

**A MAN
OF MARK**

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A Man of Mark by Anthony Hope

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






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










ANTHONY HOPE

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A                          
Man of Mark             
                           by Anthony Hope, *pseud.*



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A MAN OF MARK.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOVEMENT AND THE MAN.

In the year 1884 the Republic of Aureataland was certainly not in a flourishing condition. Although most happily situated (it lies on the coast of South America, rather to the north—I mustn't be more definite), and gifted with an extensive territory, nearly as big as Yorkshire, it had yet failed to make that material progress which had been hoped by its founders. It is true that the State was still in its infancy, being an offshoot from another and larger realm, and having obtained the boon of freedom and self-government only as recently as 1871, after a series of political convulsions of a violent character, which may be studied with advantage in the well-

known history of "The Making of Aureataland," by a learned professor of the Jeremiah P. Jecks University in the United States of America. This profound historian is, beyond all question, accurate in attributing the chief share in the national movement to the energy and ability of the first President of Aureataland, his Excellency President Marcus W. Whittingham, a native of Virginia. Having enjoyed a personal friendship (not, unhappily, extended to public affairs) with that talented man, as will subsequently appear, I have great pleasure in publicly endorsing the professor's eulogium. Not only did the President bring Aureataland into being, but he moulded her whole constitution. "It was his genius" (as the professor observes with propriety) "which was fired with the idea of creating a truly modern state, instinct with the progressive spirit of the Anglo-Saxon race. It was his genius which cast aside the worn-out traditions of European dominion, and taught his fellow-citizens that they were, if not all by birth, yet one and all by adoption, the sons of freedom."

Any mistakes in the execution of this fine conception must be set down to the fact that the President's great powers were rather the happy gift of nature than the result of culture. To this truth he was himself in no way blind, and he was accustomed to attribute his want of a liberal education to the social ruin brought upon his family by the American Civil War, and to the dislocation thereby produced in his studies. As the President was, when I had the honor of making his acquaintance in the year 1880, fifty years old if he was a day, this explanation hardly agrees with dates, unless it is to be supposed that the President was still pursuing his education when the war began, being then of the age of thirty-five, or thereabouts.

Starting under the auspices of such a gifted leader, and imbued with so noble a zeal for progress, Aureataland was, at the beginning of her history as a nation, the object of many fond and proud hopes. But in spite of the blaze of glory in which her sun had risen (to be seen duly reflected in the professor's work) her prosperity, as I

have said, was not maintained. The country was well suited for agriculture and grazing, but the population—a very queer mixture of races—was indolent, and more given to keeping holidays and festivals than to honest labor. Most of them were unintelligent; those who were intelligent made their living out of those who weren't, a method of subsistence satisfactory to the individual, but adding little to the aggregate of national wealth. Only two classes made fortunes of any size—Government officials and bar-keepers—and even in their case the wealth was not great, looked at by an English or American standard. Production was slack, invention at a standstill, and taxation heavy. I suppose the President's talents were more adapted to founding a State in the shock and turmoil of war, than to the dull details of administration; and although he was nominally assisted by a Cabinet of three Ministers, and an Assembly comprising twenty-five members, it was on his shoulders that the real work of government fell. On him, therefore, the moral responsibility must also

rest—a burden the President bore with a cheerfulness and equanimity almost amounting to unconsciousness.

I first set foot in Aureataland in March, 1880, when I was landed on the beach by a boat from the steamer at the capital town of Whittingham. I was a young man, entering on my twenty-sixth year, and full of pride at finding myself at so early an age sent out to fill the responsible position of manager at our Aureataland branch. The Directors of the Bank were then pursuing what may without unfairness be called an adventurous policy, and, in response to the urgent entreaties and glowing exhortations of the President, they had decided on establishing a branch at Whittingham. I commanded a certain amount of interest on the Board, inasmuch as the Chairman owed my father a sum of money, too small to mention but too large to pay, and when, led by the youthful itch for novelty, I applied for the post, I succeeded in obtaining my wish at a salary of a hundred dollars a month. I am sorry to say that in the course of a later business dealing the bal-