

Tristram of Blent.

Being An Episode in a Story of An Ancient House.
BY ANTHONY HOPE

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.
Adele, wife of Sir Randolph Edge of Blent Hall, eloped with Captain Fitzhugh, Sir Randolph died in Russia, presumably in time for Lady Edge and Fitzhugh to marry and so make their son, Harry, legitimate. They learn later, however, that the date of Sir Randolph's death has been given incorrectly and Harry is not the rightful heir. They keep the matter secret and eventually Mrs. Fitzhugh succeeds to the barony of Blent and the title of Countess. Harry and Adele, who are also in possession of the secret and Madam Zabriska, with her uncle, Major Duplay, come to reside at Blent. Lady Edge, who is Harry's mother, learns from her mother that he is not the rightful heir to Blent and that she determines to hold the title for him at any cost. To further his cause he decides to marry Lady Edge. Lady Edge, however, has two rivals in the latter Bradley and Major Duplay. The latter learns of Harry's marriage to Lady Edge and is determined to win the title for him. He informs him that he intends to tell Iver and they quarrel. Harry winning the point of Fairholme. Madam Zabriska meets Ned and she and Iver, who are Harry's friends, decide to keep the matter secret. Harry's interests and maintain secrecy. Lady Tristram dies after extracting from her son a promise that he will, through the rightfulness of Blent, shall be invited to the funeral. Harry falls to receive them. Later he comes suddenly upon Cecily in the garden and tells her that he is Tristram, the image of his mother. The engagement of Harry and Lady Edge is announced and announced to the world. Information to expose the false position of his future son-in-law to Cecily and with- out telling her this, he goes to Cecily and tells her that he is Tristram of Blent. Then he steals away from Blent by night, stopping to call on Bob Bradley who was and who Jane Iver who loves him.

She flung it across to Iver and rested her chin on her hand, while her eyes followed his expression as he read.
"I have thrown up the sponge and, I beg, please make friends with Lady Tristram of Blent—H. T."
For a while nobody spoke. Then Ned, leaning forward to the table again, began to explain and excuse his silence, to speak of the hard case he was in, of the accidental and confidential character of his knowledge. Neither Ned nor her uncle ever appeared to heed him. Iver appeared to listen patiently and courteously, but his mind, too, was distracted, and he did not cease fidgeting with Harry Tristram's letter and referring ever and again to its brief, sufficient message.
"I am sorry I was wrong. The position was very difficult," pleaded Ned.
"Yes, yes," said Iver, in an absent-minded tone. "Difficult, no doubt, Ned, both for you and Mina. And now he has— he has given up the game himself. Or was his hand forced?"
"No," flashed out Mina, resting in a moment of animation, her fighting instincts awake again. "He never had been forced. He must have done it of his own accord."
"But why?" again he turned to the letter. "And why does he write to you?"
"Because he knew I knew about it. He didn't know that Mr. Need did."
"And this—this Lady Tristram of Blent?" Iver's voice was hesitating and conscious as he pronounced the name that was to have become his daughter's.
Again the pink-tinted Deus made entry on the scene, to give the speaker a more striking answer.
"A woman to see you—namely, Miss Gainsborough."
The three men sprang to their feet, with a sudden wrench Mina turned her chair round toward the door. A tall, slim girl in black came in with a quick, yet hesitating step.
"Forgive me, Miss Gainsborough. But I had to come. Harry told you were his friend. Do you know anything about him? Do you know where he is?" She looked at the men and blushed as she returned their bows with a hurried recognition.
"No, I haven't seen him. I know nothing," said Mina.
"The letter, Miss," Duplay reminded her, and Mina held it out to Cecily.
Cecily came forward, took and read it. She looked again at the group, evidently puzzled.
"He doesn't say where he's gone," she said.
"You are—?" Iver began.
"I'm Cecil Gainsborough. But I think he means me when he says Lady Tristram of Blent."
"Yes, he must mean you, Miss Gainsborough."
"Yes, because last night he told me— Her eyes traveled quickly over their faces, and she reread the letter. "Do you know anything about it?" she demanded, imperiously. "Tell me, do you know what he means by this letter, and whether what he says is true?"
"We know what he means," answered Iver gravely. "And we mean that it's true."
"Have you known it long?" she asked.
"Iver glanced at Duplay and Ned. It was Ned who answered gently: "Some of us have been sure of it for some time. But—" He looked at Mina before he went on. "But we didn't intend to speak."
"Cecily stood there, seeming to consider, and for a moment, meeting Mina's intense gaze, which had never left her face.
"Had he known for long?" was her next question.
It met with no immediate answer. Duplay rose abruptly and walked to the mantelpiece; he leaned his arm on it and turned half away from the group at the table.
"Had he known for long?" Cecily repeated.
"Ever so long," answered Mina Zabriska in a low voice, but very confidently.
"Ah, he was waiting till Lady Tristram died?"
Iver nodded; he thought that she suggested a very good explanation to accept.

CHAPTER XVI.
The New Life.
"You haven't mentioned it to the young man himself?" asked Lady Everswood.
"Certainly not. I've only seen him once, and then he didn't talk of his own affairs. He takes the thing very well. He's lost his position and he's the hero of the newspapers, and he bears both afflictions quite coolly. A lad of good balance, I think."
"Is he agreeable?"
"Hum, I'm not sure of that. No excess of modesty, I fancy."
"I suppose you mean he's not shy? All young men are conceited. I think I should like you to bring him to see me."
"For forty years such an intimation from Lady Everswood had enjoyed the rank of a command: Lord Southend received it with proper obedience.
"The solution I spoke of has occurred to some of us," he went on. "He's poor now, but with that he could make a marriage. The case is very exceptional."
"So is what you propose, George."
"O, there are precedents. It was done in the Beardsdale case."
"There was a doubt there," Lady Everswood knew all about the Beardsdale case, though it was ancient history to Southend, she had danced with both parties to it.
"The house was against the marriage unanimously."
"But he did not deny the doubt."
"Well, what are you going to do?" she asked.

"I would be necessary to approach Diana," Southend spoke with some appearance of timidity. Mr. Disney was prime minister. And the truth is, none of us seemed to like the job. So John Fulsome suggested you."
"What have men you are?" Her face wrinkled humorously.
"Well, he might bite us; and he couldn't bite you—not so hard, anyhow."
"And you want me to ask for a higher rank? That wasn't done in the Beardsdale case, nor in any other that I ever heard of."
"We shouldn't press that. A barony would do. But if Disney thought that under the very exceptional circumstances a viscountcy."
"I don't see why you want it," she persisted. The slight embarrassment in Southend's manner stirred the old lady's curiosity. "It's rather odd to reward a man for his mother's. There, I don't say a word about Addie. I took her to her first ball, poor girl."
"Disney used to know her as a girl."
"If you're relying on Robert Disney's romantic memories— from Mr. Tristram which can't be anticipated now you will be put into possession of the estates and the title." He pointed to Harry's letter which was still in her hands. "You see what he himself calls you there, Miss Gainsborough."
She said no answer. With another glance at Ned, Iver pushed back his chair and rose. Ned followed his example. They felt that the interview had better end. Duplay did not move, and Cecily stood where she was. She seemed to ask what was to be done with her, her desolation was sad, but it had something of the comic in it. She was so obviously lost.
"You might walk down to Blent with Miss Gainsborough, Mina," Iver suggested.
"No," cried the Imp in a passion, leaping up from her chair. "I don't want to have anything to do with her."
Cecily started and her cheeks flushed red, as though she had been struck. Iver looked vexed and ashamed.
"It's all her fault that Harry Tristram's—that Harry Tristram's—the Imp's voice was choked; she could get no further.
Old Mr. Need came forward. He took Harry's letter from Cecily and gave it to Mina.
"My dear, my dear," he said gently, as he patted her hand. "Read that again."
Mina read, and then scrutinized Cecily keenly.
"Well, I'll walk down with you," she said, grudgingly. She came nearer to Cecily, and gave her a brief but friendly kiss. "I'll be with you for that," she cried. "I wouldn't have told either."
"What were you all doing here when I came?" asked Cecily. "This y were trying to make me tell them what I knew about Harry Tristram, but I wouldn't tell."

alone with his inquisitive friend. Southend lost no time.
"What's happened about Janie Iver? There was some talk—"
"I've seen Harry Tristram," Iver said, smiling indulgently. "But there's stuff in him."
"It's all over," he whispered Ned. "I've treated me very badly—I know Ned will admit it, but he did. Still, I like him and I'd help him if I could."
"Well, he atoned for anything wrong by owning up in the end," remarked Southend.
"That wasn't for me, but for—well, it had nothing to do with us. As far as we are concerned he's been at Blent today. It was Cecily Gainsborough who did it."
"Yes, I wonder—"
Iver rose decisively. "Look here, Southend, if you're going to do exactly what all my friends and neighbors are doing, I shall go and write letters." With a nod he walked into the next room, leaving Ned

very much. He watched her, then he asked me if I loved the things. And—well, then he told me. He told me and went straight out of the room. I waited a long while, but he didn't come back, and I haven't spoken to him since." She looked at each of them in turn, as though someone might be able to help her with the puzzle.
"Somehow you made him do it—you," said Mina Zabriska.
"Slowly Cecily's eyes settled on Mina's face; thus she stood silent for a full minute.
"Yes, I think so. I think I must have somehow." Her voice rose as she asked with a sudden access of agitation: "But what are we to do now?"
Mina had no thought for that; it was the thing itself that engaged her, not the consequences.
"I don't see why you want it," she persisted. The slight embarrassment in Southend's manner stirred the old lady's curiosity. "It's rather odd to reward a man for his mother's. There, I don't say a word about Addie. I took her to her first ball, poor girl."
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back. He went to the theater that night, to the pit (where he would be known), and enjoyed himself immensely.
And Lady Everswood had made up her mind that she would find a way of seeing Mr. Disney soon and throw out a captious feeler. Everything would have to be done very carefully, especially if the marriage with the house were to be made a feature of the case. But her resolve, although not altered, was tempered by a curious feeling to which her talk with Harry had given rise. There was now not only the very grave question whether Robert Disney to say anything of somebody else—would entertain the idea. There was another—much less obvious one—whether Harry himself would welcome it for him. However when Southend next called on her, she possessed her mind to attack or at least to reconnoiter the task from which he and John Fulsome and the rest had shrunk.
"Only," she said, "if I were you, I should find out tolerably early—so soon as you could—whether there is any chance at all—what Mr. Tristram himself thinks about it."
"There's only one thing he could think," exclaimed Southend.
"O, very well," smiled Lady Everswood. "A long life had taught her that only facts convince, and that they often fail."
(To Be Continued.)