WAVERLAND.

A TALE OF OUR OTHER LANDLORDS.

BY SARAH PITT MCLEAN BINGHAM.

(Copyrighted, 1893.)

"Good-bye, Olga," I said, kissing her. "You must be sure to attend our reception," I said to Annie as I left the room.

All the way home I could not forget Annie's sorrowful expression. What could have made such a change in my happy friend. I remembered our parting and could not help thinking that she might have known of my mother's wish and confided herself to Lord Sanders. O, why is the world so full of sorrow! Why must some hearts go yearning through life for the love they can never enjoy! But Annie was soon forgotten. I was too happy in my love to remember anyone in sorrow.

The days flew past in quick succession; at last the time to leave Waverland had come. Everything was in order, and the old mansion was ready to receive its new mistress. As I went from room to room I felt proud of my home. In the drawing room I paused a moment in the deep window seat, thinking how soon my darling would be there to look upon the scene she enjoyed so much. Myrtle was at home and with a happy heart she danced from room to room in childish glee. Once she came to me, and climbing to my knee, she said:

"O, Loyd, if mamma was only here," and sobbed as though her little heart would break.

"Yes, my pet, if mother were here to enjoy it all with us how happy we could be," I said, holding her close in my arms. I thought of the weary hours I had passed with this sweet child as my only companion. No ray of hope came to bid us good cheer. It seemed as though we were doomed to go alone through life, and to never know the pleasures of a happy home. But now, so soon, the sacred light of love would fill our hearts with joy.

Then I had another source of pleasure. When I went to Sir Wren's the day before, I had found Annie full of the old time animation. Her eyes were so bright and her cheek had not recovered its rosy contour; but the expression of sadness had disappeared.

"Papa and I are going to Silver Dell too," was her first greeting, as I entered the room. "Cousin Cordelia says papa is her nearest relative and must be present at her wedding. Myrtle and I are to be bridesmaids."

"I am glad you are going, and more glad to see you looking so well," I said with a searching glance, for man like, I wished to know the truth.

She turned away her head but answered in a calm voice.

"Yes, Loyd, I am well: what a merry time we will have at the wedding!"

How pleased I was to see her so like her happy self. So pure, so childlike in her ways.

I had been round my estate considerably and found much more thrift and comfort than one year ago, and my tenants seemed more contented. But still the agitation for low rents and home rule was keeping the people roused to constant action. I found that no home was too poor, and no tenant so ignorant but that they had obtained and read an Irish paper.

I had issued invitations to a reception and banquet to be given on our return. Now the arrangements were all complete, and to-morrow, Myrtle and I were to leave Waverland for Silver Dell, London.

CHAPTER XXIII.—THE DOUBLE WEDDING.

The morning came full of joyous sound. It seemed as though the birds had tuned their songs in harmony with the glad refrain within my heart and were warbling forth their welcome home to my absent one.

Myrtle and I were ready when the train halted at our little railway station and we were soon making rapid time toward London. The journey was the old story: but how full of new joys and thoughts, as we sped away over the silent moors; through forests and busy cities.

There was a merry party gathered at Silver Dell. The grounds seemed filled with a living throng of happy smiling faces. Lady Irving was a queen of beauty. She was never bound down by any code of etiquette, and to-day she had departed from all known rules and planned an original programme characteristic of herself. It was late as we arrived. As we entered the grounds the first one to greet me was Colonel Haynes, my well remembered American friend.

"You here?" I asked, surprised.

"Yes, Sir Waverland I am here," he answered gaily, shaking my hand with a hearty good will. "I came to give you my congratulations on this most eventful occasion!"

"How did you know of the event? Where did you come from?" I asked.

"Not quite so fast," he said, laughing. "One question at a time." I heard through the papers that you had returned and when the grand ceremony was to take place. I came from Paris and the Duke of Melvorne asked me here," he continued.

"I am very glad to see you," I said, "but I supposed you were in America before this."

Just then Sir Wren joined us, saying.

"Loyd, they are waiting for you at the house."

"Yes, Sir Wren," I answered, "allow me to introduce my friend, Colonel Haynes, of New York, Sir Wren;" then I left them to entertain each other.

After a short time to dress for the important ceremony, we were summoned to Lady Irving's private parlor. From there we followed the attendants to the vine covered arbor that had been decorated for the bridal occasion. Sir Wren led out the beautiful brides, one on either arm, for he

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claimed the right to giving them both away. The bishop, clad in the robes of his sacred office, pronounced the solemn words that were to bind our hearts and our lives in one. Then the golden band of love, emblem of eternity, was placed upon the little hand, a seal of spoken vows. A moment's silence with a blessing on the new made ties, and then came the merry congratulations. Sir Wren secured the first kiss from each fair bride, saying:

"I must have pay for my precious gifts."

For one moment I held my wife to my bosom, saying, "Mine, all mine, at last!"

Stella made no answer but her look of love and trust was more eloquent than words. Myrtle, my sweet shy little sister, came to Stella, and putting her arms about her neck wept for joy.

Annie came with her merry greeting, and not a shade of care or sorrow on her fair face. Colonel Haynes was also among the first to wish us joy and happiness. Soon after the congratulations were over we were invited to a most sumptuous banquet.

As I looked across the table I was pleased to see Colonel Haynes with Sir Wren and Annie, conversing in the most friendly manner. Melvorne looked contented. The quiet dignity that he always possessed seemed now to lend an added charm to his behavior, as he moved among the guests in the grand drawing room. Music and song, and the lively sparkle of joyous wit, made the evening pass like a fleeting fairy tale.

This was the beginning of a series of dinners and receptions. At Blue Ridge the next day, the mansion seemed a perfect Eden of bloom and fragrance. Lady Hortense, with exquisite taste had arranged everything in the most delightful order. A grand concert was the final treat.

Sir Wren could not forget the important political questions of the day even amid all this gayety, but would always find some one with whom he could discuss the difficult problems agitating the country. During the concert instead of listening to the music, he was in a retired corner of the great drawing-room in earnest conversation with a member of the British Parliament. When I heard Parnell's name I became interested and asked Lady Waverland to excuse me and I soon joined them in the discussion.

"But sir," said Sir Wren, "why need the new party be destroyed?"

"The power they will hold can force one party or the other to grant their demands in the coming parliament. If the men are elected, in the strength that Parnell expects, he will hold a controlling power," said the M. P.

"I believe he will elect nearly every candidate he chooses to nominate," said Sir Wren, earnestly. "But England need not care," he continued, "if she is willing to comply with an act of parliament passed in the first year of the present century. 'That the independence of Ireland should ever remain to her.'"

"Why sir," said the M. P., "that can never be. Ireland is a part of the empire, and as such she can never be independent!"

"Ireland does not ask complete independence, but to have the legislative right for a local parliament and local government."

"If we should grant that in this coming parliament, in the next she will ask even more. The more we grant the Irish people the more they want!" exclaimed the M. P., with animation.

"I will grant that, sir," said Sir Wren. "But one must remember that what rights they now enjoy they have had to struggle hard to obtain. And we cannot blame them for longing for more liberty. They only ask that their laws may be made by their own people, and that their interests may be protected by laws of their own making."

"Could we grant them so much without making our landed interest void?" asked the M. P.

"Yes sir, I think we could," replied Sir Wren. "But I believe the transfer of our land titles should be through the government, and, that the owners of lands in Ireland should be compensated for their lands by bonds bearing interest issued by the government."

"Would you be willing to part with your lands on these conditions?" asked the M. P.

"I would. I believe every evil that now rests on Ireland or any other country where land monopoly is allowed, grows out of the false system of the lands being held by the few and worked by the many," said Sir Wren warmly.

"But, Sir Wren," I said, "if the English government held the lands of England and Ireland as carelessly as the American government holds the lands entrusted to it for future generations, in a few years the lands would all be held by a small minority."

"That is true," said Lord Sanders, as he joined the group. "I own nearly one hundred thousand acres in Illinois and about as much more in Kansas and Nebraska. And not an acre but will yield me ten times the amount it has cost me, in less than five years. And I can secure tenants on better terms there than in Ireland."

"Then America will soon feel the same appalling misery and hear the same helpless cries that afflict and curse Ireland today!" said Sir Wren.

"Even now she feels that," I said, remembering my visit. "In the districts where tenants occupy the lands, you see the same wretched hovels and signs of destitution that we see in Ireland!"

"Well it brings us a fine income," said Lord Sanders, putting his hands into his pockets with a satisfied air. "I can live in luxury and ease and my family can hold a high position in the world while these proud Americans are glad to sweat for the gold I spend!"

"But how many families are bound under iron clad leases and driven almost to starvation to provide you with the means for all your pleasures?" said Sir Wren.

"I don't know," said Lord Sanders indifferently. "They do well enough. They only pay me rents for my lands."

"To think," said Colonel Haynes, who joined the group in time to hear Lord Sander's last remark, "that any American citizen must pay tribute to a foreigner for the privilege of living on American soil! It would be a queer sight for our State militia to be called upon, as her majesty's troops are in Ireland, to evict an American citizen from his home, because he cannot pay his foreign landlord the rack-rent demanded. Why, we boast that we are free from paying tribute money to foreign nations, especially to Britons! I thought that our war of independence meant something!"

"Well I am glad to hear that America is following in our tracks," said the M. P. "They will soon feel the annoyances we are laboring under, from the false system that was established years ago; if it is a false system."

"False! no! I would rather sound the note of warning, so long and loud that every free American citizen would rise up in the independent energy of their forefathers and crush out this foreign element which only holds her lands as means to obtain tribute money. No bloody war can make her suffer more than this cruel land monopoly will, in time," said Sir Wren with solemn earnestness.

"O, well, sir," said Lord Sanders, "they are not so sensitive as you are. They are glad to sell us lands; it brings our money into the hands of their land agents. And as long as we can hold the titles and make our own terms with the tenants, our income is sure."

"But they may not always be so quiet," said Colonel Haynes. "If our people begin to realize the danger of allowing foreigners to obtain such immense tracts of lands they may soon find a remedy, and those wealthy landlords may have to seek some other source of revenue. It seems that for years the General Land Office, at Washington, has been the most corrupt department that ever existed in any government on the face of the globe. The choicest locations have been secured to alien landlords, who will not sell, and only hold them to introduce into America the feudal system that oppresses the poor tenantry in Europe. Rentals are placed at two or three dollars per acre and the tenants are compelled to pay the taxes on lands they occupy, besides. When will our people awake to the dangers? Congress should make some laws curtailing these frauds and restore the lands to the people who have just claims on the government for protection against these unprincipled land thieves."

"How would you dispose of the lands we now hold?" asked Lord Sanders.

"Pay you what they have cost you and no more!" said Colonel Haynes. "We extend to aliens the same rights and privileges of a free born American by his becoming a *bona fide* citizen. Our people will not quietly submit to being robbed of their inheritance by alien capitalists and enemies to our institutions! Our lands are to be preserved for the use and benefit of American citizens only, if we wish to retain our present system of free government."

The amusement of the evening ended and the company gradually gathered round the party that had been having such an earnest and interesting discussion. It was a signal for adjournment which proved effectual.

The last reception was given at Raven's Park. There, Lady Waverland, or Stella, as I love to call her, assisted by the Duchess of Melvorne received the guests at the grand old mansion with quiet dignity. Colonel Haynes had established himself as Annie's companion at all these entertainments. She seemed well pleased with his society.

Notwithstanding the pleasure we enjoyed, I longed for the quiet of Waverland, where I could have the luxury of a happy home; for such I was sure it would be with my dear wife as my companion. As we were standing together after the guests had nearly all left, I said:

"To-morrow, little wife, we will be at Waverland once more."

"I am so glad," said Stella, with a quiet pleasure in her voice. "All this gaiety is nice, but I long for the rest of home."

"Well, we'll soon be home again," said Sir Wren, joining us as we stood by an open door.

"We want you to stand as member of parliament from our district, Loyd, in the coming election."

"I am willing to try. But I fear there will be a strong fight against me," I said.

"Very much will depend on Lady Waverland. If she is popular she will be a great help to you in the coming campaign," said Sir Wren.

"They will meet her first," I said, "at our reception and banquet. But I have no fear for her; she has a strong hold on the people's hearts already.

"How do you know?" she asked with a smile.

"I have heard of you very often among my tenants," I said, as we passed into the hall.

Sir Wren, Annie and Colonel Haynes were our guests at Raven's Park, and were to accompany us home to Waverland.

CHAPTER XXIV.—THE BRIDE'S HOME COMING.

The next morning we bade good-bye to the happy friends with whom we had shared so many happy hours. With many promises for exchange of letters and visits in the near future we left Raven's Park and started for Waverland. Sir Wren, Annie and Colonel Haynes were still with us. The Colonel had accepted an invitation to spend a month or two with us in Ireland to learn something of the true state of things there. I suspect a certain pair of blue eyes had a charm for him, greater even than the troubles of the country, judging from the attention he paid their owner.

Raven's Park we left in the care of the servants who had lived there in the days of Sir Edward, Stella's grandfather. It was arranged that we were to return there to spend the Winter.

"O, this is our station!" exclaimed Myrtle, as our train rolled up to the platform.

We were met by a delegation of our people; and such a throng!

"Why, I did not know there were so many people in the county," said Sir Wren as we stood contemplating the situation and waiting for the train to move on. It was indeed a sight to behold! Women in their blue cloaks with happy, smiling faces; men in their smart Sunday jackets and children of all sizes, eager for a glimpse of our party. As the train moved on, so that they could see us, cheer after cheer made the air ring with shouts of "Hurrah for the 'swate lady!" "Long life to young masther!"

"This is your home coming, darling," I said, helping Stella to a place in the carriage.

When at a little distance from the depot we were met by carriages full of people; it seemed as though all the country had put on its holiday garments and were having a jubilee.

As we were passing through the gateway Stella said:

"O, Loyd! you have copied that poem of a gateway from one we saw in Glen Eyrie!"

"Yes, I tried to make it like that, as a memorial of the love I found awaiting me in that far away land. And may it ever be a pleasant reminder of the happy hours we passed there," I said.

Myrtle was in an ecstacy of delight at being home again, and seeing so many people about.

"Sister Stella," said Myrtle, nestling in her arms, "you will never go away again will you?"

"No, darling, I am at home to stay with you now," she said.

"And Loyd too? asked Myrtle.

"This is our home, all together now, little sister," I said, as we drove up to the doorway.

The old butler and his wife met us as we entered the great hall. He was more pompous than ever in his enormous wig, high coat collar and cravat, while his wife, who

Continued on next page.

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