

STOUT'S CLOTHING HOUSE

Come and See!!!

What you get for your money, it depends upon where you go. You can buy of a dealer who is in a position to give you clothes possessing some tone and character, or you can go where all clothes look alike. When you buy a H. S. & M. or Kuppenheimer your clothes are good fitting, good style, and wear guaranteed.

Hart, Schaffner & Marx
Tailor Made Clothes



THE LADY GWENDOLEN

By ROBERT BARR.

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Let wealth, let commerce and let learning die, but leave to us our old ballad-tale.

It words to that effect by unknown poet.

The Earl of Stobross was old, but not old in the way that you would expect. He was also proud and went about with his chin in the air. Earls can always be recognized by the altitude of their chins. An American visitor to England once expressed his regret to me that the nobles of the British Isles did not go back with large printed labels on their backs telling who they were, so that a stranger would not be compelled to follow the example of Theodore Hook, who, meeting a distinguished looking man on the Strand, went up to him and inquired if he was anybody in particular. The American plaintively said, when I remarked that the nobility might object to being labeled, that it would merely be reverting to an old custom which had been allowed to fall into disuse. In ancient times the swells carried their labels on their shields, drawing pictures thereon, because, as a general rule, they were not able to write. Then, when you met a knight out in London, all you had to do was to consult your illustrated catalogue of the titled families—for the year 1492, for instance—when you spotted your man at once and knew whether it was better to take to a side street or not. As a rule, if you had any valuables about you it was safer to make a hasty move elsewhere. He suggested that if the house of lords would consent to wear large numbers on their manly bosoms, and if some publisher would issue a numbered catalogue for sale, to be sold at all respectable bookstalls, the arrangement would be a great convenience to the tourist.

A plain knight wears his chin at a certain angle, easily ascertainable by a man who mixes in good society. A baronet holds his three degrees higher, an earl five degrees higher than the baronet, a duke is eight or ten degrees elevated than an earl, and thus comes our phrase, "As drunk (i. e., as elevated) as a lord." My American friend thanked me cordially for my information, and getting some further instructions on angles, acute and obtuse, he went forth on the streets to test his newly acquired knowledge, all of which brought me back to where I started, that the Earl of Stobross held his chin so high in the air that those who passed might as well be blind. Captions readers may say, how then, could a duke hold his head higher? To explain the matter I must refer to the history of the earl. While most of our dukes' ancestors came over with William the Conqueror, the first earl of Stobross was dropped off from these islands by Noah as the ark was passing the peak of Skiddaw. The archives in Stobross castle inform us that, although Noah looked the first earl for a long time, the ancient mariner could not put up with the earl's pretensions, who insisted on sitting at the head of the table, while Noah held that this chair was the captain's place. His lordship grumbled so much about the food and complained so bitterly that there was no smoking room on the boat that Noah was glad to get rid of him, and when the marooned earl threatened him for breach of contract, Noah replied that he had his remedy at the law courts. When the waters subsided, the earl went down the hill and seized all the land he could get his hands (or feet) on and so founded Stobross Manor. He brought suit against Noah, but Noah's lawyer had sailed out of the jurisdiction of the courts. The monk who wrote the Stobross chronicles ventures a small pun at this point, spelling the word "law-reduction," and explaining thus the anti-Semitic attitude of the Stobross family. Whether the first earl hated the Jews or not, the seventeenth earl had a great liking for them, mortgaged the manor to them and blew in the money resulting therefrom with carelessness and dispatch. Having nothing else to blow in, he blew out his—well, the coroner's jury said it was his brains, but those who knew the seventeenth earl maintained that he had blown so there is a historical discrepancy somewhere, probably in the earl's head.

Be that as it may, the Stobross family has been poor and mortgaged up to the hilt ever since, but their pride never lessened in the slightest degree, which brings this biographical resume to the middle of the week before last and to Archibald, forty-third earl of Stobross, and his only daughter, the Lady Gwendolen.

Difficult as it would be for us to learn to love the forty-third earl of Stobross, even if I were content to veil the truth and say he was an amiable man, which I steadfastly refuse to do, the case of Lady Gwendolen calls forth our sympathy. The earl being poor, the neighboring nobles would not look at her, but were all over in the United States with lists of railway owners and pork millionaires in their pockets, seeking the eligible daughters of the aristocracy. The earl being proud, Lady Gwendolen was not allowed to receive the addresses of any of the rich tradesmen's sons in the neighborhood, even though the earl's grocery bills had not been paid for years and years. Now, if he paid for a plain instead of a plain statement of actual fact I would have the truest butcher of the neighborhood demand the hand of Gwendolen for his son or the instant liquidation of the meat bill. This would go well on the stage, and I can hear the deep, heavy tones of the butcher threatening to put the engine nother threatening to court and the balliffs into Stobross castle, finishing up with a peroration which would capture the gallery to the effect that—

A hundred unpaid mutton legs are worth a thousand castles.

In these circumstances the life of Lady Gwendolen was not an enviable one, and so she took to bicycling. She got a machine on the installment plan, and when the installments went for long unliquidated and the agent saw how unwillingly took the wheel away for non-payment, as was agreed, the Lady Gwendolen got another somewhere else, the maker printing in his catalogue, "Patrolized by the Earl of Stobross and others of the nobility." Great are the blessings of the credit system when you know how to work it.

At first she cycled on the smooth roads of the home park round Stobross castle. Then, as she became more expert, she took to the delightfully leafy lanes of the country, and of course when she was $\frac{3}{4}$ miles from

home she punctured the tire of the hind wheel and sat disconsolate on a mossy bank, not knowing where to go with it. There was a repair kit along, but she knew nothing of its use, thinking it had been put there to balance the wheel or something of that sort.

At this juncture, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say at this juncture, there happened along a nice young man who also rode a wheel. He sprang off on seeing a maiden in distress and asked politely if he could be of any assistance. He could, and he was. The girl sat there and admired his deft handling of a tire that had unexpectedly gone as limp as a rag.

"There," said the young man cheerfully. "It is all right now, my lady."

"You know who I am," said the girl, flushing slightly.

"Yes, my lady, but it is not likely that you recognize me may I have the pleasure of introducing myself?"

"These board schools in England do enable a young man to express himself beautifully. Pretty soon there will be no more dialect stories written, for which merely let us be truly thankful."

"I should be pleased to have you do so," replied Lady Gwendolen, with dignity. "I may know to whom I am under obligation."

"There is no obligation, my lady. It was a delight to serve you. I am John A. Biggs, son of the blacksmith in Puddlebury Gosses, the village under the shadow of Stobross castle, as one might say, although it is five miles away. We do cycle repairing, and if anything ever goes wrong with your wheel we will put it right as cheaply as any other reliable house in the trade."

"Cheapness has no attraction for my father," said Lady Gwendolen, with some of the hauteur of the gentleman she had mentioned. "We have never been in the custom of haggling about price."

The young man bowed and was silent. He was well aware of the earl's financial principles.

The two rode together along the lane toward the castle and chatted in the most amiable manner of the various cycles of different machines, and when they parted at last the girl impulsively held out her hand, and if he kept it in his own a little longer than was strictly necessary who shall blame him? Not I, for one. I've done it myself. He made bold to ask her if she was accustomed to cycle often in that lane, and she answered in a low voice that she was.

But what is the use of my dwelling on these details? I know the reader has already fathomed my shallow plot. The only one who has not to write, and that has been written over and over and over again. Still I am encouraged to proceed because I am dealing with fact and not with fiction. This is a plain, unadorned record of actual events.

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met the Lady Gwendolen in the summer house old Trevellick was listening outside? I think not; yet, fearing there may be any misapprehension, I will state it and add that he had his ear at a knothole. He heard every palpitating word, for the two, having no suspicion, did not speak in whispers. Little do young people know of the meanness of this world.

"Don't you think we might try it on a tandem?" asked Lady Gwendolen sweetly.

"No, no," said young Biggs eagerly. "I think we should have two bicycles. Then in case of pursuit we could go down different roads and thus bewilder those who follow. We could meet at the market cross in Puddlebury and go together to the place of appointment."

"Yes; I suppose that would be the best plan," sighed the girl, "although I dislike riding alone in the dark."

"I don't suppose it will be necessary for us to separate on the road. I am merely speaking of what had best be done should our plans be discovered, a not unlikely eventuality, but a few minutes' talk has not the slightest suspicion and may not miss you until it is too late for him to do anything."

Old Peter chuckled offensively and silently as he heard this.

"How thoughtful you are! Will it take long, or do we reach there?"

"Only a few minutes."

"And to think that an action fraught with such consequences, an action which changes the whole course of two lives, can hardly believe that we are so near to the realization of our fondest hopes. When shall I meet you?"

"I shall be in the lane with two bicycles at three hours after midnight. The best time, unless there is pursuit and should reach Puddlebury about daylight. I hope you will have no difficulty in getting away from the castle unseen."

"Where will be no trouble about that. At 3 o'clock, then?"

Thus they parted, and Gwendolen sought her own room. Had she any qualms about leaving it thus surreptitiously? I'm sure I don't know. I am content to keep strictly to the facts within my own recollection.

I am, however, delighted to be able to state that here the villain met his first difficulty. The proud earl was not at home. The county court was held at the castle, at Scardlington, ten miles westward from the castle, while Puddlebury was 20 miles to the east, and the earl always attended the county court, being usually summoned to do so. He was a punctilious observer of the law, and he would never flout a writ. Old Peter therefore had his work cut out for him. He mounted a horse and galloped for the earl. It was long after midnight when Peter reached the castle, and when he saw that there was much delay in finding his lordship and in convincing him that his daughter had actually eloped with the son of a blacksmith. No Stobross since the days of Noah had ever so demeaned herself, the earl maintained. He saw that if this were indeed true he could not in future keep his chin so high in the air, and as he had become accustomed to it in that position he hated to change. He was a very conservative anyhow and had always hated change, never having any of it in his pocket. At last, however, he rode grumblingly to his castle and arrived there about daylight, fully expecting to find Gwend