

HONOUR WITHOUT RENOWN

BY MRS. INNES-BROWN

Author of "Three Daughters of the United Kingdom"

CHAPTER II—CONTINUED

Stirling with difficulty a mysterious sensation of alarm, he was turning to quit the room when his attention was attracted by a certain recess, which had previously escaped his notice. With a few rapid strides he reached the tiny alcove and roughly drew the curtains aside. They disclosed a small space exquisitely fitted up as an oratory. But he noted not any of the pious surroundings, nor yet a beautiful violin which reclined carelessly against the wall; his distracted gaze was riveted upon a portrait of a handsome young man—not altogether like what he might expect to have been—a little below the middle of the century, with a stilled exclamation of horror, Harold Manfred dropped the curtains and nearly fell to the floor. His knees shook, and the perspiration started from his skin. Still he glared with a wild fascination at the picture, whilst the gentle eyes of him in the portrait met those of the intruder with a frank, steady gaze that seemed to scorch with shame the very soul within him.

Summoning all his strength, he drew the curtains together and staggered to the door, not forgetting, however, to pick up the remains of the cigar which in his agitation he had dropped.

He had just regained the kitchen when Ryder re-entered it by the other door. The old man's hearing was still acute, and he detected even the slight noise made by the cautious closing of the parlor door.

"Well, sir," he questioned, in a tone of voice which from any other man in his position would have been termed impertinent, "and how have you been occupying of yourself the last ten minutes?"

"I—I—am not well, Ryder," returned Mr. Manfred, sinking into a chair. "I have been seized with one of my bad turns—weak heart, you know."

"And did you think for to strengthen it by prowling about another person's house, sir?" Ryder felt convinced that Mrs. Manfred had intruded into the man's private apartments.

"No, no! What do you mean? I tell you I felt ill and went in search of water."

"Oh, well, if that's all, sir," answered Ryder, somewhat mollified, "I'll soon get ye that; for Heaven knows, ye look bad enough. Quite scared like," he muttered to himself, as he trudged off in quest of the water.

"I am, indeed, feeling bad. Get me the water and let me be gone at once!" He rose as he spoke, for the dread of meeting the inhabitant of the lodge gave renewed strength to his limbs; and he longed to be out in the free air once more, far from that strange house and all its might contain.

When Ryder returned with a glass of water Mr. Manfred had already passed the group of gentlemen and was standing in the garden path, leaning with a wild light in his eyes, the road leading to the lodge.

"Why, Manfred," exclaimed Sir Hugh, with some concern, "how ill you look. Come back, do! The rain has not yet ceased."

"I have had one of my bad heart attacks, and when they seize me I must have air at any cost. Thanks," he continued, handing the empty glass to Ryder. "I shall soon be all right; don't trouble about me. I will stroll quietly back to the Court under the shelter of the trees; since there is no lightning to fear, I do not mind the rain."

"Where did you pick up Manfred?" inquired one of the gentlemen. He seems to be a strange sort of fish! See how scared he was about the lightning; and I declare, he looks even more terrified now. What a nervous fellow he must be."

"You think so because you don't know him," answered the kind-hearted baronet. "I tell you that at times of real danger Manfred is reckless—doesn't know the meaning of fear. The fact is I met the man abroad, where he did a kind action for me; he is only young, though at times he does look so beggared and careworn; so, in return for his kindness, I have taken him about with me a little. Of course, I knew that my cousin wouldn't mind an extra guest, and Manfred is a good shot. He comes of an old North Country family—has an estate in Yorkshire, I believe; though for some private reason, he seldom resides there."

"Doubtless the old tale: house occupied by the family ghost," observed another gentleman.

"Well, Lonsdale," laughed a military-looking man, good humoredly, "he is your friend, and in consequence we will be merciful. Only I shouldn't care to command a regiment of his calibre."

"Under fire he wouldn't turn out so badly as you think, take my word for it," said the baronet warmly.

They had left the lodge now and were sauntering slowly down a foot path towards the gamekeepers and beaters, who, having relieved themselves of their various burdens, came out to meet them.

"Can he," asked the military man aside to the gentleman who had last spoken—"Can he be the Manfred of Abbey Towers, do you think?"

"Possibly," returned his friend, with an expressive look and a meaningful shrug of his shoulders.

No sooner had the visitors departed than Ryder returned to the lodge, and endeavored to replace the chairs and generally to restore order. He felt constrained to examine the parlor just to see if Mr. Manfred had really entered it, and whether he had left any trace of his intrusion. No sooner had he opened the door than the odor of a cigar was wafted towards him. Seeking for water, were you, my fine gentleman!" he said aloud. "Oh dear, dear! but this is bad, and me left in charge too! I'm blessed if he hasn't dropped a lot of cigar ash here!" he exclaimed. "My eyes! I must clean it up quick or it will put the poor lady in a strange fright. The man must be more fool than knave," he muttered, as seizing the shovel he stooped down, and with the aid of his red pocket handkerchief swept the ash on to it. This done, he carried and locked the door as before and returned to the kitchen.

"No need to frighten her, poor thing; and as far as I can see, the man's done no great harm. Maybe I'll best say nothing unless I'm asked; but I'll keep my eye on the gentleman, and if I see aught suspicious like, I'll give me master a hint—that's all." He waited until Mrs. Manfred's return, when he quietly informed her how the gentleman had been overtaken by the rain, and had sought shelter in her house. She looked a little disconcerted at first, but seemed to forget the matter almost immediately in the assurance that all would be quite safe under Ryder's care.

Ryder was not called upon to act as spy upon Mr. Manfred, for at an early hour the next morning that gentleman had adjured to Sir Hugh and his friends and left for town, alleging that it was imperative for him to see his medical adviser at once. "I'll drive him to the station myself, and see him safely off the premises," thought John Ryder, as he drove round to the big entrance. "Maybe I may find out something more about him too."

Mr. Manfred seated himself silently by the coachman's side in the dog-cartful salute.

"I hope you're feeling better today, sir," observed Ryder, casting a side look down at his companion as they drove away.

"Oh, yes, decidedly; but I don't think this place can suit me. It was oppressive yesterday."

"It's mostly considered healthy, sir; but when our minds is oppressed everything feels heavy and dull like around us."

Manfred turned a sharp upward glance at his companion, but the placid countenance of the old man seemed to beam with innocence.

"Not that way!" cried the gentleman, clutching suddenly at the reins; "I—I much prefer this side of the park; it is shorter, and we shall reach the station sooner."

"Oh, as you will, sir. I did but think that as the day was early and we had plenty of time, we might as well lengthen our drive by going by the Western Lodge." "He's soon learnt his bearings anyhow," mused the old man, "and him only here for a couple of days."

"Who lives at this lodge, Ryder? It must be a sweet little corner in the summer time."

"The head gardener and his family, sir."

"Ah! how much prettier it is than the other one—not so lonely, you know."

"That may be the reason why some folks prefer it, ye see, sir. We ain't all made alike."

The rest of the drive was conducted almost in silence, though each man longed to put a leading question to the other. It was with a sigh of relief that Ryder at last deposited his charge at the railway station. He hoped sincerely that the gentleman was not "going away with more than he brought."

"We are well rid of him; I don't like him, well I don't trust him, that I don't," he repeated to himself as he jogged leisurely home.

Manfred booked for London and thence made for Paris. It was a strange place to choose, seeing that the city was every day being more and more straitly besieged. But Manfred was a strange man; he felt he needed change, excitement of some sort—the more dangerous, the better would it suit his present frame of mind. The old longing to do something desperate and great seized him—something that would raise him for ever in the eyes of his fellow creatures, and stamp him as a man of unimpeachable honor and renowned courage. He had also been playing much of late—had plunged deeply and lost heavily; the knowledge of which ought to have been of vital importance to him and detained him well outside the walls of a straggling city. But desperate men do desperate deeds; or it is not, rather, that at times a Higher Power overtakes them and forces them hither or thither they know not why or wherefore?

CHAPTER III

A month later and it was Christmas time. Paris—that home of the gay and festive, of the frivolous, the high-minded, the saint and the sinner—were a very different aspect now from what it had done some six or seven weeks before. Its light-hearted inhabitants were for once serious. No noise was heard of the empty boasting of the aged where-with the Prussians were to be trusted and dispersed, and how ignominiously they would retire, cringing like

craven dogs, to the borders of their Fatherland. The theatres and places of amusement had long since been closed; even the cafes were no longer crowded since given out, and the shops and streets were lit only by dim oil lamps. The churches were crowded, and ladies were seen clad only in dark and sombre attire, many of them devoting themselves to nursing the sick and wounded. The sortie made by General Trochu to Champigny had been productive of little good, but it had filled the hospitals to overflowing; and many a brave young French soldier lay breathing his last amidst want and cold far from his father's well-filled granaries. Previously, towards St. Denis, there had been severe fighting, and the troops in that quarter had had a hot time of it. Almost all the houses in that locality bore marks of the strife. Here and there shells from the Prussian guns had straggled off the roofs, or left gaping holes in the walls, whilst the streets and gardens were strewn with debris. The defending troops having broken up the furniture and torn up the flooring of many a stately building for firewood.

One cold day, about Christmas time, down one of these desolate, cheerless streets came a young English Sister of Charity. Some few yards behind her trudged a middle-aged, motherly-looking peasant woman, who was following the Sister's steps in the capacity of a guard. They had not very much farther to go, nor had the Sister much to fear; for though the roughs of Belleville and Montmartre were known to collect in small numbers about this quarter and search amidst the ruins for plunder, still at that time scarce the worst amongst them would insult a Sister of Charity.

The wind was strong and piercing, and little Sister Marguerite shivered as she hid her hands further in her sleeves and walked more briskly forward. Her sweet face was pale, and its expression was serious. Meat was at famine prices, and like many another Sister Marguerite was feeling the want of good wholesome food. She was hungry. Was she thinking with regret of the wealth, or the herds of plenty in her old father's home, or of the bright Yuletide fires which even now glowed in his merry halls? No! no such thoughts as these filled her mind or caused that an instant, her lips trembled with pity, as her quick eye detected, in passing, the hungry half-starved form of a large dog, which slunk away at their approach, as though desirous of hiding from men. Then a sudden feeling of gratitude rose to her heart as she thought of the comfortable bed and board provided for her dear old Leo at home.

A faithful attendant on the sick and wounded after the terrible carnage at Sedan, she had followed them with her gentle ministry, even to the heart of the capital itself.

Her kind heart had been almost overwhelmed with the sorrow and suffering she had witnessed. It was in no half-hearted manner that she had given herself to God, and devoted herself to His cause. The poor, the sick, the suffering, were His; and she tended and loved them with almost a mother's love; for being His, were they not her special charge also? Many a sick man and careworn woman, many a dying youth and sorrowful maiden upon her knees, had hung upon her words, and had poured into her ears their complaints, certain of inebbing from her courage and strength to shoulder their cross, or to lay down the burden of this life with calm and sweet resignation. It might be said that when she was near—

"Sad hearts forgot their sorrow, rough hearts grew soft and mild, and weary little children turned in their sleep and smiled."

Sister Marguerite was always cheerful. Does not Heaven deal ever thus with the generous giver, and fill the heart with a secret joy which none can take from them? Why, then, this present little cloud upon her face? She had a troublesome case on hand, and she longed for help from able hands. Under her special charge was a stubborn old French officer, who neither by word nor look could be prevailed upon even to acknowledge his God—much less to make his peace with Him ere it was too late.

"And he is dying," thought little Sister Marguerite; "I knew that there is no hope for him, my poor, brave old soldier! I must do something for him!" And in her old impulsive way she hastened her steps almost to a run; then she slackened her speed as a heavy thought seemed to strike her. Her eyes brightened with a gleam of hope, and the old merry smile parted her lips, as she whispered joyfully to herself in her own native tongue: "But wherefore should I so fret and worry about my poor old patient? Have I not changed the inmates of old St. Benedict's to beseech Heaven in behalf of all my suffering poor, and this old man in particular. Their prayers will obtain for him all the graces he needs. After all, is it not such as they who do the real work? Whilst I am tending the body they are pleading for the poor neglected soul; together we will cheer him, and my poor old patient, who has been so brave in battle, shall turn in penitence to his God ere he goes forth to meet Him as a judge." A few steps more and they paused in front of a poorly-built

thetic heart all the while: "Poor old soul, she has indeed cause for her anger and irritability. It is terrible to be afflicted like this."

The old woman was a well-known character. Her temper had driven all her friends from her; and when the siege commenced no one could prevail upon her to leave her cottage. It was her own, she protested, and she would live and die in it in spite of Bismarck and all his Prussian rogues.

So gradually every house in the neighborhood save this little cottage was vacated, and the Sisters of Charity were requested to visit her daily as no one else could be depended upon to do so. Merry little Sister Marguerite was generally selected for the task, and she was wont to laugh as she related to the Sisters the amount of courage it sometimes needed to bear the lioness in her den.

Having poured out some coffee, and made the meal appear as tempting and appetizing as possible, Sister Marguerite drew the table within easy reach of her patient, and said coaxingly: "Now enjoy your food. I will remain longer with you and assist you to your couch in case Jeanne should not come tonight."

"Had you not better go in search of wood, or how do you think the fire is to be kept in or relit in the morning?"

"Ah, yes, I had forgotten that. Where does Pierre generally find the logs?"

"Outside, of course. Those who seek can generally find if they wish."

Sister Marguerite made no reply, but turned humbly to obey. Leaving the kitchen she went towards a low door which she knew led into a neglected back garden. The short December evening was closing in: a dark cloud obscuring the pale sun made it appear even later than it really was. Large snowflakes were gracefully falling; the wind had suddenly ceased, and the leaden clouds threatened a heavy snowfall. The scene was one of utter desolation. The boundary line of the old garden wall was to be distinguished only by the heaps of ruined stones which lay around; whilst tall roofless houses seemed to stare with vacant gaze through their shattered and paneless window-frames upon the scanty grass of ruthless destruction below.

"How are you today, Madame Corbette?" she asked.

"Much you care how I suffer, or whether I live or die," responded the old woman wearily. "Here have I sat since early morning, having only once broken my fast, no one to bring me food or attend to any of my wants! Yet you can find time to stand and gossip outside my door while you know I am starving!"

"Nay, nay; do not be too hard upon me. I thought Jeanne would have been here as usual and given you your dinner. I am so sorry I could not come sooner," said Sister Marguerite soothingly, as she raised the old woman in her chair and endeavored to make her more comfortable. "Why did not Jeanne come today?"

"Why said she didn't come?" inquired the old woman tartly. "She did come. But she said I was unreasonable, and flew into a passion and left me to do for myself; and my legs have been more painful than ever today." Sister Marguerite took out the contents of her bag and placed them upon the table: a bottle of light wine, one small pie—the meat of which was, perhaps purposefully, disguised with strong seasoning—two eggs, a small bag of freshly ground coffee, two rolls of bread, and a small tablet of chocolate. Hurriedly pouring out some wine into a chipped cup which stood near, and breaking off a portion of the bread, Sister Marguerite took it to the old dame, saying sweetly:

"There, poor old mother; I am so sorry that you have suffered. Drink this, and I will make you some nice warm coffee before attending to your wounds."

"You'll have to make the fire up first, and there are no dry logs left, and bad management when folks don't get the wood in overnight."

But why did not old Pierre come last night to cut the wood as usual?"

"Why? How can I tell you why he suddenly threw down the saw in the garden at the back and fled. I suppose, like every one else, he has gone mad with fear of a few Prussian dogs. If I had but the use of my limbs once more, I would show some of these cowards how to go out and meet an enemy. Is not every house around here being deserted? or even to such it. We want the Reds to take care; they know the meaning of courage!"

Sister Marguerite was now upon her knees, sweeping up the ashes and endeavoring to revive the dying embers. She was feeling tired, and a sensation of giddiness creeps over her, caused by the stooping position when the sharp voice of Madame Corbette again roused her.

"I should like to know where you were brought up!" she snarled impatiently. "Your mother ought to be ashamed of herself for not having taught you to clean up a fire-side better than that. Way you are wasting all the best of the ash!"

"Am I really? I am grieved to be so stupid, but—with a merry laugh—"you see my education was so dreadfully neglected; you must excuse me; and I will try to do my work better and be more careful in future."

"I hope you will," granted the old woman, as she drank her wine and ate her bread greedily. "You don't look too old yet to learn; but Ma Sœur, as you call her, intermeddled that you come from England; and one cannot expect much from an Englishwoman."

With the aid of an old pile of bellows and some dry wood which she discovered hidden beneath the rubbish in another apartment, Sister Marguerite succeeded in making a glowing fire; and having placed a kettle of water upon it, turned towards the frail-looking woman in order to dress her helpless limbs. In her legs were large ulcerated wounds, whilst similar ones had broken out in her neck and side. With infinite pity the Sister skillfully dressed and bound them, thinking in her sym-

passant mother, when looking into flames: "Lord, save us from the fire of hell."

Then he passed out into the sunshine of that glorious day, mild for the season, but the pleasant coolness of which was grateful after the stifling atmosphere within. Dan took off his cap and wiped his heated face and let the breeze from the mountains blow down through his thick hair.

He observed the scene before him with the keen appreciation of a Celt for the beautiful. He saw the two streams still unchecked by the frost, flowing liquid silver, just touched with the mid-day gold, between the hills, frowning and majestic, with their trees bereft of foliage, but rising in graceful outlines against the skyline, and catching marvelous effects of sunlight on the brownness of their trunks.

"Glory be to God! but 'tis the fine country all out," the Irishman murmured, as he proceeded at a brisk pace to a neighboring lunch room, where an enterprising woman undertook to give their mid-day meal to the mill hands.

When it was gradually borne in upon his fellow workmen that McGrath meant no joke at all by the frank confession that he went regularly to the "Romish Church" and that he allowed that church going to influence his conduct there was general astonishment. Even the better sort were disposed to look distrustfully at the "Romanist" for their experience with that class of the population had been small.

The worse sort of men, on the other hand, whose Saturday night and other orgies had brutalized them, began to entertain a truly diabolical hatred for their simple and unoffending comrade. Also they were disposed to count upon that hitherto imperturbable good temper, which had been proof against jests and taunts of all kinds.

On one occasion, however, when a certain little clique, led by a particularly low and aggressive fellow who had been the leading spirit in the antagonism that began to prevail against poor Dan, went a little further than usual, the weakness in the foundry became overclouded, not to say stormy. This like Whitley passed from the usual sneers and jests, directed against the Irishman himself, all of which were taken in good part, to vulgar ridicule of religion and its holiest mysteries.

Dan's face changed at once, and his voice became stern and peremptory, as he cried:

"Hold on there, like. I don't allow any man to talk like that in my presence."

But the fellow, conscious of the grinning approval of his own party, went still further, winding up his ribald talk with a remark concerning the Blessed Virgin.

Instantly Dan's brawny arm was raised and with the single exclamation of "You dirty blackguard!" he dealt the offender a resounding slap on the cheek, that could be heard above the roar of the machinery.

Like eyes blazed with fury, though, being a slinking coward at heart he dared not retaliate. Instantly there was an uproar among the men. A certain number were in sympathy with the sentiments the ruffian had expressed. Some others could scarcely make out, at first, what the tumult was about, and still another few stood abashed and uncertain. These latter were Catholics, a small and weak minority. For even those among them who practised their religion had hitherto said little about it in that atmosphere which they knew to be hostile, and they were not known to belong to the despised religion.

There was a confusion of sounds, through which could be distinguished the lowest epithets applied to the "Papist," varied by expressions uncomplimentary to the Pope.

Dan, standing at bay, his eyes gleaming out from his blackened face and his powerful fists clenched defiantly, cried out:

"Come on, then, every mother's son of you! I'm ready for ye."

Though many sprang towards him threatening with cries of "knock out the bloody Romanist," there was a certain proportion of the more decent men who felt a thrill of admiration for that sturdy upholder of the faith that was in him.

Of course, in the majority of cases it was simply admiration of his courage, his strength and, as it were, the mere look of him; yet there were a few who could go deeper and catch some glimpses of the vital principle that had been the mainspring of his action, his reverence and the loyalty that had uplifted the poor toiler to a high spiritual plane.

The Catholics, too, felt some stirrings of shame and an awakening of that faith which had burned so brightly in their forefathers. Admiration for Dan was mingled with indignation and disgust for his opponent. Many of them were glad to remember afterwards that they had rallied to his side before the next act in that insipid little drama.

In the uproar and the buzz of talk that had followed upon McGrath's action the men had not noticed that the superintendent with two of the directors and large shareholders in the iron works had stepped unnoticed into the room. They had, too, been standing outside the corridor for a few moments, and so had been witnesses of all that had occurred.

"Who is that man?" inquired the oldest of the visitors, a leading capitalist of the State and director not only in that company but in several others.

Dan was a good deal puzzled by the laughter which he had unwittingly provoked, but just at that moment the whistle blew and the men hustled into their outer garments and snatched their hats. The great building was deserted in a moment. The engines and the boiler still kept up their unceasing din, and the great fires in the melting furnaces continued to roar, as the sign of perpetual vitality.

Dan passed one of these latter on his onward way, and passing to regard it for a moment, he was caught himself of a saying of his sturdy

to be continued

A VITAL PRINCIPLE

It was a little town in the heart of the Pennsylvania mountains. Their thickly wooded slopes rose above it on all sides, and two streams, the Lehigh and the Delaware, wound on either side and met at a certain junction. At night the trains came thundering over bridges, winding through the valley, waking the echoes in the hills and glittering like fiery meteors through the night. On the outskirts of the town were mills, factories and iron works, which sent up their flame and smoke, like beacons, into the atmosphere.

It was in one of these shops that Daniel McGrath had obtained employment, which was both difficult and even perilous, since lives were sacrificed by the slightest imprudence.

He was six feet in height, corresponding broad in the shoulders and with an arm that was a terror to the evil disposed. All kinds of stories, in fact, were current of the strength and courage of big Dan McGrath. Moreover he could sing a song and crack a joke with any one. So that he was, in general, popular with his fellow workmen until a certain number began to have a distinct grievance against him.

And this was that he steadfastly refused to join in the Saturday night orgies at a local tavern; or even to take a friendly glass on the way home from work. For though he had never been unduly addicted to strong drink, Dan had taken the pledge, at the close of a mission in Ireland, on the very same occasion that he had registered himself an associate of the League of the Sacred Heart, and had been ever since faithful to its practices, notably the monthly Communion.

Nor was he at all slow to tell his hearers the reasons for these various refusals of his. He liked, in fact, to dilate upon the benefits which had accrued to him from taking the pledge and to explain that he did not wish to be seen in taverns at all, let alone on the Saturday nights, as he wanted to be up early on Sunday for Mass.

The first time he gave such a reason a sheet of laughter went up from the group of workmen by whom he was surrounded. It was believed to be a rash jest that McGrath was "getting off" at the expense of the poor, simple people, a mere handful in that town, who frequented Father Brady's church, which had lately reared its head on one of the thoroughfares.

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