

GRANTLEY MANOR.

A TALE

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

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

"There is nothing mysterious about him. His name is Edmund Neville."

"The same whose life you saved a few years ago in Ireland?"

"Exactly."

"O then I know all about him, and I am much relieved."

"Why relieved?"

"Because I had fancied that your friend would have been a sort of counterpart of yourself."

"And to such you could never have endured?"

"Why, dear Walter, I think you as near perfection as any one can be; but had your friend been exactly like you, you would have lost your originality, and a bad specimen of you I could not have tolerated."

"Well, you may comfort yourself, then, for we are as unlike as possible."

"Is he as grateful to you as he ought to be?"

"I do not see what gratitude he owes me."

"Did you not save his life?"

"I did by him what I would have done by any human being I had seen in danger of perishing. I see no merit in that."

"Merit!" exclaimed Mrs. Thornton; "no, indeed, my dear Walter, there was no merit in it, except the honor it did to your head and heart; but it is a bad precedent, indeed it is, to risk one's own life—"

"It is a precedent not likely to be too often followed," impatiently interrupted Colonel Leslie. "What is this story, Walter?"

"Let me tell it," said Margaret, eagerly. Walter shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and she went on:

"It was about nine years ago that it happened, when Walter was staying in Ireland, at Mr. Neville's house."

"My dear," interrupted Mrs. Thornton "your father does not care at whose house the accident happened."

"I happen to care," quietly remarked Colonel Leslie, "if it is Mr. Neville of Clantony; I knew him at Oxford."

"It is," said Walter.

"I remember," rejoined Leslie, "that he was one of the fiercest Orangemen in our debating-club. I can remember, now, a violent and eloquent speech he made against Catholic Emancipation."

"He was a prejudiced but a clever fellow."

"And such he has been ever since," returned Walter, "and where his prejudices and his antipathies do not bias his judgment, he is an excellent and most upright man; but his early impressions never forsook him, and subsequent events seem to have fixed them in his mind with indelible colors. He had made it a rule not to take a Catholic servant into his house, and had always strictly adhered to it; but his gamekeeper, who was one of those old hereditary domestics who succeed to the keeper's office, and to his lodge, with the same regularity as heirs apparent to their ancestral halls, married a Roman Catholic wife, who had brought up her son in her own faith. Knowing the strong prejudices of his master, he had carefully kept this fact from his knowledge, and as he was himself a regular ward attendant at the parish church, and Mr. Neville was not in the habit of troubling himself about the families of his servants, he knew nothing whatever of the religious creed of the boy Maxwell, who being in the meantime permitted to become the constant companion of the young heir, and his associate in all field-sports and rural amusements, a very strong attachment sprung up between the two youths. One day when they were clambering up trees in the park, John Maxwell broke one of the branches with his weight, and fell heavily to the ground. He was taken up senseless, and it was found that he had suffered a concussion of the brain. After a long confinement, he recovered his bodily, but not his mental health and strength, and exhibited from that time, occasional symptoms of partial derangement. Still, as there was nothing alarming in those symptoms, and the interest of young Neville for his companion was increased by an accident that had befallen him in his service, no interruption of their habit took place. The violence which Maxwell sometimes displayed towards others, was never shown towards Edmund, to whom he always evinced the most devoted affection. Among other pastimes, the boys were accustomed to scamper over the roof of the old castellated house, and one day that they had mounted there together, Maxwell was seized with one of those sudden and irresistible impulses which are the characteristics of insanity, and grasping his companion in his arms, endeavored to precipitate him over the battlement. At first, Edmund fancied that he was in jest, but when he found the attempt was real, he struggled with all his might, clung to one of the buttresses with the strength of despair—"

"And he was saved!" interrupted Margaret, turning to her father, "saved by Walter's intrepidity and presence of mind. He perceived from below the dreadful struggle, and swinging himself, at the peril of his life, from cornice to cornice, he scaled the outside wall of the turret, and reached the roof in time to rescue the boy from the grasp of the madman, who attacked him in his turn with desperate violence. Was it not so, Walter?"

"It was," he replied. "The scene was short but dreadful. I cannot think of it to this day without shuddering. The servants soon came to my assistance, and the unfortunate youth was secured. From that moment he became a confirmed maniac, and was placed in confinement. This incident, of course, made a great noise all over the country, and many stories concerning it were invented and circulated by the gossips about the place. Amongst others, it was reported that a Catholic priest had employed Maxwell as an instrument towards young Neville's conversion, and had so worked on his mind by spiritual terrors as to drive him to insanity. Mr. Neville had of course been greatly excited by the occurrence, and those false and absurd rumors were very soon conveyed to his ears. He thus learned, for the first time, that the constant companion, and very nearly the murderer of his only son, was a Catholic; and though he did not actually credit all the foolish stories which were current

in the neighborhood, his indignation was very great at the deceit which he considered had been practised upon him, and a fresh stimulus was thereby given to those religious antipathies which were already too strongly implanted in his mind, and his hatred of the Catholic religion, and of all who professed it, became more rooted, and assumed a more inveterate character than ever."

"Horrible!" muttered Colonel Leslie. "Very natural indeed," observed Mrs. Thornton, "to hate the man who has almost killed your child. I really think it quite wicked not to make allowances for people's feelings. Why, to this day I cannot look with any comfort on a Frenchman, since the French master gave Eustace the scarlet fever. He came to him with a face as red, and a throat as sore—"

"Why, my dear," interrupted Mr. Thornton, "you do not suppose, do you, that the man did it on purpose?"

"I suppose nothing, Mr. Thornton. I assert nothing. I do not wish to judge of people's motives; but I only maintain that from that day to this, the idea of contagion has been linked in my mind with the very sight of a Frenchman."

And Mrs. Thornton poked the fire with an energy and a consciousness of freedom from prejudice, that made Leslie and Walter, in spite of themselves, smile as they looked at each other.

Indeed, few things drew a smile from Leslie so readily as some piece of folly or inconsistency in others, and there was something bitterly sarcastic in the curl of his lip and the expression of his half-closed eyes. Even when anything appeared to work on his better feelings, and to inspire him with any degree of admiration or interest, he seemed not to sneer at others for being great and good, but at himself for being moved to appreciate it, and a bitter jest was generally the fruit of a latent emotion. As he became domesticated at Grantley, and renewed his intimacy with Walter, he could not help respecting his character, and admiring his way of thinking; but unwilling to betray this, he often sought to throw ridicule on his pursuits, if not on himself, in a way which was perfectly indifferent to the object of these attacks, but which tried his daughter's patience severely. Margaret's feelings were warm, and her temper not much under control; her affection for Walter made her peculiarly alive to the least allusion aimed at him in Colonel Leslie's conversation. Sometimes the injured Walter would rouse himself from a fit of abstraction, and observe her cheek flushed and her eyes darting fire at some remark which either had escaped his notice, or in which he had not discovered, or at least not resented, the latent sting. But we must now return to the day which followed Colonel Leslie's arrival at Grantley, and own that our little heroine, deprived of the society of Walter, and left in what was to her an awful tete-a-tete with her father, had some trouble to keep up her spirits; and when the two succeeding days also elapsed without bringing with them any change or variety in the shape of a visit from the inhabitants of Heron Castle, an occurrence on which she confidently reckoned, it was with difficulty that she restrained her impatience.

On the fourth day, having been again disappointed, she determined to order her horse, and late in the afternoon to ride to the vicarage, where Mr. and Mrs. Thornton had returned on the same morning that Walter had left Grantley. That vicarage was as pretty a home as can well be imagined,—one of those low-roofed, straggling cottages, to which a room had been added here and an angle there, till the original shape of the building had merged in these successive additions. Creepers and evergreens, and a gleam of sunshine, made it look as gay on that November afternoon as if spring, instead of winter, had been approaching. A few dahlias and Chrysanthemums still adorned the beds, and the hollies were already displaying their coral berries. Margaret's spirits rose as she galloped across the park, and drew near to the iron gate which separated it from the grounds of the vicarage-house. And when she came in sight of the house itself, every small-paned window, every smoking chimney, every laurel-bush seemed to give her a welcome. The house-dog barked furiously, the gate swung merrily on its hinges, the door-bell rung gaily as she approached, and she jumped off her pony as lightly as if for three whole days she had not been measuring her words, and glancing timidly at Colonel Leslie's face, with the secret conviction that he thought her a fool, or a bore. Her grandfather, who came hastily to the door, kissed her cold blooming cheeks, called her his darling child, begged her not to stand in the draught, and led her into the little drawing-room, where his wife was employed at an endless piece of tapestry-work, which had been as often unpicked as Penelope's, though not on as systematic a plan, or with so deliberate a purpose. Margaret tenderly kissed her grandmother, took the well-known work out of her hands, threw her own hat and whip on a couch, settled herself in a low comfortable armchair, threaded a needle, and began working as if for her life.

"Grandpapa!" she exclaimed in a moment, "grandpapa, I know now what the poor dogs feel when their muzzles are taken off."

"Do you, darling? How so?"

"I have been muzzled for the last four days," she returned, with a nod and a smile that made her grandfather stoop down and kiss her forehead, while he said:

"Foolish child!"

"Ay, grandpapa, you say 'Foolish child' and it means, 'Dear, clever, darling girl.' While my father says, when I make a remark, 'Very true, my love,' and that means, 'I wish the girl would hold her tongue.' So much for the value of words."

"Words, my dear," observed Mrs. Thornton, sentimentally, "are only the signs of things."

"True, grandmamma, and certain things had better give no signs of life at all; such as a father's aversion to his child," she added with a tone of mingled emotion and resentment.

"Nonsense, my love," cried Mr. Thornton, "how could anybody have an aversion to you, and still less your own father?"

"There is no accounting for aversions, Mr. Thornton," observed his wife; "I have felt myself the most inexplicable preferences for some people, and dislikes for others. I never could abide the sight of Mary Dickens, Mrs. Sydney's housemaid, or of the young curate who did duty here last Sunday."

Clippings.

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Polite Conductor—"Shall I help you to alight, madame? Aunt Mindy—"Much obliged young man, but I don't smoke."

Willie—"Papa, what is that big hammer for, in the box at the side of the car?" Papa—"It serves two purposes, my son—to enable the conductor to knock down fares and to help the commercial travellers to crack jokes."

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Dr. Phillips Brooks the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Boston, whose death is announced, after having read Bishop Spalding's recent article against exhibiting obscene pictures and improper amusements at the World's Fair said: "That is a great article, a grand work, that ought to be memorized and preached by every minister throughout the land."

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