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HONOUR WITHOUT RENOWN

BY MRS. INNES BROWN

Author of "Three Daughters of the United Kingdom"

CHAPTER XI.

"Thank God?" gasped Sister Marguerite the following morning, as she sank breathless into a vacant chair near Madame Corbette's bedside. "Thank God for safe shelter at last. Oh, I have had a race for it indeed? Once I feared the ruffianly soldiers would overtake me. Listen!"—laying her hand upon the coverlet and assuming an attitude of fearful attention—"can you not hear the roll of musketry? They are but a mile or two off now. *Mon Dieu!* but it is terrible how they fight! What must it be like in the city? Poor dear Ma Soeur! God grant that she and the rest of the thoughtful of the convent close by; otherwise I must long since have discontinued my visits to you."

A boy's cry was stretched forth, as though in grateful response, clenching tightly the little hand of the speaker in a grasp almost expressive of protection. "How, indeed, would the painful hours, and the weary days, ever have passed but for the cheery presence of the kind little heart beside her? Her departure from the cottage meant darkness again; her return, sunshine, comparative ease, and renewed hope. So thought Manfred, as the welcome tones of her voice fell upon his ear; and he heaved a deep sigh of relief and actually thanked God that He had raised up these gentle creatures, endowing them with such charity and skill. Was it possible that only a short time since, only a few weeks ago, he had treated with contempt a wearer of the *cornette*. What a fool he had been!

"My foot has been so painful, Sister," he moaned piteously when, having at last finished her ministrations to the old woman, she cheerfully came forward to attend him.

She made no immediate reply, but a look of anxiety passed over her face as she bent and examined carefully the troublesome wound. Then she shook her head solemnly, merely observing: "No, it is not healing as it should do." Mentally she concluded: "It is worse, far worse than it was; the color is bad, the pain great; there is internal irritation somewhere! Alas, the knife will be necessary after all, I fear. It is dreadful!"

After fulfilling all her tedious duties, Sister Marguerite, at the request of Manfred, seated herself once more with the still undischarged garment upon her knees, awaiting the continuation of his story. Every now and again a brisk shower would patter against the window pane, while the room grew dark. Then the fresh keen wind would chase it away, and the bright sunshine flash into every corner of the apartment, revealing the now delicate almost ethereal features of the sick man, and lighting up the rosy cheeks, spotless *cornette*, and poor habit of the gentle Sister, as she listened in rapt attention to the sad narrative of her patient.

"Keep your seat today, please; don't withdraw into the corner as you did yesterday; and if I appear to get nervous or excited, do not be surprised or astonished. You see, I know some of the doctors in this drama rather intimately."

"I understand"—with a comprehensive nod. "You were telling me that Harold and his mother had made up their minds that, by fair means or foul, he should have a share of his brother's inheritance."

"Yes, just that; and when such people make up their minds to do a thing it requires a strong force to prevent them from achieving their object. In this case circumstances favored them. A mild stronger and more crafty than their own, to their assistance in the son of the family lawyer. He was a daring and unscrupulous rogue, such as I hope never to meet again! But for him—but for his unceasing importunity and cunning advice—Harold would never have fallen as he did."

As Manfred spoke his eyes had a wild expression in them, and he struck the bed clothes with his doubled fists as though striking at a bitter enemy. "This wretch—this wily, clever knave—look a violent man!" he said coldly. "Rest content to know that poor Harold never won either Sir Henry's love or his confidence. Deep in the old man's heart lay the memory of his dead brother; and, stern as he strove to appear in his conduct towards the poor youth that Edmund was an interloper, possessing no real right to existence at all; that but for him Harold himself would have been the only legitimate heir to the title and Abbey Lands. How he persuaded Harold of the truth of all these representations I cannot now recall. But, oh, how easily we can be induced to commit the foulest deeds if only we are certain to profit by them! To cut a long story short, all three young men were sent to Cambridge together, to complete their education; Sir Henry consenting, after much persuasion on the part of the old lawyer and Mrs. Manly, to pay Harold's expenses."

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