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LORD WHARTON'S NIECE
— AND —
THE HEIR TO REGNA COURT.

CHAPTER VIII.

The moment the words had left his lips he regretted them, for though Miss Sartoris' face had shown no resentment, he feared she might think the response presumptuous. He changed the subject with some skill and presently rose.

"I will take the sketches home and get to work, Miss Sartoris. Good-afternoon, and thank you very much."

There was a moment or two of silence after he had gone, then Mrs. Lexton remarked:

"How well he said that."

"What?" asked Claire, absently.

"That he would rather be himself and rebuild the wing than be a lord.

Claire looked straight before her.

"It was rather a foolish speech," she said, quietly.

When Gerald had reached the stables he remembered the ladder. He pulled to with a slight feeling of annoyance. It would would not do to leave the ladder stuck up against the house, for, though burglars might be rara avis at Regna, the thing was a temptation to the curious as well as to the dishonest. He did not like to go back, and yet he could not allow the ladder to remain there.

"What nonsense," he said, jeering at himself for his reluctance. "Miss Sartoris will not notice my return any more than she would that of any other workman about the place!"

But he was relieved when he got back to find that the ladies had gone.

He shouldered the ladder and was returning with it when he saw Claire and Mrs. Lexton standing in the cottage garden beside Mrs. Burdon and the little girl. He intended to walk past them without any sign, but as he came up to the group, the old lady dropped a curtsey and quavered out:

"Good-morning, my lord!"

He could scarcely let the quaint saultation go without any response, and so he smiled and nodded.

Claire laid her hand on the woman's arm, which she had drawn within her own.

"You do not know that gentleman, nurse?" she said.

The old woman looked up at her with a shrewd, half-secretive expression in the faded dim eyes.

"Yes, yes!" she said, in her thin voice. "I know him well enough, and so do you, my lady!"

Claire changed color for a moment, then she said, gently:

"And now you don't know me! I am Claire Sartoris, your little girl, as you used to call me."

"I know, I know!" crooned Mrs. Burdon, nodding her head and half closing her eyes, as if she were sharing a jest with Claire.

"And that gentleman is Mr. Wayre," said Claire.

"Yes, yes! quite right!" said the old woman. "Quite right, my lady. I know his lordship as well as I know you! Why do you plague me so?" she broke off suddenly, with the fretful resentment of extreme old age.

The ivory of Claire's face grew rose-tinted and Gerald hastened to her relief.

"It is of no use, Miss Sartoris!" he said. "Mrs. Burdon insists upon my nobility—even with a ladder on my shoulder," and, with a laugh, he hurried on.

CHAPTER IX.

Gerald went to work at his plans that same evening. The lamp, as he had said, was large; it was also hot, but he did not realize how warm the little room had become until he felt the perspiration starting out on his forehead. Then he rose with a laugh, and, lighting his pipe, strolled out for a stretch and a breath of fresh air.

It was a lovely night, with a delightful breeze from the sea, and he sauntered down the steep, roughly-paved path to the jetty. He was quite absorbed in his work, and looked at the beautiful seascape absently enough; but presently he became conscious of the figure of a young girl walking along the beach and close to the cliffs, which rose perpendicularly from the very edge of the sea-line.

As the moon emerged from a bank of cloud he saw that the girl was Lucy Hawker. He was thinking, absently and casually, that it was rather strange for her to be walking alone at that time of night; but, concluding that she was tempted by the beauty of the evening, he was turning away, when he saw another figure come down a path and join her. It was a young man this time, and Gerald fancied he bore some resemblance in form and bearing to Mr. Mordaunt Sapley; but he was too far off for Gerald to identify him, and while he was looking, the two figures disappeared around a bend of the cliff.

Gerald was just at that moment trying to decide upon a knotty question in connection with the plan, and forgot all about Lucy and her companion directly they passed from his sight. He solved the problem in about half an hour, and, relighting his pipe, started to return to his plans.

There was another road, a mere track, leading direct from the beach, and he decided to take it for a change, and was climbing up the steep path when Lucy dropped in front of him from the overhanging rock.

"Miss Lucy!" he said.

She started, and uttered a faint cry of surprise and alarm, and stood looking at him for a moment or two with wide-open eyes; then glanced simply over her shoulder.

"You—you startled me, sir!" she said.

"I am very sorry," said Gerald. "Where did you spring—or rather, drop—from? I thought for a moment that it was a goat. Is there a path there?"

"Yes," she replied, looking at him sideways. "It—is not often used. I was taking a stroll; it is such a fine night."

"So it is," assented Gerald. "Too fine for indoors. I think I saw you down on the beach by the cliff, didn't I?"

She was silent for a moment; then she said, with a forced laugh:

"I daresay, sir; I was down there."

"And not alone?" said Gerald, with a faint smile.

"Oh, yes!" she said; "I was alone——"

"That's strange," said Gerald. "I thought——"

Then he stopped. It was scarcely fair to make any remark upon the girl's movements.

"At least almost all the time," she said. "One of the fishermen spoke to me; perhaps it was him you saw."

Gerald accepted the explanation unsuspectingly. After all, it was extremely improbable that Lucy, who seemed always so truthful and modest, should volunteer a falsehood. He must have been mistaken in thinking the man like Mordaunt Sapley..

"I suppose this is good fishing weather?" he remarked.

She assented, and they talked about the fishing as they walked up the path side by side. Presntly he said:

"I hope the lamp is full of oil, Miss Lucy? I have a lot of work to do tonight. Perhaps you know that I may be employed at the Court, rebuilding the old wing?"

"I heard you were there looking at it, sir," she answered. "I am very glad! It is a beautiful old place, the Court, and Miss Claire is a kind young lady."

"You like her?" said Gerald.

"Oh, yes, sir! She has always been good and kind to me! Everybody likes her, though sometimes she seems—seems proud and standoffish; but she is never so with me—leastways, very seldom." She stifled a sigh at the correction. "I've known her ever since she came here; we were girls together like—though different, of course. I think she is the loveliest young lady I have ever seen," she added, warmly.

Gerald felt as if he should like to shake hands with Miss Lucy on the spot; but he wisely made no response.

"This is a lonely path," he remarked, after a pause. "But I suppose you don't mind being out alone?"

"No; I'm used to it, sir," she remarked, simply. "Very few people come along here; only the coastguard and a fisherman now and again."

"And here comes one of them," said Gerald, as a man came slowly upon them.

The path was narrow, and he drew aside to allow the man to pass, and, as he did so, he peered at them curiously, and then touched his sou'wester and gave them "good-night."

"It's Jenks, the coastguard," said Lucy, when the man had passed on.

But after he had gone a few a few paces, he stopped, and came back to them.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," he said, civilly, with another touch of his cap, "but could you oblige me with a pipe o' bacca? I've run out, and——"

"Certainly," said Gerald, and he opened his pouch, and emptied the contentse into the man's horny hand.

"Oh, I won't take it all, sir," he said.

"I've half a pound at home," said Gerald; "you're welcome to this."

"Thank you, sir. Mr. Wayre, beant it?"

Right the first time," assented Gerald. "Good-night."

(To be continued.)

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Reduction in Tax Burden in Canada

GOVERNMENT MAY ABOLISH THE SALES TAX AND RESTORE "PENNY POSTAGE."

Ottawa, Dec. 21.—Some reduction in the tax burden upon the Canadian people is to be expected during the coming session of Parliament. This is to be made possible by the drastic pruning of estimates now in progress, and the satisfactory showing to be made at the close of the present fiscal year together with the reduced expenditures planned for the following year will be given back to the tax payers in the form of a lighter levy.

Four different courses are open to the Government. One is the abolition of the sales tax which since its inception has been a source of annoyance to the collector as well as the taxpayer.

Another is the restoration of penny postage, the benefit from which would be shared by every citizen of the Dominion.

Some time ago, Hon. George H. Boivin, the new Minister of Customs and Excise, promised consideration of the reiterated demands for abolition of the luxury tax on automobiles.

Then there is the income tax on which some reduction would be welcomed.

While there are heavy obligations to be met by the Dominion Government in connection with the war and with the Canadian National Railways, there is reluctance to relinquish any large sources of revenue. Something substantial is expected to be done, either with the abolition of the sales tax or the restoration of penny postage.

Free! At Smallwood's!!—Buy your Hockey Boots from us and we will attach your skates free of charge.—dec17,tf

TAXING THE DEAD

WALT MASON

While I'm feeling hale and hearty, I'm an optimistic party, and I'll smile with any smarty as I pay the taxes due; I will sing and smile and chortle at the tax-collector's portal alas, I'm only mortal, soon my journey will be through. I have saved some silver pieces which are stored in large valises, that my loving aunts and nieces may not suffer when I'm dead; it would soothe me when I perish if I knew the ones I cherish would not hear the sound night-marish of the tax collector's tread. When I'm in a churchyard sector, with the blessing of the rector, then will come the tax collector, saying to the mourners pale, "Where's the money you inherit? For the Government must share it, from your keeping I must bear it—where's the plunder, where's the kale?" I'll be lying cold and senseless, down and out and all defenceless, while the mourners, sad and penceless, are reduced to scrubbing floors; they will have to sew and launder while the tax collectors ponder o'er the coin they hoped to squander in the large department stores. It's a crime I long have ranted, taxing people when they're planted, spoiling all the dreams enchanted of our legatees and heirs. "Pay up gayly," is my motto, "in the tax collector's grotto," but no tax collector ought to chase me up the golden stairs.

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NEW YORK, Dec. 18—Less than two per cent. of the liquor sold now is genuine, according to United States Attorney Buckner in an address before the Aldine Club.

Buckner said that the real Rum Row was in the lofts, cellars, barns and garages of New York City and not forty miles at sea. He added that 40,000,000 gallons of poisoned alcohol, officialy poisoned under Government supervision went into bootleg channels last year and that the fountain-head of bootleg liquor was illicit trade in denatured alcohol.

The speaker made public the annual toll of deaths from alcoholic poisoning here, which has increased from 84 in 1920 to 511 for the first 11 months of 1925.

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