

Haliburton's Entrance Into Good Society

By William Hamilton Osborne

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WHEN Lord Southdown died, his surviving family was the center at once of that typical tragedy of English life that springs from the genteel habit of entailing properties.

The instant that the breath left his body he and his were immediately stripped of the title to the famous Southdown estate in land. For these vast estates had been conferred by some ancestor upon Lord Southdown and upon his heirs male.

Heirs male he lacked, and while his soul was fluttering away, the title to the lands hovered for an instant in the air and then swooped down upon a distant relative—some remote Southdown unknown even to the late incumbent.

Lord Southdown was not childless, for he left behind him the Honorable Peggy Southdown, fair, slender and some 19 years of age. And he left also his worthy sister, the Honorable Carolina Southdown, a gentle spinster of resource and tact. But when this gentle spinster began to realize, as she did soon after her brother's death, that her brother's entire wealth was now the property of someone else, her tact and her resource seemed incontinently to abandon her. However, she kept the news from her fair and slender niece.

"If it were not for Peggy," she kept exclaiming to herself, "I would not mind. I could get along. But Peggy—" With a mist floating before her eyes the tender-hearted spinster watched her young niece as she swung along the green.

"We certainly must do something," wailed Aunt Carolina to herself. "What can we do—what can we do? Poor Peggy. She'll know it all too soon. I must keep it from her while I can."

One day the Honorable Carolina was exceedingly bedeviled to receive a formal looking package by post. When she had opened it, however, she uttered a sigh of relief. It was a brief note from the London solicitors of the new Lord Southdown stating that his client would refrain from demanding possession of his estates until some time during the middle of the summer.

"Thank goodness!" ejaculated Aunt Carolina, "this gives us plenty of time to turn around. And now I must get my wits together and arrange some plan of action."

Lady Carolina was good at arranging anything, and she was past mistress in the art of planning, but the present situation put her to it beyond any experience that she had ever had. Aunt Carolina was not a woman with an immobile face, and, though she told herself that she was keeping her secret well and safely from the Honorable Peggy, this same Peggy finally put two and two together.

"Poor Aunt Carolina," she said to herself when she found it out, "what will she ever do?"

Now, on a certain memorable day in her career, Aunt Carolina shut herself up in her rooms in the east wing, and surreptitiously untied a bundle. When she did so, every daily paper in the kingdom fell out of it, and Aunt Carolina began her systematic search for profitable and dignified employment. In the very first paper she tackled a small notice in a corner attracted her attention. She read it through and then gasped with horror.

"Dear me," she exclaimed, "that any gentlewoman would so demean herself. Wait, let me read that over again." Then after reading it, she shook her head.

"No, no," she exclaimed, "that would never, never do. I could never do it, and if Peggy ever found it out—"

She continued her perusal, but over and anon she returned to that small notice.

"I wonder if it would be so bad," she reasoned. "Perhaps I could manage to keep it from Peggy after all. And I could tell her that—that they were—were distant cousins, or old school friends—or anything." She glanced about uncertainly.

"It is just awful to think of it, but why not, after all. Needs must when—when there's Peggy to be considered. And we'll have four months more here, and in that time, why—" Aunt Carolina rose and, taking a pair of scissors from her work-box, cut out the little notice. "I'll do it," she continued firmly. "It is awful, but I'll do it."

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Haliburton was a young man, who, for a time at least, had nothing to do. He sat at one of the windows of his rather expensive London lodgings, yawned once or twice or thrice, and then rose and stretched his arms above his head, after the manner of young men when all alone. He frowned.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, "this is the first time in many years that I've had absolutely nothing to do. I feel like a cat in a strange garret."

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He was a strong individual with a bronzed complexion. His attire was of the cut and fashion of the season, but there was about him an unconventionality of movement and appearance that set him just a bit apart from other London men.

"Nothing to do for the first time in years," he repeated. He rose and picked up listlessly at the window and picked up a morning paper which, with the exception of

the advertisements, he had already read through. Under the circumstances, therefore, he tackled the advertisements. With a curiosity that would have done credit to a Yankee or a woman, he first examined that column of the paper which, in America, and in England, too, contains personals, spicy and otherwise; those delicate bits of inquiry and answers inserted by ladies desiring husbands and by gentlemen desiring wives; by sportive youths who, having seen for the first time, upon a tram-car or a coach, some object of especial admiration, seek to extend their admiration into acquaintance, and acquaintance into friendship.

Half way down the column he paused with his finger on the page. "This one," he said aloud, "is not quite so nery as the rest. By Jove, I'll answer one or two of these. It will give me a good sort of entertainment, and who knows—" he added with a laugh, "it may get me into good society, after all."

The published notice that he had selected read about like this:

EXCLUSIVE member of nobility will introduce into exclusive society gentleman or lady of wealth. Instruction in etiquette. Recommendation as to character required. Terms must be of the most liberal kind. Applicants must be persons of some refinement; strangers from other countries preferred. Address, Dowager, this office.

This young man, with nothing to do—and therefore being a fit agency for the preparation of mischief—immediately answered this and one other such notice.

Two days later, by appointment, he entered the Metropole in London, and with but little hesitation, he picked out a sprightly little lady who seemed to be expecting him. He doffed his hat and bowed. "I am 'Young American,'" he announced. The lady blushed. "And you?" he inquired.

"Dear me," exclaimed the lady somewhat flustered, "dear me. Yes, I—I am 'Dowager.' There."

Now Haliburton was taken somewhat aback, for originally he had expected that "Dowager" would turn out to be some coarse representative of the upper crust whose sole claim to gentility and refinement lay in title, and the former possession of some wealth. But this, which he had started as a joke, he found to be too serious an affair, when he realized that he was dealing with a woman whose breeding was of the best. And the Honorable Carolina Southdown, on her part, was quite as agreeably surprised, when she looked at this young "American."

Aunt Carolina, looking into the face of Haliburton, felt herself impelled to tell him all. And she did it—she gave him the whole story from beginning to end.

"And now," she asked him as she finished, "what would you have done yourself?"

Haliburton bowed. "Your choice," he said deferentially and with a world of genuine respect in his manner, "was the only course left to pursue." Aunt Carolina breathed a sigh of relief.

"And now," continued Haliburton, with a strange smile on his face, for he had suddenly made up his mind to go through with the part he was playing, "the question is, may I come, and if so, when?"

In twenty minutes more the parties to this compact had exchanged references, which were satisfactory on both sides, and Aunt Carolina, the spinster "Dowager," and Haliburton, the "Young American," had gone their several ways. But young Haliburton was not yet satisfied. "While I am about it," he said to himself, "I may just as well run down this other one. There's a possibility that there'll be some fun in that one."

A short time later, in another part of town, he stepped up to a young and business-like young person. "I beg your pardon," he inquired, "but is this—that is, are you Miss 'Church Mouse'?"

The young lady rose hastily and looked at him. "Yes," she returned, "but—but—there must be some mistake. My—my notice referred solely to members of the feminine—"

"Sex," responded Haliburton, "exactly, but—"

"And," went on the young lady, "your answer was signed 'Mary Witherspoon.'"

Haliburton blushed. "Exactly," he went on, somewhat awkwardly, "one—one of my noms de plume—er—I should say, noms de guerre—er—that is—"

The young lady, whose poise was excellent, executed a curt little bow.

"Good day, Miss Mary Witherspoon," she said. And then immediately turned upon her heel and left him.

"Now," said Aunt Carolina Southdown, two days later, to Haliburton as they drove in from the station, "you—you will not forget that you are one of the Haliburtons of Hertfordshire, and the only son—of my mother's cousin. It is quite important. I assure you, for my niece knows nothing of—"

"I understand," replied Haliburton, gravely. "I shall respect your wish."

"Peggy," announced Aunt Carolina, some short time later, to her niece, "this—is this William Haliburton, our—my cousin, whom I mentioned to you?"

Haliburton, who had been standing, somewhat confused, with his eyes upon the ground, made an obeisance. Then he

looked at the girl for the first time. As he did so, he started. So did the girl.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Haliburton, "I—I'm very glad to meet you. Our people in Hertfordshire so often speak of you."

The Honorable Peggy smiled. "And you," she said genially, "do not seem a total stranger, for, singularly enough, you bear a strong resemblance to a London girl I know."

Haliburton winced, but the girl kept on. "That London girl," she said, "is Miss Mary Witherspoon." Then, even as she had done in London, she turned and went away.

Haliburton, who had brought some of his luggage down, felt, as he looked about upon the old Southdown estate, and as he kept in mind the countenance of Miss Peggy, that he was beyond question making his debut into good society.

The Honorable Peggy was quite as fond of fun as was Haliburton himself, but for that fact might have held herself aloof from him. But she understood the situation at a glance, and realized the fact that Aunt Carolina, in her concern for her niece, had done quite the same underhanded thing that her niece had done for her.

Therefore, by way of no harm, at dinner that evening the Honorable Peggy, who had spent a good hour in the solitude of her room, examining several bulky volumes under the letter H, this irrepressible young lady plunged forthwith into an animated discussion of that portion of the kingdom known by the name of Hertfordshire. Haliburton winced and so did Aunt Carolina. But Haliburton was a fairly good liar, and he pled his avocation unblushingly.

Lady Carolina, true to her engagement, announced her intention of introducing "Cousin William Haliburton," as she called him, into the neighboring exclusive society of the immediate vicinity, but Haliburton begged off. He explained that he was bashful, nervous, timid and unused to the ways of the upper world and that he desired more time to prepare himself.

As a matter of fact, he confided to himself that before entering upon his active social career a considerable amount of daily instruction by the Honorable Peggy would not be amiss. The Honorable Peggy, whose appreciation of the circumstances, made her a bit more unconventional than usual, kept him on the qui vive, and amused herself by calling him by the name of Witherspoon.

Time flew, for Haliburton. And as for the Honorable Peggy—well, that's another question.

One day, late in June, however, Aunt Carolina took her youthful niece into the library and closed the doors.

"Now, my dear," she said, and she said it apprehensively, "I have something to tell you. Lord Southdown is expected here in just about a week. Lord Southdown, my dear," she continued, placing her arm about her young charge, "is—the owner of—of all that there is to Southdown, our Southdown."

The Honorable Peggy never winked. "Of course," she responded.

Aunt Carolina gasped. "I knew it all along," said Peggy. Aunt Carolina gasped again. "I've always known it," went on Peggy.

Aunt Carolina nearly fainted. "My dear, dear child," she said, "how did you ever bear it?"

The Honorable Peggy waved this suggestion aside. "And so, Aunt Carolina," she said, "it is up to us to go."

Aunt Carolina was puzzled. "Up—to—us," she repeated.

"Exactly," responded Peggy, "that's an Americanism of Miss Witherspoon's."

"Miss Witherspoon's," repeated Aunt Carolina.

"I beg your pardon," said Peggy. "I—I meant Mr. William Haliburton. What I meant was that we must get out."

She said it with such indifference of manner that Aunt Carolina rose and struck her small hands sharply together. "I—am—so—glad," she gasped in joy, "that you take it that way, Peggy."

"We shall move to London, my dear," explained her aunt, "and Cousin William Haliburton will take lodgings with us. He is anxious that I should take him under my wing—and, in short, my dear, I think that we shall get along very well."

Lord Southdown was due on the first day of July. He did not arrive. Aunt Carolina would not leave until she had in her old-fashioned way welcomed the new incumbent. But as they were sure he would turn up on the second, they took a sort of formal leave of the old place on the evening of the first.

At dusk that evening, as Aunt Carolina sat beneath the shelter of the porch, Cousin William Haliburton and the Honorable Peggy strolled about the grounds. Suddenly Haliburton touched her on the arm.

"Whither does this lead?" he asked, pointing to a path.

"It leads nowhere," answered Peggy, "that is Lover's Lane."

"Dear me," responded Haliburton, "we must take a farewell of this, too." He led her gently down the path, and then when they had reached the end, without a word of warning, he placed his arms about her.

She tried to step back, but he would not let her.

"Dear little girl," he whispered in her ear, "there ought to be none but lovers in this Lover's Lane."

The Honorable Peggy trembled, but she did not move. "I—don't—believe—there—are," she said, reluctantly, with downcast eyes. Haliburton caught her wildly, joyfully and kissed her.

"At last," he murmured lightly. "I am in good society."

It was some time later that the Lover's Lane crowd entered the presence of Aunt Carolina Southdown. That genteel spinster was in a state of agitation. "Dear me," she exclaimed, "just look at this." She thrust forward a daily paper. On its first page these lines greeted their sight:

MISSING.

Lord Southdown cannot be found. Fails to keep appointment with solicitor and chambers found deserted. Alarm sent out. "Dear me," continued Aunt Carolina, "and tomorrow he was to be here and—And now, perhaps, he may not come. Dear me."

The Honorable Peggy clapped her hands. "May he never come," she exclaimed. Haliburton shook his head. "That's pretty rough—on him," he suggested.

"And here," went on Aunt Carolina, "is a special letter from his London solicitor, in which he tells me that though Lord Southdown lived abroad for the last three years, he had returned to London some time ago, and had made a positive engagement with the firm to come down with them yesterday or the day before."

"He never appeared and they found his chambers completely deserted. The lawyer thinks that his client has been kidnaped, but is coming down here himself, to take possession in his client's name. I expect him any moment. For all I know, this may be he now."

Aunt Carolina was right. The wheels had no sooner come to a stop outside than a hurried ring was heard at the door, and a little stout man bustled into the room. He was the solicitor.

"Well, ma'am," he started in to say, "this is a dreadful—" Then of a sudden he stopped short and stared at Haliburton.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed, looking at that gentleman through his spectacles, "what the deuce are you doing down here?" Haliburton smiled. "Who has a better right?" he answered, holding tight to Honorable Peggy, "than Lord Southdown on Lord Southdown's domain?"

Aunt Carolina looked up in alarm. The Honorable Peggy felt so faint that she had to cling to the young man at her side.

"Are you—are you," she gasped feebly, "are you Lord Southdown?"

"Exactly," answered the young man.

"Why in heaven's name didn't you keep your engagement? Why did you disappear?" asked the lawyer.

Peggy started in some alarm. "Dear me," she exclaimed, "doesn't he—doesn't he keep his engagements? Dear me, I—"

Lord Southdown gently took her hand.

"Haliburton," he explained to her, "was my mother's family name—it is the name I used to hide my identity in a country where titles are everything—if you have the right kind of a title. My title over there was 'Haliburton of the Fourteenth Ward.' He drew himself up formally. "Mr. Bolton," he announced, "allow me to present to you the future Lady Southdown, the future mistress of the estates."

The Honorable Peggy's eyes twinkled. "Lady Southdown!" she exclaimed. "Dear me," she said to the young man at her side, "you are getting into good society."

A Wonderful Light

A fast-flashing beacon light that can be seen in favorable weather for more than forty miles has just been installed by the German government upon the island of Heliogoland, in the German ocean. It is the most wonderful in the world.

The light used equals 30,000,000 candle-power. The light lasts one-fifth of a second and repeats itself in five seconds. It illumines the entire horizon in that period. At forty miles distance the pencil of light flashes over the sea at the rate of 180,000 miles an hour.

The German parabolic mirror reflector is used.

Limitations

"There was no disturbance whatever while the king were visitin' our old home in Ireland," said Mr. Rafferty, approvingly. "I've everything wor paccable as could be."

"Iv coorse," answered Mr. Dolan, coldly. "It wor a distant an' polite welcome. Ye didn't expect us to get so enthusiastic an' celebratious as ty start a fight, did yes?"—Chicago Tribune.

Life Insurance

Johnnie—Mother, say, that is all nonsense with the life insurance, isn't it?

Mother—My, what an idea, Johnnie. What makes you think so?

Johnnie—Well, didn't Mr. Brown tell you the other day that he had his life insured, and now he is dead all the same.—Brooklyn Life.