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LORD WHARTON'S NIECE

— AND —

THE HEIR TO REGNA COURT.

CHAPTER V.

(To be continued.)

"It's a beautiful old building," he said, "and in a wonderful state of preservation, considering its age. It is Norman."

"You tell it by the—"

"By the arches and the lines over them," he said, "as well as by other signs. That is the empy of a Norman knight. There are tombs here," he added, as he bent down to examine the floor.

"Yes," said Claire, "some of the Whartons are buried here. Lord Wharton was very proud of the chapel and had great care taken of it."

He poked about, pushing the grass aside and disclosing time-worn memorial slabs.

"The Hohen has eaten away most of the inscriptions," he said, "but some of the letters still remain; one feels them better than sees them."

He passed his hand over the stone. Claire bent down on the other side of it.

"Is that so?" she asked.

"Yes; see," he said, "or, rather, feel."

Claire was much interested. She looked off the gauntlet from her right

hand and passed her finger softly over the stone, her eyes half closed.

"You are feeling in the wrong place," he said, "there are no letters there. Permit me," he took her hand and guided it along the faintly-marked line.

As his hand inclosed hers firmly, yet gently, a strange thrill ran through Claire, beginning at her finger tips, and running through her whole frame. She felt a desire to draw her hand away from his, and yet an incapacity to do so. She glanced at him through her half-closed eyes, her breath coming a little faster, her dark brows drawn into a tight frown. But he seemed quite unconscious, and quite engrossed in their strangely mutual task.

"Can you feel anything?" he asked.

His face was of necessity very close to hers, and its nearness confused her and made it difficult for her to speak on the instant. At last she said, and coldly:

"I think I felt a letter."

"What is it?" he asked.

"It is a G," she said.

"Yes; and the next?"

"Is it an E?" she asked.

He passed his fingers over the letter and looked at her abstractedly.

"You are right," he said.

"And the next is an R or a K," she said.

"It is an R. How quick you are; a woman's fingers are so sensitive. That is why they make the best fishermen, as an Irishman would say."

She wanted to draw her hand away, but though she could have done so now, she did not like to do so.

"The next letter has quite gone," he said, "but the next is an L and then a D."

She spelled out the word as far as she had deciphered it, "GER—LD."

She raised her eyes and looked at him. It must be Gerald, she said.

He laughed.

"Yes; my name, strange to say, and yet not strange; it is a common enough name."

"It was one of Lord Wharton's names," said Claire.

"Yes," he said, "no doubt it is a family name, and we should find it on other tombs here."

He still held her hand as if he had forgotten he held it.

She drew it away and stood upright and looked round, holding her breath for a moment, and with a faint color mounting in her cheeks, but when he looked at her, the color had gone, and she was as cold, or rather reserved, as usual. She glanced at the watch on her wrist.

"I must go," she said, "I hope you will find some interesting things to draw here."

"Thank you," he said, half absently.

"But I don't expect I shall find anything more interesting than the sketch I took outside," and his hand slipped into his jacket pocket where the sketch of her lay hidden.

"Good-morning," she said.

"You will let me help you to mount," he said, raising his hat.

"No, thank you," she said, rather quickly, without turning her head, and she passed out.

Gerald Wayne stood for a moment looking at the doorway through which she had disappeared. It seemed to him that the chapel had become dark all of a sudden. He looked down at the tomb abstractedly, then he stooped and picked up something; it was her gauntlet. He held it in his palm and gazed at it thoughtfully, he could have almost fancied that it retained the warmth of her long, shapely hand, whose touch still seemed to linger about his fingers. He passed the glove against his cheek; then, with a flush and an impatient exclamation, he hung the gauntlet from him and turned his back upon it.

But a moment or two afterward he glanced over his shoulder at it; it seemed to have a reproachful expression as if it were a human sentiment thing, and with another half-angry, half-impatient exclamation, he strode to it, picked it up and thrust it into his bosom. There it seemed like a warm, living thing, nestling against his heart.

His lips grew tight, and he frowned.

"What has come to me?" he said, under his breath. "I must be mad!"

CHAPTER VI.

Claire rode down the perilous path and long before she had got to the road at the bottom she missed her glove. She was rather annoyed at her carelessness, for gauntlet riding gloves are not to be bought in every country town; but she felt that she could not go back after it. Mr. Wayne was there still. She would go back for it to-morrow morning.

As she went at a gentle trot along the road that winds to the court she saw Mr. Mordaunt Sapley coming toward her. He raised his hat, stopped as she came up with him, and Claire pulled up.

"Good-morning," he said, with the mixture of familiarity and respect in which he always addressed her, and which Claire did not like. "I was going to the court, Miss Sartoris; my father wishes me to speak to you about Grimley's farm. They are behindhand with their rent, and he thinks they ought to have notice to quit; he would have given them notice last week, but he—er—fancied that you did not wish him to?"

"Are they very much behind?" said Claire, hesitatingly.

Lord Wharton had never interfered with Mr. Sapley, who had, in reality, ruled the estate, and she wished to follow in Lord Wharton's path as closely as possible; but the idea of ejecting a tenant, or treating any one of them harshly, was repugnant to her. "Grimley broke his arm last autumn," she said, "and the harvest was bad; I do not like turning him out of the farm, he has been there a great many years. His eyes grew pitiful. I should be glad if Mr. Sapley could let him remain and give him another chance."

Mr. Mordaunt Sapley looked up at her with as much admiration in his small eyes as he dared display.

"You are so kind-hearted, Miss Sartoris!" he said, with an ingratiating smile, and the fanlike Oxford drawl, which Claire disliked as much as she disliked his manner. "Of course, he ought to go; a man has no right to stop on a farm when he cannot pay the rent, and we have been very lenient with Grimley. My father has to do his duty by the estate, you know, Miss Sartoris. He had only your interest at heart."

"I am quite sure of that," said Claire, "and I should not venture to interfere in any way."

"Oh, the place is yours," he said, coming a little nearer and looking up at her in a way that made Claire's face grow colder and more reserved. "Your word is our law, and we are all your very humble, but willing slaves."

Claire tried to smile.

"I don't know that I require any slaves, Mr. Sapley," she said, "but you are very kind; and I shall be glad if your father can let Grimley remain."

"I am sure he will," said Mr. Mordaunt, "especially as you desire it so much."

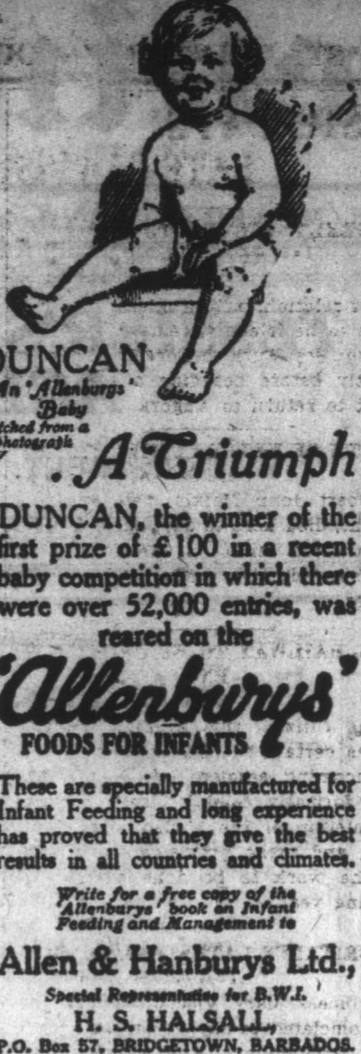
He smiled very impressively, and laid his hand on the horse's neck. She seemed to resent his touch, though she had accepted Gerald's caress willingly enough, and Claire resented it also; it was almost as if Mr. Mordaunt Sapley had laid his hand upon her arm. She drew herself up unconsciously, and her brows went straight.

"Good-morning," she said, with that tone which a woman uses when she draws herself aloof from the person she addresses, and with a cold bow rode away from him.

The smile died away from Mr. Mordaunt's face as he looked after her, and his lips moved as if he were swearing under his breath; then the smile came back again, though in rather a sickly fashion, for she had pulled up and looked back at him as if she wished to speak. He hurried toward her, hurried instinctively, though he would liked to have sauntered.

"I found a dog of yours last night, Mr. Sapley," she said, looking over his head. "It's locked up in the stable; the groom will give it to you if you ask for it."

(To be continued.)



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Some Curious Cargoes

Mr. George Wright, who lives on the Essex side of the Thames, and who has spent over half a century of labor in London's dockyard, recently told a reporter of some wonderful cargoes he has handled.

"A dozen or more venomous snakes wriggling about on deck. You should have seen everybody run," he said.

"Snakes are usually packed in boxes," he continued. "Air spaces are left round the top and there is not much chance of their getting out, but some lively interludes occurred when we got consignments of wild animals. Lions are swung up out of the hold in strong crates. I never could decide which was the most nervous—the lion or me."

Elephants dangling in mid-air! Mr. Wright described the landing of these giants, which are hoisted aboard ship in immense stells. Wide hands are passed round their bodies and fastened above their backs to the steel rope from the crane. They are then swung aloft.

"A tricky creature to unload is the crocodile. I remember some 'in a tank which caused considerable trouble before they were raised to the level of the quay-side."

A ship on fire and nobody knew it! Mr. Wright told the writer that occasionally the crew of a jute vessel were unaware that their cargo was burning until the hatches were unattended. Then the fire raged had to get very busy.

"Jute is almost as inflammable as oil, and burns at a smashing speed. Some years ago a jute shed caught fire, and two minutes after the first spark was noticed the roof was burnt off. It blazed up with a hissing roar like gunpowder, only without the bang."

Sorting Bones for a Living.

At one time Mr. Wright was assistant sorting foreman in a depot in the West India Docks, which he described as a "chandler's shop."

Here is collected every conceivable product from the jute in huge puncheons holding 140 gallons, to buffalo horns, shank-bones, and slabs of tin weighing more than a hundred-weight. One of Mr. Wright's tasks was to help sort the good shank bones from the bad, preparatory to their sale for the manufacture of knife handles.

"Frozen meat," said Mr. Wright, was transferred from the ocean boats in the old days to two ships named the Sea Witch and the Mor-

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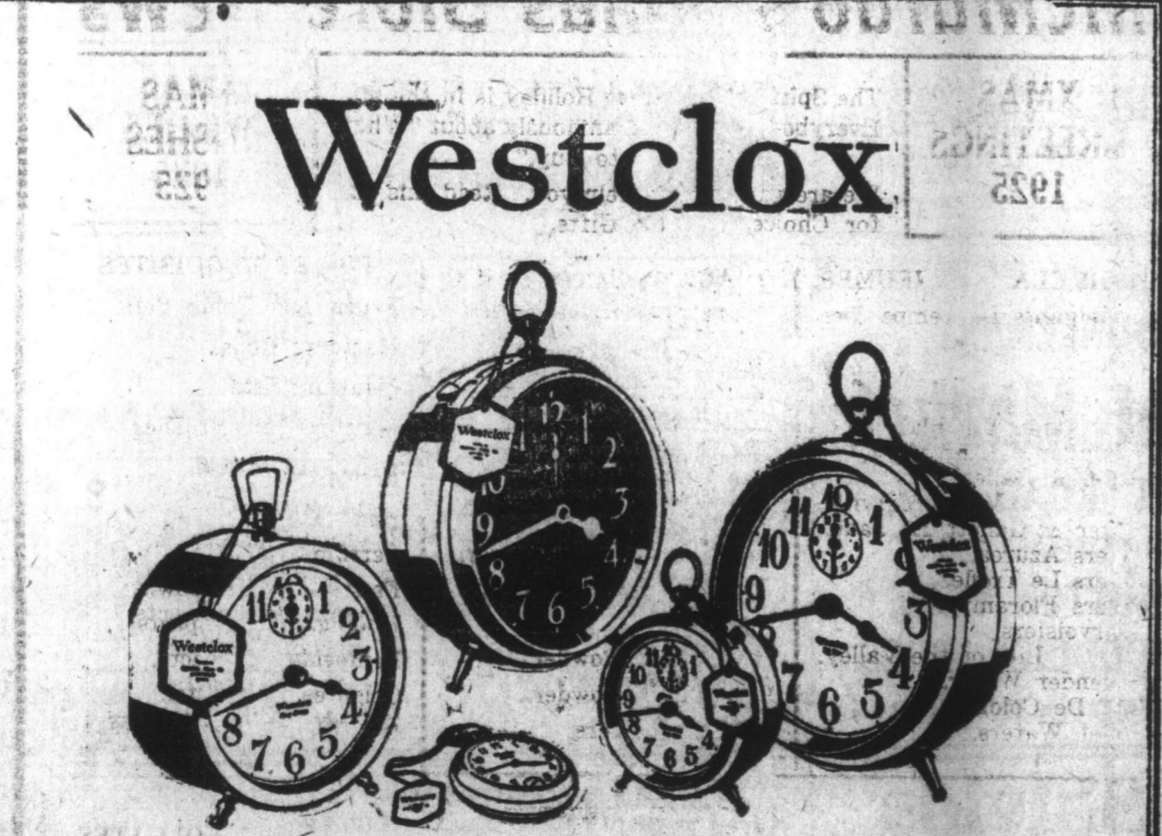
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