

GRANTLEY MANOR.

A TALE

LADY GEORGINA FULLERTON, Author of "Lady Bird," "Ellen Middleton," &c

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

Then think of the torrents of light, of the golden splendor, which the Italian sun shed on those fantastic buildings—on those bright waters, on those gorgeous flowers—those dark-eyed women. Think of the busy hum of men, of the rapid glances, of the wild smiles, which give life to that magic scene of the romantic associations which make your own heart beat at the name of Verona; and then say, Piazza to arrive there, on that very Piazza delle Erbe, on a delicious morning in May, was not enough to make Leslie exclaim, with Italian enthusiasm and English earnestness—

"There is no world without Verona's walls." Ginevra was more beautiful than Leonardo's design; no canvass has ever borne the semblance of so lovely a creature; no poet's language has ever described the passionate languor of her dark eyes; no sculptor's hand ever moulded a fairer form than hers; the wavering and broken lights that fit on the surface of a stormy sea, are not more varied than the gleams which passed over her face as hope and joy, passion or tenderness, love or scorn, animated her faultless features. When Leslie first beheld her, she was standing under the portico of the villa where Leonardo had preceded him, and holding her brother's hand in hers, she extended the other to him, while she said, in that tongue the very sound of which is music—

"Oh welcome, to you who have recalled the bloom to his cheek, and the light to his eye. He needed sympathy, and you gave it. Yours shall be the blessing of those who carry the cup of cold water to the lips of the weary traveller. You will stay with us. Will you not, Leonardo's friend? We have no English comforts," she continued, changing her earnest manner into a playful one, and glancing at the deserted-looking building near which they stood; "but our sun and our orange-trees, uncle Francesco's books, and Leonardo's love shall do what they can, and your kindness the rest," she added, with an increased softness of accent, and a glance from under her dark eyelashes which seemed to ask for something more than kindness; and yet Ginevra was no coquette. She was innocent as the child who crowns her head with flowers, and then laughs in the joy of her heart, as she sees herself in the glass; pure as the swan who curves his white neck as he skims over the water, or the gazelle, who turns her large dark full eye upon you as you pass, for she was as careless of her own beauty as the laughing child, and

"Not the swan on the lake or the deer in the vale" were more guiltless of a plan or of a design than the niece of Father Francesco, the priest of Ronere, the sister of Leonardo the painter. But her eyes spoke in a way which none but those gazelle-looking eyes can speak; the bright color in her cheek rose and fell with bewitching rapidity, as Leslie told her tales of other lands beyond those snowy Alps on which they gazed from the orange gardens of her home; she learned English, which, in her little mouth, grew soft as her own skies, and she taught him Italian, which in his became the very language of passion; and when under the shade of an elm-tree they read together the charming romance of Luigi Porta, he thought her the very ideal of the Italian Juliet;—when he surprised her one morning at break of day as she stood leaning against a broken column, and holding her empty basket out to show a clamorous crowd of beggars that her store of provisions had come to an end, he almost wished himself one of those beggars who kissed the hem of her garment, and called her saint and angel. Thus, day by day, in every hour, in every action of her life, in each conversation in which she poured forth the bright and pure thoughts of an ardent but guileless mind, and the high aspirations of an eager spirit, he discerned a goodness and a nobleness which answered to the vision his soul had formed of her whose image had riveted him in Leonardo's studio; when, in the daily tenor of her life, he saw exemplified that simple type of pure religion, and undefiled, which St. James, in a few short words, describes—"To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world;" then, to the passion which had sprung up in his heart, was joined a reverent and intense admiration, which he subdued and hallowed its nature; but when, with a strong effort, he once spoke of England and departure, Ginevra turned as white as the marble of Carrara which her brother was chiselling; and when Leslie hastily retracted the words, the pomegranate in her hand was pale by the side of her cheek—all this flashed one day on the kind but stern guardian of the orphan girl. Father Francesco, with severe tenderness, bade her shut her ears to the flatteries, and shun the presence of the stranger, who knelt not at the same altar as themselves, and who talked of love, and not of marriage, as his Ginevra. She obeyed; and Leslie saw the silent struggle of a passion, strong as life, but not stronger than conscience; and he who had watched, followed her, lived in the light of her dark eyes, who had ceased to care for aught on earth but her smiles and her tears, or to fear anything but the loss of the idol he had enthralled in his heart with all the impetuosity of his nature, which had never brooked check or control,—he determined, at all risks, to make her his own.

After a few months, into which were crowded the agitations of a life, during which he had to conquer the opposition of Father Francesco, the scruples of Leonardo, and the objections of his own parents; once, to part from Ginevra when insurmountable difficulties stood in the way; another time, to rush back to her side only just in time to prevent her taking the veil; after fears, hopes, anguish, terrors, emotions, and joys, which made this second era in his life as different from the first as a canto of Dante's from a scene of Metastasio, he became the husband of his beautiful Italian bride.

He was again happy for a time, happy, at least, as far as the present moment went. Ginevra was all in all to him; he loved her with that wild idolatry which makes human passions a fearful thing, which seems like the desperate gambler's stake of his whole fortune upon one throw,

a garnering up of the soul in one object, a concentration of all the feelings on one sole point. He remained in Italy; he spent a winter at Rome, a summer on the Lake of Como. He could not bear to transplant his beautiful Southern flower into the blighting atmosphere of the North, or expose her to the cold reception which he knew the prejudices of a hostile family could not but procure to her; and it was well that he did not! They had their bliss; two years of married love two years spent among nature's fairest scenes—two years of undivided trust, and daily intense happiness—is not that a great deal of bliss for one man's life? Must not such bliss as that decay? Had it not better cease abruptly, than slowly wither?

I am unwilling too early in my story to dwell on scenes of gloom, and this is only a retrospective sketch of Colonel Leslie's life. He was once more left alone with a child, another girl, two or three years younger than his little English Margaret. One of those sudden and malignant fevers which make such havoc of human life had carried off Leslie's second wife, and her last words were to entreat him that her child might be placed under the care of her own relations, and brought up in her own faith. Leslie religiously complied with this request. This great catastrophe, this second overthrow of the happiness of his life, did a great and sudden work upon him—the work of years. It sobered, perhaps it hardened him. No one exactly knew in what spirit he bore it. He solemnly consigned his children to their respective families, and then he went to Spain and India. He grew stern in manner; some said, heartless in character—cold he certainly was: none knew him well, and few liked him. He is now returned to his home, and we have seen his first arrival there after ten years' absence. His second marriage though well known at Grantley, had never been openly talked of or acknowledged among the members of his own and his first wife's family. It had ever been an unpleasant topic, a forbidden subject. When Margaret was a very little girl, she had once heard Mrs. Thurston whisper to Mrs. Sydney, after her father had been named—

"My dear Mrs. Sydney, since that sad Italian affair, I have never been able to feel as if he belonged to us, or would ever really be at home with us again. I have quite a horror of Italians." Margaret, who had not the least conception what an Italian was, took an opportunity on the following day of asking her governess what her grandmamma had meant by "that sad Italian affair," and why she had had such "a horror of Italians?"

"Mind your book, and don't ask foolish questions, Miss Margaret," was Mrs. D.'s judicious though not satisfactory answer. When in time Margaret learned more about Italy and Italians, she was still more puzzled, but took every opportunity of talking upon the subject; because, as she observed to one of her little friends—

"When I do so, everybody makes a face; grandmamma purses up her mouth, and gazes at the ceiling; Walter frowns and looks at his boots, and grandpapa strokes his chin and begins humming." "Does he indeed?" asked her companion, who was younger than herself, and who evidently thought these effects must be produced in the same manner as, by pulling a string, Punch, Judy, and the hanged man are set in motion. "And can you really make them do all that only just by taking of Italy? How very odd!"

That it was not very odd we can now understand, and in the following chapter we will resume the story where we left it.

CHAPTER III

On the day after Colonel Leslie's arrival at Grantley, the sun shone brightly as the assembled family met at breakfast with cheerful countenances, and it not all with glad hearts, at least with kindly feelings towards each other. It was a hard frost, and the window-panes were incrustated with those graceful and fantastic patterns in which we can trace all sorts of fanciful landscapes, the hoar-frost hung lightly on the branches of the trees, and the lawn sparkled with its diamond rays. Margaret sat at the head of the table making tea, the hissing urn before her; her little hands busily managing the old silver teapot, the large coffee cups, and the blue Sevres cream-jug, and the huge embossed sugar-basin. A cap with pink ribbons was fastened gracefully at the back of her very small head, her large violet eyes seemed to have borrowed their color from the hyacinth or the iris, and her voice was sweet and clear as the tone of the silver bell by her side. Four pairs of eyes in that room were fixed upon her with fond but very different expressions; not to mention those of the family pictures which seemed staring at her, also, and those of Ebro and Tagus, the two large dogs, who, with wistful countenances, gazed alternately upon her and the buttered cakes before her. As she laid her hand on the black head of one, and thrust a large morsel into the open mouth of the other, she said to Walter—

"You are not going home to-day, are you?" "Indeed I must, and immediately after breakfast, too." "Why?" "Walter glanced across the table at Colonel Leslie, who was busily engaged with the newspaper. Margaret, who thought that look implied that it was now her father's business and not hers to press him to stay, colored and said in a low voice—

"I am sure he wishes you to stay; pray do, Walter." "I cannot, indeed; I am expected home." "And for what important business, that you put on so serious a manner?" "Nothing very important. A friend of mine is coming to us, and I must be at Heron Castle to receive him." "A friend of yours! How curious I shall be to see him!" "Curious! why curious?" "Oh, because he must be something very wonderful. I never heard of your having a friend before." "I am sorry you think me so utterly friendless." "Oh, not altogether friendless. Grandpapa is your friend, and so am I, and Mr. Killigrew is your friend, and so is the old clerk, and Mrs. Fellowes, too, in a sort of way; but I never knew you have a friend before on a formal visit to Heron Castle, a friend who kept you from Grantley, and whom you called in that mysterious manner, without naming him at once, 'a friend of yours!'"

FROM MANY SOURCES.

The London zoological gardens contains now no less than 3,100 animals.

Ransom Turner died at Adairsville, Ga., a short time ago at the reputed age of 104 years.

Cover a nail with soap and it will then be easy to drive into hard wood.

One of the new cruisers will have a smokestack 100 feet high. An English mail steamer has funnels 120 feet high.

According to a paper published in Bristol, England, Lady Henry, Somerset, the temperance advocate is the owner of fourteen buildings which are now being used as saloons.

Mrs. Sarah Balch Braman, of the seventh generation from John Balch who came to America with Captain Georges in 1523 and settled what is now Salom, Mass., has just celebrated her 102 birthday at her home in Georgetown, Mass.

"I want a dog's muzzle," said a little fellow, entering a hardware store.

"Is it for your father?" asked the cautious bookkeeper.

"No, of course it isn't!" replied the little fellow, indignantly "It's for our dog."

A wonderful rustic table is owned by a Philadelphia lady. It is formed of the boughs of a tree and the bark has not been removed from them. It has been in her possession just two months, and about a fortnight ago it began to throw out green sprouts and is now in full bloom.

Arizona has 70,000 inhabitants, according to Governor Murphy's annual report. There are 512 miles of irrigating canals, not including laterals, and 343,000 acres of land have been reclaimed. There are still 1,730,000 acres capable of reclamation. The territory has produced \$3,000,000 in gold, \$2,200,000 in silver and \$4,500,000 in copper during the year.

An English clergyman recently officiated for a brother clergyman. Being anxious to know what impression he had made, he asked the clerk, "Was my discourse pitched in too high a key? I hope I did not shoot over the heads of the people." "No you didn't do that, Sir." Was it a suitable theme?" asked the clergyman. "Yes it was about right." Was it too long?" "No, but it was long enough." "I am glad of that, for to tell you the truth, the other day, as I was getting this sermon ready, my dog destroyed four or five pages, and that has made it much shorter." "Oh, sir," said the clerk, "could you let our vicar have that dog?"

Negroes, even more than white people, perhaps, are given to counting their chickens before they are hatched. A correspondent of the "Youth's Companion" reports a laughable instance. Gus, a young colored boy, grew confidential one Friday evening.

"I'm goin' to the cimitery next Sunday, Miss Mary," he said.

"But, Gus, that is a long walk. You know it is more than four miles."

"Oh, I'm not a goin to walk. I'm goin' to ride."

"How is that, Gus? Has your father bought a carriage?"

"Naw, but I'm goin' in a kerridge to my uncle's funeral."

All day Saturday Gus could talk of nothing but the coming festivity. To a young "darkie" a Sunday funeral is a great event.

Sunday I gave him a holiday, and on Monday expected a full account of the funeral, but Gus appeared with a melancholy face. In answer to my enquiry, he said:

"I didn't go, Miss Mary. He aint dead yet."

The sick man recovered.

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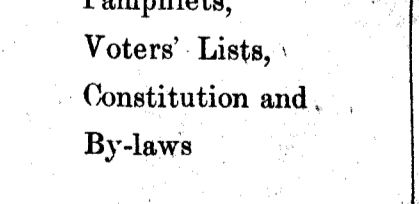
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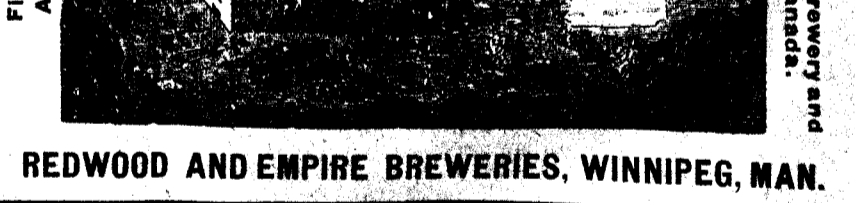
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