

Literature.

A LIFE FOURSQUARE.

CHAPTER XLII.

TOM DRAKE'S REVENGE.

We have left Earle for a long time in his magnificent loneliness at Wycliffe.

But magnificent as it is, it is indeed far from his great house there was not a soul to whom he could go for either sympathy or cheer.

He was surrounded on every hand by everything that almost unlimited wealth could buy; he possessed one of the finest estates in England, and farms and forests in France, which, as yet, he had never seen; he occupied a position second to none save royalty; he had the finest horses and carriages in the county; cattle and hounds of choice, and a retinue of men in his great household with a bit of terms that seemed unbearable.

He could interest himself in nothing—he took no pleasure in anything; he never stood in the ornamental window that looked out from the center of the broad expanse spread out before him, and beautiful as Eden's fair gardens, with its feeling that he was cursed worse even than Adam and Eve were cursed when driven from Eden.

His beautiful gardens, shining streams stacked with finest trout, broad fields of waving golden grain, the noble park with its grand old trees, God's most glorious handiwork, all mocked him with their loveliness.

It was as if they said to him, "You can have all this—you are never wearying that serves to make the world bright and beautiful; you can buy and sell, and get gain, and go to your stores, and get fame and honor, but after all that, you must carry a desolate heart to your bosom; you can never possess the one jewel worth sevenfold more than all your possessions; you can never behold the most beautiful thing that all the world, beaming upon you in your home as you go and come on the round of daily duties."

What did it matter to Earle that he was all that he could not share it with the only woman whom he could ever love?

He forced himself day after day to go over the estate to see that everything was in order, and that his commands were properly obeyed; but there was no heart in anything that he did, and he was vain and workmen all rendered to see him so sad and despondent.

The interior of Wycliffe was in keeping with the surroundings.

Entering the wide and lofty hall, with its carplings of velvet, its panelings of polished oak, its rich furnishings, its stately and picturesque arrangement of some of the best of the luxury awaiting beyond.

Upon one side of this hall was a suite of parlors—three in number.

The first and third were large lofty parlors, and furnished alike.

The second was smaller, and the ceiling was paneled and painted in the most exquisite designs.

The walls were delicately tinted with rosewood, and the ceiling was of a rich, swaying blue.

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It before he gets through. The bone is shattered. There will be fever, and a great deal of pain; while if mortification sets in, he'll get justice in another world."

"Then please excuse me by keeping the matter quiet, and do not let me hear of it on any other terms."

"Surely you don't mean to keep the fellow here?" exclaimed the doctor, in amazement.

"Certainly. What do you suppose I would do with him?" Earle asked quietly.

"Send him to the almshouse or hospital, if he is not fit to be kept here, and let the authorities take care of such scoundrels."

"If a friend of yours had been injured in this way, would you advocate sending him to the almshouse or hospital?"

"No; inflammation would probably die, the physician would probably die, the physician would probably die."

"That is what I reasoned the question; therefore I hold myself, in a measure, responsible for this man's life," was the grave reply.

"The earth would be well rid of a villain," answered the doctor, gruffly. "If you would like to see the man, you may see him at any time, but he is now, or perhaps a corpse."

"Not 'locks,' my friend, but the hand of God, and the power of God, that have sent you your being here, and I am now, or perhaps a corpse."

"Your judgment and my conscience tell me that the man will die unless he has the very best of care. He must never be touched by any other hand; so I have decided that he shall remain here until he recovers."

"But who will take care of him?" asked the physician, with a look of surprise.

"I will see that he lacks for no care or attention, and I will see that he is not mistreated, but he will be the same as a friend or guest until he gets well; and as such I shall expect you will also exercise your utmost skill, and do the very best you can, best for the patient, best for the doctor."

"Well, well," muttered the astonished disciple of Esculapius; and then he stood regarding his companion for a moment, with his eyebrows, and his mouth puckered into the smallest possible compass.

"Unless you object to treating such a patient," Earle added, with a little hauteur.

"No, no; bless you no!" Dr. Sargent returned, quickly. "I will do my right—it would be sacrificing his life to have him removed, and you may rely upon my discretion."

"The doctor went away some what mystified as to what manner of man the young marquis might be, that was willing to turn his magnificent home into a hospital for the poor wretch."

Earle went back to his charge, which found restless, feverish, and burning with intolerable thirst.

He saw that as Earle made his appearance, and defiantly demanded what he was going to do with him.

"Take care of you until you get on your legs, best for the patient, best for the doctor, best for the doctor."

"I have no doubt, but I am sure, that he held some pleasant, cooling drink to the man's parched lips."

"He drank eagerly, and then fell back among the cushions with a groan."

"'Boss! that's a likely story!'" he returned, after a minute, with an angry flash of his eyes; "out with it, and don't keep me in suspense; I've enough to bear with this pain."

"So you have, poor fellow!" Earle answered, kindly; "and it is just as I have told you, and I am sure, that he was nursed until you get well."

"What! stay here?" and the man's eyes wandered round the luxurious apartment, with an amazed expression.

"Yes, in this very room. Don't you know that you cannot be moved?"

"I don't feel much like it, that's a fact; but I am sure, that he was nursed until you get well."

"The right of ownership—'I am master here.'"

"You?"

"Yes; you recognize me then?"

"Of course I do; and you know me as an instant, but I am sure, that he was nursed until you get well."

"But you had no idea that he was here last night," interrupted Earle.

"No; I'll be—'I did'!" was the answer, but he made no change in his circumstances of late.

"I should think so! Then you are the Marquis of Wycliffe?"

"Do not be so sure, you expect to find here in the way of plunder?"

"I may as well own up, I suppose, since I'm here, that I can't help myself," the man said, with a look of defiance; "but the family jewels, which I was told were kept here, are not here."

"They are not here. I had them deposited in the treasury, and more than a month ago. There was only a little money in my safe, for I had paid off my only yesterday; so you see, my friend, you have been right in taking your life for nothing," Earle said, gravely.

"Tom Drake swore savagely again at this information."

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Earle smiled slightly at his erudite perplexity, and the invalid continued:

"First, you hit a fellow a swinger on the back of the head that knocks the life out of him, and then you say that you had not the faintest idea of his being there."

"Then please excuse me by keeping the matter quiet, and do not let me hear of it on any other terms."

"Surely you don't mean to keep the fellow here?" exclaimed the doctor, in amazement.

"Certainly. What do you suppose I would do with him?" Earle asked quietly.

"Send him to the almshouse or hospital, if he is not fit to be kept here, and let the authorities take care of such scoundrels."

"If a friend of yours had been injured in this way, would you advocate sending him to the almshouse or hospital?"

"No; inflammation would probably die, the physician would probably die, the physician would probably die."

"That is what I reasoned the question; therefore I hold myself, in a measure, responsible for this man's life," was the grave reply.

"The earth would be well rid of a villain," answered the doctor, gruffly. "If you would like to see the man, you may see him at any time, but he is now, or perhaps a corpse."

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