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The Mystery of Rutledge Hall
—OR—
"The Cloud With a Silver Lining"

CHAPTER XXIX.

Watching his son's face furtively but keenly, as he laughed and chatted, making witty remarks about the costumes and their occasional incongruity, Mr. Daunt, his eyes quickened by the words which had fallen from his wife, saw that the young man's face looked somewhat worn and haggard, and that there was a look of pain in his grave dark eyes which had not been there some weeks before. Was Lady Eva right? he wondered. Had Stephen indeed chosen unwisely? Was he not happy with his sweet young wife? Sidney was so sweet and true and good it was impossible that they should be anything but happy, he thought; and yet, as his mother had said, Stephen's face was not the face of a happy man.

"Why did not Sidney come over with you, Stephen?" he asked; and he saw the swift flush which rose in the young man's cheek at the mention of his wife's name.

"I drove in from Ashford," he answered.

"Ah, yes; I had forgotten! Milner, why did you not induce her to come over with you? I am afraid she devotes herself far too much to that poor unhappy girl."

"Miss Greville was to return home to-day," remarked Lloyd.

"To-day," Stephen repeated, looking up in surprise. "Are you sure, Lloyd?"

"Yes, I heard Mrs. Sanders ordering the brougham."

"But surely," Lady Eva remarked, drawing in her lips with some meaning, "if Christine was so ill last night that Sidney could not leave her for an hour to come here, she can hardly be well enough to go home!"

"She would have to be very ill, mamma, if she could not be lifted into the brougham and driven slowly to Ashford," spoke Dolly, rather sharply.

"And she must have been very ill if Sidney could not leave her for an hour," replied Lady Eva, with equal sharpness.

"I am afraid she is very ill," Mr. Daunt said, sorrowfully. "I spoke to Arnold yesterday, and he did not give much hope of her recovery. Poor child, hers is a sad story!" he added, with a sigh.

"Are you going to drive into town with us, mademoiselle?" Stephen asked, smiling, as they left the luncheon-table, and Lloyd was preparing to say his farewells.

"I have been thinking of it for some time."

"Do you think then that your wife's health necessitates a change of climate?" said Lloyd, gently, looking at the troubled face.

"My wife's health?" Stephen echoed, turning to him. "No; my wife would not go with me, and— You do not think Sidney is ill?" he asked, in quick anxiety.

"I do not think she is very strong," Lloyd answered, evasively. "But I do not know what other motive you would have for leaving England. You are not ill yourself, I hope, old fellow?"

"No; but I am restless—cannot settle down. I like change."

"Tolerably good reasons for a man who can afford to gratify his caprices," said Lloyd, smiling slightly. "But Mrs. Daunt may not care to leave her pretty home so soon."

"I shall go alone," Stephen answered, coldly.

"How will she like that?"

"She will be only too glad!" said Stephen, with sudden uncontrollable passionate pain. "Milner, unless you have been willfully blind during your stay with us, you must have seen the true state of things between us. That poor child—Heaven help her!—is even more wretched than I am myself. Do you not see how she shrinks from me, how she tries to do what she thinks to be her duty, and how miserably she is in the attempt? Think over it as I may, I can only come to the conclusion that the kindest thing I can do is to relieve her of my presence, and leave her to the enjoyment of those things for which she married."

"You cannot have studied your wife's character very closely if you have come to the conclusion that wealth can give her happiness," remarked his friend, gravely.

"Happiness? No, I suppose not. She is too true a woman to find real happiness in it; but she will be less unhappy when I am gone."

Lloyd Milner was almost on the point of telling Stephen of the real cause of the estrangement between himself and his wife; but, remembering the threat Sidney had uttered when he had said he would do so, he refrained.

"It was a terrible mistake," Stephen went on, hoarsely; "and yet I did it for the best. She was lonely as home and unhappy. But it has failed, as all those experiments must. There is nothing now but to make the best of it."

"And you call leaving her making the best of it?" said Lloyd, gravely.

"Stephen, in such a matter as this, even such an old and true friend as I am dare not interfere; but I must presume on that old friendship to beg you to do nothing hastily."

"I am not doing this hastily," Stephen answered, wearily. "I have thought over it for some weeks. I want to make her less unhappy, to avoid the necessity for the constraint she is forced to put upon herself so constantly now; for other reasons also it will be best."

"It is hardly a prudent proceeding, I think, to leave your beautiful young wife alone, Stephen."

"There is none of the imprudence you suggest in this case," said the other, with a slight, bitter, tongueless laugh. "Have you not seen enough that she cared for that unfortunate man too much ever to care for any one else?"

"I think you are mistaken," the young barrister returned gently. "If my observation of your wife has led me to any conclusion, it is to this one—that she loves her husband, and that, if it were only possible that perfect trust and confidence could exist between them, she would be a very happy woman. Old friend," he went on earnestly, speaking from his heart in his sympathy and compassion for the suffering Stephen could not conceal, notwithstanding all his efforts, let me advise you in this. For your own sake, and for her sake, poor child, do nothing in haste; above all, do not take the step you contemplate now. If you do, you will only arouse suspicion and gossip, your wife will be unjustly condemned, and you will be the cause of it."

They had reached the station now, and, as Stephen was following his friend into the booking-office, he turned to the coachman.

"Meet the 5.30 train from Ling," he said. "I am going so far with Mr. Milner."

(To be continued.)

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Is Britain Declining

By RHYS J. DAVIES, M.P., Under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs in the 1924 Imperial Conference.

This is the first of two articles written for The Star by British delegates to the Interparliamentary Union Conference, who visited Toronto last week. This article is by Mr. Rhys J. Davies, M.P.

During our recent visit to Canada we found considerable confusion of thought among those with whom we came in contact relative to the actual conditions prevailing in the motherland. The idea seems to prevail that the old country is practically played out; the unemployment problem so terrible that our economic situation is rendered almost hopeless; and that, above all, the workers have become so violent in their views as to constitute a challenge and a menace to the existing order of things. That, in short, is a fair picture of the minds of a goodly number of Canadians we met.

It would be absurd, of course, to minimize the colossal nature of the economic crisis through which we are passing; unemployment is a very serious matter for us; and there is undoubtedly a change in the attitude of organized labor towards the present structure of society. But there is nothing alarming in that. Indeed it should be in the direction of saying that, however bad the situation may be, it is not regarded as serious enough to have moved any serious thought to stern and drastic measures. In any case, there is nothing to warrant any apprehension of a violent upheaval. But the position is economically acute.

While remembering all that, let us see the other side of the case. There are now operating certain compensations in the industrial and social life of our people which go to balance some of the disadvantages and injustices under which they used to labor. Twenty years ago there was little or nothing on the statute book providing for financial aid for those who toiled except workmen's compensation under the employers' liability act. Since then, however, there has been a crop of laws in favor of the worker and his family. We have now the legal title to accident compensation based on the simple fact that the injury was caused in the course of the man's employment.

There is the old age pension scheme, unemployment insurance, national health insurance, and last of all the widows and orphans pensions and allowances scheme coming into operation in January 1926.

It is not our purpose to argue as to which government was responsible for this or that reform. Let us assume that the will of the people made itself felt on both government and opposition in turn. Let it be understood, too, that the amount payable to the recipients under any one of these schemes may be too small by comparison with family requirements. The fact still remains, however, that some provision is now made where it did not exist before.

Before proceeding further one point ought to be made clear on unemployment. It is probably quite true that unemployment and short time is more serious to-day in Britain than at any pre-war period. But who can tally it only since the unemployment insurance scheme came into full operation that there has been any real basis of calculation in this connection; and whilst there are more unemployed than in 1913 there are also more persons engaged in industry now than before the war. What has happened is that our industrial undertakings have failed to absorb the increase in population in our country; and emigration for some unknown reason is not flourishing. The "quota" system of the U.S.A. is the most serious factor in this respect. Let us try to further dispel the pessimism about the old country by taking into account vital statistics. After all, it is a fair indication into the life of a nation to find out what, more particularly, health and criminal figures show. In 1915 54,295 persons died from consumption in England and Wales. In 1924 the figure had been reduced to 40,788. The infantile mortality in 1910 was 131 per 1,000 births. In 1922 it was only 77. In the language of our present minister of health "A baby born to-day may reasonably expect to live twelve years longer than his grandfather." The deaths from consumption in 1887 were 2,653 per million; in 1922 only 855.

Let us now come to crime. It is very often said that there are more undetected murders in New York than there are all told in Great Britain. In 1908 there were 186,569 convictions on all counts in the old country. In 1924 it stood at 46,065. The average daily prison population is 11,148, or, for instance, one-half the prison population is double that of Spain. In 1914 convictions for drunkenness numbered 51,851; in 1924, 11,425. It will be seen, therefore, that the picture is not so black as it is painted; and we trust that when a study is made of the conditions of our people account may be taken of the "hidden reserve" of comfort that comes of the compensations referred to.

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CITY BOUND.

"Are we going to the city," say the young men of our town; "there the talented and witty earnest to be a s and r e o w n. There the youths of high ambition have their chance to put up hay, there they'll better their condition and with plutocrats they'll play. But old Punktown's soundly sleeping, and her main street pastures kine, here we have no chance of reaping any crop that's good and fine." So they say goodby and grive us, as we watch them from the lawn; so they wave their hands and leave us, and old Punktown slumbers on. To the city, in my sorry, I go when I've coin to spare, and it makes me sad and sorry, meeting Punktown laddies there. For they're nearly always busted, they are disillusioned boys, and the hopes in which they trusted blew up with a frightful noise. There are chances in the city, chances good for aching eyes, but each one, more's the pity, scores of candidates ares. Says the wife, "in my blindness, I left Punktown's kindly tents, and I'd think it quite a kindness if you'd lend me fifty cents. I am broken now and beaten, all my pride is buried deep; it is three weeks since I've eaten, and I have no place to sleep." Village boys still seek the chances which the city can afford, and where one bright youth advances, hundreds cannot pay their board. "Come ye back to Punk-

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Thieves Make Bleh Haul From Bonded Warehouse During Heavy Storm.

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The stolen property was taken from a building owned by Baller and Williams in West 20th Street. Using an extension ladder the robbers climbed to the roof of a two-story building, then to the roof of a two-story building, then to the roof of a two-story building, and from that roof climbed two more stories to the roof of the warehouse while a gale of more than 70 miles an hour was blowing. In their exposed position on the roof they broke through a skylight and entered the building.

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