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SMITH AND BROWNE; OR STRATEGY IN COURTSHIP.

CHAPTER V.

SMITH AND BROWNE AMONG THE NOBILITY.

Smith and Browne, after Lord Huntington and his nephew, Sir Eugene Wallace, punctual to their plan, took passage, in less than a week from their first meeting, on board the Steamer —, for their voyage.

It would be useless to say anything of a voyage across the Atlantic, since the time of sailing and the arrival at the other point has been so reduced by modern inventions and improvements, that scarcely an incident happens worthy of note.

The first view of them, that we shall give the reader, is their arrival in the great Metropolis of the British Kingdom when they assumed their new titles and were so introduced.

For a week none were half so regular at the theatre and opera, as these noblemen, nor was it long in being noised abroad that the rich lord and nobleman, Huntington with his nephew, Sir Eugene Wallace, were among the guests of the season.

The deception was taking admirably; Lord Huntington was the honored guest of many a nobleman, while his nephew, who played the part of a prince of pleasure and fashion, was a perfect lion with the mammas and their daughters.

No one could waltz, or dance the Polka with the young lasses, so well as the noble and gallant Prince.

The ladies said, he was so handsome, and so gallant, and so polished, and then he had such a noble air, so like his name sake, Sir William Wallace. He was a born ruler. His eyes gave evidence of the noble impulses of his soul, while his head seemed only made to wear a crown. What a love of a moustache he wore; what an imperial! and then that snowy white teeth glittered between!

His dress, how like a prince's—his epaulettes and his sword sparkled with diamonds and his buckles were of solid gold. Such was Sir Eugene Wallace, formerly Mr. Browne, the discarded lover.

These noblemen had attended one grand fete and retired to their private apartments, when the following dialogue ensued:

"Well, Uncle, how did the wind blow to-night?"

"Fair wind! fair wind, my boy! fine sailing indeed. I never enjoyed anything half so well before; but I'll tell you what it is, my nephew, the game came in an ace of being lost to us one time to-night."

"How so, uncle?"

"Do you recollect an old man with an American suit on, who made such a blustering noise over his wine, and toasted Lord Palmerston so often?"

"Perfectly, I recollect him well."

"That man is a broker in New York, and but for the advantage I gained over him in spying him out as soon as I did and letting him into the secret of the whole affair, he could have spoiled our fun completely."

"Then, he knows our real characters?"

"Yes, and laughed heartily over the matter."

"Should he betray us, I rather think we would not find such pleasant sailing in future. We might have the exquisite pleasure of being escorted out of the city on a rail in a genuine American suit of tar and feathers."

"O, you need have no fears of such a thing; for, in the first place, he enjoys a joke of the kind as well as any man living, and more than that, he sails for America in the morning, and he has promised, not to mention the affair, even at home."

"I don't feel as easy about the matter as you seem; I therefore propose, that we change our location as early as possible; suppose we go over to Paris?"

"As you like it; I am ready for any

move that will enhance the interest of our tour; I'll accept your proposition most cheerfully, and from there will go to Rome, if you say so, and spend several months, for, notwithstanding I hate Popery, I nevertheless, have a pleasant recollection of Rome as she has been. I want to see the seven hills, and on the banks of the Tiber ruminates, perhaps, on the very spot where the Shepherds partook of the great rural feast."

"Indeed, my lord, you have grown quite sentimental since leaving the shores of America; and I should not wonder if you were yet to become a great author; rival the celebrated fictionists of England and Scotland, and make to yourself a fame that will live in song and story."

"I have a strong inclination to do something worthy of remembrance, even by the lovers of fiction, but I never had the slightest idea of my adequacy to a task so important and difficult."

"Ah, well, for the sake of peace, we will dismiss the subject. I see you have no idea of becoming an author."

"Not the least."

"I propose we leave this city as soon as possible, for, notwithstanding I proposed the drama we are now acting, I feel a trepidation at the heart, and weakness about the knees every-time I am dubbed Prince, and wonder what the thunder I should do if some of my old friends from the Continent, were to hail me by the title of Browne, when I am taking things by storm as I did last night; why the truth is, my lord, I'd prefer being caught with a stolen sheep upon my back, and, that you know, is about the standard of meanness in our country."

"I have no fears of that sort, for, I am too constantly on the look out, to be caught; and furthermore, it is not likely that any visitor from the United States would be honored with an invitation to the grand fetes at which we figure extensively unless they should be very distinguished citizens or relations of the host."

"And even then I suppose the chances would be in our favor, for they would hardly know us."

From the above, it may be presumed that Smith and Browne were not feeling very secure under their new titles, but, were fearing an exposure and its ugly consequences.

But the game had to be played now that the cards had been dealt out, and they held such good hands, and had already made something besides.

"Wallace," the young prince had in a short time grown quite a favorite with the softer sex, and but for that constant dread which weighed him down, he would have felt himself quite the lion of the season.

Another gauntlet had to be run, and it was with emotions of mingled sensation, he looked forward to it. Lord Arrington gave his last grand ball of the season, and both Lord Huntington and his nephew, Sir Eugene Wallace were invited guests.

While the latter felt the importance of the occasion, and looked forward to it as one of the most brilliant of his life he could but regret that he had thus gotten himself into a box, that (should the lid be fastened on,) would most effectually imprison him; but the ordeal had to be passed, and summoning all the courage of which he was master, he was ready when his uncle came round in the carriage after him, on the dreaded evening.

Away they went whizzing along over the pavements making the night hideous with the rumbling of the wheels, and not a word was passed until the coachman bawled—"Lord Arrington's."

"Well, my boy," said Lord Huntington, "this is our last ordeal in England; if we can but succeed to-night, and leave this country with our present stock of compliments and encomiums unscathed, we shall have accomplished the most daring feat, and succeeded most admirably, and for my own part, I have no fears to the contrary."

"Be it so, but, somehow or other, I feel a little uneasy and can't help it; I hope you may be prophetic in your feelings, at least this time."

At this moment they were on the marble steps that led to the long portico in front of the stately mansion of Lord Arrington.

The lord met them at the entrance and in person, escorted them to an upper chamber, leaving them in charge of attendants, whose duty it was to attend their wishes.

As he left the room, Browne, alias, Prince Wallace, cast a furtive glance at the door-way, and turning his eyes full upon Smith, said: "really, my lord, ours is a most noble host, and reminds me wonderfully of our kinsman and countryman, Sir Washburn Bruce, the grand nephew of the famed Sir Robert Bruce."

"Indeed, he is a famous lord, and I have almost fallen in love with him, there is such an air of nobleness about him, such an exhibition of that greatness, which alone is found among men of his rank."

These speeches had the desired effect for they were intended more for the ears of the attendants than for each other, that they might be impressed with the importance of Lord Huntington and Sir Eugene Wallace. In England, as in every other land, there is no method half so well calculated to get a man a fame among the ladies, as the notoriety one acquires by means of servants. They over hear things; things not intended for their ears, of course, therefore reliable, because there could have been no design in them, and these secrets are dealt out cautiously to the young misses, whose hearts throb and tremble at each recital.

An affected indifference on the part of each, gave the servants an opportunity for a low private conversation, the subject of which was, of course, the wealth, standing and fine appearance of their distinguished guests. Browne distinctly overheard a remark from one, in which his name was favorably coupled with that of Lord Arrington's daughter, and the suitability of a marriage between them.

"What a lion," thought Browne, "I have suddenly become," but how to keep up appearances he could not exactly divine. Time was a bore to him; he had completed his toilet an hour ago, and yet, the lord had not come to escort him to the dancing saloon. Look at his watch? Yes, a hundred times and nervously he paced the floor occasionally eyeing "my lord Huntington," who had yielded himself to a comfortable snooze, much to the amusement of one of the servants, a small boy, whose risibilities were excited to an uncontrollable pitch.

At last, however, Lord Arrington came to summon Lord Huntington and his nephew, Sir Eugene Wallace to the scene of mirth.

Now for the struggle, thought Browne; now for a display of his fine person and talents. If he could but deport himself safely through this scene, English nobility might go to grass for him, with all their fine women and young misses. He marched into the presence of the gay assemblage with the dignity and coolness of his illustrious namesake of olden times, and following Lord Huntington who was escorted by Lord Arrington, he was led into the august presence of Lady Arrington. She welcomed them both, and turning to Wallace, said, "I feel complimented noble sir, in having your presence to-night at my last grand ball of the season; your name sir, notwithstanding, it was King Edward's greatest trouble, carries a charm with it. A nobler knight hath not lived than Sir William Wallace, and a nobler scion I have never seen than in yourself. Believe me, dear sir, I feel myself highly honored, and to render the evening as agreeable as possible, I hold myself in constant readiness, to present your princess to any lady whose acquaintance you may desire to form."

"Your ladyship does the private citizen, and relative of Sir William Wallace more than justice. I do not feel, dear madam, that my presence can add anything to the character of your entertainment, and were I to consult my own feelings I would not be known here by my real name; I would rather assume the common title of Browne, and dub my uncle, John Smith, and be known as a private citizen, than to be the distinguished guest I am. I like nobility; but I like it in the persons of others. For myself, I am best contented when in the employ of some lonely

occupation. But, believe me, dear madam, I could not, I dare not act insensible to the distinguished honors you have thus conferred upon my name, and shall feel mortified, if, on a more intimate acquaintance, I do not so comport myself, as to retain that high esteem which you have expressed for me."

"This way my lord, and I will introduce you to lady Caroline, our only daughter, and the heiress of the Arrington estate. She is quite young, yet, but you will find her quite talkative, and a great admirer of the heroic as well as romantic. She has just completed her education, and but lately returned from school, and has barely done away with her childish notions; you can make all necessary allowances for that." Saying which she led the way to a tall, beautiful girl of about seventeen.

"Caroline, let me introduce you to Sir Eugene Wallace, the guest of the evening."

Caroline bowed modestly, yet gracefully, and desired that he should be seated.

"I am, as you will perceive, a real stranger, and yet, by some means I have found in this great city, a host of friends; indeed there are none with whom I meet, who do not seem, ere I have been with them an hour, as intimate friends."

"London has been greatly slandered by Magazine writers and gossips, for what they term its aristocracy, but I dare say, if the truth were known and published as it is, there are fewer real aristocrats here than in any city of its wealth and magnitude, perhaps in the world."

"If I must judge from the experience which I have had, I agree with you, and go even farther and say that even in America where I have recently travelled more real aristocracy exists than I have seen here."

"How long since you left America?"

"Why, but recently; I came by the steamer, which arrived just two weeks since, and a most pleasant voyage we had."

"O, it must be delightful at this season, and yet my parents are so scrupulous of my health they will not agree for me to make a voyage even across our little seas; I've a strong inclination at times to elope and go aboard a vessel bound for the United States and run the risk of being detected."

"You don't mean that you—"

"I mean, ye, I mean to dress in a sailor's trousers and jacket and play the tar."

"Why, you might make yourself quite a heroine if you would but let your true character be known to some gallant officer of the western world; and that's not all; you might become so attached to the other shores of the Atlantic as not to return."

"Would it not be nice? I fancy I might conduct a bit of romance with considerable skill."

"Suppose then as you would like a voyage, you should change your course, and instead of going to America, you sail round the Gibraltar and visit the memorable cities of the Mediterranean; go to Rome, to Greece, to Carthage, Missolonghi, and if you desire it, up to Constantinople."

"The very thing I want to do; of all other places, I'd rather visit Rome and Athens."

"Then you had better begin that bit of romance in making a voyage in that direction; you would have one advantage in it; I would be with you should you need a friend to aid you at any time."

"What! are you going in that direction?"

"I am, and so is my uncle, Lord Huntington, and we expect to embark to-morrow."

"O, I am so anxious to go! Say no more about it; if I am not baffled in my determination I may go too."

"In the attire of a sailor?"

"No, no; I think I can get lady Arrington to go with me, and perhaps Pa, also; they have formed such a high opinion of you and your uncle, that a suggestion of yours would go a great ways with them if properly urged."

The reader must not suppose the conversation between Wallace and lady Caroline ceased, simply because we

drop them for a while, but just imagine yourself sitting near them, and perhaps you will be astonished at the freedom of each, and laugh at the many curious suggestions and plans made for the accommodation of the latter, all in reference to the desired voyage.

We leave them but to mingle with the crowd and shake hands with the lords, and smile and bow at their ladies; to enquire after Lord Huntington whom we have not seen since his entrance into the saloon.

There he stood, his head high, his feet stands proudly erect lifting his classic head (shoe makers sometimes have classic heads) high above his fellows, while every now and then, his white locks shake as if blown by a strong gale, and his merry ringing laughter is heard distinctly. Around him crowd the young noblemen, whose ambitions flow in a political channel, listening to his speculations upon the affairs of governments and nations. He was all gab; well versed in modern and ancient history and with the government for ages past, he could speculate on the present condition of the world and especially of Great Britain, with as much probability of guessing right as any one else.

Marked deference was shown to every syllable he uttered, for it was Lord Huntington, and of course, what he said was orthodox.

He speculated largely upon Turkey and Russia and evidently thought he foresaw a storm brewing that would result in a general war; that England and France and all the powers of the West would be compelled to engage in it, in defence of a great political principle. "Yes," said he, "my lords and gentlemen, the time is just ahead when we will have to send out our Wellingtons to fight Turkey's battles for her; France will stand side by side with us, for these battles are not Turkey's alone, but the battles of all Europe. But we are ready for them; no time could be more favorable for the prosperity of Great Britain. True we are in debt, but, with a nation powerful as ours, such a state of things may not only be expected, but in some instances it is a benefit rather than a curse and—"

Here the lord ceased his learned disquisition suddenly and fell back upon a seat apparently in a fainting condition. A dozen lords sprang to his assistance in an instant, and a physician was called, but the lord was insensible to all.

A paroxysm of fearful character had laid hold of him and seemed to threaten a speedy death. He was removed from the scene of his disaster to a private apartment followed by his frightened nephew and the physician. Having secured fresh air in his new position, and received a thorough bathing in resuscitants, signs of consciousness began to exhibit themselves, and it was not long before Lord Huntington opened his eyes and faintly asked, "Where am I?" illustrating in a satisfactory manner, to his friends, that Richard was himself again; or soon would be.

"Why, sir," said the physician, "you are sick; you have been dangerously attacked and but for the immediate use of the proper medicines, you must have been a dead man ere this time; but sir, you are better now, and I wish you to be composed."

"Sick? did you say! A most unfounded tale! I am wounded."

"Why my dear sir," said the physician to Sir Wallace, "your uncle is delirious; he is mad. His head must be shaved immediately or he will die with a congestion of the brain."

"That's another lie and a diabolical one, and I'll sue you for slander, you hypocritical old pill bag."

"O, my dear sir, don't be so excitable; your friends are anxiously concerned for you, and have called me to relieve you of this dreadful fit."

"Where is my nephew? Where is Sir Eugene Wallace? Where is he? Bring him in! I must see him!"

"Here I am, dear uncle! What would you have me do?"

"Defend me! yes, by the heavens, defend me! If you possess a single drop of that blood which warmed the bosom of your uncle, the hero of Scotland, defend me! Drive that rascal from my room! He is a rogue, a thief, a murderer! a blasphemer! Drive him out!"

Wallace beckoned him to leave the apartment for a moment; he did so, but the frantic lord was not yet satisfied; he made his nephew bolt the door and then sit near him on the bed. As soon as he was seated, a change came over his face and raising himself off the bed, he smilingly asked, "don't you think, Browne, that I have performed one feat in high life pretty well?"

"You are delirious uncle, try to compose yourself."

"Compose, fiddlesticks! I've got as good sense as you have or ever will have, and I want you to answer me."

Wallace, or rather Hartford, did not exactly know what to say to him, for apparently he possessed his senses to as great an extent as he ever did, but the doctor had pronounced him delirious and he thought it was so; and consequently, this sudden disposition to quietness he prognosticated unfavorably, and sat in perfect silence, occasionally rubbing his hand gently over his forehead. But his thoughts were fully divined, and Smith sprang out of the bed at a bound, carrying Browne on his back, who tried to hold him there but could not.

"Now Browne, let me tell you, (and in the first place, don't be such a darned fool.) I am not sick, neither have I had a fit nor a spasm; I have had my senses all the time, and have fooled you like the deuce. But it had to be did, my good fellow, (don't pop your eyes out looking at me) for I say it had to be did. I was getting into a d—l of a fix and I had to have a fit and be toated out, or be discovered and run out, and I concluded the first was the most genteel, so I fainted."

"Heh!" he ejaculated.

"You thick headed puppy, you can't understand it seems, but stand there and reply to me by saying 'heh!' I say I had to faint or be detected in the deception which I am practicing, for, just as I was getting that herd of cattle, (young bulls) under conviction, preaching them a real political sermon, in which I was proving to them that Great Britain was a great Government and France another, and that Russia had to be ticked and we had to help, &c., &c., who should I see coming towards me escorting lady Arrington but Tom Jones of New York, the whiskey dealer, (the very man I hate above all others and he hates me as bad) for the purpose, as I supposed, of getting up an acquaintance with Lord Huntington. I am certain that lady Arrington would not do a thing that would at all mar my enjoyment, but I tell you I had hard thoughts about her when I saw her leaning on that whiskey still, and what made it worse, I knew she was bringing him up to introduce him to me.— There was no chance of practicing my deception on that old rascal, for he knows me too well; we've had too many fights, and he knows this scar on my cheek too well. Then what else could I do but faint? I had no time to run for I was in full view. To faint was the only resort, and at it I went, and I'll leave it with you to say, how nicely I performed this feat. Sick? No! I'm no more sick than you are, but I'll tell you what my boy, we must leave here before the day dawns."

Browne could contain himself no longer, but burst into a hearty fit of laughter in which Smith joined with a zest that would have been deemed by the physician, had he seen him, a symptom of returning paroxysms.

"I'll tell you Browne, what to do; as you seem to be deeply interested in that young lady, and would like to return to her as a hog to his mud, you can leave her and send a servant in to attend me."

"Tell the Doctor I am composed now and that you think there is no danger of a return of the paroxysms unless I am disturbed. I am bound to keep close quarters the balance of the night."

Brown laughed heartily again, but this time at the ridiculous idea of as strong a man as his friend Smith being afraid to meet a countryman and a neighbor. But, he was not long in gaining his place, at the side of lady Caroline Arrington whence he had been so unexpectedly torn an hour before.

Lord and lady Arrington hurried to him to hear from their noble but unfor-

unfortunate condition.