

THE MASTER OF MAN :-: By Sir Hall Caine

An Outspoken and Moving Study of a Deep Sex Problem by the Noted Author of "The Manxman," "The Deemster," "The Eternal City," "The Woman Thou Gavest Me," Etc.

VICTOR STOWELL, is handsome, of fine nature, the son of a family of distinction on the Isle of Man, where his father is Deemster, or chief judge. Curiously enough, he enters the stage of this powerful romance of his and its consequences that makes him the man to sit in sentences on the women, who is tried for their mutual transgression, as a voluntary accomplice to save her good name from the result of a girlish escapade. *Bessie Collier*, a peasant girl, is crude, but good-looking in a coarse-grained way. Little *Dee* Stowell thinks, when he takes the blame of seducing her with her outside school hours and school bounds to save her from her brutal stepfather and to save his own, who has really been guilty, from punishment, that *Bessie's* erring, which starts so young, is to affect directly his own happiness and his future great love for beautiful and greathearted *Penella Stanley*. The principal of the school asks the boy who had been guilty of this breach of discipline and maybe of morals to rise and confess. Praising his friend, *Alick Gell*, Victor is unwillingly struck by the principal, who, discovering the truth later, remorsefully writes to the Deemster to take his son home or himself for shame must resign his principality. And here the story continues—

CHAPTER II
The Boyhood of Victor Stowell
DEEMSTER STOWELL was the only surviving member of an old Manx family. They had lived for years beyond memory at Ballamoar (the Great Place), an estate of nearly a thousand acres on the seaward angle of the Curragh lands which lie along the northwest of the island. The fishermen say the great Gulf Stream which sweeps across the Atlantic strikes the Manx coast at that elbow. Hence the tropical plants which grow in the open at Ballamoar, and also the clouds of snow-white mist which too often hang over it, hiding the house and the lands around, and making the tower of *St. John's Church* on the edge of the cliff look like a lighthouse far out at sea.

The mansion house, in the Deemster's day, was a rambling place which bore signs of having been altered and added to by many generations of his family. It stood back to the sea and facing a broad and undulating lawn, which was bordered by lofty elms that were inhabited by undisturbed colonies of rooks. From a terrace behind, opening out of the dining room, there was a far view on clear days of the Mull of Gallinore to the north, and of the *Morne Mountains* to the west. People used to say—

"The Stowells have caught a smatch of the Irish and the Scotch in their Manx blood."
The Deemster was sixty years of age at that time. A large, spare man with a slight Jewish white head, he had a shaven face, powerful yet melancholy eyes, bold yet sensitive features and long yet delicate hands—a strong, silent, dignified, rather somber personality. He was a man of the highest integrity. Occupying an office too often associated, in his time, with various forms of corruption, the breath of scandal never touched him. He was a legislator, as well as a judge, being ex officio a member of the little Manx Parliament, but in his double capacity (so liable to nobody with a doubtful scheme would have dared to approach him.)

"What does the old Deemster say?"—the answer to that question often settled a dispute, for nobody thought of appealing against his judgment.
"Justice is the strongest and most merited thing on earth"—that was his motto, and he lived up to it.

His private life had been saddened by a great sorrow. He married, rather late in life, a young Englishwoman, out of Cumberland—a gentle creature with a kind of moonlight beauty. She died four or five years afterward and the Manx people knew little about her. To the last they called her "the Stranger."
The Deemster bore his loss in characteristic silence. Nobody intruded on his sorrow, or even entered his house, but on the day of the funeral half "the north" lined the long grass-grown road from the back gates of Ballamoar to the little wind-swept churchyard over against the sea. He thanked none of them and saluted none, but his head was low as his coach passed through.

Next day he took his Court as usual, and from that day onward nobody saw any difference in him. But long afterward, Janet Curphey, the lady housekeeper at Ballamoar, was heard to say in the village postoffice, which was also the grocer's shop, that every morning after breakfast the Deemster had put a vase of fresh-cut flowers on the writing-desk in his library under his young wife's portrait, until it was now a white-haired man who was making his daily offering to the picture of a young woman.

"Aw, yes, Mrs. Clucas, yes! And what did it matter to the woman to be that a stranger when she was loved like that?"
The "Stranger" had left a child, and this had been at once the tragedy and the triumph of her existence. Although an ancient family of exceptional longevity the Stowells had carried on their race by a very thin line. One child, rarely two, never three, and only one son at any time—that had been all that had stood from generation to the generation between the family name and extinction. After three years of childlessness the Deemster's wife had realized the peril, and, for her husband's sake, began to pray for a son. With all her soul she prayed for him. The fervor of his prayers made her a devoutly religious woman. When her husband, like a certainty her joy was that of an angel rejoicing in the goodness and greatness and glory of God. But by that time the sword had almost worn out its scabbard. She had fought great fight and under the fire of her spirit her body had begun to fall.

The Deemster had sent for famous physicians and some of them had shaken their heads.
"She may get through it; but we must take care, your Honor; we must take care."
Beneath his calm exterior the Deemster had been torn by the real strife of conflicting hopes, but his wife had only one desire. When her dread hour came she met it with her head bowed and her hands clasped in prayer. Her son was born and he was to live, but she was dying. At the last moment she asked for her husband, and drew his head down to her, and she said—

"Call him Victor," she said—she had thought.
It was then that the lady housekeeper took service at Ballamoar. *Janet Curphey* was the last relic of the old Manx family that had fallen off every time and having lost all she had come to the slave-like devotion to the Deemster (during her first twenty years she would never allow anybody else to wait on him at table) as well as a motherly love for his motherless child. The child called her his mother, nobody could guess him, and for years he knew nothing to the contrary.
He grew to be a brave and bright little man, and was idolized by his mother. Having no relations of his own, except "mother," and the Deemster, he was the darling of the household. The Deemster, the housekeeper of the Ballamoar mansion, and a farm between the manor-



His face had fallen after he read the first page and it was the same as if the sun was setting on the man.

Corlett's cottage returned to its former condition as a closed-up gate lodge. When Derry trotted by Molly's side there was apparently somebody else astride of her now. But—strange whispering of sex—whatever she was the boy never helped her to mount, and when she dismounted he always looked another way.

Four years passed, and the boy and girl met again. This time it was at Government House, and the boy was on the other leg. *Penella*, a tall girl for her age, well-grown, spirited, a little spoiled, was playing tennis with the three young Gell girls—daughters of a Manx family of some pretensions. When Victor, in his straw hat and Eton jacket, appeared in the tennis court (having driven over with his father and been sent out to fetch the Governor) the French governess told *Penella* to let him join in the game. She did so, taking a racket from one of the Gell girls and giving it to the boy. But though Victor was now old at the Ramsey Grammar School, could play cricket and football with any boy in the island, he knew nothing about tennis, and again and again, in spite of repeated protests, sent the balls flying out of the court.

The Gells tittered and smiled, and at length *Penella*, calling him a booby, snatched the racket out of his hand and gave it back to the girl. At this humiliation his eyes flashed and his cheeks colored, and after a moment he checked moodily back to the open window of the drawing room. There the Governor and the Deemster were sitting, and the Governor said—
"Hello! What's a matter? Why aren't you playing with the girls?"
"Because I'm not," said the boy.
"Victor!" said the Deemster, but the boy's eyes began to fill, so the matter ended.

There was a show of peace when the girl came in to tea, but on returning to Ballamoar the boy communicated to Janet in "open court" his settled conviction that "girls were no good any way."

Boy and girl did not meet again for yet another four years and then the boat had changed its leg once more. By that time Victor was with *Alick Gell*, brother of the three Gell girls and only son of *Archibald Gell*, a big man in and out of the House of the House of Keys, the representative branch of the Manx Parliament. *Archibald Gell's* lands, which were considerable, made boundary with the Deemster's in the Ramsey road, but his principal activities were those of a speculative builder. In this capacity he had put up over the island to meet the needs of the visiting industry, borrowing from English insurance companies enormous sums on mortgage, which he could only be repaid by the thrift and foresight of a second generation.

Alick knew what was expected of him, but down to date he had shown no promise of capacity to fulfill his destiny. He had less of his father's fiery energy than of the comfortable contentment of his mother, who came of a line of Manx parsons, always shocking in dress, generally thrifless in habits, and sometimes thraudars. Yet he was a lovely boy, not too bright of brain, but with a heart of gold and a genuine gift of friendship.
At the Ramsey Grammar School he had attached himself to Victor, fetching and carrying for him, and looking up to him with worshipful devotion. Now they were together at King William's College, the public school of the island, fine lads both, but neither of them doing much good there.

It was the morning of the annual prize day at the end of the summer term. The Governor had come to present the prizes, and he was surrounded by all the officials of man, except the Deemster, who rarely attended such functions. The boys were on platforms on either side of the hall, and the parents were in the body of it, with the wives and sisters of the big people in the front row, and *Penella*, the Governor's daughter, now a tall girl in white, with her French governess, in the midst of them.
At this ceremony *Gell* played no part, and even Stowell did not shine. One boy after another went down to a tumb of handclapping and climbed back with books piled up to his chin. When it was a turn for the principal, who had been calling out the names of the prize-winners, and making little speeches in their praise, tried to improve the occasion with a moral homily.
"Now here," he said, making one of his birdlike steps forward, "is a boy of extraordinary talent—quite extraordinary. Yet he has only one prize to receive. Why? Want of application! If boys of such great natural gifts were not so I might almost say genius, would only apply themselves, there is nothing whatever, when they are sitting at school, or in after life."
Phew!—the astonishing speech Stowell was already on the list-

notice of the Governor's winsome daughter than if she had been a crow.
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After that—nothing! Neither of the boys distinguished himself at college. This was a matter of no surprise to the masters in *Gell's* case, but in Stowell's it was a perpetual problem.

Their favorite solution was that the David-and-Jonathan friendship between two boys of widely differing capacity was at the root of the trouble—*Gell* being slow and Stowell unwilling to shame him.

As year followed year without tangible results the rumor came home to Ballamoar that the son of the Deemster was not fulfilling expectations. "Yvan de looar" (time enough), said *Robbie Crear*, of the farm; but *Ian Baldromms*, of the mill farm in the Glen, who prided himself on being no respecter of persons, and made speeches in the market-places denouncing the "aristocrats" of the island, and predicting the downfall of the old order, was heard to say he wasn't sorry.

"If these young cubs of the Spaker and the Dempster," said Dan, "hadn't been born with the silver spoon in their mouths, we should be hearing another story. When you see a bird with its wings pushed out of the nest, I say, it's what I done with my own daughter—my wife's, I mane. Inmagine she was fitted to pack her own to market at the High at Castletown, and now she may shift for herself for me."

The effect on the two fathers was hardly less conflicting. The Speaker, stumped at his son's called him a "bum-skull and expressed great wonderment why he had troubled to bring a lad into the world who would only scatter his substance and talked about making a new will to protect his daughter and to save the real estate which the law gave his son by beirship.

The Deemster was silent. Term by term he read, without comment, the principal's unfavorable reports, with the "ifs" and "buts" and "althoughs," which were intended to soften the hard facts with indications of what might have been, but when he read and said of remonstrance or reproach when the boy came home without prizes, though he wrote in his leather-bound book that he felt sometimes as if he could have given the weight in gold for the least of them.

At seventeen and a half Stowell became head of the school, not so much by scholastic attainment as by sententiousness in games and by influence over the boys. But even in this capacity he had serious shortcomings. *Gell* had by this time developed a supernatural gift of getting into scrapes, and Stowell, an eager boy, partly responsible for his conduct, often allowed himself to become his scapegoat.

Then the rumor came home that Victor was not only a waster but a wastrel. Janet wouldn't believe a word of it, "deed she wouldn't," and "Auntie Kitty" said the boy was the son of the Deemster, and she had never yet seen a good cook with a bad calf. But *Dan Baldromms* was of another opinion.
"The Deemster may be a grand man," said Dan, "but save him right, I say. Spake and Stowell, an eager boy, would be the man on this island will say I ever done that with my own child—my wife's, I mane."

Finally came a report of the incident on the Darby-Haven road. *John Caesar*, a "lump" of a lad, son of *Quallrough*, the butcher (a respectable man and a member of the Keys), had given *Bessie* a good thrashing while doing his best to protect a young nurse girl from the unworthy attentions of a college boy. The culprit was Victor Stowell, and the father, who had been deputed to handle his prosecution with the utmost rigor of the law. But out of respect for the Deemster and regard for the

school he was not to be arrested on condition that he was to be expelled. For three days this circumstantial story was on everybody's lips, yet the Deemster never heard it. But he was one of those who learn ill tidings without being told, and his misadventures before they happen, so when the principal's letter came he showed no surprise.

Janet saw him coming downstairs dressed for dinner (he had dressed for dinner during his married days and kept up the habit ever afterward, though he nearly always dined alone), just as old *Willie Killip*, the postman, with his red lantern at his belt, came through the open porch to the vestibule door. Taking his letter and going into the library, he had stood by the writing desk under the "Stranger's" picture while he opened the envelope and looked at the contents of it. His face had fallen after he read the first page, and it was the same as if the sun was setting on the man, but when he turned the second it had lightened, and it was just as if the day was dawning on him. Then, without a moment's hesitation, he sat at the desk and wrote a letter for old *Willie* to take back to the principal at King William's. There was only one line in it: "Send him home—Stowell."
After that—*Janet* was read to on the Holy Book to it—she never looked up into the "Stranger's" and said in a low voice that was that of a prayer: "It's all right, Inobel—it is well."
To be continued tomorrow.
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