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

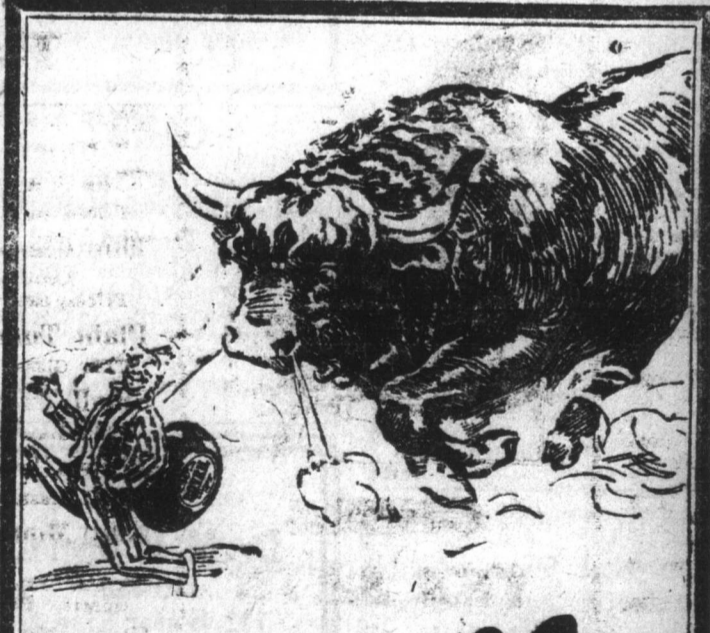
CHAPTER VII.

"Quite so; that is only right."
"And give us a couple of references."
Mordant turned upon him with a curiously snarl.
"That's right, blame me, of course!" he said. "I tell you it wouldn't have mattered what we had done or said; she had made up her mind to employ him. She had taken a fancy to the fellow."
Mr. Sapley shook his head.
"No," he said, reflectively. "But it doesn't matter."
"Doesn't matter!" echoed Mordant, with a sneer.
"No," said Mr. Sapley, his brows well over his eyes, his under lip projecting with an expression half resolute, half threatening. "It doesn't matter. Don't you be afraid, Mordant. You keep your eyes open and wait. Wait! I'll give her rope enough to hang herself with."
His voice died away into an incoherence as he turned and walked away, with bent head and scowling brows.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Gerald went round the end of the house in search of the stables. He quite understood the Sapleys' antagonism to him. A man who have knocked down generally doesn't love you; but Gerald was so much concerned, and felt that he could hold his own against both father and son, especially if Miss Sartoris stood his



Bovril
keeps you
going!

"At once. I have nothing to do," Mr. Mordaunt smiled significantly. "And I am eager to begin."
"Very well," she said, as if the matter were settled. "Please get on with it as quickly as possible, the old building may be dangerous. Good-morning, and thank you."
She inclined her head and moved away from them, and the Sapleys stood, rather awkwardly, staring at the building. Then Mr. Sapley cleared his throat.
"I don't know that there is anything else to arrange, Mr. Wayne," he said, with the air of a man who finds it difficult to be civil. "Of course, it's very—er—irregular, but Miss Sartoris—he shrugged his heavy shoulders—"Miss Sartoris is—"
"Impulsive and confiding," put in Mordant. "Well, she is responsible, not we!"
Gerald made no retort to this pleasant remark, but pushed his hat from his brow and contemplated the wing with an absorbed air, as if he were already at work at his plans.
"I think you said you know no one in England, Mr. Wayne?" said Mr. Sapley, in a dry, suspicious tone.
"No one," assented Gerald, quite cheerfully. "I have been abroad all my life. This wing seems quite unhabitable!"
"It is. Abroad? What part, may I ask?" said Mr. Mordant, insolently.
Gerald took out his pocketbook, and wrote down a memorandum before replying, and Mr. Mordant's face, while it was being kept waiting, grew red with suppressed rage.
"America," said Gerald, at last.
"Rather a large address!" sneered Mordant, taking out a cigarette.
"Not so," said Gerald, with a pleasant smile. "Mr. Sapley, shall I find

friend, as she had done this morning. How lovely she looked in her plain white frock—and how proud and reserved! He thought of Diana and several other goddesses; then pulled himself up short.
"What you have to do, my friend, is to restore the wing of Court Regna, not moon about the beauty of its mistress!"
On his way to the stables he came upon a tiny cottage. It was quite a surprise to him, for it was almost hidden in a little shrubbery. It stood in a miniature garden all aglow with flowers, and was so pretty an object that Gerald, artist-like, stopped to admire it.
As he did so, a little girl, leading an old woman by the hand, came out. At sight of Gerald they paused on the threshold, the girl bobbed a curtsy, and the old woman, screening her eyes with a trembling hand, peered at Gerald for a moment, then curtsied, and murmured something inaudible.
"I don't know, granny, it's a stranger," said the girl, shyly.
Gerald raised his hat, and seeing that they were making for a rustic seat, drew it forward into the sun for them. The girl thanked him with downcast eyes, and the old lady watched him intently and her lips moved again.
"Thank you, my lord," she said, in a thin voice.
"You are quite welcome," said Gerald, gently, with the air of reverence for her sex and age which the true man always displays. "But I'm afraid you mistake me for some one else; I am not a lord, worse luck!"
The old woman listened intently, and a smile flickered over her face, an eager, grateful smile, which touched Gerald.
"Your lordship is very," she quavered. "I trust her ladyship is well; I have not seen her for late."
"Whom does she take me for?" Gerald asked of the girl.
"—I don't quite know, sir," she replied, shyly. "She—she is very old, and often doesn't quite know what she says."
Gerald nodded, and raising his hat again, with his pleasant smile, passed on.
One of the pensioners of the Court, an old servant, no doubt, he thought. He went into the stable yard and inquired of one of the men for a ladder. He was grooming a horse, and touched his hat respectfully, as he answered.
"There's one at the back of the yard, sir; I'll get it."
"No, no!" said Gerald. "I'll get it. Don't leave your horse; they hate being left in the middle of their toilet."
"So they do, sir, so they do!" said the man, with no abatement of his respect. "It isn't every gentleman that understands that."
"I've a great deal to do with horses," said Gerald. "That's a good mare."
The man beamed with pleasure.
"It's Miss Sartoris's," he said. "Yes, she's almost human, as you may say, sir. Miss Sartoris pets her, and horses are quick to catch at kindness, ain't they, sir? I'll get the ladder for you, almost in a minute."
"No; you go on. I'll manage," said Gerald.
He found the ladder, and though it was a good weight, got it on his shoulders and set off with it. The man eyed him with approval.
"That's a gentleman, anyhow, Bess, for all he ain't above carrying a ladder," he remarked to the mare, and she pricked up her ears and tossed her head in assent.
Gerald carried his ladder round to the front of the wing, and mounted to the roof. As he had expected, he found it in a very bad condition. It would all have to come down. He stood with one foot on the parapet, looking at the view, not knowing that Claire and Mrs. Lorton were looking at his tall, stalwart figure standing out against the background of the blue sky. When he came down again he sat to work, taking measurements, and then, feeling in the vein, took his pipe, and seating himself on the grass, made a rough experimental sketch or two. Fortunately for him, he was an artist as well as an architect—the two things don't always go together, alas!—and he had caught the spirit of the old building. He sketched rapidly, and with an intense eagerness now and then jumping up to take a measurement or get a different view.

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