

#### XLIV. REDBURN INTRODUCES MASTER HARRY BOLTON TO THE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION OF THE READER

It was the day following my Sunday stroll into the country, and when I had been in England four weeks or more, that I made the acquaintance of a handsome, accomplished, but unfortunate youth, young Harry Bolton. He was one of those small, but perfectly formed beings, with curling hair, and silken muscles, who seem to have been born in cocoons. His complexion was a mantling brunette, feminine as a girl's; his feet were small; his hands were white; and his eyes were large, black, and womanly; and, poetry aside, his voice was as the sound of a harp.

But where, among the tarry docks, and smoky sailor-lanes and by-ways of a seaport, did I, a battered Yankee boy, encounter this courtly youth?

Several evenings I had noticed him in our street of boarding-houses, standing in the doorways, and silently regarding the animated scenes without. His beauty, dress, and manner struck me as so out of place in such a street, that I could not possibly divine what had transplanted this delicate exotic from the conservatories of some Regent-street to the untidy potato-patches of Liverpool.

At last I suddenly encountered him at the sign of the Baltimore Clipper. He was speaking to one of my shipmates concerning America; and from something that dropped, I was led to imagine that he contemplated a

voyage to my country. Charmed with his appearance, and all eagerness to enjoy the society of this incontrovertible son of a gentleman--a kind of pleasure so long debarred me--I smoothed down the skirts of my jacket, and at once accosted him; declaring who I was, and that nothing would afford me greater delight than to be of the least service, in imparting any information concerning America that he needed.

He glanced from my face to my jacket, and from my jacket to my face, and at length, with a pleased but somewhat puzzled expression, begged me to accompany him on a walk.

We rambled about St. George's Pier until nearly midnight; but before we parted, with uncommon frankness, he told me many strange things respecting his history.

According to his own account, Harry Bolton was a native of Bury St. Edmunds, a borough of Suffolk, not very far from London, where he was early left an orphan, under the charge of an only aunt. Between his aunt and himself, his mother had divided her fortune; and young Harry thus fell heir to a portion of about five thousand pounds.

Being of a roving mind, as he approached his majority he grew restless of the retirement of a country place; especially as he had no profession or business of any kind to engage his attention.

In vain did Bury, with all its fine old monastic attractions, lure him

to abide on the beautiful banks of her Larke, and under the shadow of her stately and storied old Saxon tower.

By all my rare old historic associations, breathed Bury; by my Abbey-gate, that bears to this day the arms of Edward the Confessor; by my carved roof of the old church of St. Mary's, which escaped the low rage of the bigoted Puritans; by the royal ashes of Mary Tudor, that sleep in my midst; by my Norman ruins, and by all the old abbots of Bury, do not, oh Harry! abandon me. Where will you find shadier walks than under my lime-trees? where lovelier gardens than those within the old walls of my monastery, approached through my lordly Gate? Or if, oh Harry! indifferent to my historic mosses, and caring not for my annual verdure, thou must needs be lured by other tassels, and wouldst fain, like the Prodigal, squander thy patrimony, then, go not away from old Bury to do it. For here, on Angel-Hill, are my coffee and card-rooms, and billiard saloons, where you may lounge away your mornings, and empty your glass and your purse as you list.

In vain. Bury was no place for the adventurous Harry, who must needs hie to London, where in one winter, in the company of gambling sportsmen and dandies, he lost his last sovereign.

What now was to be done? His friends made interest for him in the requisite quarters, and Harry was soon embarked for Bombay, as a midshipman in the East India service; in which office he was known as a "guinea-pig," a humorous appellation then bestowed upon the middies of

the Company. And considering the perversity of his behavior, his delicate form, and soft complexion, and that gold guineas had been his bane, this appellation was not altogether, in poor Harry's case, inapplicable.

He made one voyage, and returned; another, and returned; and then threw up his warrant in disgust. A few weeks' dissipation in London, and again his purse was almost drained; when, like many prodigals, scorning to return home to his aunt, and amend--though she had often written him the kindest of letters to that effect--Harry resolved to precipitate himself upon the New World, and there carve out a fresh fortune. With this object in view, he packed his trunks, and took the first train for Liverpool. Arrived in that town, he at once betook himself to the docks, to examine the American shipping, when a new crotchet entered his brain, born of his old sea reminiscences. It was to assume duck browsers and tarpaulin, and gallantly cross the Atlantic as a sailor. There was a dash of romance in it; a taking abandonment; and scorn of fine coats, which exactly harmonized with his reckless contempt, at the time, for all past conventionalities.

Thus determined, he exchanged his trunk for a mahogany chest; sold some of his superfluities; and moved his quarters to the sign of the Gold Anchor in Union-street.

After making his acquaintance, and learning his intentions, I was all anxiety that Harry should accompany me home in the Highlander, a desire

to which he warmly responded.

Nor was I without strong hopes that he would succeed in an application to the captain; inasmuch as during our stay in the docks, three of our crew had left us, and their places would remain unsupplied till just upon the eve of our departure.

And here, it may as well be related, that owing to the heavy charges to which the American ships long staying in Liverpool are subjected, from the obligation to continue the wages of their seamen, when they have little or no work to employ them, and from the necessity of boarding them ashore, like lords, at their leisure, captains interested in the ownership of their vessels, are not at all indisposed to let their sailors abscond, if they please, and thus forfeit their money; for they well know that, when wanted, a new crew is easily to be procured, through the crimps of the port.

Though he spake English with fluency, and from his long service in the vessels of New York, was almost an American to behold, yet Captain Riga was in fact a Russian by birth, though this was a fact that he strove to conceal. And though extravagant in his personal expenses, and even indulging in luxurious habits, costly as Oriental dissipation, yet Captain Riga was a niggard to others; as, indeed, was evinced in the magnificent stipend of three dollars, with which he requited my own valuable services. Therefore, as it was agreed between Harry and me, that he should offer to ship as a "boy," at the same rate of

compensation with myself, I made no doubt that, incited by the cheapness of the bargain, Captain Riga would gladly close with him; and thus, instead of paying sixteen dollars a month to a thorough-going tar, who would consume all his rations, buy up my young blade of Bury, at the rate of half a dollar a week; with the cheering prospect, that by the end of the voyage, his fastidious palate would be the means of leaving a handsome balance of salt beef and pork in the harness-cask.

With part of the money obtained by the sale of a few of his velvet vests, Harry, by my advice, now rigged himself in a Guernsey frock and man-of-war browsers; and thus equipped, he made his appearance, one fine morning, on the quarterdeck of the Highlander, gallantly doffing his virgin tarpaulin before the redoubtable Riga.

No sooner were his wishes made known, than I perceived in the captain's face that same bland, benevolent, and bewitchingly merry expression, that had so charmed, but deceived me, when, with Mr. Jones, I had first accosted him in the cabin.

Alas, Harry! thought I,--as I stood upon the forecastle looking astern where they stood,--that "gallant, gay deceiver" shall not altogether cajole you, if Wellingborough can help it. Rather than that should be the case, indeed, I would forfeit the pleasure of your society across the Atlantic.

At this interesting interview the captain expressed a sympathetic

concern touching the sad necessities, which he took upon himself to presume must have driven Harry to sea; he confessed to a warm interest in his future welfare; and did not hesitate to declare that, in going to America, under such circumstances, to seek his fortune, he was acting a manly and spirited part; and that the voyage thither, as a sailor, would be an invigorating preparative to the landing upon a shore, where he must battle out his fortune with Fate.

He engaged him at once; but was sorry to say, that he could not provide him a home on board till the day previous to the sailing of the ship; and during the interval, he could not honor any drafts upon the strength of his wages.

However, glad enough to conclude the agreement upon any terms at all, my young blade of Bury expressed his satisfaction; and full of admiration at so urbane and gentlemanly a sea-captain, he came forward to receive my congratulations.

"Harry," said I, "be not deceived by the fascinating Riga--that gay Lothario of all inexperienced, sea-going youths, from the capital or the country; he has a Janus-face, Harry; and you will not know him when he gets you out of sight of land, and mounds his cast-off coats and browsers. For then he is another personage altogether, and adjusts his character to the shabbiness of his integuments. No more condolings and sympathy then; no more blarney; he will hold you a little better than his boots, and would no more think of addressing you than of invoking

wooden Donald, the figure-head on our bows."

And I further admonished my friend concerning our crew, particularly of the diabolical Jackson, and warned him to be cautious and wary. I told him, that unless he was somewhat accustomed to the rigging, and could furl a royal in a squall, he would be sure to subject himself to a sort of treatment from the sailors, in the last degree ignominious to any mortal who had ever crossed his legs under mahogany.

And I played the inquisitor, in cross-questioning Harry respecting the precise degree in which he was a practical sailor;--whether he had a giddy head; whether his arms could bear the weight of his body; whether, with but one hand on a shroud, a hundred feet aloft in a tempest, he felt he could look right to windward and beard it.

To all this, and much more, Harry rejoined with the most off-hand and confident air; saying that in his "guinea-pig" days, he had often climbed the masts and handled the sails in a gentlemanly and amateur way; so he made no doubt that he would very soon prove an expert tumbler in the Highlander's rigging.

His levity of manner, and sanguine assurance, coupled with the constant sight of his most unseamanlike person--more suited to the Queen's drawing-room than a ship's forecastle-bred many misgivings in my mind. But after all, every one in this world has his own fate intrusted to himself; and though we may warn, and forewarn, and give sage advice, and



indulge in many apprehensions touching our friends; yet our friends, for the most part, will "gang their ain gate;" and the most we can do is, to hope for the best. Still, I suggested to Harry, whether he had not best cross the sea as a steerage passenger, since he could procure enough money for that; but no, he was bent upon going as a sailor.

I now had a comrade in my afternoon strolls, and Sunday excursions; and as Harry was a generous fellow, he shared with me his purse and his heart. He sold off several more of his fine vests and browsers, his silver-keyed flute and enameled guitar; and a portion of the money thus furnished was pleasantly spent in refreshing ourselves at the road-side inns in the vicinity of the town.

Reclining side by side in some agreeable nook, we exchanged our experiences of the past. Harry enlarged upon the fascinations of a London Me; described the curricle he used to drive in Hyde Park; gave me the measurement of Madame Vestris' ankle; alluded to his first introduction at a club to the madcap Marquis of Waterford; told over the sums he had lost upon the turf on a Derby day; and made various but enigmatical allusions to a certain Lady Georgiana Theresa, the noble daughter of an anonymous earl.

Even in conversation, Harry was a prodigal; squandering his aristocratic narrations with a careless hand; and, perhaps, sometimes spending funds of reminiscences not his own.

As for me, I had only my poor old uncle the senator to fall back upon; and I used him upon all emergencies, like the knight in the game of chess; making him hop about, and stand stiffly up to the encounter, against all my fine comrade's array of dukes, lords, curricles, and countesses.

In these long talks of ours, I frequently expressed the earnest desire I cherished, to make a visit to London; and related how strongly tempted I had been one Sunday, to walk the whole way, without a penny in my pocket. To this, Harry rejoined, that nothing would delight him more, than to show me the capital; and he even meaningly but mysteriously hinted at the possibility of his doing so, before many days had passed. But this seemed so idle a thought, that I only imputed it to my friend's good-natured, rattling disposition, which sometimes prompted him to out with any thing, that he thought would be agreeable. Besides, would this fine blade of Bury be seen, by his aristocratic acquaintances, walking down Oxford-street, say, arm in arm with the sleeve of my shooting-jacket? The thing was preposterous; and I began to think, that Harry, after all, was a little bit disposed to impose upon my Yankee credulity.

Luckily, my Bury blade had no acquaintance in Liverpool, where, indeed, he was as much in a foreign land, as if he were already on the shores of Lake Erie; so that he strolled about with me in perfect abandonment; reckless of the cut of my shooting-jacket; and not caring one whit who might stare at so singular a couple.

But once, crossing a square, faced on one side by a fashionable hotel, he made a rapid turn with me round a corner; and never stopped, till the square was a good block in our rear. The cause of this sudden retreat, was a remarkably elegant coat and pantaloons, standing upright on the hotel steps, and containing a young buck, tapping his teeth with an ivory-headed riding-whip.

"Who was he, Harry?" said I.

"My old chum, Lord Lovely," said Harry, with a careless air, "and Heaven only knows what brings Lovely from London."

"A lord?" said I starting; "then I must look at him again;" for lords are very scarce in Liverpool.

Unmindful of my companion's remonstrances, I ran back to the corner; and slowly promenaded past the upright coat and pantaloons on the steps.

It was not much of a lord to behold; very thin and limber about the legs, with small feet like a doll's, and a small, glossy head like a seal's. I had seen just such looking lords standing in sentimental attitudes in front of Palmo's in Broadway.

However, he and I being mutual friends of Harry's, I thought something of accosting him, and taking counsel concerning what was best to be done

for the young prodigal's welfare; but upon second thoughts I thought best not to intrude; especially, as just then my lord Lovely stepped to the open window of a flashing carriage which drew up; and throwing himself into an interesting posture, with the sole of one boot vertically exposed, so as to show the stamp on it--a coronet--fell into a sparkling conversation with a magnificent white satin hat, surmounted by a regal marabou feather, inside.

I doubted not, this lady was nothing short of a peeress; and thought it would be one of the pleasantest and most charming things in the world, just to seat myself beside her, and order the coachman to take us a drive into the country.

But, as upon further consideration, I imagined that the peeress might decline the honor of my company, since I had no formal card of introduction; I marched on, and rejoined my companion, whom I at once endeavored to draw out, touching Lord Lovely; but he only made mysterious answers; and turned off the conversation, by allusions to his visits to Ickworth in Suffolk, the magnificent seat of the Most Noble Marquis of Bristol, who had repeatedly assured Harry that he might consider Ickworth his home.

Now, all these accounts of marquises and Ickworths, and Harry's having been hand in glove with so many lords and ladies, began to breed some suspicions concerning the rigid morality of my friend, as a teller of the truth. But, after all, thought I to myself, who can prove that Harry

has fibbed? Certainly, his manners are polished, he has a mighty easy address; and there is nothing altogether impossible about his having consorted with the master of Ickworth, and the daughter of the anonymous earl. And what right has a poor Yankee, like me, to insinuate the slightest suspicion against what he says? What little money he has, he spends freely; he can not be a polite blackleg, for I am no pigeon to pluck; so that is out of the question;--perish such a thought, concerning my own bosom friend!

But though I drowned all my suspicions as well as I could, and ever cherished toward Harry a heart, loving and true; yet, spite of all this, I never could entirely digest some of his imperial reminiscences of high life. I was very sorry for this; as at times it made me feel ill at ease in his company; and made me hold back my whole soul from him; when, in its loneliness, it was yearning to throw itself into the unbounded bosom of some immaculate friend.