

His Heart's Desire

By SIR WALTER BESANT

CHAPTER XVIII.—(Continued.)

"Nobody ever believed that you were robbed, Mr. Leighan," I went on. "But the finding of the money seems to show that you really were robbed while you were insensible. Perhaps we shall find the papers, too, some day."

"Perhaps we shall," he said. "If they are in the hands of rogues and villains, I shall be much the better for it. Enough said about my robbery. It is strange, too; both on the same day—I knew not then what he meant. 'Both on the same day'—and after six long years. What can this mean? Will," he said, eagerly, "tell me—I never did any harm to you; you've never had any land to mortgage—tell me, do you know nothing of the papers? When you found this bag did you hear nothing about the papers?"

"I know nothing. How should I?" "Well, it matters little; I am not concerned with the robber, but with the man who has them now. I must deal with him; and, there, you cannot help me, unless—no—no—I cannot ask it; you would not help me."

"Anyhow, Mr. Leighan, you've got twenty pounds back again. That is something. Confess that you are pleased."

"Young man, if you torture a man all over with rheumatic pains, do you think he is pleased to find that they have left his little finger, while they are still red-hot iron all over the rest of his body? That is my case."

"I am sorry to hear it. At the same time, twenty pounds, as I said before, is something."

"It's been lying idle for six years. Twenty pounds at compound interest—I don't spend my interest, I promise you—would now be six-and-twenty pounds. I've lost six pounds."

I laughed. A man who knows not the value of interest laughs easily. I expect, therefore, to go on laughing all the days of my life.

"As for the papers, there's a dead loss of one hundred and fifty pounds a year. Think of that! All these years I've waited and hoped—yes, I've prayed—actually prayed—that I might get my papers back again. Three thousand pounds there are, among these papers, besides the certificates and things that I could replace. Nearly all Mary's fortune lost."

"No," I said. "Don't flatter yourself that you lost any of Mary's money. It was your own money. You are trustee for Mary's fortune, remember, and you will have to pay it over in full."

He winced and groaned.

"Three thousand pounds! With the interest it would now be worth nearly four thousand pounds at five per cent. And now all as good as lost!"

"Well, Mr. Leighan, I am sorry for you, very sorry, particularly as you will have to find that fortune of Mary's very soon."

"Shall I, Master Will Nethercote? I shall give Mary her fortune when I please; not at all, unless I please. Mary has got to be obedient and submissive to me, else she won't get anything. When I give my consent to her marriage, and not till then—not till then—I shall have to deliver up her fortune. Good-night to you, Will Nethercote."

CHAPTER XIX.

During these days David led the life of a solitary. He sometimes went to the inn; he went to the village shop on the green to buy what he wanted, and he kept wholly to himself. Except for that daily visit to Gratnor, he talked to no one.

From time to time I met him leaning over the field gates, loitering along the lanes, or sitting idly under the shade of one of our high hedges. I suppose that his leading and wandering life had made work of any kind distasteful to him. His face was not a pleasant one to gaze upon, and for a stranger would have been terrifying. At this time we knew from Mary that he went nearly every day to Gratnor, but we had no suspicion of what was said or done there. My own thoughts, indeed, were wholly occupied with the fortunes of George Sidcote, and I gave almost heed to this sulky hermit.

"David," I asked him, meeting him one day face to face so that he could not slip out of my way, "why do you never come over to Sidcote? Have we offended you in any way?"

"No," he replied, slowly, as if he was thinking what he ought to reply—"no; I don't know exactly that you have offended me."

"Come over this evening and tell us what you think about doing."

"No. I don't think I can go over this evening."

"Choose your own time, but come before I go back to London."

"George will be turned out of his place before the end of the year. The old man told me so. Then he'll go, too. Mary says she will go with George. Then I shall be left alone with Uncle Dan." He laughed quietly. "I think I shall go and live at Gratnor, and take care of him. We shall have happy times together, when you are all gone and I am left alone with him."

suffering. I made no more attempts to lead the man back to better ways and old habits.

And all the time, every day David was carrying on, slowly and ruthlessly, the most systematic revenge, with the most exquisite tortures. Every day he went to Gratnor and dangled before his victim some of his property, and made him buy it back bit by bit, haggling over the bargain; letting his uncle have it one day cheap, so as to raise his spirits, and the next at nearly its full value, so as to crush him again; and even at times, after an hour's bargain over a single coupon, he would put it in the fire and destroy it.

When David went away, the poor old man would fall to weeping; this hard, dry old man, whom nothing ever moved before, would shed tears of impotent and bitter rage. But he refused to tell Mary what was troubling him.

"I can't tell you what it is," he said. "You don't know what the consequences might be if I told you. Oh, Mary, I am a miserable old man! I wish I was dead and buried and that it was all over—I wish it was all over!"

"It is something," said Mary, "to do with David. I will go and speak to him about it."

"No, Mary, no," he cried, eagerly. "Mind your own business, child. Don't attempt to interfere. Oh! you don't know what might happen if you interfered."

"It is David, then. Very well, uncle, I shall not ask him what it is."

"I can't tell anybody, Mary; I must bear it in patience. If I resist I shall only lose the more. Mary, we've got to be very careful in the housekeeping now—very careful."

"I am always careful, uncle."

"There was a pudding again to-day. I can't afford any more pudding for a long while—not till Christmas. And I'm sure there's waste and riot in the kitchen."

"Nonsense, uncle. You not afford a pudding? Now, remember, you are not to be starved, and there's no waste or riot."

CHAPTER XX.

I terminated my holiday with a meddling and a muddling. Of course, I was actuated by the best intentions. Every meddling and muddling is, otherwise he might be forgiven.

I made my attempt with no success—on my last evening at Chalcotombe, when the old man had taken his tea, and might reasonably be expected to be milder than during the press of business in the morning.

I had not seen him for three weeks. I was struck with the change that had come over him during this short period. It was that subtle change which we mean when we say that a man has "aged." In Mr. Leighan's case, his hands trembled, he looked feeble, and there was a loss of vitality in his eyes.

"What do you want?" he asked, impatiently. "You are come for Mary? Well, she isn't here. You ought to know that she always goes out after tea. You will find her somewhere about—the Ridge or down the lane, somewhere."

He turned his head and took up his pen again. I observed that he was poring over a paper of figures.

"No, Mr. Leighan, I came to see you. I have come to see you about George and Mary."

"Go on, then. Say what you want to say. When a man is tied to his chair he is at the mercy of every one who comes to waste his time."

I spoke to him as eloquently as I could. I told him he ought to consider how Mary had been his housekeeper and his nurse for six long years, during which he had been helplessly confined to his chair. If he refused his consent to her marriage she would go away, not only from his house, but from the parish; he would be left in the hands of strangers, who would waste and spoil his substance.

"Young man," he said, "I never asked for or expected any other service than what is paid for. Mary's services have been paid for. If she goes I shall find another person, who will be paid for her services. Mary has had her board and her bed, and she's done her work to earn her board and her bed; I don't see any call for gratitude there; as for good feeling, that's my business. Now, young man, George Sidcote's land is mortgaged. As he says he can no longer pay the interest, I have sent up the case to London and have got the usual order; he has six months in which to pay principal and interest. At the end of that time, because he can't and won't pay, his land will be mine. As for what is done afterward, I promise nothing."

"You will lose Mary for one thing."

"I have told you that I, in that case, shall hire another person."

"Very well. You will have to pay Mary's fortune to her cousin David, because she will marry without your consent."

"Have the goodness, Mr. Will Nethercote, to leave me to my own affairs."

"This affair is mine as well as yours. Do you prefer David to Mary? You must choose between them, you know. I have read the will. You think," I said, "that David does not know of his aunt's will. You hope that he will go away presently without finding out." He started and changed color, and in his eyes I read the truth. He thought that David

would never find out. "So, Mr. Leighan," I went on, "that is in your mind. He lives alone, and speaks to no one; his aunt died after he went away; it is very possible that he does not know anything about it. Good heavens! Mr. Leighan, were you actually thinking to hide the thing from him, and so to rob him? Yes; to rob Mary first and David afterward of all this money?"

"What business is it of yours?" he asked.

"Very good; I shall tell David."

"Oh! if I were thirty instead of seventy, I would—" he began, his eyes flashing again with all their ancient fire.

"I shall go to David, Mr. Leighan. If, as I believe, he knows nothing about it, you will see how he will receive the news. Yes; you shall be between the two; you shall choose between David and Mary."

Yes; I had stumbled on the exact truth as accidentally as I had stumbled on the canvas bag. David did not know, nor had his uncle chosen to inform him—though he was certain from his talk that he did not know—of his aunt's will, deeply as it affected him. And I am now quite certain that the old man thought that David would not find out the truth before he went away again, and so he would keep the money to himself.

"Don't tell him, Will," said the old man, changing his tone. "Don't interfere between David and me; it is dangerous. You don't know what mischief you may be doing. As for George and Mary, I will arrange something. They shall go on at Sidcote as tenants on easy terms—on very easy terms. But don't tell David. He is a very dangerous man. Don't tell him."

"I will not tell him anything, if you will give Mary your consent."

"David will not stay here long. When he has gone—oh, dear!—when he has got some more money he will go away. Don't tell him."

"You have to give that money either to Mary or to David. Choose!" I repeated.

"Who are you, I should like to know," he asked, with a feeble show of anger, "that you should come and interfere in family matters? What business is it of yours? Go away to London. Manage your own affairs—if you've got any. You are not my nephew."

"Choose between Mary and David."

"I must have Sidcote," he said, with a kind of moan. He clutched at the arms of his chair, his face twitched convulsively, and he spoke feebly. "I have lost so much lately—I have suffered so horribly—you don't know how, young man, or you would pity me. I have been punished, perhaps, because I was too prosperous—you don't know how, and you can't guess. If I lose Sidcote, too, I shall die. You don't know, young gentleman—you don't know what it is to suffer as I have suffered."

"Then I shall go at once to David and tell him."

"I must have Sidcote. Do your worst!" he cried, with some appearance of his old fire and energy. "Do your worst. Tell David what you please, and leave me to deal with David. I will!"

He shook his head and pointed to the door.

I told David that very evening. He was sitting at his table, a large open book before him, over which he was poring intently. He looked up when he heard my step outside, and shut the book hurriedly.

"What do you want here?" he asked, roughly. "Why do you come prying after me?"

"Upon my word, David," I said, "one would think we were old enemies instead of old friends."

"Speak up, then," he replied, his eyes suspicious and watchful, as if I was trying to get into his cottage and steal something. "Speak up; let a man know your business. If you had no business you would not come here, I take it."

"It is business that may concern you very deeply," I said. And then I told him.

"Well," he said, slowly, "I suppose you mean honest, else why should you tell me? Perhaps you've got a score against the old man, too. This wants thinking of, this does. So the old woman had six thousand, had she? And Mary is to have it if she marries with her uncle's consent—and if she doesn't, I'm to have it."

"Mary will marry George with or without her uncle's consent; I can tell you that beforehand. She will marry him within a very few weeks."

"Nay," he said, "rather than give me the money he'd let her marry the blacksmith."

At this point I came away, for fear he might try even to get beyond that possibility; and the mess I had almost made of the whole business proves, as I said before, that there is no excuse whatever for the best intentions.

(To be continued.)

Lucky One.

"Let me see," began the visitor who was returning to the little town after an absence of ten years, "you used to have four sons. How did they turn out?"

"Wa-all, neighbor," drawled the old man, removing his pipe, "some of them turned out a little unsartain. Bill, he got to stealin' chickens, so they rode him out of town on a rail."

"And Sam?"

"Sam? Oh, he stole a cow and they gave him five years."

"Well, what became of Jim?"

"Stole a hoas an' they strung him up in that thar apple tree."

"Too bad! But there was one more—Pete. What became of Pete, who used to be so cunning when he traded marbles?"

"Oh, Pete did well. Got in politics an' stole a Legislature an' now he's livin' on his income."—Chicago News.

Idleness is many gathered miseries—

—one name.—Richter.

OREGON STATE ITEMS OF INTEREST

LET FOR TWO YEARS.

Oregon's Convict Labor Goes to the Stove Foundry People.

Salem—An agreement has been reached between Governor Chamberlain and the Loewenberg-Going company for the leasing of convict labor at the penitentiary for a period of two years. The price to be paid for labor is the same that has prevailed in the past, but several changes have been made in the contract in other particulars.

Because there is a popular desire that convicts be employed on the public roads, in which desire Governor Chamberlain joins, and because the last legislature authorized the appointment of a commission to investigate the subject and report to the next legislature, the governor refused to make a contract now for the leasing of convict labor for more than two years. Insistence upon the shorter period made it impossible to secure a higher price than has been paid in the past—3½ cents per hour for each man.

The new contract requires the stove foundry proprietors to employ not less than 150 men a day, whereas the minimum number heretofore has been 100. There are now 390 prisoners in the penitentiary. About 100 of these are employed on the farm, in the stables, in the kitchen, and on other work connected with the management of the institution. This leaves 290 to be otherwise employed. The foundry will now take not less than 150, leaving 140 out of employment. At many times the foundry will employ more than 150, but this number must be paid for, even though not worked.

What to do with the 140 idle men is now the problem. A few of them can be employed on the public roads near Salem under a co-operative arrangement with the county court, and a gang will be put at work grubbing out a piece of state land on the Reform school farm. This will still leave some idle, probably, at many times of the year.

Wasco to Cultivate Hops.

The Dalles—Wasco county will, it is expected, in a few years become the banner hop producing county of the state. This season a number of farmers have been experimenting in hop culture with satisfactory results. The hops they have produced are of an excellent quality and the yield is very large. So successful has been the experiment that a number of farmers are now contemplating putting out large yards next season and engaging in the business of hop raising on an extensive scale. There are thousands of acres in the county suitable for hop fields, as the hops thrive without irrigation and will do well on almost any of the upland that is sheltered from wind.

Quality is Perfect.

Salem—While it is yet too early to make accurate statements of the yield of hops in Marion county this year, estimates by men in the best position to judge are that the total yield will be in the neighborhood of 37,000 bales. The quality will be perfect. In about a week, when the work of baling is farther advanced, a fairly accurate statement of the actual yield can be made and the samples will show the quality. Growers are showing little disposition to sell at present prices, but it is believed that 15 cents a pound would cause rapid selling.

Lane County Estimate More.

Engene—The best estimate that can be made at the present time of the amount of the hop crop of this county is not considered much more than a guess, although it is based upon reports from a large number of growers. Even among those who are best posted there is a large variation in estimates. There will be at least 1,500 bales more than last year, which would make 7,500 bales, but some estimate as high as 8,000. No better figures will be available until a poll is made after the baling is completed.

First Snow Falls in Bourne.

Sumpter—The mountaineers report the first snow of the season. In the highlands surrounding Bourne light falls have occurred in the early mornings. The ground has been covered, but the snow has always disappeared before noon. Old citizens, who take pride in the weather knowledge, say that the very warm and dry summer that has just died will be followed by an unusually severe winter.

Douglas Crop Increased.

Roseburg—This year's hop crop in Douglas county will approximate 800 bales. The quality is good. No sales are reported, as growers expect prices to rise somewhat.

Benton County's Yield.

Corvallis—The estimated yield of hops in this vicinity is 1,410 bales.

FORFEIT TO STATE.

About \$10,000 Paid on School Land Lost to Buyer.

Salem—Certificates of sale for a total of 20,000 acres of state school land have been cancelled in the last few weeks, because of lapse in the payment of installments within the required time. Of this aggregate amount of land, 7,000 acres is in the limits of the proposed Blue mountain forest reserve, and, according to the rulings of the Interior department, the state will be able to use the land as base for the selection of lieu land.

The original purchasers of the land have forfeited the payments made, amounting probably to \$10,000 or more, and the state has the land to sell again. Much of the land outside the reserve will probably not be salable for some time, as the state has raised the price to \$2.50 an acre. The 7,000 acres inside the reserve should find a market as base for lieu land, at \$5 an acre.

A large proportion of the certificates that have been canceled were among those secured by violation of the law governing the purchase of state school land. Prosecution of land fraud cases has scared many of the holders of certificates fraudulently obtained, and they have thought best quietly to drop the whole transaction, forfeit what they have paid and let the state keep the land.

Adopt Early Closing.

Eugene—Forty-seven business men of Eugene who have closed their shops and stores at no regular hour in the evening have signed an agreement to close hereafter each evening except Saturday at 6 o'clock. The list includes hardware stores, gun stores, grocery stores and places in other lines of business, many of which have never closed before 9 o'clock. The dry goods stores have heretofore closed at 6 and most of the grocery stores at 7, but now there will be a uniform hour for closing.

Many Students Enrolled.

Corvallis—The attendance in the Oregon Agricultural college promises to cross the 700 mark early in the year, and many believe it will reach 800. Hop fields, fruit harvest and the Lewis and Clark fair have laid claim on many, so that the enrollment has been delayed. During the opening week 527 reported for duty, and the registration is steadily progressing.

Making Beet Sugar.

La Grande—With 125 men at work in the beet sugar factory and fully 400 more at work in the fields, the yield in sugar this season is expected to be about 25,000 tons. Next year it is expected to far exceed this amount. The work of converting the beets into sugar has started.

PORTLAND MARKETS.

Oats—No. 1 white feed, \$23.50@24; gray, \$23.50@24 per ton.

Wheat—Club, 71¢@72¢ per bushel; bluestem, 74¢@75¢; valley, 71¢.

Barley—Feed, \$19@20 per ton; brewing, \$19@20; rolled, \$22@23.

Rye—\$1.30 per cental.

Hay—Eastern Oregon timothy, \$14@15 per ton; valley timothy, \$11@12; clover, \$8@9; grain hay, \$8@9.

Fruit—Apples, \$1@1.50 per box; peaches, 65¢@1 per crate; plums, 50¢@75¢; cantaloupes, \$1@1.25 per crate; pears, \$1.25@1.50 per box; watermelons, ¾¢@1¢ per pound; crabapples, \$1 per box; quinces, \$1 per box.

Vegetables—Beans, 1¢@4¢ per pound; cabbage, 1¢@1½¢ per pound; cauliflower, 75¢ per dozen; celery, 75¢ per dozen; corn, 65¢ per sack; cucumbers, 10¢@15¢ per dozen; pumpkins, 1¼¢@1½¢ per pound; tomatoes, 25¢@30¢ per crate; squash, 5¢ per pound; turnips, 90¢@1.00 per sack; carrots, 65¢@75¢ per sack; beets, 85¢@1 per sack.

Onions—Oregon, \$1 per sack; globe, 75¢ per sack.

Potatoes—Oregon, fancy, 65¢ per sack; common, nominal.

Butter—Fancy creamery, 25¢@30¢.

Eggs—Oregon ranch, 27¢@27½¢.

Poultry—Average old hens, 13½¢@14¢ per pound; mixed chickens, 13¢@13½¢; old roosters, 9¢@10¢; young roosters, 11¢@12¢; springs, 14¢@15¢; dressed chickens, 14¢; turkeys, live, 18¢@21¢; geese, live, 8¢@9¢; ducks, 13¢@14¢.

Hops—Nominal at 19¢ for choice 1905s.

Wool—Eastern Oregon average best, 19¢@21¢; lower grades down to 15¢, according to shrinkage; valley, 25¢@27¢ per pound; mohair, choice, 30¢.

Beef—Dressed bulls, 1¢@2¢ per pound; cows, 3¢@4¢; country steers, 4¢@4½¢.

Veal—Dressed, 3¢@8¢ per pound.

Mutton—Dressed, fancy, 6½¢@7¢ per pound; ordinary, 4¢@5¢; lambs, 7¢@7½¢.

Pork—Dressed, 6¢@7½¢ per pound.