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## THE FAMILY HONOUR.

BY MRS. C. L. DALFOUR.

Continued from page 367.

## CHAPTER XXIII. LIGHT AND SHADE.

"The very star that shines from far,  
Shines trembling nevertheless."  
E. B. BROWNING.

It is the experience of many, perhaps of most in this perplexing world, to find that every joy comes with some bitter qualification. In the Hope household this had been so constantly the case that they were subdued to humble expectations. The hour of rising was not early on the tempestuous morning that followed the night we have described. Troublesome dreams had visited Mysie's innocent slumbers, and twice during the night she had awoken herself crying. Marian had written a letter of expostulation to Norry, over night, and her sleep was late in consequence. While Mr. Hope, accustomed to wakefulness, as a consequence of nervous depression, had lain listening to the rising wind as it first moaned, then surged, and at last raved over the open gardens and vegetable grounds that surrounded the house. Towards morning the shaking windows, rumbling chimneys, and creaking doors of the old cottage, had made a continuous clamour that had the effect sometimes attained by a shouting, overpowering lullaby which drives a child to sleep by wearying it, and he dozed so that the bell, which usually summoned the young folks to rise, did not call them at the usual time, and the reveille was sounded by the postman's knock, to the alarm and confusion of both girls. Marian, indeed, hastened to her father's room, fearing he might be worse, and then descended to secure the letters.

Noticing that the bolts were undone, she came to the conclusion that Norry, who was generally the first up, had gone out. Busy housewives, if any such read this narrative, know that morning time is precious; so precious that, until Marian and Mysie had prepared the breakfast, and the little tray with Mr. Hope's cup of coffee was ready, a note by post, directed to "Miss Hope," was not opened. It served as a breakfast dainty—one they were by no means accustomed to, for as Marian's eye ran it over, she at first gave a little quivering cry of astonishment, and then said—

"Oh, dear! if I could but undertake it—if I only could! Oh! it would be too delightful!"

"What is it, Marian, dear?" said Mysie, her cheek flushing, and her brown eyes opening wide and glittering with expectation—"whatever is it so delightful?"

"Miss Gertrude Austwick, my father's favourite pupil, wants me to go to her, as papa is unable. I was wishing all day yesterday, even more than ever, that I could get some teaching. It would be such a help to us."

"It would, indeed; and papa Hope so ill. It would, indeed, be delightful!"

Not that teaching exactly was delightful, but both these poor things felt enough of the darkness in the dismal shadow of poverty, to rejoice in the ray of light that penetrated the gloom.

"I'll go and tell my father," said Marian.

"And I'll call Norry; he's lazy this morning," cried Mysie, rising as she spoke, for Marian had not thought Norry's going out before breakfast of enough consequence to name it, but now she said—

"Finish your breakfast, dear. Norry's not upstairs. Oh, you shall put this letter for him in his room, though I've hardly the heart to give it to him, now this good news has come; but—" She drew the letter from her pocket as she spoke, and gave it to Mysie, who took up her words as she hesitated.

"But it will do him good, you mean. You don't scold without a cause; and he'll take more from you than from any one."

"I've not scolded him, poor boy—only reasoned with him. It's natural, perhaps—at least it is for him—to feel restless and impatient. But I must go to my father." And she mounted to his room, Mysie following more leisurely, to put the

note in her brother's chamber, carrying it pretty much as she would a dose of wholesome but bitter medicine, that must be taken; for Mysie had been pretty much of a reader, and biography had been to her what novels are to some girls: her love for her brother made her ambitious for him, and she had a sort of theory, young as she was, that tonics in the way of reproof, or the milder form of advice, were especially needed by—boys. Girls might be excused; they might have sweets without harm, but it would do Norry good to have Marian talking like a mamma to him, and though there was but some six years between them, she was the only maternal friend they either of them had since Mrs. Hope's death, and Mysie, at all events, would uphold her authority. So she entered her brother's room and crossed it, before she noticed that his bed had not been slept in. This, when she saw it, arrested her steps. Wonderingly she looked round. There was his box-lid lying open, his ordinary clothes scattered about, and his best suit gone. While her startled survey told her these particulars, and she was instantly racking her brain to supply a reason for what she saw, her eyes fell on the slip of pencilled paper on the table. In a moment she had read its contents, her mind refusing to comprehend what was presented to her eyes. Two or three times she scanned it over, then she understood that her brother was gone, and, turning very pale and still—for Mysie, under great excitement, differed from most girls by her quietude—went down-stairs, holding her breath. Mr. Hope's door was open, and Marian was seen standing within, having just finished reading her welcome letter. Mysie, entering, stared at them wildly, and with stifling sob held out the scrap of paper. The smile died on Marian's face like a light suddenly blown out, and Mr. Hope raised himself up on his elbow and hastily inquired—

"What has terrified you, child? Give me that," reaching towards the paper which had dropped from Mysie's hand on the coverlet of the bed. "What is it?" he kept saying, as he searched among his pillows for his glasses.

His daughter interposing, and taking the paper from his hand, read it in a perturbed voice that sounded a great way off; and then, after the pause of silence that followed, she continued, in a questioning tone—

"Norry never can have gone?"

"Gone!" echoed Mr. Hope, "where should he go to?"

"Gone!—right away. No, no!" gasped Mysie. But though each of them spoke thus, a conviction full of dismal certainty not the less rested on them all that it was indeed true.

The girls mounted to his room to make further investigation, Mr. Hope tossing on his pillow in bodily pain and mental vexation. He loved the wayward boy, and had got to associate the idea of him with all his own prospects of the future—such as those prospects were—even to the desire that Norry might be with him when death came, to close his eyes, and be a comforting, sustaining brother to Marian, as well as to Mysie. Something of belief and trust in the boy's loving nature and active spirit had fostered these thoughts—had involuntarily made the struggling man, whose barque was so shattered in many storms, cling to the lad as likely to prove a sheet anchor yet, while drifting along life's rugged coast. The way, too, in which he had left was most distressing; and to think, that only last night Mr. Hope had decisively rejected the boy's being sent to sea. His own unwillingness to part with the lad being at least as strong as any disinclination on Norry's part.

"Rash boy! Willful! Knowing nothing of the world—absolutely nothing. No money—none. Oh, he'll come back, the obstinate rascal! What does he mean? dear foolish fellow!" In this way he talked as he dragged his pain-wrung limbs from the bed, and awaited the arrival of a humble barber in the neighbourhood, who since his illness had come every morning to help him to rise. During the hour that it took before he was laid in his dressing-gown on the sofa for the day, Marian and Mysie had made their search, and also some out-of-door inquiries.

He was surely gone. By the time they could