CHAPTER X

The necessary business in London having been transacted, Tembarom went north to take possession of the home of his forefathers. It had rained for two days before he left London, and it rained steadily all the way to Lancashire, and was raining steadily when he reached Temple Barholm. He had never seen such rain before. It was the quiet, unmoved persistence of it which amazed him. As he sat in the railroad carriage and watched the slanting lines of its unabating downpour, he felt that Mr. Palford must inevitably make some remark upon it. But Mr. Palford continued to read his newspapers undisturbedly, as though the condition of atmosphere surrounding him were entirely accustomed and natural. It was of course necessary and proper that he should accompany his client to his destination, but the circumstances of the case made the whole situation quite abnormal. Throughout the centuries each Temple Barholm had succeeded to his estate in a natural and conventional manner. He had either been welcomed or resented by his neighbors, his tenants, and his family, and proper and fitting ceremonies had been observed. But here was an heir whom nobody knew, whose very existence nobody had even suspected, a young man who had been an outcast in the streets of the huge American city of which lurid descriptions are given. Even in New York he could have produced no circle other than Mrs. Bowse's boarding-house and the objects of interest to the up-town page, so he brought no one with him; for Strangeways seemed to have been mysteriously disposed of after their

arrival in London.

Never had Palford & Grimby on their hands a client who seemed so entirely alone. What, Mr. Palford asked himself, would he do in the enormity of Temple Barholm, which always struck one as being a place almost without limit. But that, after all, was neither here nor there. There he was. You cannot undertake to provide a man with relatives if he has none, or with acquaintances if people do not want to know him. His past having been so extraordinary, the neighborhood would naturally be rather shy of him. At first, through mere force of custom and respect for an old name, punctilious, if somewhat alarmed, politeness would be shown by most people; but after the first calls all would depend upon how much people could stand of the man himself.

The aspect of the country on a wet winter's day was not enlivening. The leafless and dripping hedges looked like bundles of sticks; the huge trees, which in June would be majestic bowers of greenery, now held out great skeleton arms, which seemed to menace both earth and sky. Heavy-faced laborers tramped along muddy lanes; cottages with soaked bits of dead gardens looked like hovels; big, melancholy cart-horses, dragging jolting carts along the country roads, hung their heads as they splashed through the mire.

As Tembarom had known few persons who had ever been out of America, he had not heard that England was beautiful, and he saw nothing which led him to suspect its charms. London had impressed him as gloomy, dirty,

and behind the times despite its pretensions; the country struck him as "the limit." Hully gee! was he going to be expected to spend his life in this! Should he be obliged to spend his life in it. He'd find that out pretty quick, and then, if there was no hard-and-fast law against it, him for little old New York again, if he had to give up the whole thing and live on ten per. If he had been a certain kind of youth, his discontent would have got the better of him, and he might have talked a good deal to Mr. Palford and said many disparaging things.

"But the man was born here," he reflected. "I guess he doesn't know anything else, and thinks it's all right. I've heard of English fellows who didn't like New York. He looks like that kind."

He had supplied himself with newspapers and tried to read them. Their contents were as unexciting as the rain-sodden landscape. There were no head-lines likely to arrest any man's attention. There was a lot about Parliament and the Court, and one of them had a column or two about what lords and ladies were doing, a sort of English up-town or down-town page.

He knew the stuff, but there was no snap in it, and there were no photographs or descriptions of dresses. Galton would have turned it down. He could never have made good if he had done no better than that. He grinned to himself when he read that the king had taken a drive and that a baby prince had the measles.

"I wonder what they'd think of the Sunday Earth," he mentally inquired.

He would have been much at sea if he had discovered what they really would have thought of it. They passed through smoke-vomiting manufacturing towns, where he saw many legs seemingly bearing about umbrellas, but few entire people; they whizzed smoothly past drenched suburbs, wet woodlands, and endless-looking brown moors, covered with dead bracken and bare and prickly gorse. He thought these last great desolate stretches worse than all the rest.

But the railroad carriage was luxuriously upholstered and comfortable, though one could not walk about and stretch his legs. In the afternoon, Mr. Palford ordered in tea, and plainly expected him to drink two cups and eat thin bread and butter. He felt inclined to laugh, though the tea was all right, and so was the bread and butter, and he did not fail his companion in any respect. The inclination to laugh was aroused by the thought of what Jim Bowles and Julius would say if they could see old T. T. with nothing to do at 4:30 but put in cream and sugar, as though he were at a tea-party on Fifth Avenue.

But, gee! this rain did give him the Willies. If he was going to be sorry for himself, he might begin right now. But he wasn't. He was going to see this thing through.

The train had been continuing its smooth whir through fields, wooded lands, and queer, dead-and-alive little villages for some time before it drew up at last at a small station. Bereft by the season of its garden bloom and green creepers, it looked a bare and uninviting little place. On the two benches against the wall of the platform a number of women sat huddled together in the dampness. Several of them held children in their laps and all stared very hard, nudging one another as he descended from the train. A number of rustics stood about the platform, giving it a somewhat crowded air. It struck Tembarom that, for an out- of-the-way place, there seemed to be a good many travelers, and he wondered if they could all be going away. He did not know that they were the curious element among such as lived in the immediate neighborhood of the station and had come out merely to see him on his first appearance. Several of them touched their hats as he went by, and he supposed they knew Palford and were saluting him. Each of them was curious, but no one was in a particularly welcoming mood. There was, indeed, no reason for anticipating enthusiasm. It was, however, but human nature that the bucolic mind should bestir itself a little in the desire to obtain a view of a Temple Barholm who had earned his living by blacking boots and selling newspapers, unknowing that he was "one o' th' gentry."

When he stepped from his first-class carriage, Tembarom found himself confronted by a very straight, clean-faced, and well-built young man, who wore a long, fawn-colored livery coat with claret facings and silver buttons. He touched his cockaded hat, and at once took up the

Gladstone bags. Tembarom knew that he was a footman because he had seen something like him outside restaurants, theaters, and shops in New York, but he was not sure whether he ought to touch his own hat or not. He slightly lifted it from his head to show there was no ill feeling, and then followed him and Mr. Palford to the carriage waiting for them. It was a severe but sumptuous equipage, and the coachman was as well dressed and well built as the footman. Tembarom took his place in it with many mental reservations.

"What are the illustrations on the doors?" he inquired.

"The Temple Barholm coat of arms," Mr. Palford answered. "The people at the station are your tenants. Members of the family of the stout man with the broad hat have lived as yeoman farmers on your land for three hundred years."

They went on their way, with more rain, more rain, more dripping hedges, more soaked fields, and more bare, huge-armed trees. CLOP, CLOP, CLOP, sounded the horses' hoofs along the road, and from his corner of the carriage Mr. Palford tried to make polite conversation. Faces peered out of the windows of the cottages, sometimes a whole family group of faces, all crowded together, eager to look, from the mother with a baby in her arms to the old man or woman, plainly grandfather or grandmother--sharp, childishly round, or bleared old eyes, all excited and anxious to catch glimpses.

"They are very curious to see you," said Mr. Palford. "Those two laborers are touching their hats to you. It will be as well to recognize their salute."

At a number of the cottage doors the group stood upon the threshold and touched foreheads or curtsied. Tembarom saluted again and again, and more than once his friendly grin showed itself. It made him feel queer to drive along, turning from side to side to acknowledge obeisances, as he had seen a well-known military hero acknowledge them as he drove down Broadway.

The chief street of the village of Temple Barholm wandered almost within hailing distance of the great entrance to the park. The gates were supported by massive pillars, on which crouched huge stone griffins. Tembarom felt that they stared savagely over his head as he was driven toward them as for inspection, and in disdainful silence allowed to pass between them as they stood on guard, apparently with the haughtiest mental reservations.

The park through which the long avenue rolled concealed its beauty to the unaccustomed eye, showing only more bare trees and sodden stretches of brown grass. The house itself, as it loomed up out of the thickening rain-mist, appalled Tembarom by its size and gloomily gray massiveness. Before it was spread a broad terrace of stone, guarded by more griffins of even more disdainful aspect than those watching over the gates. The stone noses held themselves rigidly in the air as the

reporter of the up-town society page passed with Mr. Palford up a flight of steps broad enough to make him feel as though he were going to church. Footmen with powdered heads received him at the carriage door, seemed to assist him to move, to put one foot before the other for him, to stand in rows as though they were a military guard ready to take him into custody.

Then he was inside, standing in an enormous hall filled with furnishings such as he had never seen or heard of before. Carved oak, suits of armor, stone urns, portraits, another flight of church steps mounting upward to surrounding galleries, stained-glass windows, tigers' and lions' heads, horns of tremendous size, strange and beautiful weapons, suggested to him that the dream he had been living in for weeks had never before been so much a dream. He had walked about as in a vision, but among familiar surroundings. Mrs. Bowse's boarders and his hall bedroom had helped him to retain some hold over actual existence. But here the reverently saluting villagers staring at him through windows as though he were General Grant, the huge, stone entrance, the drive of what seemed to be ten miles through the park, the gloomy mass of architecture looming up, the regiment of liveried men-servants, with respectfully lowered but excitedly curious eyes, the dark and solemn richness inclosing and claiming him--all this created an atmosphere wholly unreal. As he had not known books, its parallel had not been suggested to him by literature. He had literally not heard that such things existed. Selling newspapers and giving every moment to the struggle for life or living, one did not

come within the range of splendors. He had indeed awakened in that other world of which he had spoken. And though he had heard that there was another world, he had had neither time nor opportunity to make mental pictures of it. His life so far had expressed itself in another language of figures. The fact that he had in his veins the blood of the Norman lords and Saxon kings may or may not have had something to do with the fact that he was not abashed, but bewildered. The same factor may or may not have aided him to preserve a certain stoic, outward composure. Who knows what remote influences express themselves in common acts of modern common life? As Cassivellaunus observed his surroundings as he followed in captive chains his conqueror's triumphal car through the streets of Rome, so the keen-eyed product of New York pavement life "took in" all about him. Existence had forced upon him the habit of sharp observance. The fundamental working law of things had expressed itself in the simple colloquialism, "Keep your eye skinned, and don't give yourself away." In what phrases the parallel of this concise advice formulated itself in 55 B.C. no classic has yet exactly informed us, but doubtless something like it was said in ancient Rome. Tembarom did not give himself away, and he took rapid, if uncertain, inventory of people and things. He remarked, for instance, that Palford's manner of speaking to a servant was totally different from the manner he used in addressing himself. It was courteous, but remote, as though he spoke across an accepted chasm to beings of another race. There was no hint of incivility in it, but also no hint of any possibility that it could occur to the person addressed to hesitate or resent. It was a subtle thing, and Tembarom

wondered how he did it.

They were shown into a room the walls of which seemed built of books; the furniture was rich and grave and luxuriously comfortable. A fire blazed as well as glowed in a fine chimney, and a table near it was set with a glitter of splendid silver urn and equipage for tea.

"Mrs. Butterworth was afraid you might not have been able to get tea, sir," said the man-servant, who did not wear livery, but whose butler's air of established authority was more impressive than any fawn color and claret enriched with silver could have encompassed.

Tea again? Perhaps one was obliged to drink it at regular intervals. Tembarom for a moment did not awaken to the fact that the man was speaking to him, as the master from whom orders came. He glanced at Mr. Palford.

"Mr. Temple Barholm had tea after we left Crowly," Mr. Palford said. "He will no doubt wish to go to his room at once, Burrill."

"Yes, sir," said Burrill, with that note of entire absence of comment with which Tembarom later became familiar. "Pearson is waiting."

It was not unnatural to wonder who Pearson was and why he was waiting, but Tembarom knew he would find out. There was a slight relief on realizing that tea was not imperative. He and Mr. Palford were led

through the hall again. The carriage had rolled away, and two footmen, who were talking confidentially together, at once stood at attention. The staircase was more imposing as one mounted it than it appeared as one looked at it from below. Its breadth made Tembarom wish to lay a hand on a balustrade, which seemed a mile away. He had never particularly wished to touch balustrades before. At the head of the first flight hung an enormous piece of tapestry, its forest and hunters and falconers awakening Tembarom's curiosity, as it looked wholly unlike any picture he had ever seen in a shop-window. There were pictures everywhere, and none of them looked like chromos. Most of the people in the portraits were in fancy dress. Rumors of a New York millionaire ball had given him some vague idea of fancy dress. A lot of them looked like freaks. He caught glimpses of corridors lighted by curious, high, deep windows with leaded panes. It struck him that there was no end to the place, and that there must be rooms enough in it for a hotel.

"The tapestry chamber, of course, Burrill," he heard Mr. Palford say in a low tone.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Temple Barholm always used it."

A few yards farther on a door stood open, revealing an immense room, rich and gloomy with tapestry-covered walls and dark oak furniture. A bed which looked to Tembarom incredibly big, with its carved oak canopy and massive posts, had a presiding personality of its own. It

was mounted by steps, and its hangings and coverlid were of embossed velvet, time-softened to the perfection of purples and blues. A fire enriched the color of everything, and did its best to drive the shadows away. Deep windows opened either into the leafless boughs of close-growing trees or upon outspread spaces of heavily timbered park, where gaunt, though magnificent, bare branches menaced and defied. A slim, neat young man, with a rather pale face and a touch of anxiety in his expression, came forward at once.

"This is Pearson, who will valet you," exclaimed Mr. Palford.

"Thank you, sir," said Pearson in a low, respectful voice. His manner was correctness itself.

There seemed to Mr. Palford to be really nothing else to say. He wanted, in fact, to get to his own apartment and have a hot bath and a rest before dinner.

"Where am I, Burrill?" he inquired as he turned to go down the corridor.

"The crimson room, sir," answered Burrill, and he closed the door of the tapestry chamber and shut Tembarom in alone with Pearson.