laughed as she met his eyes, but her fair cheeks were crimson.

"Not exactly! But you are laughing at me, Lord Earncliffe! Do you mean to say that poor sketch is like anything you have ever seen?"

"To the very life! I have looked on that very scene dozens of times."

"Something, perhaps, slightly resembling it?"

"No; that, as it is, to an iota, without a shadow of difference. Some one must have described this to you, Norma?"

"Oh!" said Mrs. Tremain, anxious her own daughter should share the credit, "Emily commenced it from a description she read from a book—probably the scene was laid in that part of America where you were. Norma assisted her to finish it, only."

"It is an odd circumstance, anyway. I wonder what Mr. Rowley would say, if he knew two English ladies had been sketching his inn?" And Disbrowe laughed at the idea.

"Who is Mr. Rowley?" asked Lord Austrey.

"Oh! a particular friend of mine—keeps that inn you see there—a glorious old fellow he is, with the nicest little wife! Shall I tell you all that picture wants, Miss Macdonald, to make it complete?"

"Oh, yes! by all means! What is it?"

"Well—a rider before the door, horsewhipping an elderly individual with the most villainous face you can possibly draw; while a boy as handsome as an angel, and dressed like a young brigand, interferes to keep the peace. You will have a striking scene from life, then."

"Striking!" exclaimed Lord George. "Faith! I should say so—a pretty subject, that, for Miss Macdonald's pencil!"

After a few more remarks on the subject of the sketch, both gentlemen arose to go. Lord Austrey and Mrs. Tremain were conversing together in one part of the room, while Disbrowe was taking his departure with Norma. She turned to him with an agitated face, as he arose to go; and without looking up, said, hurriedly, and with a heightened color:

"Lord Earncliffe, I have something very important to say to you in private, and as soon as may be. When can I see you again?"

Her evident agitation, her downcast face, and hurried voice amazed him.

"At any time you please. I am always at your service, Norma."

"Then this evening—are you engaged?"

"No. I have no engagement that I cannot break."

"Then Mrs. Tremain and Emily will be out, and I will be alone. Will you call this evening?"

"I shall be only too happy."

"It is a strange request, I know," she said, coloring in painful embarrassment; "but you will understand me this evening. It is absolutely necessary this interview should take place, and immediately. I see Lord Austrey is going; so good-morning, my lord."

He bent over the hand she extended, completely puzzled by her strange manner; and when Lord Austrey had made his adieu, both went out together.

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— MAKE IT THE CHILDREN'S TREAT —

gether. The latter gentleman's cab stood at the door, and they sprang in and drove off.

"By Jove! she's a beauty!" enthusiastically exclaimed Lord George, as they dashed along. "I am half in love with her already."

"Which—the aunt or the niece?"

"Oh, pooh! I hope my religious education has not been so far neglected that I did not learn the Commandment: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.' Don't you think the belle Norma has improved since you saw her last?"

"Ye-es," said Lord Earncliffe, slowly. "She has altered, but whether it is an improvement or not, I am not ready to say at this present moment."

"Well, for one thing, she is not such a gushing young female as she was."

"No; she has, unhappily, come to the other extreme. Her manner seemed cold, constrained, unnatural, I thought."

"Oh, that was caused by meeting her betrothed 'fore folks.' If you had been alone, it would have been a different story."

"Well, I am soon likely to know. I am to see her this evening."

"When? You're not going there again—are you?"

"Yes. Have you any objection?"

"Yes, I have; most decided objections—most decided objections! Have you forgotten she is to be Lady Austrey, and that you have given up all right, claim, and title to the lady?"

"Well, no; but, to tell the truth, the engagement was of her own making. She told me she would be alone, and asked me to come."

Lord Austrey fell back, and indulged in a long, wailing whistle of intensest surprise.

"There's Miss Sibbotts for you! Oh, you shy ones are never to be trusted! What, in Heaven's name, can she want with you this evening?"

"That is something I did not ask her. To give me my coupe de couteau, I should judge by her look when giving the invitation. She said it was of the utmost importance, and was to be heard by me alone."

"Well, I am astonished! I say, Earncliffe, you won't make love to her—will you? Honor bright, you know."

Disbrowe laughingly promised. And they were soon driving through the park, too busy answering bows and salutations to talk further of Norma.

(To be continued.)

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What's the Wealth of London?

ALL ABOUT NEXT YEAR'S GIGANTIC STOCKTAKING.

Active preparations are being made in London for next year's quinquennial valuation, an enormous task in which property valuers, estate agents, rating experts, and the Town Clerks of the various boroughs play the leading part.

Known as the quinquennial valuation because it takes place every five years, the purpose of the undertaking is to ascertain the rateable value of all property in the Metropolis, from great hotels like the Ritz and the Carlton to tenements in Bethnal Green and little shops in the Mile End Road.

The authority for reassessing London's value from the point of view of the rate collector is not a modern Act of Parliament, but the "Statute of Elizabeth" passed in 1601, which rendered "every inhabitant, parson, vicar, and other" liable to pay rates. The Statute was amended to meet present-day conditions in 1889, the first five-yearly valuation taking place in 1870.

How Rates Are Levied. Since then the rateable value of the Metropolis has increased by nearly £30,000,000, it being estimated by competent judges that the forthcoming valuation will show that London is worth, from this standpoint, at least £58,000,000, a figure which does not, of course, include the outlying districts, such as Richmond or Ilford.

Already many owners of property have received their valuation forms, on which must be recorded a description of the premises in question, rent, whether let on lease or under an agreement, the duration of either, and similar facts. The forms are reviewed by the valuation committees of the different local authorities, and later a valuation list, showing revisions, is posted up at the Town Hall, where it remains for two weeks to allow of objections being handed in.

All objections are heard by the assessment committee, and if the plaintiff still fails to satisfy the referees he seeks his way to giving formal notice and by depositing £50, as security for the costs of the appeal, brings his case for consideration at the next quarter session.

Rates are imposed on other forms of property besides houses, shops, and so on. Railway companies have to pay rates on their stations and lines. In London the revenue from this source alone is over £2,250,000. Ad-

vertisement boardings, gas, water and electricity mains, and even sewers, are rated, as well as racecourses, theatres, and cinemas, the latter being assessed according to the seating accommodation.

On the other hand, there are certain kinds of property that are considered exempt for this purpose, as, for instance, churches and chapels, art galleries, public libraries, and museums. Ships do not pay rates.

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unless they happen to be permanently moored. Caravans also escape, although in recent months one or two local authorities have floated this regulation and imposed rates in cases where they regarded this course as justified. The lighthouses and lightships maintained by Trinity House and the Board of Trade are also exempt, but those in the possession of dock and shipping companies have to pay.

Exemption is also granted in the case of foreign embassies and legations, on the ground that they are internationally recognized as being part of the territory of the country they represent. Crown property cannot be assessed for rates, but in some instances, such as telephone and telegraph cables, post-offices, and custom-houses, the Government departments concerned make a payment to the local authorities in place of the rates that would ordinarily be demanded.

Knuckle-Duster Fight in London

RIVAL GANGS BATTLE IN STREET AND DISAPPEAR SUDDENLY.

Amazing scenes were witnessed in Oxford Street, London, when gangs of men, armed with knuckle-dusters, suddenly engaged in a free fight.

Prior to the extraordinary incident, it was noticed by the Sunday afternoon crowd that two light covered vans were being driven along Oxford Street at a rapid pace.

Suddenly the leading van slowed up and a band of men jumped out. Each man was equipped with a knuckle-duster.

Pedestrians were bewildered at what followed. The second van stopped, and a similarly armed crew leapt down into the road.

In a moment the two gangs had come to grips, and the men fought furiously for several minutes.

Police whistles were blown, women screamed, and for a time there was general uproar and alarm.

When the panic was at its height, and the police whistles were screaming insistently, the rival gangs rushed back to the vans, one partly carrying a bleeding man, who had been knocked down in the strange encounter.

The vans then drove off and disappeared from sight before the police arrived.

Scotland Yard officials are unable to throw any light on the mysterious affair.

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