

WAVERLAND.

A TALE OF OUR COMING LANDLORDS.

BY SARAH MAIR BIRCHAM.

Continued from 1835.

"Don't, Colonel, you will pardon my selfishness," said the Duchess. "I have had so much pleasure in my quiet visit with you, that I am almost sorry the week was so short."

The conversation soon became general. Melvorne was in high spirits with his "family," as he familiarly called us. Annie seemed shy and embarrassed, but through Stella's thoughtfulness she was soon talking at her ease with Mrs. Haynes. "I almost felt that I was personally acquainted with you, Lady Waverland," said Mrs. Haynes, addressing Stella, while she was gently coaxing Myrtle to her side. "Mr. and Mrs. Lollard were very pleasant companions and gave me vivid descriptions of you all on our voyage."

"We had a most delightful journey together in California and Colorado. They helped to form a happy party," said Stella. "Mother," said the Colonel, joining the group and taking Annie by the hand, "allow me to introduce to you my chosen bride."

Mrs. Haynes adjusted her glasses, then rising from her chair, said:

"I greet you as a daughter. I have learned to love the gentle Annie from the frequent letters that came when my son was ill. I felt that some one was dear to him by the wording of the messages. If you have won the love of my noble boy I will gladly give you my blessing. His happiness is my greatest desire," she continued, drawing Annie to her and giving her such a tender motherly kiss, that I felt sure there would be real pleasure in their new relations of mother and daughter."

The Colonel looked too happy for words in possessing the love of two so dear to him. I almost envied the love of his mother. I could only think of one distant grave, but it was a garden full of sweet memories."

After dinner as we were returning to the drawing-room, we heard strains of enchanting music from some hidden nook. Lady Hortense, true to her artistic skill in arranging for the pleasure of a party had taken the least with Myrtle by her side, and opening a door to another part of the mansion carried us back to the scenes of our forefathers."

"Oh!" exclaimed Myrtle, "a Christmas tree." Sure enough there stood a Christmas tree in a room beautifully decorated with the time-honored mistletoe and holly, and in the open fire place lay the ancient yule-log."

"Yes, little one," said Lady Hortense kindly, "this is your Christmas gift. You are the fairy to light the fire and to call for old St. Nick. Wave this wand," she continued, handing Myrtle a golden scepter. Myrtle was a little bewildered for a moment, but intensely interested. At a movement from Lady Hortense the great log fire was soon blazing with bright splendor; it seemed to send forth all the colors of the rainbow, and what was strange, it did not burn away."

At a signal from Lady Hortense a corpulent old Santa Claus stepped from the fire place and began robbing the tree of its dainty fruit, calling the name of the owner of each article and handing them to Myrtle to distribute. Amid joyous peals of laughter at the witty sayings we each received some little souvenir to keep as a reminder of this happy Christmas time."

At the request of Mrs. Haynes it was decided that Fred and Annie should be married while she might be present to witness the ceremony. The day was fixed and the arrangements made for the wedding to take place at Blue Ridge. In the meantime Annie and her father were to be our guests at Raven's Park. Col. Haynes and his mother were to remain at Blue Ridge."

A busy time followed this arrangement. From the frequent consultations and the numerous visits to London followed by boxes and bundles of various kinds and descriptions, one might have thought that they were fitting out a colony of young soldiers for the land of Purisloe."

While to our little party the wedding was the all-absorbing theme, the whole of England was agitated over a very different subject—over the "Unfettered Event."

CHAPTER XXVIII.—THE HISTORIC TUESDAY.

At a reception given at Raven's Park quite a number of distinguished guests were present. Among them was a gentleman who had once been a United States minister to Persia; who, by the way, was a friend of Col. Haynes. They soon engaged in earnest conversation on the one topic that the Colonel was so much interested in, viz: the great and increasing number of English landlords in Ireland."

"Why, I have not heard very much about the subject; I believe I did read something in the papers about a duke or someone owning from twenty to fifty miles of land in Dakota, but I was not interested in it," said the ex-minister in an unconcerned listless fashion."

"I was no more interested than you are," said the Colonel, "when I came to Britain, but I am beginning to learn the extent of their investments and can realize that something must be done to stop it, or British lords will soon lord it over more land in America than they have in all the British Islands together."

"O, well, Haynes, if they do it will only give us American more dignity and importance by having a few aristocrats in our midst," said the ex-minister, watching the ladies in a group opposite, as though he would rather join them than discuss the unimportant theme of absentee landlordism in America, which only involves the wear and woe of a few hundred generations of people."

The Colonel reading the wish in the ex-minister's eyes, crossed the room and presented him as a personal friend, to the Duchess of Melvorne, Lady Waverland and Miss Annie Wren, who formed a pleasant group amid the brilliant throng."

"There, you see how most Americans feel on the subject of foreign landlordism," said Mr. Lollard, who had been standing near me while the Colonel and ex-minister had been conversing."

"I see they are very indifferent on the subject," I said, "but if they only knew how hard it will be to throw off this yoke that is now being fitted to their necks they would soon be intensely interested."

"If they would only turn back a hundred years and read a few pages of their own history, they would pause long enough in the mad whirl of business to establish laws that would control this foreign land monopoly. Gen. Washington saw the oppression that the children of American fathers and mothers will feel in their generation, when he said, 'What does England's conduct deserve, and what punishment is there in store for the men who have distressed millions, involved thousands in ruin, and plunged a numberless crowd in inextinguishable woe?'" said Lollard.

"That describes the situation of Ireland to-day," I said, "and that is what I would warn the people of America to prepare to defeat and slay."

"Oh, you are always talking of land-lords," exclaimed Lord Sanders, as he joined us. "That seems to be a favorite theme of yours. I thought you were a landlord yourself, Waverland."

"So I am, and that is why I know so much about them. Every humane impulse of my life has been made to suffer from the cruelty I have seen practiced on starving, evicted tenants."

"I was a land-owner once in Ireland myself, but the tenants you sympathize with so fervently would steal and sell my stock as fast as I could buy," said Lord Sanders, "so I sold my lands there and invested my money where tenants are law-abiding and stand by their contracts."

"I bought your estate," said Sir Wren, "and the tenants who remained after the most cruel eviction, I found good, faithful laborers. Men and women have stood by every contract, and now I am going back to Ireland to sell my lands to those very men who were evicted from them years ago. I have no fear but that they will stand by every contract I make with them."

"You're welcome to deal with the Irish as you please, I will have nothing to do with them," Sanders exclaimed. "I would not live among such a blood-thirsty people! I would sooner be among the Fiji Islanders for safety!"

"I have found that the love of home and liberty is the one strong element in every Irish heart, and it is the hope of obtaining that which has brought all classes into union with Parnell. My sympathies are with the people. I want to see them have a chance to become prosperous and happy."

"It's easy to talk," said Lord Sanders, with a sneer, "but if you were tried you



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would find your money and your life would be very dear to you, so dear that the common Irish tenant would be left to look out for himself."

"The time will come when we can prove our loyalty to the cause of Home Rule and land reform," I said, with warmth.

"You may go into parliament but they will never grant Home Rule to Ireland, or, very much land reform while the Queen has power to defeat it! Coercion will be enforced by adding a greater number to the official force now established in Dublin. Law and order must be maintained in Ireland at whatever cost. The National League and all other societies dangerous to the government must be suppressed. The Queen is fully alive to the needs of the times. She will call for more troops to aid in stamping out this rebellion!" said Lord Sanders, jingling his watch chain and jewelry with vehemence.

"But," said Sir Wren, "some may still remember the 'terrible' shock of last January. They may fear to carry out your proposals. If the people of Ireland cannot work openly they will find some other way to accomplish their object. They are deeply in earnest."

"Well, I'm glad I'm going to a land where pence sits enthroned and tenants haven't learned to avoid their legal obligations," said Lord Sanders, complacently folding his long white hands and winking his sinister black eyes.

"I, too, am going to that land, and if my influence has any power I shall exert it to the utmost against this increasing evil," said Sir Wren.

"If I was in a position to act for the American people I should soon have a bill passed that would refund to you alien landlords every dollar you have paid for your lands. Then I would make another law that any alien who desired to buy or lease lands there, should first take the oath of allegiance as an American citizen," said Lollard.

"That would be a fine way of disposing of us," said Lord Sanders. "My one hundred thousand acres that cost me an average of one dollar per acre, are now worth from fifty to one hundred dollars per acre. You would only have them pay me what it cost! That would be acting the honorable part with a vengeance! Where are all the noble principles you have been advocating? Where has your nice sense of justice gone?" he asked.

"Where have they gone? Gone, sir, to find the timber that has been taken from the public lands of Utah, Dakota, and other parts of the great West. Timber was appropriated to private purposes in large quantities by aliens who dared to take possession of the lands belonging to the United States! They have cut the timber from millions of acres. They have erected saw mills to turn out large quantities of railroad ties and lumber of all kinds. They sold this lumber and pocketed the proceeds! No more glaring outrage could be perpetrated against a free people than has been committed by these foreign land robbers in the great West!" said Lollard with much emphasis.

He had unconsciously raised his voice during this denunciation of the alien robbers and a large company had gathered around and heard his words, full of withering scorn.

Lord Sanders did not say a word! He felt there was truth in the statement that he could not deny. I thought of the words of Emerson when he was in England:

"That anyone might say anything he wished in good society, provided he was some one."

Lollard being a descendant from a wealthy and ancient family, although not of the nobility, was important enough to be listened to with respect. After a short pause the amusements of the evening continued to a late hour.

"Well," I said, as I came home from the House of Commons, where the Tory government had been destroyed, "our uncrowned king is winning fame for making and unmaking ministers. He is illustrating the doctrine that the talent and powers, as well as the sins, of the fathers are

handed down for many generations. Charles Stewart Parnell is a lineal descendant in the fifteenth generation, of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, famed in history as 'the king maker'!"

"I am not glad, neither am I sorry, to learn of his royal lineage," said Colonel Haynes. "I would almost wish him to be one of the people. But his influence will be more powerful, perhaps, from the knowledge of his noble origin."

"Give us a description of the proceedings in parliament," said Stella, as we seated ourselves in the pleasant drawing-room of Raven's Park. The duke and duchess of Melvorne, Col. Haynes, his mother and Annie were with us, forming a quiet morning party."

"The House of Commons," I began, "was crowded in every part. At a very early hour Mr. Parnell and his faithful eighty-six were there and planted their hats on the choicest spots on the opposition benches. The breakfast at which we regaled ourselves in the dining-room of the House was a sight worth seeing. Sixty sat down to one long table, the remainder at a cross table. The view from the stately windows which overlook the river was a charming one; the sun lit up the scene. A facetious Ulsterman was one who aspired to outdo the Parnellites by rising early. When he caught sight of the acre of Parnell hats he rushed into the dining-room to see the prodigy. He was greeted with a clap of thunder in the shape of an uproarious laugh! They did not forget the courtesy of war, however, but invited him to partake with them, and, instead of poisoned wine which the English gave to Shane O'Neal, they gave him his choice of honest beefsteak, eggs and bacon. By noon every seat in the House was taken. But as there can be no business done in House until four o'clock, the members roamed about listless through the lobby and grounds to pass away the lagging hours. At last the herald's voice was heard resounding through the hall. Every member rose to his feet, while the sergeant at arms bearing the mace, the chaplain, the speaker and his train beaver entered. Prayers occupied about ten minutes. Then followed an oppressive silence. Just when every nerve was raised to the utmost tension, an elderly gentleman rose and gave a homely on hats, until Mr. Bradlaugh's finger and Goshen's fist caused an interruption. During the homily, Mr. Gladstone, who looks fresh and well for a man of seventy-seven, sat in his favorite attitude with his head thrown back and hands crossed—the one great figure in the whole assembly."

"Yes!" exclaimed Melvorne, "he is always that, the vain old man!"

"When the votes were cast it was a complete defeat to the Tory government that had been threatening to suppress the National League and to establish a new coercion in Ireland. The wildest exultations of the Irish members greeted the announcement of the vote."

"This is the second ministry that Parnell has destroyed within the last eight months," said the Colonel.

"The Irish may have reason to regret this act," said Melvorne. "A ministry with a powerful majority would be apt to do the right thing if Gladstone was out of it. He always has done the wrong thing for Ireland and always will, I fear. He is vain and vacillating!"

"He has no easy task," I said. "He must now form a policy which the whigs have heretofore bitterly detested and which will fill his party with doubts and misgivings."

"England needs just now a Lincoln or a Grant!" exclaimed Col. Haynes. "Men who can think and act for themselves and beyond themselves and see what will be the best for nations and for mankind at a glance."

"I am sorry that Gladstone is in power. With him as our pilot we may have insurrection in Ireland, war with Europe and mutiny in India," said Melvorne, thoughtfully. "Then he is not in favor with the Queen. She resorted to every device before she submitted to the inevitable by playing Gladstone in power."

"That makes it harder for him to form his cabinet. While Parnell would not accept an office in the English government, he will rule its destinies in a great measure," I said.

"At present Parnell is master of the situation. If he is as you believe, the earnest friend of the Irish cause, if he can command himself and keep his followers united, there is every reason to believe that he will gain for Ireland some form of Home Rule," said Melvorne.

"It is hard to control men who are in the condition that the Irish are just now. Everything is unsettled; the great and uncontrollable riot that occurred in London has added fuel to the fire and it will be strange indeed if we do not hear of some lawlessness. They are deeply earnest for Home Rule and Irish liberty. Anything that they imagine will hinder that they will overthrow, if it costs them their lives," I said.

"I do hope to hear of a speedy settlement of this matter without the shedding of blood," said Col. Haynes. "I have learned a lesson in my brief tour in England and Ireland that I shall try to turn to the good of our own nation. When I reach New York I shall commence an active campaign against our 'Coming landlords'!"

"I am with you in that sentiment my son," said Sir Wren, entering the room. He had returned from Ireland unexpectedly and had entered the room unannounced.

"O, papa," exclaimed Annie, as she sprang to meet her father.

"Well, pet," he answered, giving her a tender kiss. "I see you are looking well. I seem to be just in time to join a family party," he continued, giving to each some word of greeting.

"Yes, Sir Wren," said Stella, "this is our last family gathering. This evening the great event is to close our happy reunions, for on the morrow Colonel Haynes with his party leave for America."

We had lunch together and were pleased to hear Sir Wren's account of how he had disposed of his large estate.

"Then you think it is safe to sell to the tenants on such easy terms?" asked Melvorne.

"Yes, I consider it perfectly safe. The tenants will pay me on their place instead of rent, on the installment plan."

"Then you will invest your money in American lands," said Melvorne.

"Not unless I remain there to reside. I cannot begin now to follow out a practice that I have always condemned, of taking money from one nation and spending it in another, without leaving an equivalent."

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