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R. WORTHINGTON,

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## THE FAMILY HONOUR.

BY MRS. C. L. DALFOUR.

Continued from page 217.

## CHAPTER XII. GOSPEL.

"The hawk poised himself for a sudden spring, While the strutting sparrows kept twittering." ANON.

Gubbins was seated in the servants' hall, yawning a little over the old newspaper that he was drowsily spelling out. The entrance of the stranger startled him; but, seeing the pack, in a half slumberous voice the old butler growled out, "No, no, you're too late wi' your pack; I lets no one inner doors arter—"

"Late! 'tis no fault o' mine. Blame the rail, and not me, my good sir. My good friend—I've reason to call you so—I'd have stayed at the station hotel, or gone on direct to Winchester; but I thought Mistress Martin, or may be yourself, wad be glad to see the very best goods I've had this one whike."

"Martin's in mourning; but you can come in. I didn't at first just chance on who you was; you've been a precious long while away from these parts. Why you looks much the same—Old Leathery by name, and Old Leathery by nature; and no offence—no offence!"

The ancient butler chuckled out a hearty plethoric laugh as he invited the packman in, who, sitting along and letting his pack down, said, somewhat angrily, "You don't look much the same, you look wonderfully better."

"Ay, ay! you and I, maybe, 'll last out a good fewish of the young uns, thof they're that up in the stirrups, a many on 'em there's no keeping 'em in their places. But they hant done yet with the likes o' you and I."

"No, no; not they, sir," said the packman, giving his mouth a back-handed wipe, and peering all round the hall. "And so good Mistress Martin is in mourning—no near friend?"

"Was nor that—that is, I don't know as she've any own friends: it's one o' the family—the best on 'em's gone. Leastways, between you and I and the post, and to go no further, I may say so. Muster Edmund was always outlandish, and I doubt Muster De Lacy, his son, be the same, and Muster Basil's nought of a country gentleman; but the captain was a Haustwicke every bone on him. He'd been the one to keep' up the old place, if so be as he'd been born at the right time. He oughter a been the hare. But there comes Martin. I say, yer's a pretty go, Mistress M.: a strange gentleman's a wanting of you."

The old man turned a fuc purple as he laughed, and Martin, whose eyes were getting dim, did not see in the shadowy hall who it was that Gubbins was announcing, so he stared questioningly when the packman, in his dry tones, remonstrated—

"Mum, Mr. Gubbins will have his joke. I've come, Mistress Martin, a long way out o' my round, to show you a shawl for winter wear, that's not to be had in any shop in the south of England; I brought it from Paisley myself."

"Why, deary me, it's Old Leathery!" exclaimed Martin, recognizing him. "I thought you'd gir' up—made your fortin', and left off tow'ring about. Goodness! to think on the miles and miles as you've gone over since I fust set my eyes on you in Lish—mago."

"Lismahago?" said the man.

"Ah! that was it, I can't well get my tongue round them names o' the North, they're like oatmeal—a bit sticky in the mouth, and cloggy in the throat—that is, of them as is used to whateen flour and shoe-leather."

"Ou, now, spare my country."

"Bless and save us! I meant no harm to your country. Spare! it's all spare as I see. I'm as glad as a bird our dear little Missy came—that is to say, Miss Gertrude—or I and my lady might have been by now at that Glow'er O'er, with a great 'ill a-hanging over our heads, and another under our feet; and if climbing o' hills is good to raise some people's spirits they always puts mine down."

"Them! if there's hills, there's plains, too, in Scotland."

"I s'pose so, I s'pose so," said Gubbins good naturedly, thinking Martin was over sharp. "There's never so high an 'ill but there's as low a dale."

"And so ye're not going to Scotland this season, Mistress Martin?"

"Not if I can have any say in it; no, thankye. But whatever you have been a-doin' wi' yourself? It's a year or more, for sure, since you was here-away. Be you a-gettin' idle along o' gettin' rich?"

"I'm a poor man still, or it isn't hereabouts I'd come; it's like ploughing the mountains."

"Well that's what your country folks is used to; and as to poor, why, all the talk as ever I could make out away yonder was o' packmen as grow to be merchants and bailies and what not. The little uns eats in that belief with their porridge—it saves sugar."

"You're too clever for me, Mistress Martin. You're like your country folk—a sweet voice and plenty o' words."

"More words nor wit by fur," chuckled Gubbins.

"I don't say so when Mistress Martin's by, but I've a bit of other business on hand as well a bit message to the lady herself."

"A message to Mis Austwicke?" cried Martin, surprised.

"Is it to ask her consent to your coming a coortin o' Martin?" said Gubbins, thinking it was a joke.

Old Leathery drew his knuckles across his mouth, puckered his eyelids nearly close, and with a little cough said,—

"Ou, it's just a trifle a message from Glow'er O'er, in case I came nigh here, to be sent, if the lady pleases, to Mr. Basil Austwicke; but, little or much, as I was asked to bring it and to give it myself, so I must e'en do it. I said to myself as I came, 'Maybe I can help Mistress Martin to an elegant shawl and carry the message all under one; and as it's already o'er late to see the lady, ye'll let me have speech of her, and then I can open my pack after.'"

Martin was not, as we have seen, without a duo spice of curiosity. She fell very readily into the plan, assured that, if she could not get the purport of his message out of Old Leathery before she bought the shawl, that over the bargain she would do so.

Accordingly she went, taking a card, with a pencil-mark on it, into the parlor, where the lamp had just been lighted, and Miss Austwicke was sitting with her knitting, and her niece at the piano, both cozily settled for the evening. Whether it was part of Old Leathery's shrewdness not to increase Martin's curiosity by asking for a private interview, or that he had a good guess that the lady would grant him one when she read the card, certain it was she no sooner heard Martin's words than she gave all attention.

"There's a Scotch dealer, Miss Honor—a packman—below, that says he brings a message to you from Glow'er O'er. He's late, through the hojous railway. He isn't a stranger-like, for I've dealt with him for years—ever since I fetched Miss Gertrude home, that time. But maybe, Miss Honor, as he's strange to you, you'd like me to stay."

"Do Martin, learn to give a message without so many words," said Miss Austwicke, taking the card from her servant's hand and reading—"The bearer comes from A. Burke, in 1859 of Dumbarton."

She paused a moment, turning her back towards Martin, so that the light from the lamp fell over her shoulder on the card. Then, after reading the words two or three times, as being, Martin concluded, unable to make them out clearly—which indeed, she, even with her glasses, had failed to do—in her usual voice, only a little quieter, Miss Austwicke said—

"Light the lamp in the breakfast-room, Martin. You can go on playing, my dear Gertrude—I will not have any stranger in here. I shall be back soon."

With that sense of injury with which a check is received by a favourite servant, Martin led the way into the room indicated, lighted the lamp in silence, and compressing her lips as she looked at her mistress, as much as to say—"I'll not