

LLOYD PENNANT

A TALE OF THE WEST.

By RALPH NEVILLE, Esq.

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CHAPTER VIII.—CONTINUED.

"Stay a bit," he said, as Fincher led the way out...

When Colonel Blake reached the goal next morning all was bustle and confusion...

More than six months had now elapsed since the execution of the mortgage to Mr. Glipper...

To add to their disquietude, Mr. Doek's bankruptcy appeared shortly after the Gazette...

For some time after the trial, Fincher Martin felt considerable uneasiness as to the consequences...

His first step after the prisoner's conviction and escape was to prevent further publicity by securing the local press...

His marriage was by no means a happy one, his wife being anything but an amiable person...

At length accident disclosed the nature of the ailment to her astonished husband; and to the dread inspired by the revelations made to him...

Nearly two years had gone by since the trial. The interest on the debts affecting the Dunseverick estates had been punctually paid by Mike...

Fincher Martin received the proposition with delight. He longed for the opportunity of playing the "grand seigneur," and of exhibiting his wealth and splendor...

Now, then, was the time to secure a visit from the haughty peer, which might lead to an invitation for Mrs. Fincher Martin and herself...

Kate had been early taught the necessity of self-control and the value of self-reliance. At nineteen she found herself plighted and deserted...

be unknown to any but herself and Mike, together with the efforts made to solve the mystery of her lover's disappearance...

The vicissitudes of her uncle's fortune showed her that calamities might arise, when least expected, and she prepared herself to meet any which Providence might send...

Colonel Blake often marvelled at the indomitable perseverance with which she mastered a language or learned an art. He little knew that those severe studies and prolonged labors were undertaken from a far higher motive...

The mutual confidence established between Mike and herself since the interview in the drawing-room tended to give this bent to her mind and this direction to her reflections...

It was no wonder that a girl whose thoughts and acts were regulated by such high motives, and whose affections were guided by such rigid principles, whose disposition was so unselfish...

Parliament having been suddenly dissolved, Theobald Frederick Blatherwell again solicited the honor of representing the county.

The candidate who could then base his claims on patriotism must be a fellow able to drink all night and ready to fight in the morning...

Theobald Frederick could not lay claim to even the least meritorious of those qualifications, being neither eloquent in his speech nor elegant in his manners...

The worthy judge had other motives, too, for proposing the arrangement; it would not only facilitate his son's communication with the leaders of his party...

Fincher Martin stood before her with a smiling face, and she looked upon him coldly, although they had paid the usual complimentary visits on his establishment amongst them...

"Very," replied Mike, looking intently at her; "it is the first time I've had the honor of meeting her, for you may suppose, Lord Heatheringfield, that past occurrences cut off all intercourse between the Blakes and Martins...

"I only wanted to say," addressing Mike, as he closed the door, "that I will expect the Colonel to support Blatherwell."

"That, I think," Pincher continued, becoming excited, "is the least he can do, considering how kind I have behaved towards him."

"I don't care a d—n about you, sir," said Pincher. "I set you at defiance. I'll go over to-morrow with Blatherwell, and have a clear understanding and decisive answer. And if you, or your relative, as you call him, attempt to annoy me, I'll take you to the King's Bench to learn your manners."

headquarters during his sojourn in the neighborhood, and enclosed an invitation for that nobleman, which he requested his relative to forward and enforce with all his influence.

Mrs. and the Misses Blatherwell (there were two) formed a considerable addition to the family circle, and now it only remained to secure the presence of some of the neighboring aristocracy to render success complete.

Colonel Blake declined on the score of ill-health and disinclination to enter society, but even he was awed by the power which Fincher, were he hostilely disposed, might exercise over him, and therefore, to keep up appearances, suggested that Kate and Mike should go.

It rarely happens that persons unaccustomed to move in good society from their youth can do the honors of their table with that elegance and ease which only habitual association with the refined can impart.

It was the first occasion upon which Mrs. Blatherwell and her daughters had the honor of dining in company with the Heatheringfield ladies; for, although the peer, when in town, sometimes patronized the judge, the countess had never honored their new connections with her presence at an entertainment.

Lady Heatheringfield, who was too conscious of her own position to be supercilious, displayed the utmost condescension when she came in contact with the female branches of the Blatherwell family, and had even gone the length of suggesting that some of them might be invited to the Manor; but the earl at once put an extinguisher on the proposal, declaring peremptorily "that it would never answer."

Unfortunately, Mrs. Blatherwell deemed it necessary to show off before her grand connections on this the first opportunity which presented itself, for the purpose of convincing them that she could do the fine lady, and by so doing the good woman added exceedingly to the perplexities and discomfort of the evening.

"Dearest" (the pet name by which the judge always addressed his better half) was a fine buxom dame, turned of fifty, with a person rather stout, with a face presenting as florid a picture of robust health as the most jovial bacchanal that ever issued from the enzel of Nichol Poussin.

The entertainment was progressing heavily, but all things considered, rather well, when a preliminary hysterical sob startled the company, and Mrs. Blatherwell fell back in her chair.

"My support, sir, is already promised—" "Promised!" repeated Pincher. "Then, sir, I'm sorry for it on your own account, for if you don't give my cousin your votes you must be ready to give me my money; and in the meantime I tell you plainly that I'll have no more trees cut; and I warn you publicly (the laborers had now entered) not to lay a finger on one more of them or I'll make it a dear job to you or any other person who executes your orders."

"You will please to leave my demesne forthwith, sir," he said, addressing Pincher, with his usual serenity of manner. "If you have any power to enforce your threats, you may do so; but until you satisfy me of your authority to interfere I have not the least notion of allowing you to dictate to me what I shall do with my own property."

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Hear Kate's smiling face appeared at the window. She tapped, and joyously asked the gentlemen to accompany her in a walk.

"Heaven bless you, my sweet and warm-hearted girl!" muttered the Colonel, as he rose from his seat to comply with her request.

Mr. Fincher Martin lost no time in putting his threats into execution. Before a week elapsed, a formal demand was made for the amount of the mortgage, accompanied by a notification that if the money remained unpaid after ten days he should proceed by bill of foreclosure.

Mike, who had now become quite a man of business, at once proceeded to Dublin, and by the next post after his arrival transmitted the cheques and intelligence that Pepper assured him "there could be no difficulty in getting the sum required; in fact he had no doubt that he could have it that very evening had he only the time to call upon the proper parties."

Mr. Pepper, it may be remarked, never felt a difficulty about anything he undertook; although it, unfortunately for his clients, almost invariably turned out that his expectations were not realized. Mike dined with him, and passed a very merry night, for he anticipated the joy which his letter would diffuse amongst his friends at Dunseverick. Next morning he waited on Pepper by appointment. Some of the persons they called upon were from home, and others so occupied that they could not receive them, and so that day passed; and on the succeeding one the disappointments were repeated. At length Mr. Pepper wrote to a friend in the country (his trump card), and was informed as quickly as a communication could reach him in return "that what he called a regular off-hand, honest fellow. Now, all that remains to be done is to stop proceedings and draw up the deeds. There are but four of the ten days unexpired. Let's go to Sharp's office, and show him that we require no more time this time to prepare our papers. A great deal he is, no doubt, but he will scarcely venture to do anything under such circumstances."

Mr. Sharp, however, soon undeceived them. "His instructions were peremptory, and he must obey them. The money were not paid within the specified time the bill should be filed."

No making a head of the sanctimonious scoundrel," said Pepper, as they walked away. "It's not possible to have deeds prepared so quickly, and if the bill be filed the expenses will be heavy. You must at once start for home, call upon the judge, be his Fincher's master, and is just now staying with him; take this letter—he knows the writer, and will see that the money is forthcoming. Ask his interference as a favor, be sweet upon the old hound, and you might lead him to inter- [with a wink] "that although the Dunseverick interest is against him this time it may be for him the next. He is a sassy fellow, and if you lay on thick you may possibly save both the expenses and exposure."

Mike rose cheerily as a lack on the morning after his arrival at the castle, and commented his vivacity to the friends who so graciously missed his hearty, good-natured laugh during his absence. His horse was ordered, and after an early breakfast he set out, without acquainting any one with his destination or purpose, to call upon Judge Blatherwell. Being of a sanguine temperament, Mike, when he desired success, always set success down as certain; and not doubting the felicitous issue of his present undertaking, he hummed snatches of hunting songs as he trotted smartly towards Castlemore.

The judge received him in the library, seated in an arm-chair, and enveloped in a rich, but sombre-colored dressing-gown. He continued attentively perusing a small-sized bible which he held in his hand, interrupted by the entrance of the servant, and Mr. Blake's name was announced; then he raised his eyes, smiled benignly, bowed graciously, and requested his visitor to sit down. Having performed all that politeness demanded, he laid the open book on the table, so that its sacred character might be easily recognized, cautiously removed the blue ribbon-marker to the page which he had been reading, then closed and grasped his treasure, as though he dreaded its abduction, and raised his eyes to the ceiling as he clasped it to his breast. Again he smiled blandly, bowed even more graciously than before, and then remained silent. It happened to be the hour (after the morning meal, and before the commencement of his diurnal duties) which the worthy judge devoted to private meditation, and the precise time when he wished to see and be seen, because he was then always well made up for the part he assumed, and prepared to enact the character of a devoted Christian to perfection.

Fincher, who was in the room, continued writing at another table, and did not appear to notice anything passing around him.

Mike was charmed with his reception, and as he looked on the placid, benevolent countenance of the judge he regarded his object as almost accomplished. And then, how fortunate to find the person at whose hands he sought a favor actually pondering over the sacred volume which incalculable brotherly love and Christian forbearance. Had his knowledge of physiognomy been more profound, he might have marked the unrelenting expression of the clear, cold, blue eye, and the smile of suppressed triumph which sat upon the sneering lip, but partially concealed by the catlike gentleness with which the vindictive man contemplated the victim now fairly within his clutches.

After some desultory remarks, the conveyer entered on the subject of his mission without the slightest embarrassment.

Colonel Blake being, as you are aware, in delicate health, and unable to call upon you, Judge Blatherwell, has deputed me to speak to you concerning the mortgage held by Mr. Fincher Martin on the Dunseverick estates. [The Baron bowed.] He is much surprised to find that such decisive steps are about to be taken, and hopes that you, as the uncle and trustee of Mr. Martin, will kindly exert your influence to procure a short delay in the proceedings.

"I should have felt a difficulty in addressing myself to Mr. Martin, on account of some unfortunate circumstances which have recently occurred, in which, I am willing to admit, I may have been to blame, and for which I am prepared to make a suitable apology. [He turned to where Fincher sat to see the effect produced by such unconditional submission; he caught the full expression of his face, and was startled by its malignity.]

The judge hemmed, and was proceeding to reply, when Mike interrupted him. "I beg to say that all we require is a delay sufficient to enable us to have the deeds resigning the mortgage drawn up, for the money is ready."