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Then he consulted his watch. It was a fairly long drive, the factor was a busy man, and it would be scarcely read the telegram aloud: the thing to keep him waiting-novel consideration for Dalesford to display

earl.

Vane!"

exclamation

and perhaps the drive would be too long for Diana if she were tired and overdone. He would go up and suggest that he should go without her. and that she should keep her bed until he returned. Going up two stairs at a time, he stopped outside he: door and listened. There was no

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A Queen Among Womer

CHAPTER XXIII.

and I thought it better not to disturb

her.'

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sto sir ha at cli co ga dis we wa att

str pas wii bri

disturb her."

"But she's sleeping now, my lord,

"Quite right," he said approvingly.

"Don't wake her, Janet. She has

been doing a great deal lately; far

too much. I'm afraid. No. no. don't

He wandered about the hall and the

smoking-room with patient impa-

tience; they came to tell him that the

dog-cart was ready, and he nodded

and went out, and stared at it in the

way men have when they are waiting.

le way, without leaving word where are going: of course Diana is

He handed it across the table, and Vane murmured "Thank you," bu open the ugly envelope; h

"What a hideous invention the telegraph is! I've not yet got used to it. It seems to me that people should find time

keen to permit of reflection or con- breakfast," Vane reminded her

"Tut, tut!" said the earl. "Gone to had come back and gone to bed again. London, unexpectedly. What-?"

"Yes, my lord. I-I thought she Bertie.

I listened at the door and did not hear be ill," said her moving; and she had not rung.

see about her packing-or flirt with mean if you could have the money handed to you to rebuild and reimburse you for the loss.

"I shall have time for both, thank That's what we do for you when you are insured in our reliable comyou, Vane," she retorted haughtily. Good heavens, I hope no one will be Take out a policy with us to-day. so desperately in love with me as to become transformed by my temporary absense into a perfect bear. Bertie shall we play just one game of bil liards?" she asked that quite-willing young gentleman, and marched off with him, her head aloft, her "redripe" lips pouting. Vane sat up late that night, smok ing alone and hard, and thinking of Diana and her sudden journey. A cloud of darkness and gloom seemed

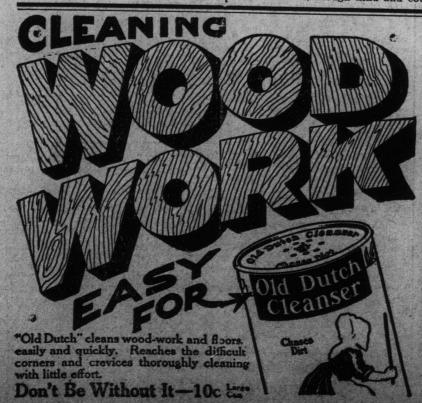
sound within the room, and, conclud ing that she was still asleep, he sighed and went down again. "Tell Miss Bourne that I thought i

best not to disturb her, and that I will be back as quickly as possible,' he said to the butler; got slowly into the dog-cart, and, with a wistful glance at her window, drove off. It was past two o'clock before he got back, and the butler met him in the hall, and, with a grave face, said: "The earl would be glad if your lordship would see him in his writing-room." Dalesford nodded, and strode

quickly across the hall. At the drawing room door he paused and looked in. He had failed to see Diana on the terrace; perhaps she was in there anxiety.' trying some music or reading; but the room was empty, and he went on to the earl's. The old man was seated in his chair with the paper, behind which he almost hid his face, as he said, with a cheerfulness which instantly struck Dalesford as forced: "Oh, you've got back, Vane. Have you-er-seen Diana?"

"No," replied Dalesford. "Where is she? She is not-ill?"

"No, no," said the earl quickly. the pane until his father got him "She-she is out somewhere; with away by asking him to look at Mabel and young Selby, very probbusiness letter he had received. ably. Really"-testily-"these young Presently Janet entered. She lookpeople must not be allowed to-ram- ed pale and frightened; for both the be about the place in this irresponsi- earl and Vane, though kind and cour-



She had told me not to disturb her-Vane, in a low voice, "And vet, no Diana would have said so, would and she sleeps so lightly that I was afraid to go in. to open the door. have been sure to say so." even. "She must have heard some news

received some message." said the "Has your mistress taken any lug-"She has not been seen gage?" asked Vane as casually as befor hours; I can find no one who has fore. seen her the whole of the morning-"No, my lord," replied Janet, begin indeed, since last night." nnig to threaten tears again. "That's Vane went to the bell and rang it -that's what uppsetting me so. She must have gone to London without "Ask Miss Bourne's maid to come here, please," he said to the servant

anything; and without me to take "Ah, the maid!" exclaimed the earl. care of her-" "Of course. Howw quick you are Vane nodded by way of dismissal and Janet, fighting with another at-

"Where Diana is concerned-yes," tack of tears, was leaving the room when the earl called her back. responded Vane with a smile. "Janet will tell us all about it. Don't be "It is a very terrible thing that alarmed, sir; there is no cause for your mistress should make a journey to London, to visit some friends, with "I'm not alarmed," retorted the old out her luggage: but it is not

man irritably. "Good heavens, why rible as to serve as an excuse for should I be? There is nothing ominyour weeping, my girl. Be good ous in a lady going to town suddenly. enough to dry your eyes-and hold Depend upon it, she has received an your tongue. important communication from he Then-the worm, especially the

modiste or the man who is making loving worm, will turn-Janet flashed her boots." He laughed, and Vane an indignant glance at the grand earl. nodded and smiled; but neither of "My lord, I-I don't deserve it!" them looked reassured; and Vane she said. "I-I never talk of my bet went to the window and drummed on ers, especially of my dear mistress.' There was silence when she had

one, then the earl said: "Seven o'clock; no telegram could reach here until half-past eight or nine'

"Th? What, sir?" Vane said. "No elegram? She may have met the man bringing one that came last night; she must have done so." "Of course, of course!" exclaimed he old man, welcoming the suggestion. "Or-or one of the other maids, Janet being out of the way, may have taken it to her room." "But she did not come back to th ouse," said Vane absently. Then uddenly he drew himself up and, with a hauteur he seldom displayed, said: "Pon my soul, sir, we're discussing this little journey of Diana's as if there were some mystery in it. We are both rather absurd, don't you hink?"

"Yes, yes; we are, Vane!" responded the earl, gratefully. "Deuced absurd! And it's all so explicable. The hild met the man with a telegram aying that a relation was se ll-Mrs. Burton, very likely. Diana

to have fallen on the whole place; the hours dragged along with weary, tardy feet. Great heavens! what should

he do if-if anything happened to her, if by some unimaginable cause she disappeared from his life! Calling himself a nervous idiot, he

at last went to bed-to lie awake and count the hours as he had counted them in the smoking-room. But he would not get up earlier than usual,

Ham Butt Pork, Fat Back, and when he got down and went for Heavy Mess, Jowls. his accustomed walk before break-Spare Ribs, Boneless Beef. fast, he could not stroll to meet postman Plate Beef & Beef Cuttings,

Indeed, when the letter-bag wa Molasses, Sugar, placed beside him, he did not haste and the best value in Teas. unlock it, but helped himself to bacon before doing so, though

there was already some on his plate See our Flour at \$6.20 brl. Mahel and Brtie were at the table and he opened the bag and tossed them their letters. Among his was an envelope, a plain, cheap envelope 136 & 138 Duckworth Street.

addressed to him in Diana's handwriting. He took it up, feeling Ma-EUROPEAN bel's eyes upon him, but he could not

open it.

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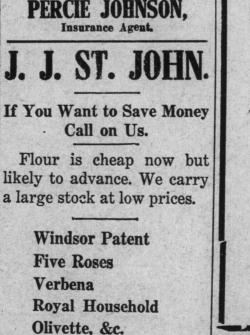


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