

THE WHIP



Novelized From the Exciting Play of the Same Name
By BERTRAND BABCOCK

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CHAPTER III.

Who Got the Stable Secrets and How.

ALL the morning Captain Greville Sartoris, the cousin of Lady Diana and the heir to the Beverley title, though the fortune would go to the marquis's granddaughter, had led the greater part of the house party in an otter hunt.

Now, with the hounds that they had taken for their rather tame hunt in full cry, they were pursuing a large she otter the hounds had started. Through the open the little creature fed, followed by the yelping pack, not that, of course, with which Lady Diana had run, and the party of men and women on foot with their savage otter spears.

The animal had found its courses along the little stream no longer in their accustomed solitude, so now the animal seemed to feel that there would be safety in going toward the spots never deserted.

In any event she broke cover completely and made for the kennels and stables, still, however, keeping close to the east bank of the Bourne.

Across the stable yard the small pursued object went in an effort to get far enough away to make a dive into a deep pool there. Over the retaining walls and other obstacles in their path leaped the men of the party. Sartoris was first, but after he had made one frenzied lunge with his spear he realized that the otter had escaped.

With an exclamation of anger he buried his spear in the ground and then looked up to find the amused but more scornful eyes of his cousin upon him.

"Don't, Greville, it's horrible!" exclaimed she strongly, while her grandfather was showing the fox hounds and some of his famous racing string to the visitors.

"What is?" Sartoris asked, not realizing that the girl was condemning a pastime that he regarded as sport.

"Otter killing—like that—other hunting," she answered.

"But you like fox hunting," went on Sartoris in the bland tones of surprise of the Englishman of his wily type, with his wisp of a mustache and his weak appearing figure, which hid considerable skilled strength. "You like to see a drizzled, beaten fox torn to pieces alive."

"No, I don't," interrupted the girl. "But it's done," went on the man.

"I know," said the girl. "That's why if I were a man I'd ride nothing but steep-chases. I love a run best when the fox gets clean away. I love a race with neither whip nor spur. I love sport—and in the best sport there's no pain."

It was for such speeches as that—and actions, too—that they called Lady Diana "the clearest sportswoman in all England."

"Not if you're beaten?" questioned the cousin.

"Not if you played fair," said the girl.

Her cousin was moved to reveal, almost unconsciously, some of that queer sporting philosophy which sustained him in the somewhat questionable practices which were already being commented upon in his London clubs.

"I confess I have a weakness for winning," he said with an air of frankness. "Whatever the odds in your favor, there is a certain pleasure in pursuit—in getting home."

As to give emphasis to his words he drove the head of his spear into the

ground. He raised his eyes and, with a start, found Myrtle Anson, the young sister of Harry Anson, the Whip's jockey, near him. She had come quietly into the yard and, as if moved by an impulse of her budding woman's heart that she could not entirely control, had gone straight toward Sartoris. Lady Diana had not seen the girl, for the back of the marquis's granddaughter was turned to the more humble young woman.

For a moment Sartoris regarded the girl, then with a slight move of his shoulders he turned away. Myrtle Anson, seemingly cut to the heart, sank on a rock at the edge of the stream and continued to watch him with eyes of love.

This little bit of byplay had taken but a moment, and while it was taking place and Sartoris was still eyeing the sister of the jockey she was replying to his last observation.

"There's pleasure in getting home? On a weak thing that can't defend itself—or strike back?"

Her words seemed to the sick conscience of Sartoris to hold a double entendre, and he looked sharply at his cousin.

"Eh?" he exclaimed, suspiciously and expectantly.

But Lady Diana, who had noticed nothing and was but speaking of the immediate object before them, went on:

"I mean a weak thing like an otter. In sport there must be a fair chance."

It was with genuine relief that Sartoris answered:

"I know, but I prefer lowest weight in life's handicap—a shade of odds in my favor, when I'm trying to win. But you're a girl and mix sentiment with your sporting."

The women of the house party now claimed the attention of Lady Diana, and they called upon her to explain from her stores of "horse wisdom" the points of some of the racers. About them during this time hovered the anxious marquis. He had ordered the Whip put in a locked box stall, and not even the most charming entreaties of the fairest of his guests could induce him to unlock the door.

With a furtive glance about him, Sartoris walked toward Myrtle Anson sitting like a lowly muse of tragedy by the Bourne. This quick glance of Sartoris was by no means a precaution, for he knew that the few words that he might publicly exchange with the pretty sister of the jockey would not cause any comment, but his act was one of instinct. There was something furtive and almost sinister about this sportsman who took care to win when he could without causing too much of a scandal, and his rapid survey of the positions of his equals was his tribute to his own caution.

But the first words he spoke to the girl were ordinary enough. He disliked "emotion and all that sort of nonsense, you know," and he did not often exhibit it.

"Morning, Miss Anson. Been botanizing again?" he asked, lifting his hat and pointing to a leather case she carried slung over her shoulder.

"Yes," said the girl in a dull monotone.

"Up on the world?" he asked, lowering his voice with that cautious instinct, though there was no one to hear them.

"Where I could see the world," said the girl, meaning creeping between her words.

"With glasses?" he persisted.

For answer the girl showed him a pair of field glasses concealed in the case.

"Anything worth seeing?" Bitterly she replied.

"No; opponents Silver Shoe, Rover and The Whip—a striding gallop, but nothing like a trial."

There was that in her voice which would have told an expert in human nature that the girl despised herself for what she was doing, but that she could not resist the demands of this man.

But the cousin of Lady Diana did not honor the girl with the slightest concern for her feeling. He was thinking only of the horses and of how

many times he had won handily because of some bit of stable information he had been able to extract from the girl.

"I wonder if their dark horse is worth anything?" he went on, his gambler's sense playing in and out of a series of calculations as to odds and weights. "What a pile one could win if one knew! Twenty to one! Look here, Myrtle, you can pump your brother, if you like. He must know."

"He won't tell," said the girl, almost sulkily.

The tone of the captain was kinder, now that he had found something that the girl could do for him.

"You can make him," he said.

"I can't," she answered, her breast rising and falling. "I believe he suspects."

"You?"

"Me?" exclaimed Sartoris.

There was self-loathing, accusation and defiance of all the world in the girl's face.

"You and me," she said slowly, but almost sulkily.

But if he felt any impending danger at her words Sartoris did not show it. There was almost bantering humor in his face, which gave place to stuper as the girl hurried on in little panting gasps.

"My brother used to tell me everything. When he told me stable secrets I told you. I have been a traitor to him—and a traitor to them all. I have betrayed Lady Di, whom I love. I have sold out Lord Beverley, who gave us a home and everything we have in the world, and I have forgotten all that and have sold him out—sold him out for nothing at all, nothing in the whole wide world. A girl only does that for one reason, and my brother knows that."

With white fury Sartoris turned upon her. For a moment it seemed as

was at much pains not to let the women see it. But straight to Captain Sartoris, whom he instinctively disliked, though he tried to overcome that feeling, he went.

"Greville," exclaimed the marquis, "I'm afraid from what I hear that you were trespassing this morning."

"Oh, did we?" exclaimed Sartoris lightly, not attaching much importance to the opinions of the racing marquis upon any subject.

"Yes, from beyond the bend where the Bourne winds through the Brancaster property," Beverley answered, in a modified tone.

"Of course—so it does," answered Sartoris. "Well, we didn't go far. Surely it doesn't matter. As a neighbor Brancaster wouldn't object."

Beverley frowned as he went on in his ponderous and bombastic tone:

"He's a neighbor to whom I object; certainly not one from whom I'd ask favors."

One of the women of the house party, Lady Antrobus, had overheard the two men use the name Brancaster. Of Lady Antrobus it had been said that "she rushed in where—well, you know, my dear." Her shrewish curiosity made her anxious to know what they were saying of Brancaster, so, despite the breeding of her line, she interjected herself into the conversation.

"Lord Brancaster will have to sell the Rievers for a song if he goes on racing so desperately," she said.

She was an old neighbor of the marquis, and her chance touching upon a hobby of Beverley aroused his ire.

"Pardon me," said he, "betting so desperately. Gambling is not racing."

"He's a wonderfully cool gambler," went on the chatty tongue of his feminine neighbor. "I saw him at Sandown last autumn betting over the rail with all the bookmakers on the other side ranging at him like a pack of wolves."

Sartoris himself had taken the other end of some of these bets, and his smile was useful as he put in:

"With Kelly, the Leviathan, leading them, hurling the odds at his head in thousands."

It was plain that Lady Antrobus, who had known of Brancaster since he was a boy, had rather a sort of admiration for him.

"And he never turned a hair," she went on. "I believe he loves the excitement."

The failure of the plan of the father of Lady Diana and of Brancaster had left a deep bitterness in the heart of Beverley, though his bark was worse than his bite.

The marquis felt that a man of his own position and morality owed to the world to point out every "horrible example," even if that example were the son of an old family friend, "for how otherwise can the rising generation get the proper moral perspective?" he had asked more than once.

So now he did not hesitate, though he was well aware that his utterances would place him in the light of seeming rather less of a gentleman than he was in the minds of those who might not understand his real feeling in this and related matters.

"He won't love paying for it," he said, "and for his other follies"—Ever Beverley felt that he was going too far.

But the mind of Lady Antrobus was alert for any bit of gossip.

"Are they so very costly?" she continued, hoping to open the doors of the marquis's indignation.

But Lord Beverley glanced at Lady Diana, not very far off. Then he coughed as he returned hesitatingly:

"Hem—er—I have heard so."

Fuel to what she felt was a flame about to expire the voluble neighbor of Falconhurst added:

"I've only met him once," she said, "with the air of one contradicting the marquis, and I thought he'd be charming manners and was quite good looking. Every youngster must see his wild oats, you know, my dear marquis."

Lady Antrobus had partially succeeded. Beverley did not, it is true, add to her fund of knowledge regarding the escapades of Brancaster, but he did express his own opinion most forcibly, though in his somewhat stilted phrase.

"Certainly, let him sow all the wild oats he wishes," he said, "but not in my garden. If you women of position in social England did your duty a boy like Brancaster would be cut. Yes, and we men are just as much to blame, too, for we should cut him for your sakes. We smile too much and look the other way in these days. Many a youngster would be saved from perdition if his elders only spoke out as men and gentlemen should speak, as I myself would speak to Brancaster, if he ever came near here."

"If we all acted as we should in regard to these spendthrift boys and these wastrels more than half of them would turn from their folly and become worthy of their ancestors. If Brancaster ever came to Falconhurst I would not hesitate to say to him, 'While my women folk live in my house you are not welcome within it.'"

Lady Antrobus sighed at thought of the young earl, who was so unwelcome in the home of the friends of his father. She might have returned to the attack, but at this moment a loud cry from Captain Rayner, one of the men of the house party, drew the attention not only of her, but of Beverley and all of the rest.

CHAPTER IV. An Old Acquaintance.

RAYNER was standing near the highway, which passed not very far from a corner of the stables, and he was looking upward along the tortuous course of the road as it steadily mounted to the highlands.

Down that road from the plateau above a large touring automobile was rushing, swaying from side to side as the man at the wheel took rockingly the many turns in the course. There was a woman beside him. Suddenly she arose and screamed. A moment later she had jumped from the car and was standing in safety in the road watching the terrifying descent of the automobile.

Lord Beverley was worried over something the women of his granddaughter's house party had told him. They had described the course of the otter hunt, and this description had displeased him exceedingly, though he

was not all of the women in the group at the Falconhurst stables saw the woman after she had left the lurching vehicle, as some of them were too occupied with their own fears and terrors, for gradually, after their first moments of amazement, they realized that the car was beyond control.

After the woman jumped the man looked backward for just a fleeting instant as though assuring himself that she were safe. Then he doubled over his wheel.

To the spectators among the wafifers it was soon apparent that the man in the car possessed no means of checking its momentum. Plainly his brakes were not working. As he came nearer and nearer to them they could see that he was fumbling with his change gear lever in an effort to throw into mesh the reverse and check the car, but something stuck and the gears did not engage. Then Lady Diana moved closer to the road, her face white, but self-possessed. She thought that she recognized the stanch figure in the car that through some deep seated instinct of sportsmanship did not and had not attempted to leave its seat.

Making a megaphone of her hands, she called up:

"Throw in your first; throw in your first! That'll slacken you."

But even before she spoke the man in the car had been attempting to do so. The lever shot forward, and then, before he could try to mesh the gears, the car literally careened on two wheels. The rider's hand was forced to quit the lever and with his other hand grasp more firmly the wheel.

He rounded the curve and literally fell, car and man, down the last descent that separated him from the bit of road beside the Falconhurst stables. Now he seemed to have clear sailing, for the road ran straight, and half a mile beyond the stables there was a slight rise that would be more than sufficient to check the speed of the car, intense though it was.

As car and man blurred past Lady Diana she thought she caught from the car the words, "Thank you," and the flash of a hand waved in the air.

The next instant there was a thunderous crash, followed by the manifold and multitudinous sounds of separate mechanisms of metal being rent asunder all in one second, yet following one another in minute fractions of that second.

The eye of the rider must have deviated from his course in that brief point of time when he had waved his hand and called his thanks to the girl, who had the presence of mind to shout to him the only thing possible in that crisis.

His car, deviating ever so slightly in that instant, had rushed into the stone corner of the bridge just at the side of the footpath. It lay in fragments and twisted bits of metal. The man, hurled to the middle of the highway, sprawled there, bleeding and unconscious.

For a long moment men and women stood without moving. Then Rayner and Beverley broke the spell, and a half dozen of them darted forward, took up the form in the road and carried it into the stable yard. Lady Diana upon her arm received the limp, hanging head as they put the man upon the ground.

"Quick, Lambert, some brandy!" ordered Beverley to the Whip's trainer. "Grandfather; he's dying!" exclaimed, pitifully, Lady Diana.

Then she looked long into the face of "the stranger, my aviator," she said, a vast sadness falling upon her as she saw the wrist lying there limp upon which not so long before her hunter had set its mark. He had laughed so blithely and had taken so good naturedly what had seemed to her a matter of so much concern, and here he lay dead or dying. Poor

stranger! Poor artist! But a step from laughter to death, she reflected sadly.

Now, Lambert had brought the brandy, but he did not hand it to the marquis as he caught sight of the poor, pale face.

"My lord, it's the man we thought a tout," he said to his employer.

"I can't help that," answered Beverley impatiently. "The pony cart, quick! The man's hurt. We must take him to the castle at once—at once!"

Captain Sartoris had been looking into the face of the inert stranger on the ground for several moments in a puzzled fashion. He knew that he knew the man, but the banishment of consciousness had made such a difference in the features that he could not

recall. Suddenly he made an exclamation.

"Good heavens, cousin! Do you see who this is?" came from him as memory cleared.

The marquis looked at the man on the ground and then into the face of the captain, an unspoken inquiry in his own eyes.

Sartoris took a deep breath, the better to subdue his own lively astonishment.

"It's—It's—Brancaster," he said.

For six days now Lord Brancaster had lain in one of the old lofty castles of Falconhurst. He had not regained consciousness for a moment since the day he had been buried out when his automobile struck the stone bridge.

Despite the words of censure the Marquis of Beverley had spoken of the Earl of Brancaster there was nothing for him to do now save to try to efface them in every possible way.

Beverley had done more than the situation demanded. It was as if the injury which had fallen upon the earl had wiped out all the past and had brought to the old racing nobleman a renewed consciousness of the brotherhood of man. The most noted physicians and surgeons of London had been summoned by him, and Sir Andrew Beck, whose very retaining cast a distinction upon the families able to induce the great surgeon to visit them, was even now in consultation with some half dozen of the kingdom's greatest surgeons. There was a question as to whether they would try an operation in the hope of relieving the pressure upon the brain, but the consensus of opinion was against it.

The chamber in which Brancaster lay had been the abode of more than one fugitive nobleman in the days of the commonwealth, which had followed the ascendancy of the Puritans after the execution of Charles I., and there was a well authenticated legend that "Bonnie Prince Charlie" himself had once been sheltered there when there was a price upon his head.

But certainly never before had the old apartment occupied by the unconscious Brancaster had a more lovely aspect. There were flowers everywhere, but not in the profusion that would have meant annoyance to the ill man had he been conscious of them. There were lilies of the valley in the old stone vase built into the old disused fireplace. Their white loveliness was accentuated by the long trailing vines which formed their background, for Lady Diana had seen to the corner and the decoration of the apartment of the man she was sure could not be all quite bad.

The accident to this young man in the prime of his life had done much to soften her pride of the very young, and she realized that her judgment was harsh.

In these days she accepted nearly everything without question. When the woman she had seen with Brancaster on the day he was known to her merely as the artist called at Falconhurst and asked to be allowed to sit by the side of Brancaster the girl had led her without question to the bed-chamber, though her grandfather had subsequently seen that a footman performed that office.

Lady Diana had not inquired as to the woman's name, but she had noticed her name. The "Mrs. D'Aquila" she had received told her nothing, and she did not ask other information as to the dark, foreign appearing woman who seemed to take Brancaster's injury so deeply to heart.

There was within Lady Diana a deep spiritual sense. She felt that the stricken earl might die. Indeed, she had heard it so whispered, though the marquis tried to spare her such thoughts as these. She felt in her pure consciousness of small sin that if he died without receiving the benefit of the Church of England or of any clergyman there would be a cloud upon both his chances in a world which might understand him better and upon her own conscience. She could not forget those murmured words as the car shot by her and that waving of the hand. Surely "that within us which makes for righteousness" could not ignore such a spirit. His was a rare soul, which must have its chance in that void into which it hourly seemed about to escape.

So she had dispatched a note to the vicar, innocently unmindful of the fact that "Sporting Jack" Thorpe rode far better to hounds than he did to grace and that even then he was taking the cure for gout far from the village, the great name of which was Beverley.

Today just as the sun was about to set she was waiting on the terrace of the Italian garden for the appearance of Thorpe in answer to her summons. As she walked to and fro along the terrace, with many glances down the little path known to her friends, who did not wish to drive three miles along the road through the acres of the marquis before they reached the castle, she was joined by her cousin, Captain Greville Sartoris. The captain was, as usual, "devilishly hard up," and he was trying to evolve a way to make a "killing."

To him Lady Diana expressed her fear that Brancaster might die before a clergyman could see him.

"My dear Di," exclaimed Sartoris, "he's just as likely to come to himself and wake up as he is to kick off, and when he does wake up, mind you, Di, he won't ask for any parson. He'll ask for the lady who is sitting by him now."

The birth of what may have been jealousy began in Lady Diana. It was not strong and merely manifested itself at this moment by a curiosity not usual with this gentle though self-contained English girl.

"Greville, who is Mrs. D'Aquila?" she asked suddenly.

There was astonishment in her cousin's face as he realized that the ordinarily self-sufficient Diana, who usually was content with the personal knowledge that her own senses conveyed to her, had asked him a question on a plane with those asked by the ordinary members of her sex. Ner-

cessness he did not pause in his answer.

"Oh, you know, Di, she was staying at Rievers when the smash came—staying there with a very tame chap-eron. Oh, she does everything very correctly."

"But who is she, Greville?"

"She was a married woman moving in good society," said Sartoris. "She is—er—still received in some society. She is exactly the sort of woman who suits the Brancaster sort of man. She is not the sort of woman Beverley would wish me to discuss with you."

He stopped and looked into her face. She seemed abstracted, musing upon something very far away. He thought that there was a look of tenderness on her face. Perhaps this wasn't the right moment, but he was rather hard up, you know, and they were alone. Who could tell when they would be

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