

BREEME HOUSE

By Katherine Newlin Burt

To do him justice, Tremont was neither spendthrift nor heartless. As the prospective Earl of Breeme he was subject, proportionately, to the strain of poverty which ground down his father. His personal expenses, in the extravagant set he frequented, went far beyond the allowance his father could make him. It had never occurred to him that he could meet the situation in any other way than by dropping out of his "set", which was unthinkable, or by borrowing the wherewithal to keep his end up.

His friends had already reached their limit on loans, and at the last influx of pressing bills from tradesmen and others, he had had resort to a professional money-lender: It was only in the dilemma of the latter's untimely threats that Tremont had at last found himself forced to put the matter up to the Earl—a predicament from which he shrank quite as much out of consideration for his father's ill health as from a feeling of shame at the repeated mismanagement of his affairs.

With characteristic light-heartedness, once the matter had been decided, Tremont had set forth on his mission to Canada, with every resolution to make this the last of his unpleasant financial experiences. He had planned his return so as to escort his sister and her American friend to England, where Claire Wilton was, at the Earl's urgent invitation and to Jane's great delight, to pay a long visit to Breeme House.

Lady Jane had been sitting in the lounge for five minutes, with carefully suppressed nervousness, waiting for her brother, before he came sauntering in.

He came over to her, and with English coolness nodded to his sister as if they had last met but half an hour since.

"Do, Janey. Had a good time in Yankee land with your little Miss Croesus?" he asked, smiling.

"Very nice, thanks Alec. It's rather too rapid for an old fogey like me—but they are awfully kind and open hearted. I never knew anything like it."

"Makes us feel a bit slow doesn't it, what?" he drawled.

"Yes—and so horribly inhospitable!" she added in her quiet, whispering voice. "It makes us ashamed to think how little we ever do for any of them, when they come to England; no wonder we get a reputation for being cold and snippy!"

There was a pause.

"Well—how about Canada?" she asked. "I do hope it came out all right?"

"Ripping, Janey!" We've made our eternal fortunes!"

She looked up with such happiness in her eyes, and such a flush of relief from anxiety, that he hastened to tone down his exaggeration.

"At any rate I can wash my hands of that usurious Unterberg—the money-lender, you know. It's like a mill-stone off one's neck. And there'll be a bit over, besides."

"Oh Alec, how splendid!" Lady Jane's eyes were moist; her face radiant. "Dear old boy—won't father be delighted. It will be such a load off him; it will do him more good than anything else."

Alec felt a twinge of compunction; by inference his sister's comment touched him on the raw.

"Where's Miss Wilton?" he asked.

"She's dressing; she'll be here directly. I know you'll like her, Alec. It was too bad that you were away when she was at Breeme before. Father's simply devoted to her—I never saw him take to anyone so quickly. She seemed to put new life into him."

"We must give her a good time; what does she go in for?" Lady Jane laughed.

"When she was staying with us those few weeks, she didn't go in for anything but just Breeme itself. It seems to fascinate her—the house and everything in it, the grounds, the people,—the whole place."

"Does she ride?"

"Yes—she loves it; but we really hadn't anything decent to

mount her on, before."

"Well—we must get something, then. We'll all have a regular gala time, Janey, eh, what?"

Alec drawled it out with a glance of real tenderness at Lady Jane's almost pathetically happy face. It cut him to realize why he so seldom saw her looking like this.

"You're a brick, Janey—always were," he said. And her smile seemed to him like an affectionate hug.

Lord Tremont turned away. He was suddenly aware of a tall, graceful figure standing beside them.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," he said. "Let me introduce myself. Miss Wilton, this is Alec Tremont, the unworthy brother of my little sister, Jane, here."

"And this, Lord Tremont," laughed Claire, completing the introduction, "is Claire Wilton, the fortunate friend of your little sister, Jane, here."

The bugle sounded the message for dinner, and they took their way down to the brilliantly lighted saloon, alive with people trying to find their seats, and buzzing with conversation.

Jane, retiring within her habitual reserve of silence, noticed with quiet satisfaction the spontaneous ease with which her brother quickly established himself in Claire's good graces. His relief from harassment had enhanced all the natural charm of his personality. He responded to Claire Wilton's quick wit with a readiness and warmth that seemed to promise congenial intimacy.

They were among the last to leave the saloon, Lord Tremont making his way to the smoking room.

"Your Englishman," commented Claire to Lady Jane, with that little frowning of the brows and half closing of the eyes which marked her generalizations, "when he once decides to drop the national mask of cold indifference, can make a particularly charming impression."

CHAPTER II A SCRAP OF PAPER

To talk of the democracy of ship-board has become a commonplace; but like most such commonplaces it does prevail.

Lord Tremont gravitated towards an elderly man who sat comfortably secluded, enjoying his after-dinner cigar in the smoking-room, sipping his coffee and liqueur.

Tremont pressed the bell, and a steward hastened to serve him—having already informed himself of the identity of his lordship, who struck him as a good prospect for a generous tip at the end of the voyage.

"Yes, milord, certainly milord," he bowed, and hurried off. Tremont's quietly ruminating elderly neighbor was idly holding in his hand a copy of the passenger list. After a moment he opened the booklet and scanned the names, glancing in Tremont's direction. Resting his head against the leather back of his chair, he cudgelled his brain concerning the name he had found—Lord Tremont. Presently he nodded, as if he had found the clue for which he had been searching, and as the steward returned with Tremont's coffee, he looked at the younger man as if weighing a subject for decision.

After the steward had disappeared, the elderly man turned to Tremont.

"I wonder," he said, "whether I may ask an important question?"

Tremont looked directly at the questioner for the first time, and decided that he liked his "cut".

"Certainly—go ahead," he replied.

"Your famous Van Dyke at Breeme House, it is still not on the market, of course?"

Tremont's reply was an icy stare.

"I warned you my question would be an impertinent one," smiled his questioner. "You've replied most eloquently, Lord Tremont. And now, in apology, I must explain, if I may."

There was such delightful urbanity in the manner of the man, that Tremont had already voted

against himself in the little contest.

"Do—I'm interested! No idea I was such an—er—a marked character," he added smiling.

"Oh, the passenger list, you know, coupled with the steward's familiarity with the peerage did that," laughed the older man. "But once I'd been given your name, I was stumped for a few moments before I could connect it with my business. My name's Northby,—pictures, you know."

Of course Tremont knew! Mr. Northby's name was as familiar to owners of famous paintings on both sides the Atlantic as Paquin or Worth to leaders of fashion—the famous picture-dealer, Northby; of course!

"And now let me tell you why I asked such a grossly impertinent question—more as a joke than anything else. It happens . . ."

"Ah, Lord Tremont," an oily voice interrupted the speaker with suave assumption of familiarity.

"My cabin companion, Mr. — Mr. —"

Tremont's delicate snub to the intruder was so perfectly contrived as to be apparent to Northby while it missed its direct object. Tremont's habitual prostration had resulted in his finding himself cabined with this unpleasant bed-fellow.

"Cardoni's the name, Cardoni," he minced. "Glad to meet you," and he extended a much be-ringed paw towards Northby, who, to avoid it, nodded towards a third chair in the hope that this disturber of the peace might at least subside into it.

"You were telling me about your interest in your Van Dyke," remarked Tremont, quietly resuming the conversation with Northby.

"Van Dyke? What's that? Van Dyke?" sputtered Cardoni with superabundant excitement.

"A picture by an artist of that name, Mr. — er —," remarked Tremont.

"Don't I know that! I know a thing or two about pictures, Lord Tremont . . ."

But, for reasons best known to himself, Mr. Cardoni left his knowledge unspecified, and dropped into the chair which he had drawn up.

"As I was saying, Lord Tremont," Northby proceeded, "I happen to have a special interest in your Van Dyke—'Lady Jane's' it's called, isn't it?—a family portrait with quite a romantic history. I once took the liberty of writing to your father about it. His reply was only a little less eloquent than yours," he laughed. "Your silence was golden; the Earl's being in writing, could not be wordless. But it was next door to it, and quite as effective. The fact is that some years ago a man of your name, a Mr. Tremont, in America—somewhere out West if I recollect—had written to me asking if the picture was for sale, and forwarding me a substantial deposit on account of whatever price might be put upon it. On receiving Lord Breeme's reply I informed Mr. Tremont accordingly, and returned him his money. It came back to me, doubled, with instructions to deposit the amount and hold it to his credit on account of the purchase of the picture if it should ever be on the market."

"I hope you're getting the interest on the money, and that Mr. Tremont's successors will leave it on deposit with yours on the same terms," replied Tremont drily. "Funny chaps, these Yankees; won't be downed, will they?" he drawled, without a glance at Cardoni.

"Why don't he have it copied? Good copy'd pass for the genuine article out in his section. I bet a dollar to a doughnut he'd fall for a copy himself. Try him!" wheezed the irrepressible person, silyly.

Perhaps it was a free-will exit that Cardoni effected, chuckling at his own joke; perhaps it was precipitated by the kick which Lord Tremont mentally directed at his odious cabin-companion. He moved off towards the centre of the room, to the relief of both Northby and Tremont.

"Queer fish," drawled Tremont with a yawn. "Live and learn! Book my passage earlier next time."

Northby smiled.

"Your luck certainly wasn't with you, in that," he said, and with a nod and "good night", he rose and strolled out towards the lounge.

Tremont got up from his seat with a motion of boredom, and was about to go and see if Lady Jane and Miss Wilton were still about, when a familiar face came within his vision.

"Lo, Alec. Good man! Saw your name on the list. Been getting some of the dollars away from the yanks, or catching a billionaire, what? Come on and make a fourth at poker."

Ned Burnet was an old college friend of Tremont's.

"All right, Ned," he replied. "Seems to me you've still got some of my I O U's, unredeemed," he laughed. "With luck I might cancel a few of 'em."

"Good—come on, I've scratched up a queer specimen for a third; the other's all right. We won't go high—can't do it, myself," he added. And Tremont let himself be piloted over to a table.

Tremont made the best of it, registering a vow that he would turn in early, even if it meant breaking up the game.

Drinks were ordered, and the cards were cut,—Tremont and Cardoni against Burnet and the other. It was perhaps a pity for Lord Tremont that prohibition did not obtain aboard ship that night. His foreign-looking partner proved an unconsciously careless player. They lost inexorably. When at last the game ended, Cardoni brought out a roll of bills.

"Don't worry, Lord Tremont," he urged, as Alec fumbled in his pockets to pay his share, "I'll pay out of this, and you can settle with me down below."

Lazily Tremont complied.

"Fact is, Cardoni," Tremont informed his cabin companion as they prepared for bed, "I've brought so little cash with me that I'd better give you an I O U. 'Suits me fine, Tremont,'" swaggered Cardoni familiarly.

"Got to much around with me already. Your bit's only sixty-five dollars," he went on, as he jotted down something on a piece of paper,—"You can put your fist to that if you like, or just let it go."

Tremont had already climbed into his berth. He took the paper and the proffered pencil, and scribbled his name.

"Right-o; thanks; cheerio!" And he turned on his side and slept.

The while Mr. Cardoni with a precision that belied his easy-going "take it or leave it" of a moment ago, folded the paper with due care, and put it in his letter-case.

Then he switched off the light, and turned on his back and snored.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

One Canadian Family Holds Farm 295 Years

Quebec, P. Q.—Ismael Bedard, a French-Canadian farmer, of Charlebourg, Quebec county claims the distinction for his family of having lived longer in one place than any other family in North America. His forebears have held the same farm, without interruption in the succession, since 1629, according to the returns of a questionnaire sent out to parish priests in the province by the Arts, Science and Letters society here.

Ismael Bedard, the present owner, has been on the land thirty years. He has a family of grown sons, and the house in which he lives is believed to be the original building erected in 1629.

Electric Ground Cable May Guide Aeroplanes

London.—The British air ministry is now experimenting with an electric guiding cable for aircraft, which may be the forerunner of definite aerial routes possible for night flying and flying through fog. The pilot, from instruments before him, would be able to tell when flying directly over the cable laid along the ground, and the device would automatically correct the direction of the flight of an aeroplane which was off the set route. With the completion of such a scheme it would be possible to establish air routes as definite as railroad lines.

Argentine Anticipates Steady Growth in Numbers

Buenos Aires.—Countries with a high birth rate have a high death rate, but there is one exception in the world and that is Argentina, according to Alejandro E. Bunge, economist and government statistician.

In 30 years, Mr. Bunge says, Argentina's death rate has dropped from 25 a thousand to 13.6 a thousand, one of the lowest in the world, while a birth rate of 33 a thousand has been maintained. These two facts combined produce a great natural increase in population. The mortality of infants before reaching one year of age is only 10 per cent. in Argentina, compared with rates of from 9 to 25 per cent. in other countries.

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Measuring Light's Speed

The speed of light was measured first by timing the eclipses of Jupiter's moons; light takes about 16 1/2 minutes to cross the earth's orbit, so when the earth is on the side of its orbit away from Jupiter the eclipses will seem to occur at 16 1/2 minutes late. Several other methods of measuring the velocity of light have been worked out.

Enough

Home Economics Teacher—Name three things which contain starch. "Two cuffs and a collar."

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