

#### **Chapter IV. Randal Receives His Correspondence.**

Self-revealed by the family likeness as Herbert's brother, Randal Linley was nevertheless greatly Herbert's inferior in personal appearance. His features were in no way remarkable for manly beauty. In stature, he hardly reached the middle height; and young as he was, either bad habit or physical weakness had so affected the upper part of his figure that he stooped. But with these, and other disadvantages, there was something in his eyes, and in his smile--the outward expression perhaps of all that was modestly noble in his nature--so irresistible in its attractive influence that men, women, and children felt the charm alike. Inside of the house, and outside of the house, everybody was fond of Randal; even Mrs. Presty included.

"Have you seen a new face among us, since you returned?" were his sister-in-law's first words. Randal answered that he had seen Miss Westerfield. The inevitable question followed. What did he think of her? "I'll tell you in a week or two more," he replied.

"No! tell me at once."

"I don't like trusting my first impression; I have a bad habit of jumping to conclusions."

"Jump to a conclusion to please me. Do you think she's pretty?"

Randal smiled and looked away. "Your governess," he replied, "looks out of health, and (perhaps for that reason) strikes me as being insignificant and ugly. Let us see what our fine air and our easy life here will do for her. In so young a woman as she is, I am prepared for any sort of transformation. We may be all admiring pretty Miss Westerfield before another month is over our heads.--Have any letters come for me while I have been away?"

He went into the library and returned with his letters. "This will amuse Kitty," he said, handing his sister-in-law the illustrated New York newspaper, to which she had already referred in speaking to her husband.

Mrs. Linley examined the engravings--and turned back again to look once more at an illustration which had interested her. A paragraph on the same page caught her attention. She had hardly glanced at the first words before a cry of alarm escaped her. "Dreadful news for Miss Westerfield!" she exclaimed. "Read it, Randal."

He read these words:

"The week's list of insolvent traders includes an Englishman named James Bellbridge, formerly connected with a disreputable saloon in this city. Bellbridge is under suspicion of having caused the death of his wife in a fit of delirium tremens. The unfortunate woman had been married, for the first time, to one of the English aristocracy--the Honorable Roderick Westerfield--whose trial for casting away a ship under his command excited considerable interest in London some years since. The melancholy circumstances of the case are complicated by the disappearance, on the day of the murder, of the woman's young son by her first husband. The poor boy is supposed to have run away in terror from his miserable home, and the police are endeavoring to discover some trace of him. It is reported that another child of the first marriage (a daughter) is living in England. But nothing is known about her."

"Has your governess any relations in England?" Randal asked.

"Only an aunt, who has treated her in the most inhuman manner."

"Serious news for Miss Westerfield, as you say," Randal resumed. "And, as I think, serious news for us. Here is a mere girl--a poor friendless creature--absolutely dependent on our protection. What are we to do if anything happens, in the future, to alter our present opinion of her?"

"Nothing of the sort is likely to happen," Mrs. Linley declared.

"Let us hope not," Randal said, gravely.