

HELEN MOIR

LOVE AND HONOUR.

A TALE OF THE CLYDE. CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE CONTENTS OF THE PACKET—WATCHING BY HERMANN'S COUCH—THE CRISIS APPROACHES.

Edwin led the way into one of the front rooms looking out upon the street. It was now past daybreak, and the soft grey light of early morn was stealing through the casement—sufficient to show the objects in the room, but not strong enough to read by; and as they were all impatient to know the contents of the will, the curtains were closely drawn, and they sat down at the table in eager and excited expectation.

Bridgenorth untied the string, when the packet was seen to consist of two papers—a larger and a smaller—the larger being the will, and the other a sheet of common paper, closely written in what Bridgenorth at a glance recognised as the handwriting of George Jordan.

"It is precisely a copy of the former will," he said, "but without its extraordinary condition of forfeiture. By this document, as by the other, I am made the inheritor of George Jordan's whole property, simply and inalienably, with the proviso that I retain Jasper Jaquin in my service, or pay him an annuity of fifty pounds should I dismiss him."

"Whew!" cried Edwin. "Then that is the document that takes effect. The former will is abrogated!"

"Undoubtedly."

"And the hospital in Melbourne gains nothing by the revelation of your identity?"

"Not under this last and final settlement."

"Is it properly stamped and duly executed?" asked Edwin, delivering his questions one after another in rapid abruptness.

"It is," answered his uncle, "the stamp of the Colonial Government is affixed. George Jordan's name is at the bottom and the names of two witnesses, one of whom is that of Jasper Jaquin."

"The man that I scorned!" said Edwin, bringing his clenched hand with violence on the table.

"Yes," sighed Bridgenorth, "Jasper has played me false to the last. His enmity has been unquenchable. In the suppression of this will he retained a cruel power over me, and caused me to endure torment of his presence when otherwise I would have rid myself of the annoyance. Ah, well! his power of mischief is at an end now."

"Not with his will, though," returned Edwin. "He meant to make the injury perpetual, as we saw by the frantic efforts he made even in death to destroy this packet; and, dot, that I was, I would have allowed him to do so yesterday had he insisted."

"But," remarked Ritchie, "what in a world could be the creator's object in working his evil against ye, Master Bridgenorth?"

"Ah, Ritchie, who can understand the feelings of a perverse nature? None of us, I hope, and least of all you, who are cast in a mould entirely opposite. The essential elements of Jaquin's spirit, were malice, cruelty, and fiendish wickedness. In these he lived and moved and had his being. Physically, morally, and socially he was unhappily constituted; as for religion, I could never discover that he had any of it."

"In short," cried Edwin, "he was a very devil, a fiend incarnate, and he has gone to his own place."

"Hush, Edwin," said Bridgenorth, in a gentle tone, "he is dead, and that saves him from all censures from us."

"Good gracious, uncle, can you speak of him so mildly, after the irreparable evil he has done you—the measureless suffering you have endured through his machinations?"

"Yes, Edwin, I can. By the grace of Him who brings good out of evil, I humbly hope that these same sufferings have purified me in some measure."

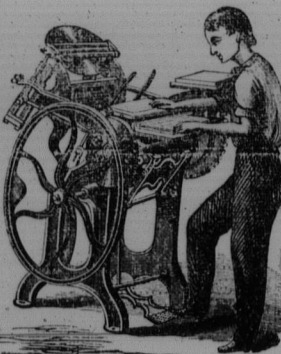
"And the highest Christianity," cried Edwin, as he warmly grasped his uncle's hand. "It is a noble complication of the Master's precept. Do you see how that despoitically you and persecute you! I admire you for the sublime altitude you have reached, uncle; but I confess that I am not saint enough to imitate you."

"Nor I!" exclaimed Ritchie, with stately candour. "I am perfectly sure that I'll never come to think of Jasper Jaquin but with feelings of anger and bitterness. In fact, the best way will be never to mention his name again."

"Right, Ritchie," cried Bridgenorth. "Your advice is sound, and we shall follow it. Let us finish the subject once for all by seeing what are the contents of this other paper."

It proved to be the candid confession of George Jordan, written in contrition, remorse and sorrow, revealing a human heart struggling between parental affection and the high claims of conscience and duty. George Jordan had been substantially an upright, honorable and true man. The infamous career and miserable death of his only son had truly broken his heart, but his very sense of honour tempted him to yield to temptation, or rather it proved a temptation before which he fell. Through the ravings of Philip on his deathbed he came to know the truth concerning the forgery—that it was really his son who had committed the crime for which the innocent Edwin Allerton had been made to suffer. The right course for his father to take was unquestionably to clear the youth's character, establish his innocence, and restore him to his country and his friends. But he could only do this by publishing the disgrace of his family and his name, and he could not undergo the dreadful sacrifice, to keep silent, but conscience would not permit him to rest, and remorse added its stings to his anguished bosom. He sold off all and went to Australia, but though he could go far from England he could not fly from his own restless soul. Accident led him to discover the whereabouts of Edwin Allerton, living under the assumed name of Bridgenorth, and under the desire to atone for the wrong the youth had suffered at the hands of Philip, he got him to his abode. He lavished every kindness upon him, and came to the resolution to leave him all his property. Still the wish to preserve the honour of his family in the eyes of the world clung to him with undiminished force, and he conceived that idea of preventing all chance of discovery by attaching the singular condition to his will that if Bridgenorth resumed his true name, or revealed his identity to his family in England, the property should be forfeited to him, and go to swell the funds of an hospital. His will was framed and executed to these terms, and he thought now to obtain peace. For some time he did feel the gnawings of remorse less keen, but conscience still

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SHAW & MURTON, MERCHANT TAILORS.

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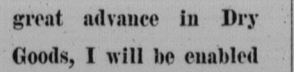
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Is now opening out a very attractive Stock of New DRY GOODS for early Spring use.

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Guelph, March 16, 1872 dw



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Flour and Feed as usual

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