

Our Two Squires.

THE STORY OF A LONG FEUD.

CHAPTER I.

It was Christmas morning; a genuine old-fashioned Christmas, sharp and clear and cold. The meadows were covered, far and wide with crisp, white snow, and the hedgerows sparkled with crystal frost-work. The rustic monuments in the village churchyard assumed forms of quaint indefiniteness under their fleecy covering, and the ancient yew trees, dark and gloomy in summer when all else was gay, seemed now like fairy fountains, springing upward in the winter sunshine. Within the church was gathered well-nigh the whole population of our Cornville, and with tender eloquence our good old vicar, bowed with age and infirmity, but still earnest, still eloquent, once more preached the message of peace and good will. Not an eye wandered among the earnest, upturned faces, not a sound broke the quiet hush of rapt attention as he spoke his concluding words:

"And now, my brethren—nay, rather my children, for my journey has been long, and most of those who started with me have gone one by one to their rest—for well nigh forty years have I labored among you, and the time is at hand when I, too, shall rest, and when you will hear my voice no more. It is but a little while, and the silver cord must be loosed and the golden bowl be broken. God has been very good to me; yet one gift more, one only would I ask of him; that ere I go to my long home, every soul in this my little flock shall have blotted out all memory of former feud or ancient grievance, and shall, with love and fellowship to all mankind, be able to join in the Christmas song of the angels: 'On earth peace, good will among men.'"

All knew for whom these last words were especially intended, for the feud between my uncle, Richard Polwhele, and the only other large land owner in the parish, Sir Philip Trefusis, was a matter almost of county history. It had originated many years back, when both were young men fresh from Oxford. At school and college they had been bosom friends, nay, almost brothers, but (so the story ran) both young men had been fascinated by the wiles of the same village beauty. Neither would yield to the other. A violent quarrel arose, and in a moment of passionate excitement on both sides Trefusis struck Polwhele with his riding-whip across the face. Polwhele raised his hand to return the blow, but checked himself, or it would have gone hard with Trefusis, for he was slight and undersized, while Polwhele's strength and daring were proverbial throughout the country side.

"If you value your life," he said, controlling himself by a mighty effort, "get out of my sight."

Trefusis read aright the warning of the white face and flashing eyes, and, already dreading the consequences of his rash act, fled away. Richard Polwhele spent the rest of that day alone in the woods, and four-and-twenty hours afterward was stricken with brain fever. Ere he had completely recovered, his rival had left the country, and the coquetish cause of their quarrel had married a rustic swain whom she secretly much preferred to either of her aristocratic admirers. Thirty years had since passed by, during the greater part of which Trefusis had remained abroad, visiting his native place only at rare intervals. Three years back, however, he had finally returned, a widower with one daughter, now aged nineteen, and had taken up his abode once more at the family mansion, Trecarra Park. Richard Polwhele had also married, and was left a widower, with five children—Howard, Mary, Alice, Percy and Dorothy, of ages ranging downward from twenty-two to seven. Uncle Dick would readily have let bygones be bygones, but he waited for Trefusis to make the first overture. Possibly Sir Phillip had a similar feeling. At any rate, neither would make the first advances, and the result was that "the two Squires," as they were called, met and remained on terms of haughty coolness. No communication took place between the two houses, though it was whispered that Cousin Howard and Pretty Edith Trefusis, who had met more than once on neutral ground, were not dis-

posed to keep up the family feud for another generation.

Such being the state of things, the earnest appeal of our good old vicar was not difficult of application, and many eyes were turned upon the two squires to see in what spirit they received this public admonition. There was a touch of heightened color upon Uncle Dick's handsome face as he stepped forth into the churchyard, the very model of a gallant English gentleman, dispensing hearty handshakes and kindly Christmas greetings to friend and neighbor. Close behind him came Sir Phillip Trefusis, his daughter hanging on his arm. At the lychgate, Uncle Dick stepped aside to let them pass. With kindly eyes he looked straight at Sir Phillip, and we felt instinctively that with him, at least, Mr. Pentreath's appeal had not missed its mark, and that at the slightest answering sign his hand would have been outstretched with generous cordiality. Whether Sir Phillip saw the look, I know not, but his daughter did, and an expression of pain came into her sweet eyes as he strode on, proud and silent, and the opportunity for a reconciliation had once more passed away.

CHAPTER II.

We were a merry party round the luncheon table at the lodge, for Richard Polwhele was accustomed to keep Christmas right royally, and his own family, nephews and nieces of every degree and friends from far and near, were gathered around his hospitable board. Luncheon being ended, a discussion arose as to how we should employ the interval before the important hour of dinner, the dinner, which was to be the crowning glory of the Christmas festival. Some one suggested skating, and the idea was at once hailed with acclamation. Polworthy pool, a piece of water almost within a stone's throw of the lodge, was frozen over, and afforded a capital skating ground. Every available pair of skates was speedily in requisition. There was a general rush for great-coats, seal-skin jackets, muffs, furs, warm gloves and woolen comforters. Uncle Dick was led captive by a couple of pretty nieces, one of whom took possession of each arm; and, looking like a miniature Arctic expedition, we sallied forth to the pool.

The fun was at its height when Sir Phillip Trefusis and his daughter were seen approaching. No one noticed them till they were fairly on the ice, and then we saw with alarm that they were close to a spot where the ice had been broken on the previous day for the convenience of certain ducks and geese who were the regular inhabitants of the pool, and which, though now again frozen over, would certainly not bear the weight of a human being. Uncle Phillip was the first to perceive the danger.

"Back! back! the ice is unsafe!" he shouted.

Edith Trefusis drew back, accordingly, but her father, either not understanding the warning or too proud to regard it, continued his course, and, in another instant the ice crashed under his feet and he disappeared. After a couple of seconds he rose again, and, flinging his arms wildly upward, with a hoarse cry of "Help! Save me," once more disappeared, but this time did not rise again.

"Good heavens! he has gone under the ice!" said a voice, and in an instant all was terror and confusion.

"Break the ice!" shouted one.

"Fetch a ladder!" said another.

"Run for a rope!" exclaimed a third.

A score of suggestions, practicable and impracticable, were proffered in a breath; but the ringing voice of Richard Polwhele was heard above the tumult.

"Silence, all! Dr. Hamlyn, you have a cool head; you tell them what to do. A gate, quick, and lay it over the hole!"

Meanwhile, in less time than it takes to tell it, he had divested himself of hat, coat and boots, and without waiting for an answer, plunged into the ice-cold water. Twice he dived, without success. He had well chosen his aid in the doctor, a quiet, unassuming man, but of iron nerve and unlimited resources; and ere he had arisen for the second time, a couple of gates had been lifted from their hinges and laid one on each side of the hole. A third time he dived; and this time was so long beneath the surface that a dread came over us lest he too, should be lost under the

ice. But at last, after what seemed an age of suspense, he was seen to rise once more.

"Help! I'm done!" he gasped. Dr. Hamlyn, kneeling on one of the gates, caught his uplifted hand. Strong arms were quickly outstretched to help him.

"No, no; Phillip first!" he exclaimed; and we found that he held Trefusis in his failing grasp.

Under Dr. Hamlyn's directions they were both, though with difficulty, lifted out and laid upon the bank. Sir Phillip was, to all appearances, beyond earthly help, and a terrible fear came over us that Uncle Dick, who was now insensible, had sacrificed his own life to no purpose. Never were words more welcome than Dr. Hamlyn's assurance that he had only fainted.

"Give him some brandy, some of you; and rub his hands and feet."

Eager hands volunteered for the service; but almost ere they could begin their task he opened his eyes and gazed around.

"What's this? Ah! I remember now. But where is Phillip?" And, shaking himself like a Newfoundland dog, he rose, unassisted, to his feet. Sir Phillip lay on the ground a few feet off, white and lifeless, his daughter weeping on her knees, beside him. Uncle Dick raised her with infinite tenderness.

"Nay, don't weep, pretty one; by God's help we'll win him back to life yet. Now, lads, lend a helping hand. Doctor, bring him to my place. It is a good deal nearer than his own house, and minutes are precious just now."

Under the doctor's guidance, coats and rugs were laid upon one of the gates; and on this rude couch the silent form was borne up to the lodge. Uncle Dick himself led Edith, tenderly patting the little hand which lay upon his arm, and whispering cheery words of hope and comfort. Quickly we reached the lodge, and the good doctor at once commenced the struggle with the grim destroyer. For more than an hour the household was hushed in an awful quietness, each hardly daring to speak above a whisper, till that tremendous question should be decided: "Is it life or death?" Poor Edith sat weeping apart, each moment adding to her apprehension; while Howard, almost equally distressed, vainly endeavored to console her. At last, after what seemed an age of agonizing dread, the door opened, and Uncle Dick came forth, and went straight to Edith.

"God is good to us, my child; your father will live."

Edith threw herself sobbing on his breast.

"O, Mr. Polwhele, how can I ever thank you for your noble, generous—"

"When I'm dryer, my dear, if you don't mind putting it off a little. I begin to realize that I'm slightly damp, and I think it might be as well to put on a few dry clothes. You shall tell me about it at dinner, my child," and gently touching her forehead with his lips, he made his escape.

Meanwhile though the rescued man had given to the experienced eye of the doctor the welcome promise of life, there was still much to do to win him back to conscious existence. Still the resources of skill and science were applied with unremitting energy, and after a while the watchers were rewarded by the patient opening his eyes and saying, in a feeble voice:

"Dick, dear Dick! Where's Dick? I want to speak to Dick."

What took place at that interview between the two old friends, so long severed, none knew save themselves, but when some hours later we gathered round the well-spread board, Trefusis and his daughter sat on either hand of his generous host.

And surely such a dinner was never chronicled. Pen and ink would fail me to tell how the two ancient friends, warmed into youth again under the sunshine of love renewed, vied with each other who should best recall the memory of youthful pranks and genial recollections of happy boyish days. And how Uncle Dick, sitting with Edith's little hand in his, and stroking her silken hair, told her what a gay young dog her father was in those merry days; and Sir Phillip, not to be behindhand, recounted daring exploits and hair-breadth 'scapes of which Uncle Dick had been the hero. And how Cousin Howard, seated on the other side of Edith, artfully got possession of her disengaged hand;

and how their respective fathers cheerily smiled approval. And how, as, all too soon, the clock struck twelve, Richard Polwhele stood up, and, hand in hand with his old friend, trotted out, in a deep, rich voice, the good old song of "Auld Lang Syne."

Should old acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should old acquaintance be forgot,
In days o' auld lang syne?

And how, when the song was ended, dear old Parson Pentreath, always an honored guest at this Christmas festival, folded his hands and, with tears in his happy eyes, said:

"For these and all His other mercies God give us grateful hearts."

And with all our hearts we said: "Amen."—*London Society.*

Love and Boiled Cabbage.

Valentine Brutz, a young German, was arraigned upon the complaint of his wife Mary that he refused to support her. Valentine said he was able and willing to take care of his wife if she would only come and live at his home with him and his aged parents. Mary declared if she went she would have to cook cabbage for the whole family, and her mother said "she needn't, so there, now!" The Court informed her that her refusal to prepare cabbage for her husband was a blow at the entire social fabric, and was calculated to undermine the family altar and devastate the holiest feelings of the human heart. Mary looked aghast at this frightful announcement, and began to weep, whereupon the Court adjourned the case for one month to enable her to fully make up her mind on the cabbage question.—*Buffalo Express.*

"What does transatlantic mean, mamma?"

"Across the Atlantic, child, hold your tongue, and ask no more questions."

"Then does transparent mean a cross mamma?"
(Has to forfeit her slate, and stand in the corner.)—*Fun.*

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