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Which Was The Heir?
CHAPTER XXXI.
(Continued.)

THE old man sat in his accustomed chair and beat his glittering eyes upon the young man's face; but the lamp was thickly shaded, and probably Sidney's pallor was not noticed.

'Good-evening,' said the earl in his metallic voice. 'So you have come back? Wait! Please do not tell me where you have been. Of all my many small vices I have always kept free from that of impertinent curiosity. And, if I may say so with out rudeness, I have no desire to know. The doings and the whereabouts of my fellow-men have long ceased to interest me.'

'I have been for a little change,' said Sidney Bassington, trying to keep the tremor from his voice, but, of course, failing. 'I have been travelling—er—for a little change.'

The earl nodded.

'Very reasonable. Change is always desirable. Travelling is expensive. Do you find that your means permit of it?'

Sidney Bassington's heart jumped with satisfaction.

'Well, sir, I have rather overrun the constable,' he began, rather jauntily; but the old man cut his jauntiness to the ground with a scornful gesture.

'For God's sake, don't use the phraseology of a lawyer's clerk to me, sir!' he said, sternly. 'You mean, I presume, if you can bring yourself to use the language of a gentleman, that you have exceeded your allowance. Is that so?'

'I am afraid I have, sir,' said Sidney Bassington in a low voice, and quaking as he spoke.

'I am not surprised,' said the earl. 'There is an old proverb, "a baggar on horseback"—but I do not blame you for riding hard; though I desire that you do not ride quite to the devil. Oh, no apologies, please! For Sidney had opened his mouth. "I have no doubt that you are no better than most young men of your class—or of mine, for that matter—and that you sow your wild oats as thickly as others. But, all the same, I think it as well that your sowing should be a brief one. If you have exceeded your allowance, you may draw upon my bankers for the sum of money you need. Tell it to Mr. Oldham: I have no wish to know—One moment! In a recent conversation, you were good enough to enlarge upon the charms of Miss Eva Rashleigh. I gleaned—rightly or wrongly—that you had a penchant for that lady. If I am right, I would advise you to pursue your attentions in that direction. It is necessary that the heir to Starborough should make an early marriage. I will

up to London by the morning train. Eva gave him his breakfast, attending to his wants—they were very few, for he was too anxious to eat much—with that silent, exquisite devotion which such a woman can display to a man at such a time; and when it came to the moment of saying good-bye, she was not full of words as Edward was, but gave him her hand in almost silence.

'I don't know how to thank you, Miss Rashleigh, for all your goodness to me,' said poor Geoffrey, too modest and simple to understand the scarcely hidden tenderness in her beautiful eyes; 'in fact, the less I say the better. But I do ask you to believe that I am very, very grateful that I shall never forget your kindness to me as long as I live. Perhaps, when I have found my boy, you will let me come back—and bring him with me—for I feel wretched at running away like this; but I got a kind of idea that the boy is in trouble, and—and—I'm very fond of him. You see—he stammered, apologetically—the young beggar was alone with me so long, and—and he saved my life. I should have been a dead man if he hadn't been quick with his rifle. But I won't apologise; I'm sure you understand.'

'We understand,' said Eva, in a low voice; and she thought she did.

Edward drove Geoffrey to the station, and parted with him reluctantly enough. He would have gone with him, but Geoffrey would not hear of it. He felt that he really had no right to bore his friend with such a search as he—Geoffrey was starting upon.

'Of course you'll let us hear from you,' said Edward; 'and mind, you come at the first moment you can, with or without the boy. You talk about saving lives; don't you forget you saved mine! Besides, you're the best chap I've met for a long while, and I froze to you as they say on the other side. Remember the Hall's your home, and you'll get a darned sight warmer welcome there than most fellows get when they fly back to the nest!'

Geoffrey could scarcely say anything to this and a great deal more, for he was not good at words; but he wrung Edward's hand and looked him square in the face with a look which, in men of Geoffrey's stamp, means so much.

Tired as he was when he reached London, he started on the old game, commencing at the terminus and beating the well known corners—the police-station, the hospitals, even the slums.

But nowhere could he find any trace of Ronnie, for his description was always of a lad, dressed as a lad; and, as he was informed about fifty times a day, there are so many lads in London. Sometimes he went to a theatre or a music-hall, and prowled about the auditorium, staring at every young fellow who bore any resemblance to Ronnie, and making himself a general nuisance. Every day he hoped for a letter from Mrs. Sefton, who might receive some answer from her advertisement, but none came; and one morning it occurred to him that he would run down to Brighton and see Mrs. Sefton.

(To be continued.)

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say no more. You are doubtless weary with your long journey—you said it was a long one, did you not? I wish you good night!

He dismissed the young man with a wave of the hand, and Sidney went from the earl's presence feeling, as he always did, like a beaten hound.

But the earl's words rang in his ears and almost drowned his resentment. Eva Rashleigh! The earl consented to, and even wished, the marriage. Would it be possible for him—Sidney—to win her? Why not? There was Rachel, of course; but—thank Heaven—he was not tied to her!

CHAPTER XXXV.

Geoffrey and the two Rashleighs searched the town that night for the missing Ronnie. Geoffrey forgot his weakness—though Eva did not—and turned a deaf ear to all their entreaties that he would remain quiet and allow them to do the searching.

Every now and then he himself was struck by the terrible keenness of his desire to find the boy, to see him again; and the intensity of his affection puzzled him—it was an affection passing that of a brother; and, if the word be not too strange when applied to a man, it had almost a touch of maternity in it. It seemed to him that the even the great trouble and grief of his nameless birth were as nothing compared with his loss of Ronnie.

When, late at night, they returned from a futile search of the town and the whole neighbourhood—for futile it necessarily was, seeing that they were enquiring for a boy, and that it never occurred to even Eva that Ronnie might have disguised herself in some of the clothes that had been sent in the basket for Betty—Geoffrey announced his intention of going to London by the first train.

'Eva flushed crimson, and then her face went pale; but she said not a word, though Edward remonstrated with Geoffrey in flowing and emphatic language.

'What the devil good can you do—I beg your pardon, Eva; but it makes me mad to think of this chap rushing about when he is only fit to lie on his back. You might as well try and find a needle in a bundle of hay as hope to spot a youngster in London. Besides, you don't know that he's gone there; and all the evidence goes to prove that he has not. Do you think that the people at the station wouldn't have noticed such a boy? He's one of those striking kids' that attract your attention; he's such a good-looking little devil. You stop here, and I'll go to London; though I tell you I think it's waste of time. Better engage a private detective.'

But Geoffrey was averse to this. There was evidently some mystery about Ronnie's proceedings; the police in Australia had assured him that the lad was in bad hands. Geoffrey felt that he must keep clear of the detective element.

He was as obstinate as a mule where his heart was concerned, and he stuck to his determination to go

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G., Mundy Pond Chafe, Miss Annie, Mundy Pond Catigan, Thomas J., Duckworth St. Case, Amos Carson, W. Carew, Miss May Clarke, Mrs. C. W. Cheeseman, Mrs. Jas., York Street Hitch, Bertram Hisholm, T. F. Jofford, Andrew, Mundy Pond Road Joady, John, ret'd. Cornell, Ross E. Coyell, Miss E., care Wm. Redstone South Side Connolly, Miss Ethel, ret'd. Cooper, Miss Dora, care Miss Crocker Crocker, W. J. Cox, Mrs. Minnie, ret'd. Cook, A. J., slip Conway, Jas. Patrick, care G. P. O. Cullen, Miss Rose, ret'd. Cummings, Mrs. Wm. Curnew, James, Duckworth Street	D Dawe, Isaac Dawe, George Davis, Mrs. Michael Dally, Morris A., care G. P. O. Dalton, Mrs. B., ret'd. Devereaux, Mrs. Annie, New Gower St. Dwyer, Michael, Mundy Pond Road Doyle, Miss Nellie, ret'd. Donivan, Maggie, card, Quidi Vidi Rd. Downey, Elias Dooley, Bernard	E Doyle, Miss Bessie, ret'd. Donnelly, Miss M., ret'd. Duff, Miss M., card, care G. P. O. E Evans, Mr., card Earle, Wm., card Earle, Jacob Ehlett, John, Bond St. F Farland, K. M. 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