

NO ALUM

MAGIC BAKING POWDER

MADE IN CANADA

Stella Mordant:

The Cruise of the "Kingfisher."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"I suppose you've heard the news, Bulpit?"

"Yes, my lord, and I offer you my congratulations," said the old lawyer with, as Ralph fancied, an emphasis on the "you." "I have known Lady Mary since she was a child, and—"

He paused and took snuff energetically.

"Thanks; very kind!" drawled Ralph. "I want you to draw up the marriage settlement. What ought I to settle on my wife, now?"

"Five thousand a year," replied Mr. Bulpit, quietly.

He had, since reading the announcement in the paper, been considering the matter.

Ralph looked rather blank.

"Oh!" he said, grimly.

Mr. Bulpit eyed him gravely and critically.

"You would like to make it more?" he said, suavely. "Very natural, considering your income, my lord."

"Oh, no," rejoined Ralph, hastily. "That will do." Now that he had secured Mary he was not anxious to pay too long a price for his possession. "Get the thing prepared as quickly as possible; we are going to be married in a month."

Mr. Bulpit frowned as he inclined his head.

"So soon?" he said.

Ralph coloured.

"Why not? Why the devil should we wait?" he retorted.

"I know of no reason, my lord," replied Mr. Bulpit. "There will be no difficulty in arranging the settlement. We have the proceeds of the sale of the New Golconda deposited in the bank and can realize on some of the consols. You did those shares just in time, my lord."

Ralph nodded and laughed shortly as he thought of the clever stroke

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of business by which he had made a large sum of money and secured Mary.

"Yes, the other poor beggar who held on must have been let in."

Mr. Bulpit assented.

"Lord Hatherley was very desirous of dabbling in them, I believe; but I dissuaded him. Oh, by the way, my lord, a man named Workley, has been here this morning. He applied for the Cross Tree Farm, which becomes vacant at Lady Day. He offered considerably less rent than the last tenant, but assured me that you would accept it."

Ralph, in the flush of his success, had almost forgotten Workley. He coloured, and flicked his leg with his riding-whip.

"Oh, did he?" he said, with assumed calmness. "I'll think it over."

"You know him—know that he is a responsible man?" said Mr. Bulpit.

"I think that he has only been in the neighbourhood a short time."

"Oh, yes, he's all right," said Ralph, casually. "I'll think it over."

He left the office with much less of a swagger than he had entered it, and as he rode home the nasty twist of his lip was very noticeable. His face grew blacker as the butler met him in the hall and informed him that "a person by the name of Workley" wished to see him.

"I told him that your lordship's return was uncertain; but he insisted upon waiting; he is in the library, my lord."

Ralph strode quickly into the room and found Mr. Workley seated in Ralph's particular chair, with his legs over one arm, and one of Ralph's big and black cigars between his lips.

Ralph, pale with fury, stared at him haughtily; but Mr. Workley, though he slung his legs into an ordinary position, did not rise.

"Good-morning, my lord," he said, pleasantly, his small bird-like eyes meeting Ralph's furious ones coolly.

"You make yourself at home, Mr. Workley!" said Ralph, sarcastically, and with an angry glance at the cigar-box on the table.

"Not knowing how long I should have to wait, I took the liberty of helping myself to a cigar," said Workley, "and a very fine cigar it is; full flavoured but soft in the mouth. It's a good brand, wherever you got it, my lord."

"I'm delighted to hear that my tobacco meets with your approval," said Ralph, hardly able to contain himself. "And now, perhaps, you'll be good enough to explain your business."

"Certainly, my lord. I've come up to congratulate you on your engagement."

"Thanks! But—"

"And on a little matter of business of my own. I want the Cross Tree Farm, my lord."

"Oh, is that all?" said Ralph. "You are sure you don't want the Hall?"

"This bit of furious sarcasm seemed to pass over Mr. Workley as water off a duck's back.

"No, no," he responded, with a laugh. "I'm not so greedy, my lord. I shouldn't know what to do with it, if I had it; no, that little farm will content a humble individual like me."

"What do you want with it?" asked Ralph. "Mr. Bulpit tells me you have already been to him, and that you offered him a lower rent."

"Yes; that was a mistake," said Mr. Workley, coolly. "I needn't have done that, for I know you are too good a sort to insist upon an old pal of your father's paying any rent at all."

Ralph eyed him savagely.

"Look here, Mr. Workley," he said in a thick voice, "this is the second time you've attempted to blackmail me. The first time I gave you something from sheer good nature; but now—why the devil should I let you one of the farms—and rent free, too?" he broke off.

Mr. Workley selected a fresh cigar, and while he lit it he fixed his small, twinkling eyes upon Ralph's crimson face.

"Sure you don't know?" he demanded.

Ralph swore—and swore vilely.

"No, I don't; except that I had the misfortune to meet you when I was—in a different position, before I had come into my property, and I don't want you to gas about it all over the town."

"Is that the only reason? Well, I

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believe you. And that being so, take my advice: don't ask. Don't you ask, my lord. For, if you knew, you'd wonder why I don't demand the Hall—and that rent free, too."

Ralph's face went white, and he frowned as if he were trying to decide whether to insist or not upon learning the nature of the man's knowledge.

"Don't ask, my lord," repeated Mr. Workley, gravely, almost solemnly. "You let me the farm for ninety-nine years at a pepper-corn rent, and advance enough for me to stock it as one of your lordship's farms should be stocked, and you won't hear any more from me. The fact is, I'm thinking of being married, like your self, and want to settle down. I might ask you for a big lump sum; but I'm not extortionate. You won't miss the rent of a single farm and a little wedding present."

Ralph bit his lip.

"How am I to know that you won't blackmail me again?" he asked.

Mr. Workley laughed.

"Well, you've got my word. But, to tell you the truth, I don't like the business; and when I'm married, I shall like it less. You'll have my respectability as security against any more applications like this. 'Pon my word, you're making a good bargain. Like enough, if you gave me a lump sum, to say, leave the country, I should spend it or lose it, and be back for more; but I shall do very well at the Cross Tree Farm, you'll see."

Ralph paced up and down.

"Does your secret, your information, concern me or my father?" he asked in a low voice.

Mr. Workley smiled.

"No, no; let it alone!" he said.

"Give me what I ask, and I'll keep my mouth shut and pocket my cards; refuse me, and I'll tell what I know—not to you, but to Mr. Bulpit—I'll throw the cards down for all the world to see."

"I've got a good mind to defy you, to ride to the police station and charge you with attempting to blackmail me!" said Ralph, hotly.

Mr. Workley smiled.

"You've a better mind to take a cigar and order something for us to drink," he said, quietly; and he stretched out his hand and rang the bell. "I'll take a whiskey and soda."

The servant came in, and Ralph

half mechanically gave the order.

"And I may have the farm? Thank you, my lord," said Workley, respectfully, as the footman placed the things on the table. "I won't detain your lordship any longer, and I am exceedingly obliged." He drank his whiskey and soda at a draught, took up his soft hat, and, with a bow as respectful as his jone, wished Lord Ratton good-morning and went out.

Ralph flung himself into a chair and pondered.

What was it the fellow knew? Some disreputable incident in the life of Ralph's father? That must be it, for Workley had repeatedly hinted, in a significant way, of his knowledge of the father. For a moment, Ralph thought of Nita, and the sweet brook out upon him; but he put the suggestion from him. No one of his early companions, fellow-actors, and loafers, knew of his marriage. No, it was something connected with his father! What could it be?

He rose with a smothered oath. At any rate, he could not afford to defy the man at this moment. When the marriage had taken place, and Lady Mary was his, then he might do so. After all, Workley might be satisfied with the farm; and his silence would be cheaply purchased at such a price. With a lark face and heavy brow, he wrote a short note to Mr. Bulpit telling him to prepare a lease of Cross Tree Farm at a pepper-corn rent. "I find that Mr. Workley was an old friend of my father's, and I am anxious to make it up to him, for my father's sake," he added.

Then he went to the table and poured out some whiskey and drank it neat. As he sat the glass down, he caught sight of the one from which Workley had drunk, and he snatched it up and flung it into the fire-place.

"Curse him!" he muttered. "Let him wait until I am married!"

But though he tried to console himself with this threat of future vengeance, the reflection that Workley had got what he had demanded rendered Ralph the earl anything but complacent. He dined that night at Hatherley. Mary had still a bad headache, and, pleading it as an excuse, she left him and her father as soon as the dessert was set. Ralph had tried to shake off the effects of his interview with Workley, but had not succeeded in doing so until after Mary had left the room, and the butler had brought in the port.

"I mustn't touch it, Ralph," said poor Lord Hatherley, with a sigh, as he glanced at his tumbler of mineral water beside him.

"Then I must drink Mary's health, or both of us," said Ralph, and he did so by drinking two glasses in quick succession. Then he began to talk rapidly, as was his way when he was in wine, and when he had finished his port he drew the sherry taster towards him half mechanically. As he poured himself out a glass—using one of the large burundy glasses—Lord Hatherley regarded him with vague disquietude, Ralph had always been "careful" when in the presence of Mary and her father, but this evening he seemed to have lost his usual caution, and when he rose to get a light for his cigar he staggered slightly.

"Room's deuced hot!" he said, with a suspicion of a hic-cough. "Yes, Mary and I'll get along all right, you'll see! She's a bit wilful and fond of having her own way—only natural—only child, you know!" He laughed knowingly and nodded with 'fisy gravity at the unhappy old man. "But she'll settle down into her right place. They all of them do. I know women—I flatter myself there's no one knows the fair sex better than I do. Met 'em on the boards and off—That sherry decanter's empty."

"I will ring for some more if you wish it," said Lord Hatherley. "There is some apollinaris here—"

"Poor stuff, that," responded Ralph; "but I'll have some with a dash of brandy." He mixed it rather strongly, and drank it off. "What was I saying? Oh, about Mary! She will settle down and find her level—"

Lord Hatherley rose as if he could endure no more.

(To be Continued.)

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President's Reply to Germany

WASHINGTON, June 10. (Special Telegrams.)—The President's note to Germany contains the following: The Government of the United States notes with gratification the full recognition by the Imperial German Government, in discussing the cases of the Cushing and Guilford, of the principle of freedom of all parts of the open sea to neutral ships; and the frank willingness of the German Government to acknowledge and meet its liability where the fact that attack upon neutral ships, which have not been guilty of any hostile act, by German aircraft or vessels of war, is satisfactorily established. The Government of the States will in due course lay before the German Government, as it requests, full information concerning the attack on the steamer Cushing. With regard to the sinking of the steamer Palaba, by which an American citizen lost his life, the Government of the States is surprised to find the Imperial Government contending that an effort on the part of a merchantman to escape capture or secure assistance alters the obligation of the officer, seeking to make capture, in respect to the safety of the lives of those on board, a military act, although the vessel had ceased to attempt to escape when the period. The Government of the States, however, does not understand that the German Government is seeking in this case to relieve itself of liability, but only contends to set forth the circumstances which led to the capture of the officer, seeking to make capture, in respect to the safety of the lives of those on board, a military act, although the vessel had ceased to attempt to escape when the period. The Government of the States, however, does not understand that the German Government is seeking in this case to relieve itself of liability, but only contends to set forth the circumstances which led to the capture of the officer, seeking to make capture, in respect to the safety of the lives of those on board, a military act, although the vessel had ceased to attempt to escape when the period. The Government of the States, however, does not understand that the German Government is seeking in this case to relieve itself of liability, but only contends to set forth the circumstances which led to the capture of the officer, seeking to make capture, in respect to the safety of the lives of those on board, a military act, although the vessel had ceased to attempt to escape when the period.

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