

THE SEVENTH MARCHIONESS OF RIVIÈRE.

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"SOMEWHERE THOU ART."

One of Papa's most delightful characteristics was his invariable charm in the home circle, a rare virtue in the sons and grandsons of the gross and jovial "three bottle men" of the Georgian era, whose choleric tempers reduced their women-folk to pulp.

Of course, we do not mean to infer that Papa wore his best company manners every day—and that there was nothing of quite superlative grace left for such great occasions as when ladies of high degree paid visits of ceremony, and took tea with Papa and Mama in the French grey parlour—or were led by him in to dinner in their bridal array. No!—that might have been too great a strain—as "nobody could play the agreeables better nor Mester" according to his retainers; but Papa when on business or pleasure bent all day, was capital company when from the head of his mahogany he enlivened the family at dinner with all the news of the hour.

Thus what more natural than that he should mention the fact that Lord Rivière was in the hunting field for the first time this season,—that he was an uncommonly fine horseman, indeed they had trotted home together and in spite of his revolutionary ideas—he was an eminently agreeable fellow; or that the old Duke was beginning to droop under the weight of those blood-sucking mortgages.

Then Mama said she considered Lord Rivière a real hero of romance—no doubt it was his mother's Italian blood—he and his twin brother were so alike, they could not be distinguished apart, and so passionately attached, just like the Corsican Brothers—and they must have looked most picturesque in their red shirts fighting side by side with Garibaldi for the liberation of Italy—and then such a marvellous artist—no wonder the loveliest heiress—

Then Papa broke in with "gently—gently my dear—how you do run on."

But Mama replied with spirit—and continued to "run on," until she noticed that Andrea had disappeared—when she rose and shook out her numerous *glacé* silk flounces, and dusted a card table with her fine lawn handkerchief—as she passed into the hall.

Mama's dislike of dust was only evidence of her instinctive love of beauty, in an age when Science had not yet realised that dirt was the dark knight it must jostle and unseat in the lists—when tilting in the Tournament of Health.

Mama's beauty, like that of the rest of the world, might only be skin deep, but her skin was like a wild rose leaf, and the children could scent her, as they said she smelt pink. There was some truth in this, as Mama made lavish use of

the finest rose-scented soap—and her first article of faith attested to the sublimity of cleanliness. In the innermost recesses of her somewhat inelastic mind soapsuds borne on the crest of the wave, denoted the high-water mark between the classes, and the statement once advanced by a fond village dame that "my Joedy ain't been washed for forty year, and he's as sweet as a noot" only convinced her that Providence was mercifully negligent in constructing the olfactory nerves of the *hoi polloi*.

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At Beauvais dinner was a function, perhaps we might say—the function of the ducal day. The hour sounded, the doors of the Long Gallery were thrown open,—a gorgeous and dignified person advanced one foot within, five words he spoke—but before they were uttered the old Duke was well on his way, conducting with great solemnity his guest of highest rank to the banquetting hall.

The Duke worshipped rank—yet beauty had charms, and as he passed through the Gallery to-night his beguiling smile was bestowed upon a very lovely girl—shimmering in virgin white tulle, her golden hair encoiled with pearls, her hand resting on the arm of his heir, the Seventh Marquess of Rivière. To-night after dinner there would be an intimate and informal little dance, and might not his consent be required to their betrothal? Who more welcome as an adopted daughter of the House than this sweet little maiden—a peeress to be in her own right, and the heiress to untold wealth? Wealth not to be despised in these days, because it had been hacked out at the point of the pickaxe, by a strenuous progenitor in a Lanarkshire mine!

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A few hours later a little orange envelope was opened under the stars by Lord Rivière where he stood on the terrace at Beauvais, looking across the Vale to Carillon. It contained the terrible news that his brother was dying of fever at Rome; and a few minutes later he was bidding his people an urgent farewell. Consternation had hushed the music and the tripping of feet. In the outer vestibule the weeping mother—Ah! well might she weep—and the perturbed father, were hurrying him forth. There was not a moment to lose, and yet at the sight of a fluttering white figure he turned at the outer door. Silently and very quickly she came, passing between the motionless steel figures—which in centuries past had felt brave hearts throb redly with love and hate.

Yet never a heart more valiant than this!

The family made way for her.—No doubt Rivière had spoken—and she would embrace him goodbye.

Yet this was no meeting between those betrothed!

In her trembling hand she held a letter, and as she gave it to Lord Rivière, though she spoke softly each word came very fine and clear.

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