

LORD STRANLEIGH

In Search of Game.

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THE warm morning gave promise of a scorching day, as Lord Stranleigh strolled in his usual leisurely fashion up the Avenue. High as the thermometer already stood, the earl gave no evidence that he was in the least incommode by the temperature. In a welter of heated, hurrying people, he produced the effect of an iceberg that had somehow drifted down into the tropics. The New York tailor entrusted with the duty of clothing him quite outdistanced his London rival, who had given Lord Stranleigh the reputation of being the best-dressed man in England. Now

his lordship was dangerously near the point where he might be called the best-dressed man in New York, an achievement which gave Ponderby much satisfaction.

His lordship, with nothing to do, and no companionship to hope for, since everyone was at work, strolled into the splendor of the Club of which he was honorary member. He sought the comparative coolness of the smoking room, where, seating himself, he began to glance over the English weeklies. He had the huge room to himself, and a feeling of loneliness crept over him, perhaps germinated by sight of the weeklies, and accentuated by an attempted perusal of them. They were too stolid for a hot day, so Stranleigh turned to the lighter entertainment of the American humorous press.

Presently there entered this hall of silence the stout figure of John L. Banks, senior attorney for the Ice Trust, a man well known to Stranleigh, who had often sought his advice, with profit to both of them. The lawyer approached the lounge.

"I was just thinking of you, Banks; reflecting how delightful it must be, in this weather, to be connected, even remotely, with the ice supply of New York."

Mr. Banks' Panama hat was in one hand, while the other drew a handkerchief across his perspiring brow.

"Well, you're looking very cool and collected. Enacting the part of the idle rich, I suppose?"

"I'm a specimen of labor unrest."

"Perhaps I can appease that with a suggestion. If you will simply parade the streets in that leisurely fashion we all admire, bearing a placard *Pure Ice Company*, I'll guarantee you a living wage and an eight-hour day."

"Should I be required to carry about crystal blocks of the product?"

"Oh, no; you're frigid enough as you are. Besides, ice at the present moment is too scarce to be expended on even so important a matter as advertising."

BANKS wheeled forward a chair, and sat down opposite his lordship. A useful feature of a Panama hat is its flexibility. You may roll one brim to fit the hand, and use the other as a fan, and this Banks did with the perfection of practice.

"And why the unrest?"

"Thinking;—the cause of unrest the world over. Whenever people begin to think, there's trouble."

"I've never noticed any undue thoughtfulness in you."

"That's just it. Thinking doesn't agree with me, but America somehow stimulates thought, and thought compels action. Action is all very well in moderation, but in this country it is developed into a fever, or frenzy, curable only by a breakdown or death."

"So you think it's as bad as that?"

"Yes, I do. You call it enterprise; I call it greed. I've never yet met an American who knew when he'd had enough."

"Have you ever met an Englishman who knew that?"

"Thousands of them."

"I imagine," said Banks, "that it's all a matter of nomenclature. You think us fast over here, and doubtless you're wrong; we think you slow over there, and doubtless we're wrong. I don't think we're greedy. Our motive power is interest in the game."

"Everyone tells me that, but I regard the phrase as an excuse, not as a reason." "Look here, Stranleigh; who's been looting you? What deal have you lost? I warned you against mixing philanthropy with business, you remember."

Stranleigh laughed.

"There you have it! According to you a man cannot form an opinion that is uninfluenced by his pocket. As a matter of fact, I have won all along the line. I tried the game, as you call it, hoping to find it interesting, but it doesn't seem to me to be worth while. I pocket the stakes, and I am going home, in no way elated at my success, any more than I should have been discouraged had I failed."

Leaning forward, Mr. Banks spoke as earnestly as the weather permitted.

"WHAT you need, Stranleigh, is a doctor's advice; not a lawyer's. You have been just a little too long in New York, and although New Yorkers don't believe it, there are other parts of the country worthy of consideration. Have you ever had a taste of ranch life out west?"

"I've never been further west than Chicago."

"I see. When you spoke of setting a limit to financial ambition, I remembered my old friend, Stanley Armstrong, the best companion on a shooting or fishing expedition I ever encountered. He was a mining engineer, and few know the mining west as he does. He might have been a millionaire or a pauper, but he chose a middle course, and set his limit at a hundred thousand dollars. When land was cheap he bought a large ranch in Wyoming, partly plain and partly foot-hills, with the eternal snow mountains beyond. Now, if you take with you an assortment of guns and fishing rods, and spend a month with Stanley Armstrong, your pessimism will evaporate."

"A good idea," said Stranleigh. "If you give me a letter of introduction, I'll telegraph immediately."

"Telegraph?" cried the lawyer. "He'd never get your message. I don't suppose there's a telegraph office within fifty miles. And you don't need a letter of introduction, though I'll write you one, and give your name merely as Stranleigh. You won't have any use for a title out there; in fact, it's the necessary part of my prescription that you get away from yours. As for accommodation, take a tent with you and be independent. When I return to my office, I'll dictate full instructions for reaching the ranch."

"Is it so difficult of access as all that?"

"You might find it so. When you reach the nearest railway station, two days from the ranch, hire a horse for yourself, and two or three men with pack mules for your belongings. They'll guide you to Armstrong's place."

STRANLEIGH found no difficulty in getting a cavalcade together at Bleachers Station, an amazingly long distance west of New York. A man finds little trouble in obtaining what he wants, if he never cavils at the price asked, and is willing to pay in advance. The party passed through a wild country, though for a time the road was reasonably good. It degenerated presently into a cart track, however, and finally became a mere trail through the wilderness. As night fell, the tent was put up by the side of a brawling stream, which they had forded.

Next morning the procession started early, but it was noon before it came to the clearing which Stranleigh rightly surmised was the outskirts of the ranch. The guide, who had been riding in front, reined in, and allowed Stranleigh to come alongside.

"That," he said, pointing down the valley, "is Armstrong's ranch."

Before Stranleigh could reply, if he had intended doing so, a shot sounded from the forest, and he felt the sharp sting of a bullet in his left shoulder. The guide flung himself from the saddle with the speed of lightning, and stood with both hands upraised, his horse between himself and the unseen assailant.



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