WAVERLAND.

A TALE OF OUR COMING LANDLORDS.

BY SARAH MABIE BRIGHAM.

With the first sign of day I went out to look at the ruins the fire had made. The long line of stables was now a smouldering pile. But I was gladly surprised to see the horses coming one after another for their morning feed. I found that every living thing had been removed before the fire was kindled. So, I thought, they show more kindness to the beasts than to man. But I do not believe that they would have burned the house. They only thought to frighten Lord Waverland into complying with their requests. When the breakfast bell sounded I went to the dining room, but it was empty. I thought Lord Waverland and his friends were making up for their lost sleep. When an hour passed and no one appeared, a search was instituted. It was soon discovered that they all had left in the night. A maid from Lord Waverland's room brought me a note, saying:

"I found this under Lord Waverland's pillow."

I opened the note and read:

"Loyd, you may deal with the brutal tenants as you think best. I shall never set foot in this house again if I escape alive. I shall return to Paris, where life is more agreeable,—where I can live without the fear of being mobbed or burned alive. SIR EDWARD WAVERLAND."

This, then, was the way he chose to protect himself. When the tenants began to gather, calling for Lord Waverland, and found that he had left, they were very angry. One man who seemed to be their leader said.

"That is just the way with the English from the highest down! you cannot trust their promises!"

"I will listen to your requests," I said, as they began to murmur their complaints.

"You! what right have you to arrange things? When my lord returns he will blame us for making terms with you," said the leader.

When he said that I took the note I had received from my pocket book, saying.

"Here is my authority," and I read it to them. That was sufficient evidence and they were willing to make new contracts with me.

"Now, what are your grievances," I asked.

"We want our rent lowered to the Griffith valuation!" (that being the rate the Land League had adopted) said the speaker.

"Well, if you will come with me I will do the best I can for you," I said, leading the way to the library, where I had a map of the estate and a book containing the rent roll and the accounts of the tenants. The first thing I did was to lower the rent to the Griffith valuation and then from the rent roll I made a settlement with each tenant to the new rate. Then as fast as possible I reinstated those who had been evicted, or provided for them in some other way. From that time I began in earnest to work for the welfare of my people and to save "my inheritance."

On going to the drawing-room one morning I found Miss Everett there, watching the sunrise on the lake and among the grand old mountains.

"Well, little girl," I said, as I came to her "you seem charmed."

"Yes, Sir Loyd, this is a charming view. I have watched the sunrise from here for the last six months, and every morning it presents a different picture. Just now, see the grand old mountains are shaded by a fleecy cloud. But look, there comes a streak of sunlight like a rainbow on its brow. And there in the distance is the O'Sullivan cascade. We can see its dancing waters like a silver thread sparkling in the sunlight, but we cannot hear its deafening roar as it rushes from crag to crag in reckless haste!"

"It is a grand sight. I never saw it before at sunrise. You see what a lazy fellow I have been," I said, watching her expressive face.

"How I wish my pencil would obey my will," she said, as though forgetful of my presence. "Have you ever labored and wished for anything with all your heart, and then felt the keen anguish of a disappointment?" she asked, turning toward me as she spoke.

"No, I have never been enough in earnest to feel a disappointment very keenly," I said.

"I have," she said. "I have spent hours trying to put just a faint shadow of this beautiful scene on canvas. But disappointment has always been my reward."

"I never knew this was such a picturesque place," I said. "I believe you have bewitched the sunlight, to change the world to suit yourself! This old house was never so bright before!"

What a strange girl she was! One moment I would find her in the kitchen with a clean white apron on, directing the servants or doing their work if need be, a contented domestic little housekeeper; and the next, watching the fitful play of sunshine and shadow on the lake and mountains. She seemed like a caged bird ready to break its prison bars and to fly away.

While I stood looking more at her than at the scene, the breakfast bell sounded. In an instant she was again the domestic little woman, whose pet theory was that we should all meet at breakfast or dinners for social enjoyment. Here it was we read the morning papers. How eagerly we watched Parnell in his eventful career, or Gladstone's new position, or how the trouble between England and Russia would be settled. This morning as we took our places a telegram was handed to my mother.

"What is it, mother?" I asked, as her face grew deathly white and her hands trembled. She handed me the telegram,

She handed me the telegram.

saying.

"Lord Waverland is dead! He was killed at a gambling table in Paris."

With a sad, white face she rose to leave the table. I assisted her to her own room. As I was about to leave her, she said.

"Once I thought I loved him! But leave me now, my son. I would like to be alone."

There was little real sorrow felt for the dead husband, father, and master of Waverland. He had been a cold, proud man, and his overbearing nature had dwarfed the good qualities he possessed. His remains were brought home and placed in the family vault. Thus closed the life of one possessed of every accident and opportunity to make a noble man.

CHAPTER VI.—THE NEW THEORY.

The inheritance was mine. It came heavily mortgaged. I had not finished making my settlement with the tenants at the time of Lord Waverland's death. I continued, however, just as I had begun. One morning at breakfast I said:

"I am almost tired of being landlord. There are so many responsibilities connected with it. In settling up with my tenants on the estate I find thousands of pounds due now, after the reductions I have made. I cannot go out and force these poor fellows to pay. Some of them with all the help I have given and can give will suffer before spring. The long wet season has made the peat unfit to burn, and what can be done? There is Michael Malone has a holding of ten acres, but it has not brought him a living this year. If it were not for his son in America he could never pay his rent. And his is not an exceptional case. There are millions of dollars coming from the Irish boys and girls in America to help keep up this farce of landlord'sm in Ireland."

"Is that true?" asked my mother. "I did not know money ever came from America to Ireland, except in time of famine."

"I remember hearing my father say it was a heavy tax on the Irish-Americans, this unjust land system of Ireland," remarked Stella.

"That is very true," said I, "and yet we often hear that if tenants were only industrious and sober they could pay their rents. That may be true sometimes, but very few of our tenants are intemperate. Their small acreage is not enough to raise food for the family without paying rent. So where is my living to come from?"

"Why don't you have the pretty soldiers come and help you?" asked Myrtle. "I like to see them. Papa had them when he was here."

"Little sister," I said, "when the soldiers come some one must leave home. Would you like for the soldiers to come and turn us all away?"

She sat a moment thoughtfully, then said:

"Was it the soldiers that wanted to burn our house?"

"No, but it was because the soldiers had sent so many from home. The men grew angry, and wanted to burn our house for revenge," I answered.

"Miss Stella, if you are at liberty I would like your help in the library for a moment," I said, as we left the table.

As we entered the library I took her hand. I held it with the firm grasp of a friend. How sweet, how pure the love of that plain, simple girl seemed to me on that winter's morning. For a moment I did not speak, for fear my voice would tell her of my love too soon, and by its unexpectedness deprive me of the gift I craved. For a time we stood in silence. It seemed an age to me, so many hopes and fears were crowded in the pause. But really, as time is measured, it was but a moment. Then I spoke.

"Now, my little friend," I said, "it was your words that made me take an interest in this work. Can you help me solve this problem, how to relieve the suffering and misery of our people?"

Stella's cheeks flushed as I spoke and she turned from me to the table. She must have felt the impulse of my heart for she remained silent. Then again I said.

"I need the aid of your clear judgment. Will you give it?"

Turning her clear brown eyes to mine, she said.

"Sir Loyd, I know so little about laws governing landlord and tenant, that I can not aid you in this matter."

"You remember the widow that had her oat stack burned and came to beg for mercy on the rent. I have made her little house into a school room and she is the teacher."

"I know that, Sir Loyd," said Stella, with animation. "I have often been there and helped her with her teaching."

"You have been there, when."

"Often when I have been out riding or walking. And I heard how you bought the improvements on McGee's holding so he could go to America and get a home of his own. And I have also heard how you are fixing up the old tenant houses more comfortably than they ever were before," she said archly.

"You little spy! I did not know you were watching me."

"I was not watching you, Sir Loyd, I was only trying to help the poor people, and heard all the news, you see."

"Yes, I see, you were taking sunlight into the poor tenants' homes, as you brought it into ours. Well, they need it. I see so much filth, so much sorrow and discontent that it is terrible. I can find no means of relief. How can you expect purity and peace where men must live with hogs and cows? Our tenants live with their animals that they may save them to pay the rent. How I hate the word!" I said, leaning on the mantel and looking at Stella as she stood idly turning the leaves of an old album that lay on the table.

"I, too, have seen the misery and want that this terrible rack rent has produced. It is like some loathsome monster, that with fetid breath pollutes all within its reach," she said, with earnest indignation.

"Dear friend," I said, going to her and taking her hand within my own, "You have been more than a friend to me. You have inspired my heart with sympathy for man. Now I come to you, asking your help in finding relief for all this woe. I need your aid and—"

Just then my mother opened the door, saying:

"My son, Annie Wren is at the door asking for you." I looked at Stella for a moment. Could I leave her with the words of love unspoken? I was just forming such words when my mother called me.

Stella seemed conscious of my thoughts, and the tell-tale blush that mantled her cheeks and brow gave me hope that my suit would not be in vain. For one instant I was undecided. But then I turned and left the room. I found Annie at the door on her pet pony. I offered to help her dismount, but she said:

"No, Loyd, I cannot stop Papa sent this note to you and asked me to bring an answer."

I opened it and read the message, and thought the best way to answer it was to see Sir Wren myself.

I ordered my horse, and without entering the house, rode away with Annie. As we rode out over the wild moor that lay between the two estates, we met a girl with a donkey cart loaded with peat which she had gathered and was now taking to the village to sell. She was a decent looking girl but very poorly clad, barefooted, and had on only a thin cotton gown with a bit of an old shawl over her head and shoulders.

"I am sorry for such girls. She must be cold this frosty morning," said Annie, with a shiver.

"They earn something in that way to help pay the rent," I said.

"Oh, that everlasting rent!" said Annie. "If I were a man no one should ever pay me rent."

"What would you do, you little spice-box?" I asked, amused at her show of temper.

"I would do as papa does. He hires men to work for him, and gives them good warm houses to live in."

"I thought your father had rent, the same as others," I said. I never paid any attention to the way Sir Wren conducted his estate.

"You ask him and see," she said, as we rode up to the door.

Sir Wren was in the library enjoying the morning paper and a warm comfortable fire, as Annie ushered me into the room.

"So, so," he said, as he saw me. "You bring your own answer. Well, that is business like."

"Yes, Sir Wren," I said, taking the chair he pointed out near the fire. "So far as I know I am at your service."

"I have some important business in London. It needs careful attention, though not immediately. And as this rheumatic foot disables me, I thought you could do it for me and take a pleasure trip at the same time. The business is easily managed. I will prepare the documents and you can deliver them according to directions. I will give you a letter of introduction to the Duke of Melvorne, who will show you kindness for old times' sake; as his father and I were very warm friends until his death two years ago. Since then I have never been to Blue Ridge, as his home is called."

"Then I am to follow directions and have the pleasure free," I said, laughing at his plan.

"I hope it may be a pleasure to you. I am always glad to aid my friends in that direction. How is your mother and the brown thrush at Waverland?"

"My mother is very well. Better, she says, than for years. And Miss Everett is as busy as ever scattering sunshine and gladness wherever she goes. Even the poor tenants enjoy some of her gladness. We were just planning some way by which we could make them more comfortable, when Annie came."

"Did you hit on any plan?"

"We did not. But Annie gave me a hint of the manner you manage your estate, that may help me. I would like to learn your method."

"There is not much to tell. I hire men, women and children by the year to work for me."

"Why, what are you doing now to earn their wages?"

"Come and see," said Sir Wren, as he took his hat and cane and started for the door. We passed into a large yard surrounded by out-buildings. We entered one and found large quantities of vegetables with women and children sorting them into heaps.

"You see now," he said, pointing round the room, "I have them sorted in this way to make different grades for market."

"I understand now. The object gained by this work is a higher price for produce."

"Just so, just so," he said, patting me on the shoulder. "I save the small ones and sell them to my help at a lower price: while the large fine ones bring a higher price in the market."

We entered another building which proved to be a workshop. Old rakes wagons, plows and all kinds of farming implements were being repaired by the men

"No idlers here," he said as we walked through. There were no idlers, but what seemed strange was that some were singing and some whistling, which told of contentment.

"That is a saving in two ways," said Sir Wren, as we left the building. "Things are under shelter, and then, when they are needed in the busy season, we will not have to lose valuable time during good weather for them to be repaired."

"I see the philosophy of that," I said, as we entered the blacksmith shop. Here one man was shoeing a horse, another fixing a buggy spring, and all were usefully employed.

"This is a sample of the way about four hundred people are employed in the cold winter weather. In summer my land is well cultivated and made to produce large returns," he said, as we left the shop where all were busy.

"Do they earn their wages?" I asked.

"Yes, and a good per cent of profit."

"Where do they live?"

"Follow me and see," he said. We walked round to one side of the estate where a street was laid out, and lots of about one-half acre with a neat little frame house, a pig pen and a cow stable on each.

"Here," he said "is where my people live. I give this house and lot free of charge to any man with a family while he works for me."

"I see each one has a pig pen and a cow stable."

"Yes, I give the men a cow and a pig if they hire by the year."

"These cottages would rent for five or six pounds a year."

"I know they would. But I would rather have happy, contented men and women than the rent. Then, too, I believe I receive more than the rent in extra work."

"How neat and clean it all looks," I remarked with warm approval. I could not help contrasting this with the tenant village on my own estate.

"I tell them," said Sir Wren, "that cleanliness adds to their comfort. I also try to inspire them with a desire to keep their places neat. I believe tenants in general would keep their places more tidy, but they fear their rent will be raised if they make any improvement."

"I think Annie was right," I said, as we entered the house. "This plan is better for the people than the old rent system."

"I could never submit to that," said Sir Wren, with decision. "It is too galling for the tenant and too tempting for the landlord who has nothing to do but grind out of the tenant farmers all he can, while the tenant must live on the poorest food and in the meanest hovels, that the rent may be paid when due, to save eviction."

"I know that is true," I said. "I have been over my estate and find want and misery at nearly every door. Why in some hovels with neither floor nor windows, I have found five or six persons, a cow and the pigs all crowded together; they say they must shelter the cow so she will give more milk; and the pigs will die if not sheltered from the cold. I turn from such places, sick at heart. What can be done? I do not wonder that men are crying out against such degradation. I am willing to assist Parnell or any one else who can make a change for the better."

"I believe Parnell has done more for the

Continued on next page.