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THE FAMILY HONOUR.

BY MRS. C. L. BALFOUR.

Continued from page 85.

Before Norman had recovered himself sufficiently to inquire, "What is it to me, her coming here? Why did I make such a simpleton of myself, rushing down in that way?" Fritz was conducting Dr. Griesbach across the yard. Norman was able to face round and bow.

"What! Don Umbra, I declare, shot up into a lofty mystery! I need not ask how pease-meal and bannocks have agreed with you. I'm glad to see you."

The last words were so cordially uttered, and accompanied by the open hand in which our startled Norman laid his own, that the banter of the first exclamation was quite atoned for.

What an altered house the sombre abode was for the next two hours! Something of Ella's cheerfulness flushed through the old place. Talk of marvels of chemistry, what is so great a marvel as the transforming power of beaming looks and kind words sweetly uttered?

Martha came out of her cell, and sunned herself in the light of the smiles she had seen before the shadow of her mother's grave had fallen on Ella. Fritz changed his old jacket, and donned a fine laced coat in honour of the "Fraulien Ellachin." The Professor patted his young relative's cheek paternally, and let his active old hand rest lovingly on her soft curls.

Norman was called to join the party as they sat down to a repast of fruit, and cream, and brown bread. And miserably abashed the youth was, with some secret consciousness that kept him unable to raise his eyes to Ella, and yet treasuring every word she spoke, he was most thankful for a word of commendation from Dr. Griesbach before he and his daughter departed.

"I'm pleased, almost more than pleased, gratified by what I hear of you," said the kindly physician, in a whisper, at the gate. "Work, learn. I'll advise my kinsman here about further studies, if you progress as you have done hitherto."

"Shall I take a message to Rupert?" said Ella, as she kissed the Professor's cheek in filial style.

"No; I'm angry with him. Why is he not here in my laboratory?"

"He's not well. And he prefers languages to alembics and retorts," said the young girl.

"Your brother is wilful, then. Chemists and engineers rule the world."

"Pshaw! nonsense," said Dr. Griesbach, impatiently: "wealth rules."

"Oh, dear papa! I've heard you say truth rules."

They were gone, and the night came down darkly upon the house as Norman went to bed, reciting to himself, over and over again, what he had just heard. "So Martha was Ella's nurse before she came here as housekeeper. I'll coax the old woman to talk about her. And this Rupert is her brother." What could it matter to Norman?

CHAPTER XL. FRIENDS AT THE HALL.

"Life is transfigured in the soft and tender
Light of love, as a volume dunn
Of rolling smoke becomes a wreathed splendour
In the declining sun."

ALEXANDER SMITH.

While Norman's life was thus unfolding under the teachings of books, solitude, scientific experiments, and, though last not least, the inspiring hopes of love-prompted ambition, we must leave him for awhile to their influences, and visit some old acquaintances.

Time had passed beneficially over Austwicke Chase since we last saw Gertrude recovering from her long illness, and compensated for suffering—so her parents thought when they saw her—by being no longer conspicuously undersized. Yet a lingering delicacy of constitution rendered great care and quietude needful; and it is just possible Mrs. Basil Austwicke was not sorry that the physicians she consulted, advised a tranquil country-life for Gertrude until she should be grown up.

Meanwhile, Allan Austwicke had discovered—

as his parents had, indeed, long before—that his old contemptuous talk about the "mere Nimrods," and bucolic squires of his Austwicke ancestry was but talk, indulged in on the "sour grapes" principle, while he had no expectation of succeeding to the ancestral acres. To misprize advantages which are never likely to be possessed, and to satirize peculiarities out of the range of individual temptation, are common foibles of the young—perhaps of the old also, only the former do braggingly and independently what the latter do malignantly and enviously. Not a particle of envy was in Allan's composition when he thought it likely he should have to be a lawyer. While he did not exactly take a study kindly—that was not his rôle—he had made amends to himself for his school toils by fancying that, if even not a great lawyer, he should be something far better than a mere country gentleman. But on the death of the heir De Lacy, he had gone to Oxford; and, though by no means a presuming young man, he was not insensible to the improvement in his position which his father's coming into possession of the family estates had brought about. The life of a country gentleman, improving his property and engrossed in agricultural matters, soon seemed to Allan the very happiest life; he felt again as he once had done when, a little child, he had gone to the Cattle Show in London, and rejoiced at Farmer Wotton, of Wicke Farm, on the Austwicke lands, taking the prize for pigs. From that moment, fat cattle, fat lands, and big homesteads, had been secretly a good deal in the boy's mind; and, as it is quite certain, some English boys take to water like Newfoundland dogs, and were meant by Nature to be sailors, so it is equally sure that some have as strong a predilection for the woods and fields, and all the work and all the sport that is to be made or found in them.

Mrs. Austwicke, to be sure, had cherished the hope that her son would be a scholar. Certain glowing visions of legal triumphs leading to the woollack, or at least the judge's ermine, had floated before her mind as likely to be Allan's inheritance; for though she held that his Austwicke ancestry had never shown either great talent or ambition, her son's descent from the Dunoon family gave him an inheritance of brains which, she argued, education would teach him how to use. But, it must be owned, maternal pre-visions are too much influenced by affection or vanity to be very correct. And so it came to pass, as Mr. Basil (now Squire Austwicke) had laughingly prognosticated all along, that Allan was soon a keen sportsman, a fearless hunter, a capital cricketer—"anything, my dear," the father would add, "but a lover of parchment and a groper among Acts of Parliament."

The young man had left college, as hundreds do, without disgrace and without distinction. He spent afterwards, by Mrs. Austwicke's request, some time abroad, rather impatiently, and was returning, much to his father's satisfaction, to "look to matters" at the Hall, which was all the more needful, as a legal appointment—one of those quiet bits of preferment that come to well-connected rather than well-endowed lawyers—had come to Mr. Basil Austwicke. He was made Taxing Master in one of the law courts; and as he had planned many alterations, meant to be improvements, at Austwicke, he needed some one who would look to his interests during his long-enforced absences from his estate.

Not half the farming, draining, and road-making that he had planned could have been undertaken, but for the fact that the barren Scotch acres, which were his wife's dower, had been sold to a railway company. And though the money had been but tardily realized, and still more slowly was the iron road, in which he was a large shareholder, progressing, yet Allan was surprised, as, on a fine August morning, he approached his ancestral home in a dog-cart, which had been sent to meet him at the station, to see the changes that had been effected while the young man was making what he very truly called "a run on the Continent."

The dilapidated old church was restored; the whole front of the house was renovated; and a fine arch, where the east porch stood, was flanked by a sort of annex—his aunt Honoria's dwelling,