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The Heir of Rosedene

OR, The Game-Keeper's Hut

CHAPTER X. A LEGAL CONSULTATION.

"And that precious brother of mine," commenced Edward More, with morose repugnance, "is in happy ignorance of this stroke of luck! No one ever had such luck, and no one less deserved it," he added, with an envious snarl.

"Well," said Mr. Burdon, with a curious smile, "as to luck, that remains to be proved. He may—he may, you know, refuse to comply with the conditions—"

"Pshaw!" interrupted the amiable brother, with a sneer.

"I said—may," remarked Burdon. "Of course it is not likely that he would be so unwise, so ill-advised as to turn his back upon such a fortune. It is to be hoped not, for your sake," he added, with a smile.

"Ah!" snarled Edward, biting at his anger and fidgeting in his chair. "For my sake, indeed! Do you think he'd spend any of it on the estate? Not he! You don't know him! He's a fool, and a spendthrift, and a profligate, who'd waste and play ducks and drakes with twenty such fortunes, all as large as this."

Mr. Burdon smiled and rustled the documents under his hand.

"We can't say that. May have sown his wild oats by this time; and if he hasn't, the very condition by which he'd get the money would help him to! 'Pon my word, More, I don't think you've much to feel cut up about. The money would be in the family at least—"

"In one member's pocket, and that not for long," said Edward More, with a malignant sneer. "Oh, don't expect me to be overjoyed and congratulatory. I know too much of my precious brother ever to hope to get any advantage, directly or indirectly, through him. Now, if this money—"

He stopped abruptly, for a little bell sounded in the distance—it was the bell attached to the door of the clerk's office.

"Had only been left to you—if Edward More's name instead of Cyril's, had stood in the deed," and Mr. Burdon laughed softly.

Edward More's ill-favored face flushed angrily and enviously, but before he could make any reply there

was a knock at the door, and a soft-footed, discreet-voiced clerk stepped in and placed two cards before his principal.

"One minute, Lane. When I ring," said Mr. Burdon. Then he held up the cards.

"They have come," he said.

Edward More glanced at the substantial, expensive clock upon the mantelshelf, and fell to biting his forefinger again.

"The girl," he asked, "have you seen her? Do you know anything about her?"

Mr. Burdon shook his head.

"No, nothing. She has been living with her father, old Weston, the book-worm, as we used to call him, in Geneva. Since his death she has been under the care of her aunt, Weston's sister-in-law."

"And you've no idea what she will be likely to do—what course she'll take."

"How should I have?" asked Mr. Burdon. "Candidly, I don't expect any girl, however unsophisticated, to throw away a chance like this any more than I should suspect your brother of doing so."

"No, of course not!" assented Edward More, ill-humoredly. "She must be told to-day, I suppose."

"Certainly," said Mr. Burdon, tapping the deed. "What good would it be to anyone to keep it from her? Nothing could be done without her—nothing at all. I wish I had your brother here! You have no clew to his whereabouts?"

"None!" snapped Edward, the look of dislike and repugnance, which always rose to his face, showing on it as usual. "None at all. How should I have? We never correspond; I take no interest in his proceedings. Have you—"

Mr. Burdon shook his head.

"I have not the remotest idea where he is. Since the general smash and wind-up I have seen little of him—lately, nothing at all. He took what money there was—the rents and a slight advance in bank notes. There was some talk of Italy, or Switzerland, or it might be Germany—I could not take upon myself to say that I remember. Poor fellow!"

"Poor fellow!" echoed Edward, with a splendid ring to the echo, however. "You pity him! A man who has brought all upon his own head, a fool who has wasted a fortune upon blacklegs and—every kind of profligacy, and not only his own money, but squandered and wasted, to the best of his ability, the estate that belongs to his family! Pity! I cannot understand how a man of sense can

feel anything but disgust and contempt for him."

"Ah, yes—yes, very true," said Mr. Burdon, as the handsome face of the abused man rose before him, with its genial, light-hearted, good-tempered smile; "but one may be too hard—little too hard. But there, bad as he is, or is not, I'd give something to have him here."

As he spoke he took up a memorandum book, and consulted it.

"I sent Jackson after him last week, quite on my own responsibility, but of course I can't tell whether he will find him. There is one good thing, Sir Cyril carries a pretty distinct identity about with him. Few people who run against him are likely to pass him unnoticed. Like most of your wild men he is confounded handsome."

This was of all subjects the least to Edward More's taste.

"These people are still outside."

Mr. Burdon nodded.

"Nothing more to say before they come in?" he asked, with his hand on the bell, and as Edward shook his head, Mr. Burdon gave the signal.

The discreet clerk opened the door noiselessly, and the two ladies were ushered in.

Mr. Burdon rose from his chair with an inward sense of surprise. Of course no trace of it was visible on his legally composed features.

He had expected to see a half-formed, fairly bred, but rather commonplace young woman, with a decidedly foreign air and appearance, and with whose embarrassment and nervousness he should have to struggle and contend during the task that was set before him.

Instead, he saw a tall, graceful girl, with a face that, but for its look of weariness and pallor, would have been simply lovely; and what told with still greater effect upon the lawyer, an unmistakable air of high breeding which displayed itself in the carriage of her head, the composure—yet not constrained composure—self-possession of her manner.

The lawyer had expected to have the task of soothing and overcoming the shyness of an inexperienced girl, before him stood a beautiful, queenly—well, almost woman.

"Miss Weston, how do you do? Miss Weston, I am very glad to see you; this is Mr. Edward More, with whom you will soon, no doubt, be well acquainted; and he turned with his pleasant smile to introduce the then sour-visaged brother of wicked Sir Cyril.

CHAPTER XI. READING THE WILL.

YES, most certainly Mr. Burdon was surprised. This was not at all what he had expected—so much did it differ, indeed, from his preconceived idea of the persons and situation, that he, the man of the law and the world, was slightly embarrassed.

He had been fully prepared to meet, and, if need be, cope with persons expectant of and grasping after "something to their advantage," but he was quite unprepared for the quiet, timid, elderly lady, and this equally quiet but modestly dignified girl.

But he was aware that Edward More's cynical gaze was dwelling on him, and made haste to recover his usual urbane self-possession.

He ensconced Mrs. Weston in the easiest of the easy-chairs, and placed the next best, with an air of profound respect and old-fashioned gallantry, for Edna, and then suggested refreshments, which were quietly declined.

"Pray let me urge a glass of sherry—dry sherry and a biscuit," he said, putting the decanter and its accompaniments on the table as he spoke, and making a little joke as he filled the glasses. "Dry sherry!—the proper beverage for such a dry place as a lawyer's office, my dear madam. Indeed, my dear young lady, you must allow me to insist upon your taking at least half a glass."

And he drew a small table to Edna's elbow, and placed the glass upon it. All this having given him and them time to compose themselves, Mr. Burdon relapsed from the man of gallantry into the man of law and business, and, resuming his seat, rustled his papers, glanced across at Edward More—who had watched his friend's efforts at hospitality with an unpleasantly sarcastic smile—and commenced his task.

"I need scarcely ask whether you arrived this morning?" he said, by way of prelude.

Aunt Martha, who was in an inward tremor, assented.

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"Yes, yes," said Mr. Burdon, "in accordance with my dear friend's—your brother's—wish. Exactly. 'Tis this is the first of September, and we are met here by the appointment of one whose wishes and instructions I trust, I sincerely trust, we may all be able to carry out."

As he spoke, he glanced with mingled curiosity and admiration at the pale face opposite him.

Edna's eyes, which had been fixed on him, dropped a little under his glance; she raised them again a moment afterward with an expression of wistful but patient attention. If Mr. Burdon had expected her to speak he was disappointed.

"As you are aware, Mrs. Weston, we have met to-day to consider deed, which, to all intents and purposes, is the will of this young lady's uncle, John Weston."

Aunt Martha looked up and nodded nervously.

"Yes, I think I knew that; but Edna knows nothing."

"Just so; that, I think, is exactly in accordance with her father's and her uncle's wish," said Mr. Burdon. "It is not for us to question the wisdom of that wish; it is our duty to respect it—in this case I think we have all done our duty," and he bowed slightly to Edna. "I may say, for myself, that, until to-day, I was as ignorant of the motive that actuated your brothers in their desire for concealment—ignorant also of the purport of this deed—as you yourselves were."

Aunt Martha inclined her head again, and stroked Edna's hand, which she had, somehow or other, managed to smuggle into hers, nervously.

"My first duty," continued Mr. Burdon, "is to read, from beginning to end, this rather long document; but"—and he opened the deed from the table and turned the leaves over with a smile—"I am afraid if I do that without explaining its purport first, that it would not enlighten you much. The language of the law is not, I deeply regret to say, as plain and simple as we lawyers could wish it to be."

Here Edward More, who had been nibbling and fidgeting at his nails, barked out a low, sharp laugh of sarcastic incredulity, which brought Edna's large, expressive eyes upon him with a look of startled surprise.

Mr. Burdon, not a whit put out by his friend's little commentary, smiled urbanely.

"Mr. More thinks that if there was nothing to explain in the law, there would be no need for lawyers, and considers me guilty of a little humbug. Well, well, perhaps I am. However, shall I explain it to you?"

He looked so directly at Edna that for the first time she spoke, but it was only a simple:

"Thank you."

(To be Continued.)

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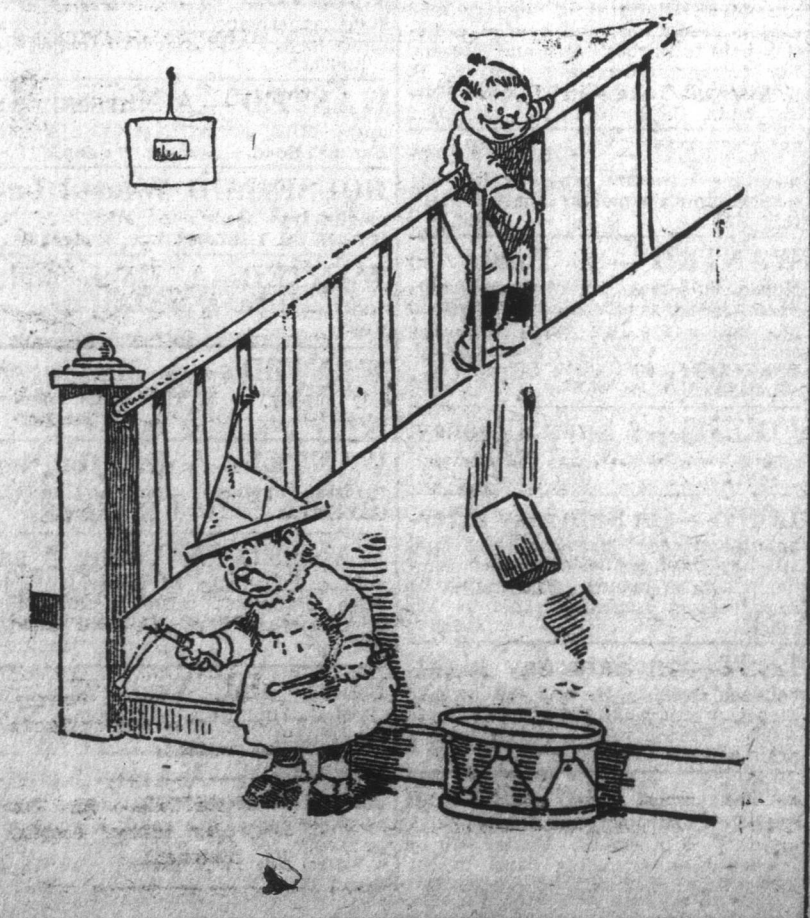
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Evangelists. St. George's... from last night's throng... interest manifested in every... it would seem that instead... religious campaign ending... about beginning... happened along and ex... and a sort of blinned-out... but instead we found that... not get a seat, everywhere... and everywhere people... the meeting was a different... many ways from those so far... there were features in it... a heart, and drew... near. First, there was the... of men and women, who... preaching of Mrs. Demarest... convinced of the error of... and who, after due con... made up their minds to... a new page, and lead a new... there was the very well... announcement that the services... continue all through this week... our good friends the Evange... had been with us. Then there... singing and the music, which... much in religious services... there was one particular fea... last night's meeting that out... others—it was the story of... told by Mrs. Demarest... without her permission we... to write it, further than... for paths and self-denial... can scarcely be duplicated... travelled through Europe... British Isles, and through the... part of America; and to have... all in simple childlike faith... sometimes stand face to face... was a task to test the faith... almost have bowed down many... We almost feared for the... as she told her tale—for it... delicate ground; but she... victory, and by her frank... deeper than ever before into... of her hearers. It may be... are some people who think... path of the Evangelists is a... roses, and that the way is all... but such a story as Mrs... recited last night, should... whether this false idea, of... to pressure, or had we better... pressure, of work, the ad... last night was a short one, but... a helpful message all the... was on Victory, or Over... and had a good deal to do... of the Christian life... and overcoming implied... and in the Christian fight... the assurance of victory to... To confirm her posi... Evangelist quoted extensiv... the Scriptures, and showed by... instances that she had made... preparation. From Gospel... and Apocalypse, she gathered... and in delivering their... note which seemed to ring... and to overcome all ring... though tired after the strain... heavy duties, the Evange... of her best, and when she... had the biggest victory... herself.

Constructive Lecture. Brinton delivered his fifth... a series on Church History... at the Synod Hall. Brinton occupied the chair... spoke upon the "Resis... foreign Jurisdiction in Brit... pointed out how that first... monasteries were not living... their professions, and this... and his followers protested... "the dawn of the Reformat... Wycliffe's translation of the... into English, the spread of Ed... and the introduction of print... also the "New Learning" be... at Oxford by such men as Colet... Erasmus and others assisted... church to regain Ecclesi... freedom. It was clearly shown... the Reformation was the per... ment of centuries, which reached... fulfillment in the time of Henry... lecturer spoke of the work of... that differentiated between the... in England, and the reform... continent, as the English re... purely national. Brinton was shown illustrating the... of our representative parlia... scenes of like interest... an instructive lecture, and... attended it could not have... otherwise than with the... come again. National Anthem closed the...

Weights Wanted. members of the Joint Com... are preparing a reception... home for the boys re... the S.S. Corsican, would... aided and cheered if... copyweights were sent to... of the Furness Withy Co... ships arrival. Committee is advised that there... 230 invalids requiring con... therefore come along with... ARRIVES. The Cross... express did not arrive until... this morning.