

His Heart's Desire

By SIR WALTER BESANT

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

"There! I have done what I could, and I have told your uncle my mind. Let us talk of something else. Oh, I forgot to say that Will has come down. We shall find him waiting for us at the church."

"Will? I am glad."
"He got away a week before he expected."

"He will cheer you up, George."
"Yes; he talks as if nothing mattered much and everything was a game. The Londoners have that way, I suppose. It is not our way."

They walked away through the narrow lanes, holding each other by the hand like two children, as they had always done since they were children together, and George, who was three years older, led little Mary by the hand to keep her from falling.

This Will that George spoke of with irreverence was none other than myself, the person who narrates this true history of country life for your amusement and instruction. I am Will Nethercote, in fact; and though of the same surname as Mary, am no relation to Mary. I once endeavored, it is true, to remedy this accident, and proposed to establish a very close relationship indeed with that dear girl, but I was too late. My father was the rector, and when I left Oxford I found I had no vocation for the life of the country clergyman. Therefore I became a journalist. It is a profession which suits me well, and I suppose if I live another forty years and arrive at seventy I shall have written 9,000 more leading articles, and my countrymen will then be saturated with wisdom. I did not wait for these young people in the church yard. I walked down the lane to meet them.

I declare that my heart leaped up only to see that sweet, fond girl walking with her lover, only to see the glow upon her cheeks and the soft light in her eyes. Mary greeted me with her usual kindness, bearing no resentment on account of that proposition of mine above referred to.

"And how is George behaving, Mary? And has the Dragon relented?"

"George always behaves well," she said. "But as for the Dragon—" She shook her head.

"See, now, Mary," I said, "I mean to put the case before a lawyer. I will do it directly I go back. In the will your aunt leaves you 6,000 pounds, to be paid to you on the day that you marry with your uncle's consent. If you marry without his consent, it is to go to David. Well, David has gone away, no one knows where, and perhaps he is dead, or will never come back. Suppose you were to marry now without your uncle's consent, who is to have the money?"

"My uncle says it will be his own."

"We shall see to that. It is a case for a lawyer's advice. And I will get that advice directly I go back."

I turned and walked toward the church with them, in the narrow lanes between the high hedges. We talked of different subjects, of what had happened since I last came down.

But that subject of which we were all thinking—George's impending ruin—lay like a lump of lead on our hearts. And so we walked through the darkening lanes, our faces to the west, so that Mary's glowing in the golden light like an angel face in a painted window, and presently came to the church.

CHAPTER VIII.

In the church the choir were already assembled, and as soon as we arrived the practice began. They sang, right through, first the chants and then the hymns, both for morning and evening, so that the practice took an hour and more.

I sat on the porch and listened, watching the fading light in the windows, and the shadows falling along the aisles, while the voices of the choir, uplifted, rang out clear and true and echoed around the walls of the empty church, and beat about among the rafters of the roof.

The black clouds hanging low made the evening so dark that outside the porch one could see nothing. But the lightning began to play about, and lit up the grave stones with sudden gleams. Presently, looking out into the blackness, I discovered in one of these flashes a man in the church yard walking about among the graves. This was a strange thing to see—a man walking among the graves after dark. I waited for the next flash of lightning. When it came, I saw the man quite clearly; he was bending over a headstone and peering into it, as if trying to read the name of the person buried there.

Then the man left the grass, probably because he could no longer read any of the names, and began to walk along the gravel walk toward the porch; perhaps because he saw the lights and heard the singing. The choir were just beginning the last of their hymns:

"Lead, kindly light, amid the incensing gloom;
Lead thou me on."

"That's the voice of George Sidcote," said the stranger, addressing himself. "He always sang the tenor. I remember his voice well; and that's the voice of Mary Nethercote; I remember her voice, too. That's Harry Rabjohns, the blacksmith, singing bass; a very good bass he always sung. Ay; they are all there—

they are all there."

"Who are you?" I asked. "Who are you to know all the people?"
A sudden flash of lightning showed me a ragged man with a great beard, whom I knew not by sight.

"I know you, too. I didn't see you at first. You are Will Nethercote." His voice was hoarse and husky. "You are the son of the rector. I remember you very well."

"I am; but the rector is dead; and who are you?"

"Before I go on," he said—"before I go on," he repeated these words as if they had some peculiar significance to him. "I thought I would come here first and see his grave—his grave—the place where they laid him; and I thought I would read what they wrote over him—how he died, you know—just out of curiosity, and for something to remember."

"Laid whom?"
"I should like to think that I had seen—actually seen—his grave," he went on. "But the night has turned dark, and I can't read the names, and haven't got a match upon me. Will you tell me where they've laid him?"

"Laid whom, man? Who are you looking for?"
"I am looking for the headstone of Daniel Leighan. Old Dan, they used to call him. Who died six years ago, or thereabouts."

"You mean Mr. Leighan of Graton?"
"The same, the same! I suppose Mary Nethercote got Graton when he died. They always said that he would leave her all he had, Graton Farm and Foxworthy and Berry Down. Oh, she'd be rich with all those lands."

"Who told you that Daniel Leighan was dead?"

"I saw it," he replied, hesitating—"I saw it in the papers. There was some talk about it at the time, I believe. A—a coroner's inquest, I was told; but I never heard the verdict. Perhaps you remember the verdict, Will Nethercote, and would kindly tell me? I am—yes—I am curious to hear what the verdict of the jury was—"

"You are strangely misinformed. Daniel Leighan is not dead."

"There is only one Dan Leighan, and he is dead," returned the strange man.

"I tell you that old Dan Leighan is still living. He is paralyzed in his legs, if you call that dead; but if you have business with him you will find that he is very much alive."

"Not dead?" The man reeled and caught at the pillars of the porch. "Not dead? Do you know what you are saying?"

"No more dead than you."

"Oh!" he groaned; "this is a trick you are playing. What do you play tricks for? He is dead and buried long since." "I think you must be mad, whoever you are. I tell you that Daniel Leighan is alive, and now in his chair at home, where you may find him to-night if you please to look for him."

"Not dead! not dead!" By the frequent flashes of the lightning I had now made out that he was a very rough-looking man, in very ragged and tattered dress, looking like a laboring man. "Not dead—can it be? Then I've had all the trouble for nothing—all the trouble for nothing. Not dead?" He kept on saying this over and over again, as if the wonder of the thing was altogether too much for him.

"What do you mean," I asked, "by your rubbish about an inquest and a verdict? What inquest should there be? And what do you mean by saying that you saw it in the papers?"

"Not dead? Then how should his ghost walk if he is not dead? Are you sure that Daniel Leighan—Old Dan—is alive this day—the same Old Dan?"

"I suppose it is the same Old Dan. There never has been any other Old Dan that I know of."

"It can't be the same. It must be the evil one."

"That is possible, and now you mention it, I think he may be, and very likely is. But I wouldn't say so openly if I were you."

"Not dead!"

He turned and walked slowly away. I heard him stepping over the stile, and then the sound of his footsteps ceased, as if he was walking over the village green, which, in fact, was the case.

The voices of the choir ceased; the candles were extinguished; and the singers came out. We two men walked home with Mary. I told them on the way my little adventure with the strange man peering about among the tombs.

"Who could it be?" asked Mary.

"I thought I knew his footsteps, but I did not know his voice. I cannot tell who it was. He knew your voice, Mary; and yours, George; and Harry, the blacksmith's—Good heavens!"—for here my memory of the man came back suddenly with one of the lightning flashes—"good heavens! how did I come not to recognize him at once? Mary, it was!—how could I have forgotten? Why, the thing may change your whole future."

"Will, what do you mean?"

"Your whole future, Mary. Your uncle refuses his consent because he thinks that David is dead; well, then, David is alive! For the man who prowled among the tombs and wanted to see your uncle's headstone was no other than David Leighan himself—come home again in rags."

CHAPTER IX.

The in upon Challacombe Green is a

small place and humble, though visitors may get tea served in a neat and clean parlor. The inn is licensed to Joseph Exon. It is also the smoking divan of the parish of Challacombe. The room is paved with stone, and furnished with a long wooden table and benches, a high-backed wooden settee to pull before the fire in cold weather, and a broad, hospitable fireplace.

The room was about half full at nine o'clock this Saturday evening, when the latch was lifted, and an unknown person—a stranger—stood in the door, looking about the room. He looked about the room as one who remembers it. But his face was seared, and his eyes seemed as if they saw nothing. Mrs. Exon, at sight of him, spoke up:

"Now, my man," she said, "what do you want? We don't encourage tramps here. You must go as far as Bovey to get a bed to-night."

"I am not a tramp," he replied, hoarsely. "I have got money. See." He pulled out a handful of silver. "Let me come in."

He shut the door and sat down at the lowest end of the table, taking off his hat and shaking his long hair off his forehead. Six years ago all the men in the room would have risen out of respect to the owner of Berry Down. Now not a soul remembered him.

His eyes were full of trouble, and with a kind of trouble which the good woman had never seen before. Not pain of body or grief, but yet trouble. He dropped his head upon his chest and began to murmur aloud as if no one was in the place but himself.

"Not dead! he is not dead! How can that be? how can that be?"

Then he fixed his eyes upon the landlady's and gazed upon her as if she could read in them what ailed him. Bewilderment and amazement which beat upon his soul, as the old poet said, as a madman beats upon a drum—this was the trouble which caused his eyes to have that terrifying glare and his limbs to shake and tremble. Mrs. Exon watched him, thinking he must have a fit of ague.

"The poor man is ill," she said. "Here, my man, drink this." She gave him half a tumblerful of cordial, which he poured down.

The dose had the effect of composing him a little. His legs ceased trembling, though his hands shook.

"Yes," he said, "I am ill. I was took sudden just now. I am better now."

"Where may you have come from?" asked one of the men.

"I've come from Southampton, where I was put ashore. I've come all the way from Australia."

"And where might you be going next?" "I'll tell you that, my friend, as soon as I know." Ragged and rough he looked, he spoke, somehow, as if he belonged to something better than would have been judged by his appearance. "If you had asked me this morning, I should have told you that I was going to Bovey; now, I don't know."

Mrs. Exon still looked at him with curiosity which comes of a half uneasy recollection.

"Old Dan Leighan, now," he went on; "can any one give me news of him—I mean Old Dan; him as had Graton first and Foxworthy afterward, and then got Berry Down, being a crafty old fox. Is he still alive? Somebody told me he was dead."

"Surely," replied Mrs. Exon; "he is alive and hearty, except for his legs, poor man."

"Oh, he's alive—alive and hearty? I thought, perhaps—somebody told me—that he died—I forgot how—six years ago come October it was. That's what they told me; six years come October."

"He had an accident just about that time—six years ago. Perhaps that is what you are thinking of."

"How," he asked, without taking any notice of this reply, "can a live man have a ghost? How can a live man send his own ghost to travel all round the world? Won't he want his own ghost for himself sometimes?"

"He's got a touch of fever," said the landlady, "and it has gone to his head. You had better go home, my man, and lie down, if you have got a bed anywhere."

"I want to know this," he repeated, earnestly; "did anybody ever hear of a living man sending his ghost out on errands, to keep people awake and threaten things? It can't be; it isn't in nature."

Nobody could explain this fact, which was new to all.

"How did he do it, then?" he asked, impatiently, banging the table with his fist; "tell me that? How did he do it?" Then he pulled himself together and became natural again. "About his legs, now. What's the matter with Dan Leighan's legs?"

"Why, after his accident they began to fall him," said Mrs. Exon, "and now he's paralyzed, and never leaves his room unless he's wheeled out of a fine morning. But hearty in appetite, and as for his head, it is as clear as ever."

(To be continued.)

Economy.

Mr. Bibbets—Now, m' dear, I'll tell you how I happened to get home so late if you'll only listen.

Mrs. Bibbets—All right. Turn off the radiator before you begin, will you?

Mr. Bibbets—What for?

Mrs. Bibbets—Oh, it seems so extravagant to have steam and hot air both going at the same time.—Kansas City Independent.

Practical Exercise.

"I hear that your daughter is going to take lessons in physical culture," said the friend from town.

"Wa-all, yes," drawled Farmer Silas, "an' I've been bus' getting her the necessary articles."

"Indian clubs and dumbbells, I presume?"

"No, a new washtub an' a patent ironing board."



A Good Hamburg Steak.

A Hamburg steak is scornfully refused by many because it is badly prepared. In the first place it is always most satisfactory to buy a freshly cut slice from the round and put it through the home food chopper; the chopper in the store is not as frequently or as thoroughly cleansed as it should be, and often gives a taint to the meat which is irremedial, says the Brooklyn Times. For each pound add after chopping one tablespoonful of onion juice, a half teaspoonful of pepper. Work thoroughly with the hands, then mold into an oval steak fully an inch and a half thick. Arrange in a greased broiler and place over a rather moderate fire. Turn every half minute and cook from eight to ten minutes. It should be slightly rare, tender, juicy and well flavored. When dished pour the sauce round it.

Banana Salad.

A strip of the peel of a large and perfect banana may be turned back, and most of the pulp carefully scooped out. The short, thick variety of banana, in either red or yellow, is the best for this purpose. To all the space left by the removal of the pulp prepare a mixture of thinly sliced banana, shredded orange or grapefruit, seeded and peeled white grapes and a few kernels of English walnuts or pecans in small pieces. In their season stoned cherries may be added. All must first be mixed in a bowl with a generous supply of dressing, and after the yellow cases are filled with the salad each must be laid on lettuce leaves. These must be prepared a short time before using. Either a mayonnaise or a good boiled dressing may be used.

Cream Filling.

Heat a cup of milk and stir into it three tablespoonfuls of flour rubbed smooth in a little cold water. Boil, stirring, for a minute, beating out all lumps. Take from the fire and pour upon four eggs beaten light with a half cup of powdered sugar. Stir over the fire to a thick, smooth cream; take from the fire, flavor with vanilla and, when cold, fill the puffs.

Devilled Mushrooms.

Chop one quart of peeled mushrooms. Season with salt, pepper and lemon juice. Mix the yolks of two hard-boiled eggs and two raw eggs together, and stir in with one pint of bread crumbs and one large tablespoonful of butter. Fill little shells with the mixture, cover with grated crackers and bits of butter. Set in the oven to brown.

Escalloped Tomatoes.

Arrange in a baking dish alternate layers of sliced tomatoes, from which the skins have been removed, and grated bread crumbs. Season with pepper, salt and a little powdered cinnamon. Dot with bits of butter. Bake, covered, till tender; remove cover and place on the upper grating of the oven to brown.

Tomatoes Au Gratin.

Cut into pieces a half dozen (not too ripe) tomatoes. Line a pudding dish with cracker crumbs, cover with a thin sprinkling of the tomato, grate over it some American cheese, and so on until the dish is filled, having the last layer of the cheese and the one before it of the cracker crumbs.

Canned Peas.

Shell peas and lay in cold water for an hour, then boil until tender, but not broken, in salted water. Drain out the peas and return to the fire. Pack the peas in heated jars and bring the liquid to a boil. Fill jars to overflowing with the boiling liquid, screw on the tops, and seal.

Peach Fudding.

Fill the pudding dish with alternate layers of crumbs, dotted with butter and sliced and sweetened peaches, having crumbs on top. Pour over custard made of one pint of milk, the yolks of two eggs, and two tablespoonfuls of sugar. Steam.

Harvest Drink.

Mix with five gallons of good water half a gallon of molasses, one quart of vinegar, and two ounces of powdered ginger. Keep this in a cold place, and it will make not only a pleasant beverage, but one highly invigorating and healthful.

Nectar.

Squeeze the juice from three oranges and as many lemons into a pitcher; add two tumblerfuls of water, and sweeten to taste. Then put in plenty of pounded ice, half a teaspoonful of rose-water.

Raspberry Ice.

One and one-half pints of raspberries, juice mixed with three-fourths of a pint of sugar and one-half of a pint of water, and freeze.

Please Your Hair

Don't have a falling out with your hair. It might leave you! Then what? Better please it by giving it a good hair-food—Ayer's Hair Vigor. The hair stops coming out, becomes soft and smooth, and all the deep, rich color of youth comes back to gray hair.

"I was troubled greatly with dandruff until I used Ayer's Hair Vigor. It completely cured the dandruff and also stopped my hair from falling out. It serves me very nicely also in arranging my hair in any style I wish."—Miss MABEL COOK, Davis, W. Va.

Made by J. C. Ayer Co., Lowell, Mass.
Also Manufactured at
Ayer's
SARSAPARILLA
PILLS
CHERRY PECTORAL.

Crowded Out.

There is a contractor who most strenuously objects to the teamsters in his employ leaving their wagons unattended outside eating houses. So when he came across a flagrant breach of this regulation the other day his angry passions rose.

With fire in his eye he rushed into the eating house, and found his employ placidly investigating the interior mysteries of a chicken pie.

"What do you mean by it?" he cried. "How dare you leave my horses in the street! How came you to do it?"

The startled teamster looked up, his mouth full of pie crust.

"Well, sir," he stammered, "there wasn't no room for them in here!"

She Was Prepared.

Husband—I made \$100 on a lucky turn in stocks to-day, and you can now get that new gown you have wanted for so long.

Wife—Oh, I'm so glad. Here is the bill for it, my dear.

Undoubtedly.

Green—How a physician must be when convinced that his diagnosis of a case is wrong!

Brown—Yes; he would rather believe he is right and let the patient do the suffering.

Mothers will find Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup the best remedy to use for their children during the teething period.

Not So Great.

First Excursionist—Niagara Falls is certainly a wonderful example of nature's handiwork.

Second Excursionist—Oh, it isn't such a much—merely a drop of water.



CLEMENTINA GONZALES, OF CENTRAL AMERICA, RESTORED TO HEALTH. PE-RU-NA THE REMEDY

Miss Clementina Gonzales, Hotel Provincia, Guatemala, C. A., in a recent letter from 247, Cleveland Ave., Chicago, Ill., writes:

"I took Peru-na for a worn-out condition. I was so run down that I could not sleep at night, had no appetite and felt tired in the morning."

"I tried many tonics, but Peru-na was the only thing which helped me in the least. After I had taken but half a bottle I felt much better. I continued its use for three weeks and I was completely restored to health, and was able to take up my studies which I had been forced to drop. There is nothing better than Peru-na to build up the system."—Clementina Gonzales.

Address The Peru-na Medicine Co., of Columbus, Ohio, for instructive free literature on catarrh.