

GRANTLEY MANOR.

A TALE

LADY GEORGINA FULLERTON,

Author of "Lady Bird," "Ellen Middleton," &c

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

"Hesquints, grandmamma, and Mary Dickens has a crooked mouth and a bottle-nose," cried Margaret, glancing at the opposite looking-glass, which, certainly, reflected an image ill-calculated to inspire aversion.

At that moment the door opened, and two gentlemen came in, the very two for whose appearance Margaret had vainly watched during the last four days. Walter Sydney, shook hands with her, and then introduced his companion, young Neville, who, after a slight bow, turned away, and withdrew into a recess behind Mrs. Thornton's embroidery frame.

Margaret had been anxious to see Edmund Neville; first, because she had heard of him all her life; and, secondly, because that wish had been thwarted for three whole days. She was somewhat disappointed at his appearance, people we have heard of and thought of much are seldom like what we have expected to see; and though Walter had told her that his friend was not tall, that he was very slight, and that, with the exception of a pair of handsome grey eyes, shaded with black eyebrows and eyelashes, he had not a good feature in his face; she had pictured to herself a very different hero de roman from the boy, as she rather contemptuously termed him in her own mind, who was now sitting opposite to her.

In order to explain why he need have been a hero de roman at all, we must unveil a little more of that secret web which is woven in a girl's mind during the time when her future destiny is a mystery to her. Margaret, like—not all—but most girls, from the time that she had ceased to consider her own marriage as an event that would as naturally and as inevitably occur as having her first gown substituted for a frock, her hair turned up with a comb instead of flowing in ringlets over her neck, or dining at seven with grown-up people instead of at two with her governess, and often resolved in her secret thoughts what was likely to be her destiny in that line. It must be confessed that the idea had often suggested itself to her mind that Mr. Edmund Neville, the friend—almost like herself, the adopted child of Walter, the heir to an immense property in Ireland, and, as she had heard, distinguished at Oxford for his remarkable abilities, would be a very desirable husband for the heiress of Grantley Manor. On this notion had been built up many secret imaginings, many vague cogitations respecting his probable merits, his qualities, his looks, and the circumstances that would attend their first meeting. This event had now come to pass, but unattended with exciting incidents; and what was still more provoking, she did not herself feel in the least excited; but turning to Walter, she said in a low voice—

"What an unkind man you are, not to have been to see me for three whole days! Account for yourself, Old Walter, or I shall think you the most capricious and inconsiderate of men!"

She could not repress a smile as she made this accusation, it was so inconsistent with Walter's character, that she fully expected that he would regard it as a jest; but strange to say, he looked a little embarrassed at the charge, and said he had intended to come, but had been twice accidentally prevented just as his horse's head had been turned towards Grantley.

"Have you been showing Mr. Neville the beauties of the country?" said Margaret, who was curious to hear her new acquaintance speak.

He turned his head suddenly towards her, the color rushed into his cheek, the keen glance of his eye rested one instant on her face, and then was rapidly withdrawn. Opening Mrs. Thornton's "Every Lady her own knitter," or some such erudite guide to learning, he began reading out to her, in a low voice, directions for the manufacture of a poor man's waistcoat, and then begged to count the stitches in her work, and appeared quite absorbed with his occupation, while Walter was replying to Margaret's question. Not being much accustomed to give up any point, however trifling, on which her mind was set, she cut this answer rather short, and turning to young Neville, asked him what he thought of the scenery of Brace Muir, the object of their excursion on the preceding day. He gave a light start when she spoke to him, and answered, without raising his eyes from the rows of knitting which he was counting, "It is very wild, very picturesque." Then in a hurried manner he held out the knitting to Mrs. Thornton, with several stitches in it dropped, and walking up to the flower-stand, he smelt the geraniums and twisted their leaves, with a heightened color and restless manner.

"It is getting late, my love," cried Mr. Thornton from the lawn in front of the drawing-room; "your pony is impatient, and you had better be off."

"We will accompany you," said Walter; "it will scarcely lengthen our ride, and I should like Neville to see the beauties of Grantley before they have shed all their leafy honors."

"I must go back straight to Heron Castle," cried his friend hastily; "I have a letter to write before the post goes out; but I know the way, so do not think of me."

Margaret was provoked; it was evident that Walter's friend was resolved not to make her acquaintance, and bent on avoiding her society. A slight, almost imperceptible swelling of heart accompanied this impression. She was not pained, no indeed; nor mortified either. What was it to her—what did she care whether that ill-mannered boy chose to notice her or not? It was very good-natured of her to have offered to talk to him. She had no wish, now, ever to set her eyes on him again. She was sorry for Walter that his friend was so ungracious and unsatisfactory. She did not wish indeed that Walter had allowed him to be tossed off the battlements of his own castle; but she did wish she had not asked him to Heron Castle to spoil all their comfort. She was just seated in her saddle, and gathering the bridles in her hand, when, turning towards the windows of the dining-room to nod a last adieu to Mrs. Thornton, her eyes met those of Neville, who was standing by her grandmother's side. They were fixed upon her with

an intense and piercing earnestness which startled and confused her.

The next moment, long before they had reached the gate of the park, she had made up her mind that Walter had all along had it in his head to bring about a marriage between her and his friend; that he had probably hinted this to her; that this had been very foolish of Walter, for it had put a constraint on their first acquaintance, which would however very soon wear off; and by the time they turned the corner of the avenue, she had begun to examine in her own mind whether Edmund was not rather too short and too slight to be reckoned good-looking; whether she should, on the whole, like to marry an Irishman; whether there was any Irish accent in his way of speaking; and, above all, whether there was likely to be any opportunity of ascertaining this fact. There was no time to be lost in investigating the subject; for with Margaret there was generally little or no interval between the thought in the mind, and the words on the lips. That interval! How it varies with different people! How much turns upon it! What a rubicon it is—that second, during which the impetuous impulse of the heart, or the rapid conception of the brain, moulds itself into words, and assumes a living shape!—During which, some can deliberately close "the barriers of their teeth" as the Eastern proverb has it, and force back the rising flood,—some, into the polluted dens they call their hearts,—some, into the secret shrines where self is sacrificed and God adored!

What a strange power there is in silence! How many resolutions are formed—how many sublime conquests effected—during that pause, when the lips are closed, and the soul secretly feels the eye of her Maker upon her! When some of those cutting, sharp, blighting words have been spoken which send the hot indignant blood to the face and head, if these to whom they are addressed seek silence, look on with awe, for a mighty work is going on within them, and the Spirit of Evil or their Guardian-angel, is very near to them in that hour. During that pause they have made a step towards heaven or towards hell, and an item has been scored in the book which the day of judgment shall see opened. They are the strong ones of the earth, the mighty for good or for evil, those who know how to keep silence when it is a pain and a grief to them; those who give time to their own soul, to wax strong against temptation; or to the powers of wrath, to stamp upon her the mark of their withering passage.

Margaret was not, at this time at least, one of these mighty ones, and she thought that crossed her mind seldom failed to pass her lips, especially when Walter was at her side. She had not therefore been many minutes seated in her saddle before, to use a common expression, she took the bull by the horns, or rather the mane of her companion's horse in hand, and rolling the rough hair round and round her little finger, she asked—

"How long is Mr. Neville going to stay with you?"

"A few days longer, I believe. How do you like him?"

As she left the vicarage drawing-room, Margaret would certainly have answered "Not at all," but there had been something in that earnest gaze which she had detected through the clematis creepers of the dining-room window, which disposed her to suspend her unfavorable judgment. She thought it accordingly more prudent not to commit herself, and said with a smile—

"Why, in truth, he seems little inclined to give me an opportunity of judging."

"I suppose," said Walter in the same tone, "that he is afraid of you."

"Afraid of me!" cried Margaret, with a burst of her own merry laugh, "I wish that was true! I should like to see somebody afraid of me! Why, Walter, I cannot be dint of frowning and lecturing, make one of the school-children afraid of me. I threatened the other day to turn Martin Dick, the carpenter's fat boy, out of the room, but when he put his thumb to his nose, and spread his fingers out, looking all the time so impudently good-tempered, I laughed outright, and compromised my dignity. What black fingers they were, too!" she added, laughing again at the recollection, while with her own she imitated the attitude of the naughty school-boy, and looked so very pretty, that Walter said, in a half-grumbling tone—

"Some people might be afraid of you, though Martin Dick is not. Afraid of loving you too much, you little wretch!"

"More than I deserve, you mean, Old Walter? Well! you may be afraid of that; though I should hope your gaze was a hopeless one; but as to Mr. Neville, he can have none of that sort of fear."

"O Margaret! Margaret! this was the first time in your life, that you did not think the exact truth: for did you not think, even while those words were in your mouth, that just such a fear as that, would make somebody avoid you in a vicarage drawing-room, and peep at you through branches of clematis?—and did you not begin to revolve in secret why Edmund Neville should be afraid of thinking you too pretty, or making friends with you, when the very worst that could happen to him would be to fall in love with one of the most captivating beauties that ever mounted a little spirited Arabian;—and who now, as the wind blew about the brown curls that escaped from under her hat, bent her head low to avoid the spreading arms of the old oaks through which she winded her way; and as she darted out of the grove into the open plain, drew herself up, and shook back those troublesome curls, and rained in her horse; till he arched his neck, and shook back his mane too, and bounded along as if the hope of conquest and the pride of beauty, and the schemes of youth, and the visions of joy, and the magic scenes which fancy draws on the blank pages of futurity, were stirring at his heart, and flushing before his eyes, as well as in those of his mistress?"

Ride on, Margaret! Ride on while you may, with that bright color in your cheek, with that smile in your eyes, with that joy at your heart. The blue sky is over your head, and the smooth green turf beneath your feet, and the Spirit of Hope within you is undimmed and strong. Ride on! with Old Walter at your side, and his voice of kindness in your ear. The sunny days of spring wax stormy, and the spring of life is often darkened! Ride on, Margaret, ride on while the wintry wind brings color to your cheek, health to your frame, and joy to your heart.

(To be Continued.)

Regina Notes.

Deep snow blizzards, low temperature and delayed mails have been enjoying several innings during February through the Northwest, and Regina has experienced a fair share of the tribulations belonging to the season yet every recompense that frigid weather and long evenings offered have been harnessed to enjoyment's wheel and although the present mild days and balmy chinooks bring joy to the man who has a coal bill to foot the pertinacity with which the devotees of curling and skating pursue each favorite pastime leaves room to surmise that some at least will not be overpleased if Jack Frost surrenders his hold before they have enjoyed some more of the privileges flowing from the possessions of a season's ticket.

Prominent amongst the schemes of benevolence and pleasure is that of the (Penny) "Penny Readings" Association which with blessed charity as its object and under the presidency of the Mayor, Dr. Willoughby, condenses the talent of the town into an entertainment twice a month and never fails to pack the hall with an appreciative audience. At the nominal admission fee of 5c over \$28 was taken in at last meeting and at least 100 turned away for want of standing room. The money realized so far has furnished several loads of wood and bags of flour to those in need.

Amongst those whom the 2 weeks blockade on the Prince Albert was detained, unwilling guests in Regina and this side of the invincible snow drifts far up the line are Judge McGuire and Father Michel, the latter having been transferred from Texas to labor in the Prince Albert mission. The change from 70 deg. above to 50 below Zero, added to nearly a week spent on the train north of here in a fruitless endeavor to reach his destination has furnished a chilly reception to the good Father, which we hope, the hospitalities of Father Caron have done much to dispel.

The genial judge too appears to have been alive to the pleasures of a pre-Lenten week in the capital and tripped the light fantastic with right good will at the Barracks Ball.

Father Lemieux has returned from his western trip looking as though he enjoyed the good things of life among his Montana friends and bringing with him from the mines many rich specimens of ore as well as many other substantial testimonials of the generosity of the Butte people.

Mr. A. E. Forget Ass't Indian Commissioner and lady have departed for the east in search of health and for a well earned holiday intending to cross the Atlantic and pass some time on the Mediterranean Coast. We shall miss his pleasant smiles and ever welcome presence and surely we pray that both shall return with renewed hope.

His Honor, Governor Royal, went east last week on official business.

The ladies of the "Altar Society" hold regular meetings and transact much useful business, the practical part attendant on collecting and disbursing funds being well under way.

The Curling competition mentioned in our last notes finished in favor of Sandy McDonald and E. McCarthy after a very close game. Both however have the honor of winning laurels in the recent Winnipeg bonspiel the two Regina rinks of which they were respectively members having forged well to the front in several of the grand contests decided there.

The appointment of Sir John Thompson and the discomfiture of Dalton the Bold have been very nauseous pills for our Orange friends, but the introduction and probable success of Gladstone's Home Rule Bill is the last straw so we find them busy lining the "last ditch" with an "humble petition" etc. praying for the abolition of dual language and separate school privileges. The aforesaid petitions to the House of Commons is we are informed being "numerously signed" and who, by the way, ever saw a petition that was not? We happen to know however that in this case it has been quite "numerously" repudiated by the respectability of the town outside of the pale of those valorous "truly loyal" and we are very much mistaken if such a petition will not be accepted by our rulers as very strong evidence that the rights of the minority in the Northwest are not safe in the hands of a majority composed of such calibre as go to make up such petitions.

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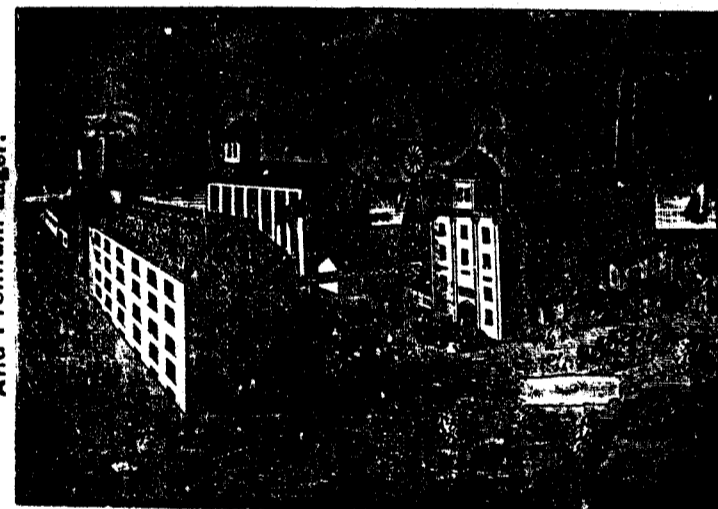
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