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WILFRID CUMBERMEDE.

An Autobiographical Story.

BY GEORGE MACDONALD.

Author of "Alec Forbes," etc.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A DISCOURSE.

MR. CONINGHAM WAS AT MY door by ten o'clock, and we set out together for Umberden Church. It was a cold clear morning. The dying autumn was turning a bright thin defiant face upon the conquering winter. I was in great spirits, my mind being full of Mary Osborne. At one moment I saw but her own ordinary face, only, what I had used to regard as dullness I now interpreted as the possession of her soul in patience; at another I saw the glorified countenance of my Athanasia, knowing that beneath the veil of the other, this, the real, the true face ever lay. Once in my sight, the first clung flower had blossomed; in full ideal of glory it had shone for a moment, and then folding itself again away, had retired into the regions of faith. And while I knew that such could dawn out of such, how could I help hoping that from the face of the universe, however to my eyes it might sometimes seem to stare like the seven-days-dead, one morn might dawn the unspeakable face which even Moses might not behold lest he should die of the great sight? The keen air, the bright sunshine, the swift motion—all combined to raise my spirits to an unwonted pitch; but it was a silent ecstasy, and I almost forgot the presence of Mr. Coningham. When he spoke at last, I started.

"I thought from your letter you had something to tell me, Mr. Cumbermede," he said, coming alongside of me.

"Yes, to be sure. I have been reading my grannie's papers as I told you."

I recounted the substance of what I had found in them.

"Does it not strike you as rather strange that all this should have been kept a secret from you?" he asked.

"Very few know anything about their grandfathers," I said; "so I suppose very few fathers care to tell their children about them."

"That is because there are so few concerning whom there is anything worth telling."

"For my part," I returned, "I should think any fact concerning one of those who link me with the infinite past out of which I have come, invaluable. Even a fact which is not to the credit of an ancestor may be a precious discovery to the man who has in himself to fight the evil derived from it."

"That however is a point of view rarely taken. What the ordinary man values is also rare; hence few regard their ancestry, or transmit any knowledge they may have of those who have gone before them to those that come after them."

"My uncle, however, I suppose, told me nothing, because, unlike the many, he prized neither wealth nor rank, nor what are commonly considered great deeds."

"You are not far from the truth there," said Mr. Coningham in a significant tone.

"Then you know why he never told me anything?" I exclaimed.

"I do—from the best authority."

"His own, you mean, I suppose."

"I do."

"But—but—I didn't know you were ever—at all—intimate with my uncle," I said.

He laughed knowingly.

"You would say, if you didn't mind speaking the truth, that you thought your uncle disliked me—disapproved of me. Come now, did he not try to make you avoid me? You needn't mind acknowledging the fact, for when I have explained the reason of it, you will see that it involves no discredit to either of us."

"I have no fear for my uncle."

"You are honest, if not over polite," he rejoined. "You do not feel so sure about my share. Well, I don't mind who knows it, for my part. I roused the repugnance, to the knowledge of which your silence confesses, merely by acting as any professional man ought to have acted—and with the best intentions. At the same time, all the blame I should ever think of casting upon him is, that he allowed his high-strung, saintly, I had almost said superhuman ideas to stand in the way of his nephew's prosperity."

"Perhaps he was afraid of that prosperity standing in the way of a better."

"Precisely so. You understand him perfectly. He was one of the best and simplest-minded men in the world."

"I am glad you do him that justice."

"At the same time I do not think he intended you to remain in absolute ignorance of what I am going to tell you. But you see, he died very suddenly. Besides, he could hardly expect I should hold my tongue after he was gone."

"Perhaps, however, he might expect me not to cultivate your acquaintance," I said, laughing to take the sting out of the words.

"You cannot accuse yourself of having taken any trouble in that direction," he returned, laughing also.

"I believe, however," I resumed, "from what I can recall of things he said, especially on one occasion on which he acknowledged the existence of a secret in which I was interested, he did not intend that I should always remain in ignorance of everything he thought proper to conceal from me then."

"I presume you are right. I think his conduct in this respect arose chiefly from anxiety that the formation of your character should not be influenced by the knowledge of certain facts which might unsettle you, and prevent you from reaping the due advantages of study and self-dependence in youth. I cannot, however, believe that by being open with you I shall now be in any danger of thwarting his plans, for you have already proved yourself a wise, moderate, conscientious man, diligent and painstaking. Forgive me for appearing to praise you. I had no such intention. I was only uttering as a fact to be considered in the question, what upon my honour I thoroughly believe."

"I should be happy in your good opinion, if I were able to appropriate it," I said. "But a man knows his own faults better than his neighbour knows his virtues."

"Spoken like the man I took you for, Mr. Cumbermede," he rejoined gravely.

"But to return to the matter in hand," I resumed; "what can there be so dangerous in the few facts I have just come to the knowledge of, that my uncle should have cared to conceal them from me? That a man born in humble circumstances should come to know that he had distinguished ancestors, could hardly so fill him with false notions as to endanger his relation to the laws of his existence."

"Of course—but you are too hasty. Those facts are of more importance than you are aware—involve other facts. Moldwarp Hall is your property, and not Sir Giles Brothers'."

"Then the apple was my own after all!" I said to myself exultingly. It was a strange fantastic birth of conscience and memory—forgotten the same moment, and followed by an electric dash—not of hope, not of delight, not of pride, but of pure revenge. My whole frame quivered with the shock; yet for a moment I seemed to have the strength of a Hercules. In front of me was a stile through a high hedge; I turned Lilith's head to the hedge, struck my spurs into her, and over or through it, I know not which, she bounded. Already, with all the strength of will I could summon, I struggled to rid myself of the wicked feeling; and although I cannot pretend to have succeeded for long after, yet by the time Mr. Coningham had popped over the stile, I was waiting for him, to all appearance, I believe, perfectly calm. He, on the other hand, from whatever cause, was actually trembling. His face was pale, and his eye flashing. Was it that he had roused me more effectually than he had hoped?

"Take care, take care, my boy," he said, "or you won't live to enjoy your own. Permit me the honour of shaking hands with Sir Wilfrid Cumbermede Daryll."

After this ceremonial of prophetic investiture, we jugged away quietly, and he told me a long story about the death of the last proprietor, the degree in which Sir Giles was related to him, and his undisputed accession to the property. At that time, he said, my father was in very bad health, and, indeed, died within six months of it.

"I knew your father well, Mr. Cumbermede," he went on, "—one of the best of men, with more spirit—more ambition than your uncle. It was his wish that his child, if a boy, should be called Wilfrid,—for though they had been married five or six years, their only child was born after his death. Your uncle did not like the name, your mother told me, but made no objection to it. So you were named after your grandfather, and great-grandfather, and I don't know how many of the race besides.—When the last of the Darylls died—"

"Then," I interrupted, "my father was the heir."

"No; you mistake: your uncle was the elder—Sir David Cumbermede Daryll, of Moldwarp Hall and the Moat," said Mr. Coningham, evidently bent on making the most of my rights.

"He never even told me he was the eldest," I said. "I always thought from his coming home to manage the farm when my father was ill—that he was the second of the two sons."

"On the contrary, he was several years older than your father—so that you mustn't suppose he kept you back from any of your rights. They were his, not yours, while he lived."

"I will not ask," I said, "why he did not enforce them. That is plain enough from what I know of his character. The more I think of that, the loftier and simpler it seems to grow. He could not bring himself to spend the energies of a soul meant for higher things on the assertion and recovery of earthly rights."

"I rather differ from you there; and I do not know," returned my companion, whose tone was far more serious than I had ever

heard it before, "whether the explanation I am going to offer, will raise your uncle as much in your estimation as it does in mine. I do not rank such self-denial as you attribute to him so highly as you do. On the contrary I count it a fault. How could the world go on if every body was like your uncle?"

"If everybody was like my uncle, he would have been forced to accept the position," I said; "for there would have been no one to take it from him."

"Perhaps. But you must not think Sir Giles knew anything of your uncle's claim. He knows nothing of it now."

I had not thought of Sir Giles in connection with the matter—only of Geoffrey; and my heart recoiled from the notion of dispossessing the old man, who, however misled with regard to me at least, had up till then shown me uniform kindness. In that moment I had almost resolved on taking no steps till after his death. But Mr. Coningham soon made me forget Sir Giles in a fresh revelation of my uncle.

"Although," he resumed, "all you say of your uncle's indifference to this world and its affairs is indubitably correct, I do not believe, had there not been a prospect of your making your appearance, that he would have shirked the duty of occupying the property which was his both by law and by nature. But he knew it might be an expensive suit—for no one can tell by what tricks of the law such may be prolonged—in which case all the money he could command would soon be spent, and nothing left either to provide for your so-called aunt, for whom he had a great regard, or to give you that education, which, whether you were to succeed to the property or not, he counted indispensable. He cared far more, he said, about your having such a property in yourself as was at once personal and real, than for your having any amount of property out of yourself. Expostulation was of no use. I had previously learned—from the old lady herself—the true state of the case, and, upon the death of Sir Geoffrey Daryll, had at once communicated with him—which placed me in a position for urging him, as I did again and again, considerably to his irritation, to assert and prosecute his claim to the title and estates. I offered to take the whole risk upon myself; but he said that would be tantamount to giving up his personal liberty until the matter was settled, which might not be in his lifetime. I may just mention, however, that besides his religious absorption, I strongly suspect there was another cause of his indifference to worldly affairs: I have grounds for thinking that he was disappointed in a more than ordinary attachment to a lady he met at Oxford—in station considerably above any prospects he had then. To return: he was resolved that whatever might be your fate, you should not have to meet it without such preparation as he could afford you. As you have divined, he was most anxious that your character should have acquired some degree of firmness before you knew anything of the possibility of your inheriting a large property and historical name; and I may appropriate the credit of a negative share in the carrying out of his plans, for you will bear me witness how often I might have upset them by informing you of the facts of the case."

"I am heartily obliged to you," I said, "for not interfering with my uncle's wishes, for I am very glad indeed that I have been kept in ignorance of my rights until now. The knowledge would at one time have gone far to render me useless for personal effort in any direction worthy of it. It would have made me conceited, ambitious, boastful; I don't know how many bad adjectives would have been necessary to describe me."

"It is all very well to be modest, but I venture to think differently."

"I should like to ask you one question, Mr. Coningham," I said. "As many as you please." "How is it that you have so long delayed giving me the information which on my uncle's death you no doubt felt at liberty to communicate?" "I did not know how far you might partake of your uncle's disposition, and judged that the wider your knowledge of the world, and the juster your estimate of the value of money and position, the more willing you would be to listen to the proposals I had to make."

"Do you remember," I asked, after a canteer, led off by my companion, "one very stormy night on which you suddenly appeared at the Moat, and had a long talk with my uncle on the subject?" "Perfectly," he answered. "But how did you come to know? He did not tell you of my visit?"

"Certainly not. But, listening in my night-gown on the stair, which is open to the kitchen, I heard enough of your talk to learn the object of your visit—namely, to carry off my skin to make bagpipes with."

He laughed so heartily that I told him the whole story of the pendulum.

"On that occasion," he said, "I made the offer to your uncle, on condition of his sanctioning the commencement of legal proceedings, to pledge myself to meet every expense of those and of your education as well, and to claim nothing whatever in return, except in case of success."

This quite corresponded with my own childish recollections of the interview between them. Indeed there was such an air of simple straightforwardness about his whole communication, while at the same time it accounted so thoroughly for the warning my uncle had given me against him, that I felt I might trust him entirely, and so would have told him all that had taken place at the Hall, but for the share his daughter had borne in it, and the danger of discovery to Mary.

(To be continued.)

THE GLOBE OYSTER AND CHOP HOUSE, 232, ST. JAMES STREET.

WE BEG MOST RESPECTFULLY TO inform our friends, and the public generally, that we have leased for a term of years the premises No. 232 St. James Street, to be called "THE GLOBE," (formerly the Queen's Chop House, which we opened on SATURDAY, Dec. 23rd, as a first-class OYSTER and CHOP HOUSE.

DINNER will be served up-stairs Every Day from 12 to 3 p.m.

TERMS:—FULL DINNER, including Glass of Ale, Tea or Coffee, 95c. FULL DINNER, per month, \$3.00. DAY BOARDERS, per month, \$5.00.

We respectfully solicit a share of public patronage, which at all times will command our strict attention.

BRAND & VOSBURGH.

N. B.—WEDDING BREAKFASTS, DINNERS, and SUPPERS supplied on the shortest notice.

DECKER PARK RACES, 1872. Winter Meeting. Under the auspices of the Montreal Trotting Club. PREMIUMS, \$2,000.00 TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, and THURSDAY, January 16, 17, and 18.

First Day.

PURSE No. 1, \$200. For horses owned and actually being wintered in Canada, that have never trotted better than 3 minutes, \$125, \$50, \$25. PURSE No. 2, \$200. For horses owned and being wintered as above that have never trotted better than 2 1/2, \$125, \$50, \$25. PURSE No. 3, \$200. For all horses owned and being wintered as above specified, \$100, \$50, \$25.

Second Day.

PURSE No. 4, \$200. For all horses that have never trotted better than 3 minutes, \$100, \$50, \$25. PURSE No. 5, \$200. For all horses that have never trotted better than 2 1/2, \$100, \$50, \$25.

Third Day.

PURSE No. 6, \$200. For all horses that have never trotted better than 2 1/2, \$125, \$50, \$25. PURSE No. 7, \$200. For all horses, \$100, \$50, \$25.

All the above Races to be mile heats, last 3 in 5, to harness, except No. 4, which will be in 4, and 100 to start.

Entrance fee five per cent of Purse, and must accompany nomination in all cases.

In all heats, when eight or more horses start, the winner a distance, when less than 10, 3/4.

A horse outstriking the field will only be entitled to first money.

Heats in each day's Races will be trotted alternately. A horse that is called out will not be entitled to any part of the money.

Races will commence each day at 10 1/2 o'clock sharp.

Trotting at Winter Meetings here is attended with so much difficulty, and from experience is found to be utterly impracticable at times to accomplish with sufficient accuracy to do justice to parties interested in the public, that there will be no attempt made to keep an official record. Time bets must, therefore, be provided for by the parties making the bet.

Judges will have the right to postpone, on account of inclement weather or bad track, a Race at any stage thereof.

Admission tickets for the three days, \$1.00. Single admission, 50 cents. Ladies free. Single teams 25c. Double, 50c.

Entries will close on Saturday, 13th January, 1872, at 4 p.m., and to be addressed to L. W. DECKER, Secretary-Treasurer, Alison Hotel, Montreal.

L. HERTUBESE, President.

5-1a January 2, 1872



GOVERNMENT HOUSE, OTTAWA, SATURDAY, 16th Day of December, 1871.

PRESENT: HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL IN COUNCIL.

ON the recommendation of the Hon. the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, and under and in pursuance of the provisions of the 19th section of "The Fisheries Act," His Excellency has been pleased to make the following Regulation:—

The waters of Lake Beauport, in the County and Province of Quebec, are hereby set apart, from the 1st day of January to the 1st day of May, 1872, for the natural propagation of fish.

Certified, WM. H. LEE, Clerk, Privy Council.



GOVERNMENT HOUSE, OTTAWA, SATURDAY, 16th Day of December, 1871.

PRESENT: HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL IN COUNCIL.

ON the recommendation of the Hon. the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, and under and in pursuance of the provisions of the 19th section of "The Fisheries Act," His Excellency has been pleased to make the following Regulation:—

The waters of the River Tomkedgwick, in the County of Restigouche and Province of New Brunswick, are hereby set apart for the natural and artificial propagation of fish.

Certified, WM. H. LEE, Clerk, Privy Council.

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