

# **A MILLIONAIRE'S LOVE STORY**

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A Millionaire's Love Story by Guy Boothby

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LOVE STORY**



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BY  
GUY BOOTHBY

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"Dr. Nikola," "The Strangest Case," "A Cabinet Secret,"  
"The Mystery of the Clapsed Hands,"  
Etc.



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## A MILLIONAIRE'S LOVE STORY.

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### CHAPTER I.

A CERTAIN paradoxical wit once remarked that George Kilvert was a man very much to be pitied, for the reason that he was too wealthy ever to experience the peculiar delight of wasting a sovereign. Doubtless there are people in the world who would assure you that it would be impossible to be overburdened with riches; this argument, however, will serve to show you how little they realize the thralldom that encircles a millionaire. Kilvert was wont pathetically to declare that his father, otherwise an entirely unromantic man, had chanced to acquire a liking for the romance of money-making, and for this reason had been unable to leave off when he had accumulated his fair proportion of the world's wealth. What pleasure this amassing of money gave him no one was able to tell, for a more unostentatious individual than he could scarcely have been discovered on the face of the habitable globe. He wore the shabbiest of clothes; when he traveled

## 6 A Millionaire's Love Story.

he invariably patronized the third class, for the reason that there was no fourth; he lived the simplest of lives by preference, drank nothing stronger than coffee, and preferred Yorkshire pudding to the finest confection, that was ever placed upon a table. To the day of his death he never once entered the doors of a theater, not because he did not approve of the drama, but because he failed to see the advantage of spending his money on an amusement which was only an amusement, and which, so he was given to understand, offered nothing in return but mere words and a transient emotion. And yet he was far from being a mean man. He gave liberally to such people and things as he deemed worthy, never failed to help a friend in his hour of trouble, or permitted an obligation to pass unrewarded. He looked upon life as life looked upon him, and, paradoxical though it may seem, gradually built up for himself a name for niggardliness and generosity, for thrift, and, as you shall presently see, for the most reckless gambling, for bigotry, and also for the most supreme disregard of the conventionalities of life. It only remains for me to cite one of the greatest cases in point. And since it vitally concerns his character, and the story I have to tell, it may not be found altogether lacking in interest.

On one memorable occasion Mr. Kilvert's



health was somewhat run down, and he was ordered to the seaside for a fortnight. After much deliberation he saw the force of the medico's argument, and departed to the village of Beachcombe-on-Sea, a tiny hamlet on the Sussex coast. Let it not be supposed, however, that he comported himself there like other men on a holiday. That was not his way. His first afternoon was spent in trying to convince himself that complete rest and absence from business could not fail to be delightful. On the second day he began to feel restless and to prowl about the village, noting, with an eye ever on the lookout for such matters, the various opportunities it presented for speculation. As every one must admit who knew it in those almost forgotten pre-bicycle, pre-motor car days, it was a charming little place, a world unto itself, and unknown save to the more adventurous tourist. The nearest railway station at that time was five miles distant, while the only sort of conveyance that formed a connecting link with the outside world was the fly from the inn and the antiquated, four-miles-an-hour carrier's cart. There was no pier, there were no bathing-machines, and, so far as shipping was concerned, only a few humble fishing-boats. The one inn of the place was scarcely larger than a beershop, the majority of the dwellings were small cottages inhabited by the

## 8 A Millionaire's Love Story.

fisher-folk ; yet the air was excellent, bracing and pure beyond compare ; the sands were exactly fitted to the requirements of children ; and there was abundant facility, matters having once been arranged, for an excellent cross-Channel service to France.

On the third day after his arrival Mr. Kilvert stood on the shore with his back to the sea, and took stock of the prospects of the place. Some calculations on the sand made with the ferrule of his walking-stick followed ; after which he produced pencil and paper and made a few careful notes. Half an hour later he had discovered the name and address of the largest landed proprietor in the district, and had returned to his lodgings to commence operations. A fortnight afterwards it was known to such of the rustics as took any interest in Public Affairs, that the greater portion of the village had changed hands. Within a month an army of Architects and Surveyors had put in an appearance, and had quartered themselves and their men upon the inhabitants, much to the benefit of trade. Within six months of Kilvert's cogitations on the sands, half a hundred new streets had been planned, and villa residences were already in course of erection. Rumors were rife concerning a gigantic hotel, a pier, and an esplanade ; while one spirit, bolder than the rest, declared that mention had been made of a gasworks and a railway station.

From a fortnight Mr. Kilvert's holiday, for so he persisted in calling it, spread into a month, then into another. After that he made journeys to the place regularly once a fortnight. Never in his life had he enjoyed himself so much. While at Beachcombe he scarcely allowed himself breathing-space, from the time he rose in the morning until he went to bed again at night. Most of his meals were eaten standing up at a side-board, the table being unapproachable by reason of the mountain of papers and plans it supported. Then the metamorphosis commenced. The first sod of the railway was turned on young George's fifth birthday, and the foundation-stone of the pier was laid on his father's forty-fifth. Any one who had seen the place before would scarcely have recognized it after five years, and would not have known it at all after ten. An enormous hotel, with half a dozen smaller ones, all built upon the latest plans, looked out, across a wide esplanade, upon the sea. The bay was surrounded by a crescent of attractive villas. A uniformed band played twice daily upon the noble pier, upon which was to be seen, moreover, a glass concert pavilion. Children in hundreds thronged the beach, the streets contained many fine shops, and, more wonderful than anything in the eyes of the old inhabitants, there was a spic-and-span railway sta-