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Which Was The Heir?

(Continued.) CHAPTER XLIII. HOW do you do, Miss Rashleigh? Your visit, whatever its import, is a very great honour and pleasure to me. Pray be seated, for Eva, in her agitation and out of respect for his age, had unconsciously risen. Let me beg of you to be seated. Permit me to enquire after Sir Edward Rashleigh's health. We have not seen each other for some time: the loss, as well as the cause is, I fear, mine. I am an old man and a cantankerous one, I have been ill and feeble of late; but I am stronger now, and if my strength continues to increase, I hope to have the pleasure and honour of calling upon Sir Edward, and the satisfaction of telling him that I am afraid I do not remember the cause of our quarrel—that I am sure I was in the wrong. My brother will be very, very pleased to see you, Lord Starborough, faltered Eva. Confronted by those dark, piercing eyes glittering in the waxen face, that grim, calm, and stately courtesy, she found her task very difficult. I have come—this young lady is a great, a dear friend of mine. Her name is Constance Setton. She wishes to see Mr. Geoffrey Bell—it is important that she should see him at once. The glittering eyes fixed themselves on Cottie's face penetratingly as the earl bowed to her. It is most fortunate that you should have come here, he said, for Mr. Geoffrey Bell is at this moment in the castle. I will send for him. He rang the bell and gave the message to Yates; then he turned to Cottie. Is this your first visit to this neighbourhood, Miss Setton? he asked, blandly. Cottie raised her eyes, and inwardly quaking, answered in a very low voice: No. Indeed, said the earl. It seemed to me that I had had the pleasure of seeing you before; but the name is not familiar to me. At this moment the door opened

and Geoffrey came in. He was grave and pale, and his face bore marks of the terrible struggle which had taken place in the cottage. He had no idea why the earl had sent for him—they had been together in the earl's room, talking long and earnestly, when the earl had been brought down to see Eva—and Geoffrey looked with surprise from Eva to the other girl sitting, with downcast face, in the shadow of the great room. Miss Rashleigh! he said; then he looked again at the other, a cry of amazement burst from him, and he sprang towards her and caught her hand. Constance—you here! The earl had risen and stood grimly regarding them. Permit me to retire, he said; and he turned towards the door. No, no, cried Geoffrey. Don't go, sir! This young lady is—she is Miss Constance Setton. She is—may I say it, Constance? my future wife. I was going to tell you about her, about my hope, when you were fetched away just now, Constance, this is the earl of Starborough. He led her, shrinking and trembling, towards the earl, led her with love and pride on his face and in his bearing, as if he were sure of the welcome she would receive. The earl fixed his eyes on her, and as he scanned her face his thin lips curved with a peculiar smile—one, as it seemed, of cynical amusement. He extended his hand and took and held hers. I am glad to see you at the castle, Miss Setton, he said, and I congratulate your future husband, whomsoever he may be. Geoffrey beamed at the earl and at Cottie with all a lover's satisfaction. She hasn't promised yet, sir, he said, earnestly. But I think you will, Constance, when you hear what I have to tell you. I have found Ronnie, my boy partner, and I have got his consent which you insisted upon. I found him to-day—this morning—in the strangest way. There has been a discovery, made under terrible circumstances—I will tell you about them later. He proves to be the nephew of Lord Starborough, here. Neither he nor I nor his lordship knew it until this morning. The discovery came like a thunder-clap in the midst of a tragedy. Ronnie will be here directly; he should have been here by now. I don't know what has kept him or where he is. I was going to search for him. There is no need, said the earl, Constance—Ronnie! he cried in a voice hoarse with emotion. Oh, how blind I have been! And my heart ought to have helped me to the truth! I ought to have known that my love for you was, from the beginning, that of man for woman. How blind I have been! You ask for forgiveness! It is I who ought to kneel to you. Yes; forgive me, Ronnie, forgive me, Constance. Oh, my darling, my dearest! I don't know what to say. I have got you both, Constance and Ronnie in one. He looked at the earl, seeing the bent, stately form through a mist of tears which did not shame Geoffrey's manhood.

slowly. I saw him in the room a few minutes ago. Geoffrey swung round in astonishment, and Cottie shrank back and sank into a chair and covered her face. Ronnie, the boy, here, sir! exclaimed Geoffrey. Where? Where is he gone? He sits there, said the earl, with perfect calm; and he pointed to Cottie. Geoffrey stood transfixed for a moment; then he sprang towards her, drew her hands from her face and gazed at her searchingly, the hands that grasped hers trembling with the excitement of the dawning truth. Constance! Ronnie! he exclaimed. Yes, it is you! Ronnie, speak to me. Are you Constance or Ronnie? He drew back for a moment, waiting for her reply. Eva rose and glided towards them. She is both, she murmured, almost inaudibly, in her agitation. Don't you see—can't you guess? She has been Constance all the time. It was her brother—Ronnie—who died; and it was she—Constance, the sister—who took his place.

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'Boy or girl, she has been all the world to me, sir,' he said, brokenly. 'No man ever had a truer friend—lover. The sweetest, dearest boy—and girl—in all the world.' They clung together, forgetful of all else except themselves. Eva stole to the earl. 'You see, you understand, my lord,' she pleaded. 'They have loved each other from the first. You cannot be angry—you will consent? She is your own blood—' The earl raised Eva's hand to his lips with old-world courtesy. 'My dear young lady,' he said, with perfect calm and perfect courtesy. 'I have no desire to interfere; and, indeed, I do not think any interference of mine would be of any avail. The romance must take its course. Indeed, I am conscious of a certain satisfaction in adding to it, and, so to speak, rounding it off to poetic completion. If these lovers are not too engrossed in mutual confidences, I should like to inform Miss Constance Setton—I humbly beg her pardon—Miss Constance Bassington—that the young man whom she has honoured as her choice is also my nephew, the son of my brother, Reginald Bassington, and that he is the heir to Starborough.' Cottie heard and understood only dimly; but the earl advanced to her and took her hand. (To be continued.)

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Table with columns A, F, M, G, H, J, K, L, D, B, E, R. Lists names and addresses of individuals with unclaimed letters.

SEAMEN'S LIST

Table with columns A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R. Lists names and details of seamen.

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