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CHAPTER LX.
A LAWYER OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

Lawyers nowadays may possess not one whit less honor, but they are scarcely so loyal to the families whom they represent.

In the old times to possess a solicitor was to possess a friend.

A family lawyer was a family bulwark, henchman, and guardian. He was the recipient of the most sacred confidences, the adviser on matters that even stood outside the pale of purely legal ground.

No marriage was promoted or celebrated without his advice and help; no will made, lease granted, decisive step taken, legal or otherwise, without his advice having been obtained.

Such a lawyer was Mr. Reeves; such a friend had he been to the Dale and its masters up to the death of Sir Harry.

Nay, though he scarcely owed the same true loyalty to the new master, Reginald Dartmouth, he would have remained in the same character to him; but as we know Captain Dartmouth had no friend, no confidant, and could not regard the possibility of one with anything but aversion and dread.

So Mr. Reeves—though acting as the Dale solicitor as before—really did little for Reginald Dartmouth, and had seen nothing of him since the final settlement of Sir Harry's affairs.

He, it will be remembered, had closely questioned Captain Dartmouth concerning the last moments of Sir Harry; he it was who had opened and read the will, and attended to the necessary forms and legalities.

In the discharge of these duties the keen-eyed old lawyer may have seen much to arouse his suspicions—or he may not. Either way he had remained an ever-silent and inscrutable.

To him Sir Charles now went.

He found him located in an old-fashioned, red-bricked house, substantial



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"And you wish me to take up this clew and follow it out said Mr. Reeves.

"Yes," said Sir Charles.

Mr. Reeves looked grave.

"Sir Charles," he said, slowly, "such practice—such criminal practice—is entirely out of my province. I have never touched matters of this sort, have never soiled my professional hand—you will pardon the expression—by undertaking a case of this description. My practice is peculiarly a civil one, and though for once I might feel disposed, in my anxiety to be of some service to Miss Goodman, to waive that objection, I fear I could not be of so much assistance as a solicitor practicing in a criminal court and having at his elbow a staff of trained detectives."

Sir Charles nodded.

"Just so, Mr. Reeves; this objection I expected, and had little doubt of overcoming, but I regret to say that one still more formidable remains."

Mr. Reeves raised his eyes keenly for a moment, then lowered them again, listening as before.

"That one is—you have not asked me the name of the individual whom Miss Goodman suspects, Mr. Reeves."

The old lawyer smiled a dry smile.

"We do not ask for confidences, Sir Charles; we only receive them."

"Ay, ay," said Sir Charles. "Perhaps it is well that as yet I have not told you. First let me state that the person we suspect of criminal acts and wrongdoing is a client of yours."

Mr. Reeves rose immediately.

"Sir Charles," he said, as the baronet, alarmed at the sudden change in his manner from calm, courtesy to proud reserve was about to speak—"Sir Charles, not another word, I beg. You should have told me this at the commencement of the interview. Surely you must be aware that my client would, on getting the slightest knowledge of your movements, come to me immediately, as his solicitor and legal adviser. How could you imagine that I could so betray a client's interest as to consent to advise his opponent or accusers? You must not say another word, for your own sake, my dear sir, for I am bound in honor to use whatever information you may give me after this morning for the benefit of my client."

He evidently expected Sir Charles to rise and say good-day, but the baronet, though he flushed rather hotly, remained quietly in his chair, and seemed waiting to speak.

When the old lawyer was silent, he said:

"I am fully aware of all you say, Mr. Reeves—knew it to be as you state before I started this morning; but still I am here, you see, and still I ask your assistance in discovering and punishing—a crime. No, hear me out, please," he said, earnestly, as Mr. Reeves held up his hand again, with a warning shake of the head. "I foresaw all your objections, and I still decided to come, for I believe, Mr. Reeves, that I can offer you an inducement to join our side—I say side, for it will be a pitched battle, short and decisive—and help us."

The old lawyer colored faintly.

"If you mean any pecuniary inducement, Sir Charles," he said, coldly.

"But Sir Charles stopped him with a smile and exclamation of impatience.

"I am not so entirely senseless as to imagine that I could bribe you to take any course whatsoever, Mr. Reeves," he said. "One gentleman does

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not come to ask a favor of another with a bank-note in his hand."

"I beg your pardon," said the old man.

"And I, in granting it, beg yours for putting my case so badly," said Sir Charles. "The fact is, Mr. Reeves, I am the very last person to carry this thing out properly. But I have come with a plain, unvarnished case, and I will go on with it. I ask you to join us, for no pecuniary reasons, but for those of justice and loyalty. Let me put it before you in my blundering way. Supposing you have been—as of a surety you have—the legal adviser, counselor, guide, and friend of a good old house, noble in more than name, ever since you have been able to act in those capacities."

"I follow you," said Mr. Reeves, seating himself.

"That house, family, is bound up in yourself, is a part of your life; you know all its secrets, are more conversant with its history, past and present, than even its masters, and have grown to look upon its sons as your own."

"I follow you still," said Mr. Reeves, in a low voice, as Sir Charles paused to give his words effect.

"From father to son the house and estate go down, not by entail, mark, but by will, an entail of affection and parental confidence; at last the estate rests in the hands of a fiery old man with one brave-hearted, noble-minded son. There exists no reason why the grand estates should not still go with the good old name as of yore, but suddenly, in a fit of unreasonable temper, father and son part—the latter is turned adrift the inheritance falls—mark me, I don't say given—falls into the hands of a man of another name, an individual whose interests lie apart from the old estates, whose life has been entirely separate from it and whose character is doubtful. I ask you where your loyalty lies?"

"With the owner of the estate," returned the old lawyer, gravely. "Be he a stranger or kin matters not. He to whom the estate goes has my loyalty."

"Ah!" said Sir Charles bending forward; "but not, surely not, if he who has it has grasped it from the hands of the rightful heir and holds it by foul play!"

The old lawyer's hands, which still concealed his face, shook visibly.

There was a moment's pause. Then, in a very low voice, he said:

"You are speaking now of—"

"The Dale and Reginald Dartmouth!" interrupted Sir Charles.

The old lawyer's hand dropped suddenly upon the table, and he turned his face, much moved, but still kept in restraint.

"Sir Charles," he said, "I always held you to be Captain Dartmouth's friend."

"So I was until I had good reason to believe him a villain, and then—not being his solicitor—I called him enemy and prepared to fight with him for the heritage which he has stolen from Hugh Darrell."

The last word seemed to break the back of the old man's firmness.

At the old, familiar, much-loved name he turned suddenly aside and groaned. Then, before Sir Charles could follow up his advantage—or spell it by attempting to do so—he turned the hand-bell and, in a low voice, said:

"I will accompany you, Sir Charles, to the Warren."

(To be continued.)

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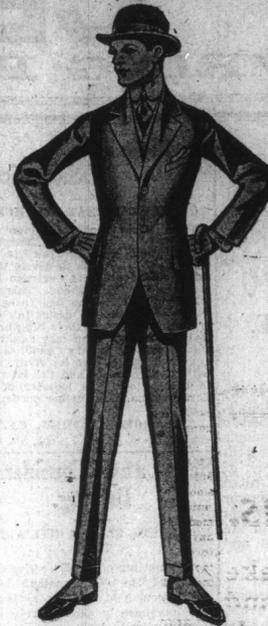
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