

The Storyteller

DEEDS, NOT WORDS.

A large party is assembled to celebrate the holidays ushering in the New Year at Ravelstoke Hall, an old country house about two miles distant from the north-west coast of Devon. The various branches of English society are very fairly represented by its component parts. There are two peers, three members of the lower house, some guardsmen, some under-graduates, a clergyman, and a lieutenant in the navy. But our hero is not a representative man yet he belongs to a class, which called into existence by the accumulated wealth of the nineteenth century, is ever on the increase.

Frederick Tyrawley resembles Sir Charles Coldstream, inasmuch as he has been everywhere, and done everything, but he is by no means used up, and can still take an interest in whatever his hand finds to do. Nor is his everything everybody else's everything. It is not bounded by Jerusalem and the pyramids.

Mr. Tyrawley has fought in more than one State of South America, and has wandered for more than two years from isle to isle of the Pacific. A mysterious reputation hovers round him. He is supposed to have done many things, but no one is very clear what they are, and it is not likely that much information on the point will be obtained from him, for he seldom talks much, and never speaks of himself. His present mission appears to be to kill partridges, play cricket, and dress himself. Not that it must be supposed that he has been in the habit of wearing less clothing than the custom of the country in which he may have been located required; but only that at the present time he devoted much attention to buff waistcoats and gauze neckties, braided coats and curled mustachios.

Such as he is, however, he is an object of interest to the feminine portion of the party at Ravelstoke Hall; for he is rich and handsome as well as mysterious, and cannot be more than two-and-thirty. And the ladies at Ravelstoke outnumbered the men, for although it is still rare for the fair sex to participate actively in the saturnalia of the partridge-god, they will always be found hovering in considerable numbers on the outskirts of the feast, and the varieties of the British lady are fairly represented.

There are some mammas with daughters to marry, and there are some daughters with a mamma to prevent marrying again,—which is, perhaps the most difficult thing of the two, as she has an income in her own right. There are blondes and brunettes, and pretty, brown-haired, brown-eyed girls who hover between the two orders, and combine the most dangerous characteristic of both, who can wear both blue and pink, and who look prettier in the one color than they do in the other, but who always command your suffrage in favor of what they wear when you look at them.

And there is Constance Baynton with gray eyes and black hair, and the nicest critic of feminine appearance would be defied to state what she had worn half an hour after he left her, for no one can ever look at anything except her face.

Yet Constance is three-and-twenty, and still unmarried. Alas, what cowards men are! The fact is that Constance is very clever, but as Mrs. Mellish (the widow) says, 'not clever enough to hide it.'

Is she a little vexed at her present condition? Certainly she does not exhibit any tendency to carry out Mrs. Mellish's suggestion, if it has ever been repeated to her. The young men are more afraid of her

than ever; and certainly she does say very sharp things sometimes. Especially she is severe upon idlers, the butterflies of fashionable existence. She appears to consider that she has a special mission to arouse them, but they do not appear to like being lectured. With the young ladies she is a great favorite, for she is very affectionate; and though so beautiful and distinguished, she has proved herself to be not so dangerous a rival as might have been expected. Indeed, it has happened, more than once, that male admiration rebounded from the hard surface of her manner, has found more yielding metal in the bosoms of her particular friends. Besides, she is always ready to lead the van in the general attack upon the male sex, when the ladies retire to the drawing room.

Not that she ever says anything behind their backs she would not be ready to repeat to their faces; but in that course probably she would not meet with such general support.

In Mr. Tyrawley she affected to disbelieve. She stated as her opinion to her intimate friends that she didn't believe he ever had done or ever would do anything worth doing, but that he plumed himself on a cheap reputation, which, as all were ignorant of its foundation, no one could possibly impugn.

There is reason to believe that in this instance Miss Constance was not as conscientious as usual, but that she really entertained a higher opinion of the gentleman than she chose to confess. He certainly was not afraid of her, and had even dared to contradict her favorite theory of the general worthlessness of English gentlemen of the nineteenth century. It was one wet morning, when she had been reading Scott to three or four of her particular friends—and it must be confessed that she read remarkably well—that she began to lament the decline of chivalry. Tyrawley was sitting half in and half out of range. Perhaps she talked a little at him. At any rate he chose to accept the challenge.

'I cannot agree with you, Miss Baynton,' he said. 'It is true we no longer wear ladies' gloves in our helmets, nor do we compel harmless individuals, who possibly may have sweethearts of their own, to admit the superiority of our ladylove at the point of the lance; but of all that was good in chivalry, of courage, truth, honor, enterprise, self-sacrifice, you will find as much in the nineteenth century as in the twelfth.'

He brightened up as he spoke, and it was quite evident that he believed what he said, a circumstance which always gives an advantage to a disputant.

More than one pair of bright eyes smiled approval, and Miss Constance saw a probability of a defection from her ranks. She changed her tactics.

'You are too moderate in your claims for your contemporaries, Mr. Tyrawley. If I remember right, modesty has always been considered a qualification of a true knight.'

'I am not ashamed to speak the truth,' he replied. 'Your theory would have been more tenable before the days of the Crimean war and the Indian mutiny, but the men who lit their cigars in the trenches of the Redan and who carried the gate of Delhi, may bear comparison with Bayard or Coeur de Lion.'

'Oh, I do not allude to our soldiers,' said she; 'of course I know they are brave, but,—and here she hesitated a moment till, possibly piqued because her usual success had not attended her in the passage of arms, she concluded—'but to our

idle gentlemen, who seem to have no heart for anything.'

Tyrawley smiled. 'Possibly you may judge too much by the outside,' he said. 'I am inclined to fancy that some of those whom you are pleased to call idle gentlemen would be found to have heart enough for anything that honor or duty or even chivalry could find for them to do.'

'I hope you are right,' said Miss Constance, with a slightly perceptible curl of her upper lip, which implied that she did not think so.

Tyrawley bowed, and the conversation terminated a few minutes afterwards. When he had left the room the conversation of the young ladies was suddenly interrupted by Master George Baynton, aged fourteen, who suddenly attacked his sister.

'I think you are wrong, you know, when you call Tyrawley a humbug.'

'My dear,' said Constance with a start, 'I never said anything so ru—'

'Well, you have implied it, you know, in your girl's words, and I think you make a mistake, for he can shoot like one o'clock, never misses a thing, and I hear he can ride no end. He was rather out of practice in his cricket when he came down, but he is improving every day. You should have seen the hit he made yesterday—right up to the cedars.'

'Do you think there is nothing else for a man to do but ride and shoot and play cricket?'

'Oh, that's all very well; but you should hear what Merton, our second master, says, and a great brick he is, too. "Whatever you do, do it as well as you can, whether it's cricket or verses." And I believe if Tyrawley had to fight, he'd go in and win, and no mistake.'

'Ah,' said Constance with a sigh, 'he has evidently—what is it you boys call it?—tipped you, isn't it?'

Indignant at this insult, George walked off to find his friend and have a lesson in billiards.

The day lingered on, after the usual fashion of wet days in September in full country houses. There was a little dancing after dinner, but all retired early in hopes of a finer day on the morrow.

Tyrawley had some letters to write, so that it was past two before he thought of going to bed. He always slept with his window open, and as he threw up the sash a fierce gust of wind blew out his candles and blew down the looking-glass.

'Pleasant, by Jove!' he soliloquised. 'I wonder whether it's smashed—unlucky to break a looking-glass—I'm hanged if I know where the matches are; never mind, I can find my way to bed in the dark. What a night!' as a flash of lightning illuminated the room for a moment, and he bent out of the window. 'The wind must be about north-west. Cheerful for anything coming up to Bristol from the southward, I wonder what a storm is like on this coast. I have a great mind to go and see. I shall never be able to get that hall-door open without waking them up. What a nuisance! Stay capital idea! I'll go by the window.'

Before starting on this expedition he changed the remains of his evening dress (for he had been writing in his dressing gown) for a flannel shirt and trousers, whilst a short pea-jacket and glazed hat completed his array. His room was on the first floor, and he had intended to drop from the window-sill; but the branch of an elm came so near that he found it unnecessary, as springing to it, he was on the ground, like a cat in an instant. He soon found his way across country, 'like a bird' to the edge of the cliff. The sea for miles seemed one sheet of foam.

But a flash of lightning discovered a group of figures about a quarter of a mile distant, and he distinguished shouts in the intervals of the storm.

RIDE "ANGLO SPECIAL" CYCLES.