

CASTLE ON THE CLIFF

BY RICHARD DOWLING

THE DUKE'S SNEAKERS, "The Skeleton Key," "Under St. Paul's," "The Wreck of the 'Avalanche,'" "The Duke's Sneakers," etc.

CHAPTER XIII. IN THE DARK.

When Lady Lenore and John Southwood had been a few yards from the window of the room, she spoke again.

"Are you ready? Will you come?"

"I cannot. Why cannot? What has changed since last day?"

"Well, Jack, it is a very prosaic fact. If I ran away with you my father could follow us and catch us before we were ten miles from the castle. I thought I was free to do as I please, but now I am not."

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their sons in positions requiring money, without making a suitable allowance.

"When you spoke of you; and I asked him what he allowed you, and he told me; and I said to him that I thought not less than twice what he now gives you; and he said, 'And straightway, he said he would double your allowance.'"

"He also said other things, which led me to believe that meeting here, between you and him, while I am on the spot, would be most advantageous to you."

"I am confirmed in this opinion by a few words his lordship has just said. I need not tell you that I have been so guarded in all I have said about you to the Earl, that he thinks I have been speaking to him of some one I have never seen."

"I am sure you ought to come here at once. You must not, for a moment, fancy I carry any memory of business out of Lombard-street. I am, my lord, your lordship's most obedient servant."

"ANDREW POLLOCK."

When Lord Balchouse read these letters, he found himself in a position of no slight difficulty. He had no wish whatever to go to the castle, but his father and Pollock were there; and yet, here was Pollock—to whom he was under deep obligation—asking him to come; and here were Nora and Southwood asking him to come too.

He supposed there was nothing for it, but to get leave and start for Berkham next day. And this he did.

CHAPTER XIV. TWO THOUSAND POUNDS!

Nothing short of necessity could have induced Lord Balchouse to visit Berkham just then; but he had no choice.

It was a horribly unpleasant to find this Mr. Pollock, who so generously found him the money, here on intimate terms with his own family. Much as he would have shrunk from acquiring his father with the Lombard-street transactions, he would have shrunk a thousand times more from telling his mother of it. It would make his father by its own admission, and he would rather be horsewhipped in Canterbury Barrack-yard by his father than be the cause of his mother's tears. He had a thorough contempt and dislike for his father. For his mother he had a profound and devoted love. His was a softer, less debilitated nature than Lady Lenore's.

He drew up as quickly as he could, and disagreed, he did not defy the Earl, he simply walked away or held his peace. This was partly owing to indolence, for he was one of those constitutionally slothful men, who, though as firm as a rock in their resolves, are almost as impassive under the protestations of those they do not trust.

The first time after his arrival at Berkham that Lord Balchouse found himself alone with any member of the family, was with the Countess in her own room.

He drew up easy-chair in front of the fire, and he had heard absolutely nothing yet beyond what the letters had told him. When he came to the room the Countess was engaged in embroidering a kettle-holder for the local bazaar. She could afford to make no costly presents. The Countess did not put down her work. She could talk better to her son with work in her hands than without it. Light conversation of such a kind helps to clear up thought.

"I suppose you know, mother, that I have come down because John and Nora wanted me?"

"Nora told me John Southwood had written to you. She also told me he had told you that he has proposed to Nora."

"Yes, and that it is all settled between them. The Countess passed a moment in her work, and looked up into his face with a quite smile. "Yes, all settled between them, but then there's the Earl. He has other views for Nora."

"Other views?" said the young man cautiously. "What are my father's views?"

"I guessed he told me, I told Nora half in jest I thought he intended this Mr. Pollock to marry her. Now I am sure of it."

"Yes, Oliver, this Mr. Pollock is something in the City, and enormously rich. The Earl will hear of no objection or demerit."

"Then, by Heaven, he shall hear of objection and demerit from one person! In any way, will not stand by and see this done, because my father happens to be a heartless spendthrift."

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"Mr. Southwood is a gentleman, and if your father tells him he must not come here of course he will stay away."

"Southwood cares as much for Nora as she deserves to be cared for, and if he stays away because the Earl tells him, he is a snail. That's all."

"Well, we will say nothing of that just now. There is one great thing in your favour. Mr. Pollock has come only a few days, and is not likely your father will remain after he has gone, so we shall have plenty of opportunity for talking over the matter. Your father has gone even to the length of writing John Southwood to come here, he has told Nora she must hold no kind of communication whatever with him."

"Ah, well, mother, as you said a moment ago, we need not trouble ourselves with that now. I certainly, for one, should not think she would feel she had done anything very dreadful if she had forgotten all about your command by this time. What did she say when he told her?"

"He did not tell her personally. He sent word through me."

"And what did she say to you?" asked Lord Balchouse, drawing up before his mother.

"O, she is almost more rebellious even than you. She said she would not come."

"Well, I think we're safe to win anyway now, for you are the most reliable of the three. You know your own mother. As sure as you are sitting there before me, she will not come. I don't think she will marry this Mr. Andrew."

"Mellock, come this way. This is her ladyship's private room. She will be delighted to see you here."

Lord Balchouse's sentence was finished by his father, who had that moment opened the door, and was looking out as if he were waiting for some one or less distant place, but return, if not prevented, after 24 to 48 hours. In the first two days of illness most mad dogs lose their appetite for their natural food, and they are liable to vomit, earth, peat, straw, wood, rags, and the like. All mad dogs have a peculiar way of barking; and even when any natural right and dog behaviour is in rapid succession, but only once which they prolong and raise to a higher pitch. This bark is the main symptom of the disease. Some mad dogs bark very much, others very little; the former gradually get worse. In almost all mad dogs the desire to bite is enhanced. They bite other animals sooner and more than human beings. Some mad dogs bite their own masters and obey their call, but sometimes they do not. Some mad dogs bark very much, others very little; the former gradually get worse. In almost all mad dogs the desire to bite is enhanced. They bite other animals sooner and more than human beings. Some mad dogs bite their own masters and obey their call, but sometimes they do not.

"A very lovely view. A most beautiful view, indeed."

"But, but," said the Earl, with a desperate attempt at joviality, "I did not come to admire your landscape, Countess, but to tell you Mr. Pollock is going to give you a splendid treat."

"A splendid treat?" she said, with a look of surprise. "Yes, I have just accepted for you and Lenore, Mr. Pollock's invitation to spend a few weeks at his magnificent palace in Brighton. You and I will be delighted to go."

"What, going to town in October? In your lordship's serious?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Your ladyship will have the goodness to observe there is no 'but' in this matter. It is all arranged."

"Mr. Pollock," said Lord Balchouse softly, "I shall go too."

"Yes, my lord."

"No, my lord; but when Mr. Pollock was laid enough in London to lend me two thousand pounds a few days ago, he gave me his place, and I now accept his invitation."

"Two thousand pounds!"

"The Countess uttered a low cry, and rose to her feet. "Yes, all settled between them, but then there's the Earl. He has other views for Nora."

"Other views?" said the young man cautiously. "What are my father's views?"

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