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HONOUR WITHOUT RENOWN

BY MRS. INNES BROWN

Author of "Three Daughters of the United Kingdom"

CHAPTER XXXV.

A hot July sun poured its brilliant rays upon the gorgeous flowerbeds which studded the graceful terraces around the stately home of Baron Court. A grateful breeze tempered the heat, and bore with it the fragrant perfume of Nature's exotic plants and flowers. It soured and played amid the leaves and branches of the rare old trees, tossed with sportive mischief the crystal drops from the brimming mountain fountains far beyond the rim of their massive marble basin; furled and spread, as though in merry mirth, the bright gay flag which floated from the lofty turret tower. The swallows flew high, their small bodies glistening swift and clear against the deep blue of the cloudless sky.

To-day was a holiday, a fete day at Oakhome. The Lord of the Manor was returning, and with him, in his tender care, the poor innocent gentleman who had suffered so long and so unjustly. In their company was his wife, Lady Leadbitter—she who had lived in their very midst, and been known among them only as the lodge-keeper. The people drew in their breath, and looked askance at each other as they repeated her name.

"Lady Leadbitter, indeed, who'd have thought it? For it was all out now; that terrible mystery which had hung around her was dissolved at last; but no one in the whole village had ever surmised or guessed it, and some few spiteful hearts had bled in angry confusion when they felt that the merciless weapons of spite and jealousy wherewith they had so freely wounded the lonely Marion MacDermot could now be turned upon themselves by their victim. How little could they judge or appreciate a nature like that of Lady Leadbitter's!

The papers had been full of the whole story. The local Times had reaped a small harvest out of its harrowing description of the sufferings endured by the innocent man, and the hard striving and patient endurance of his gentle wife.

It told in thrilling language "of the strange revelations made by a well-known English gentleman, who upon his death-bed had openly confessed before competent witnesses that all the shameful and degrading story which condemned his brother to five years' penal servitude—and life-long ignominy—was concocted by a confederate and himself, for the sole purpose of disinherit him and securing for them the estate of the old uncle. The sudden and tragic death of this uncle had also been unmercifully laid at the door of the supposed defrauder, whose ungrateful conduct was said to have brought about the aged gentleman's death-stroke." The paper went on to describe with reverent, almost patriotic pride, how one "dear still to them all, had in her office as a Sister of Charity so won upon the heart and good feeling of the surviving conspirator, that he had confessed all; and thus, with the aid of the untiring exertions of her brother, Earl de Woodville, she had been the means of restoring to the ill-used baronet his liberty, and establishing for ever his innocence." Nor did it omit to paint in glowing language "the gallant conduct of this brave Sister, in rescuing her charge from the devastating element."

With trembling hands the old coachman had cut out every sentence which spoke of her. Reverently he had folded and kissed the print, then had stowed the cuttings away in a well-worn old book that had never left his breast-pocket—one that a little girl with gold-brown hair and sunny violet eyes had once given to him, with these words: "Many happy returns of the day, John. I do hope that you will live for lots of years yet. I shall never like any coachman half so well as you, dear old John." On the fly-leaf of the book was written in a child's handwriting, "To John Ryder, from little Lady Beatrice."

So there way joy this day at Oakhome. The kind-hearted villagers had entered so warmly into the whole sad story that they were unanimous in their desire to express the joy they felt at the happy result of the Earl's efforts. No corner in England—save and except Abbey Towers itself—had such right to rejoice this day as Oakhome, for in its very centre had lived many of the principal actors in this drama. Bright, gay bunting was suspended in festoons from house to house and from tree to tree. Here and there could be read sentences such as "Welcome back to liberty!" "God bless the faithful wife!" "Hurrah for our master!" etc.; and if the Earl winced a little as he read them, and would have preferred that the honest folks had shown more reticence in their greeting, he refrained from saying so, and no one guessed his thoughts.

A crowd of curious and expectant faces had collected in and about the station. Many of them, filled with ardent curiosity, strove to catch a glimpse of the poor, ill-used gentleman; others—women especially—

were dying to see how Lady Leadbitter bore herself; but there was not one amongst them whose breast swelled with more genuine pride and joy than did that of the honest old coachman, as he sat in his seat of honour, the driving-box of the handsome carriage.

"Ah, she done it! she done it all!" he kept repeating to himself, as he flicked the flies from the impatient steeds. "Who'd have found it out but for her. I'd like to know, Steady, Drosure! Standstill, beauty! Ye'll not have long to wait now, the signal's down."

Others might fear and wonder how they should meet and greet Lady Leadbitter, but old John Ryder had been her staunch friend. He longed to see that the weary look of suffering had left her gentle face for ever; he had no upbraiding of conscience to stifle.

"Here they are! Here they come!" was passed from mouth to mouth, as the long, serpent-like train glided stealthily down the winding track.

Simpson, the footman—poor Yorkshire Mary's ancient enemy—now came prominently forward, and with an air of privileged importance awaited the arrival of the master and his guests. Barely had the engine stopped ere the servant desisted those he was in search of, and advancing to the door of the saloon, threw it open, saluting respectfully. Out sprang the Earl, and close upon his heels followed the merry-hearted, genial-faced O'Hagan.

Then hearty cheers in quick succession arose from the throats of the bystanders as Sir Edmund Leadbitter, pale and weak, yet with pleased countenance and a certain dignity of bearing, endeavored by the aid of his two friends to dismount from the carriage. This accomplished, all three turned again to proffer assistance to the lady—their companion. And now by a curious instinct, as though the crowd would in some way atone for unintentional coldness in the past, hands were raised, handkerchiefs were waved, and a wild enthusiasm seemed to fill their hearts as Lady Leadbitter, taking the hand of the Earl, sprang lightly on to the platform.

For an instant or two the cheering almost ceased, as, breathless with surprise and half concealed doubt, they gazed upon her. Was this elegant and graceful lady really the same Marion MacDermot who had toiled and resided in such lowly fashion at the Western Lodge? They pressed forward in eager groups so as to scan more closely her form and features. Yes, after all, it must be the same. But, oh! But, oh! how changed, how altered to be sure! She looked so young and sweet now, as decked in the daintiest of lace and muslin, a large black picture hat shading her happy face, she took her husband's hand and gracefully bowed her acknowledgments of their kindly greeting. Now was the time that many a heart in that crowd felt that many a stab of bitter self-reproach. Why had they been so harsh in their judgments of her? How they wished they had bestowed more courtesy, more Christian charity upon poor Marion MacDermot. The Earl looked elated and well, as he shook hands with some and bowed to the rest, remarking to O'Hagan:

"What a pity it is that our little wives are not here to witness this cheering spectacle."

"I begin to doubt if we shall ever see them again," sighed O'Hagan laughfully. "We might as well make up our minds to life-long celibacy; there's no getting them from those Convent walls once they get ensconced therein."

"We have one last and unfailing resource; we'll make the babies ill; that will fetch them, like a shot," rejoined his companion.

As they neared the carriage, Marion recognized the kindly face of the coachman shaded by the hand in which he held the whip, as in an attitude of leaning forward he looked eagerly towards them. She stepped out in advance, and springing into the carriage knelt upon the seat nearest to him and seizing his other hand clasped it tightly in both her own, exclaiming in a glad, tearful voice, "God bless you, dear old John! I am so well and happy now."

"So am I! So am I, my Lady," he repeated quite excitedly. "Ye see, it's all come right at last. I knew—I always said it would. I've a deal to tell ye, my Lady! I've seen our young lady, and she's got her dog, and she's better now."

"My dear husband and I will call and see you, John, and you shall tell us all about it. We are longing to know everything."

"Yes, indeed we are," chimed in Sir Edmund, as he settled himself in the carriage, drawing his wife down tenderly beside him. "I owe you a great—an enormous debt of gratitude, John; and, God helping me, I will repay you."

"You owe me nothing, Sir Edmund—no, not a thing. To see her Layship's face bright and joyful is enough reward for me!"

"Drive very steadily, Ryder," urged his master. "Sir Edmund cannot stand too much shaking yet, I fear."

"All right, sir!"

Up jumped the footman; and amid numberless good wishes the party drove off to the hospitable roof of Baron Court.

It is often quite marvellous to note how much exertion the weak body can endure when the mind is at rest and the heart filled to overflowing with peace and happiness. Sir Edmund still looked worn and thin, and his fine face bore lines wrought by mental care and bodily endurance; yet he owned to no feeling of fatigue after the somewhat exciting and tedious journey. He spoke but little—appeared, in fact, almost unable to trust himself to speak at all. His mind seemed engrossed by some overwhelming emotion; one phrase of words alone shaped themselves to his mind; he felt as though he could have sung his heart out in one long Te Deum. In his dark hour of trial he had called upon and trusted in God, and had He not both heard and answered him?

He could not endure that Marion should leave his sight for a moment. How he revelled in her kind ministrations—the touch of her gentle hands, and in listening to the accents of that sweet voice, and the mere echo of which had dwelt in his brain during all those lonely hours in his prison cell. No, he could not speak much; he could only mark with rapture untold the joy expressed in her dear eyes, and pressing her hand, think, and strive to realise their present and future happiness. It is not easy to imagine, much less to realize, what power to elevate and sustain the heart of man, is contained in the full meaning of the word *freedom*; only those who are capable of so doing who, like Edmund Leadbitter, have—through no fault of their own—suffered the loss of it.

In the cool of the evening, as the shadows lengthened, two figures—those of husband and wife—strolled down the western avenue and entered the tiny lodge. Filled with perfect peace seemed the evening hour; hushed and low was the twitter of the birds, and subdued and calm the murmur of the river as it rippled gently over its stony waters, near so sweet a spot. The fallow deer, browsing or lying beneath the cool, shady trees, scarce more than raised their heads as Marion and her dear one sauntered by.

Once more she entered the little cottage. In broken-hearted misery, alone, weary of mind, and fearful of what was in store for her, she had last crossed its portal. Now, with step as light as the heart she bore, her hand fast locked in his for whose freedom she had wept and pined so hopelessly, she stood again within the little kitchen. Everything was just as she had left it; old John had seen to that. The flowers she had trained and tended with such care were fresh and green; a kind old hand had watered them and kept the little home swept and garnished.

The eyes of the husband wandered fondly around. Nothing escaped his keen, sharp glance.

He knew now what her life must have been; he knew that she had toiled, slaved, and saved for him alone. But when she led him into her little parlor and disclosed to him the treasures hidden within the small curtained alcove—the sight of which had a few months since so unmanned his brother—Edmund threw his arms around her; and kneeling together, as they had so frequently done of late, they poured out the fulness of their heart's gratitude in prayer to God.

"All these treasures, dearest wife, must be gathered carefully together. Not one, however small or trifling, must be lost. They shall be carried to our own dear home at 'Abbay Towers.'"

As they arose he clutched his violin with a yearning grasp and pressed it to him; he felt—he knew—that, through the power of this old instrument, voice, and expression could be given to the various emotions which flooded his inmost soul.

They spent a long time in her little home; she had so much to show him, so many things to tell.

"See my little bank-book, darling; though only the balance shall you look at now; the items we will study later." How could he speak! He took the treasure from her hands, kissed her fondly, and pressing the record of her love and sacrifice to his lips, conveyed it reverently to his inner pocket.

Yes, he would study that alone; and might God forgive him if he did not repay her tenfold for her devotion. The birds were silent; the deer were sleeping quietly; the shades of night had fallen; the little river alone stirred and rippled its running waters on its ceaseless journey downwards, when Marion and her husband retraced their steps to the Court.

They were happy, yes, such happy days—those which Edmund and Marion spent at Baron Court. It was a pleasant and gratifying sight to their kind host to witness the rapid progress of their health and strength achieved by the invalid. There were so many beautiful things to see and enjoy—to feast his hungry eyes and ears upon; but that which seemed to fascinate him and to attract his admiration most, was the very object which had most moved and touched his brother—poor Harold Manfred.

It was the picture of "The United Kingdom."

Reverently he gazed upon the pure sweet face of that centre figure—she who had played the part of Destiny in their lives, and had been, as it were, the guardian angel of them both. He never seemed to weary of looking at that fair young face, and blessings rare and precious must descend upon her

soul, for he felt he could never pray for her enough.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

They were seated beneath the shade of a drooping ash, listening with no small interest to Sir Edmund, who was recounting to them incidents of his early life. He told them of the deep affection which existed between himself and his uncle Henry, before the baneful influence of his younger brother and young Thomas marred its happy existence, and how it had always been a source of the greatest wonder to him why and how they had so gradually but surely brought about his certain ruin.

They could hear the lap-lap of the lake as its waters, stirred into ripples by the gentle breeze, beat lazily against its mossy banks; and the busy rattle of the reaping machine, as it felled the golden corn, echoed pleasantly from the opposite hills.

Sir Edmund's face was flushed from an inward sense of pleasure and excitement. To such a pleasure lover of nature as he had ever been, why, the simple song of a wild bird, the hum of a honey bee, the caw of a rook, the cry of a hound—nay, even the rustle of the summer leaves, possessed a power to stir his soul with that strange thrill of undefined emotion known only to those who, like himself, had been reared amid Nature's beauties. And these glorious gifts, these earthly blessings, were restored to him once more; he might call them his own, might feel them, touch them, walk among them as free man, the acknowledged proprietor of the dear old home, with all its time-worn and treasured belongings. Well might words fail him; for those who suffer keenly rejoice as deeply.

"Marion, darling, the agent tells me that in three days from now our home will be ready to receive us, that home which in fevered dreams alone I have visited during these long weary years; and you, dear wife, shall be at last its little mistress and queen. Together we will stroll among the dear ruins of the ancient Abbey; and who knows but in time, over the very slab where once the high altar stood, where I, as a helpless infant rested, whilst my father craved for me my uncle's love and care, and beneath which lay hidden the very deeds that restored to us our peace—who knows, I say, but that out of dear and treasured savings there may one day arise on the hallowed spot another glorious altar, before which we can bow our heads and pour our happy hearts in gratitude and praise."

She pressed his hand and answered warmly: "Yes, dear one; and shall not Father Lawrence be our guest and officiate there? It is meet that he who shared so much of our sorrow should participate in our joy."

"He has promised me most faithfully to visit us often."

"What has become of that branch of the Thomas family which has been in possession of the Abbey Towers for the last few years?" demanded De Woodville.

"My lawyer informed me that at the first rumor of danger they fled, no one knows exactly whither; nor shall I pursue them. I hear they are absolutely penniless, and could never refund to me any part of the sum for which they are responsible. Let me but possess the dear old home once more in peace, and those who injured me may go their way. I shall never molest them."

"Dr. Arno told me," observed O'Hagan smiling, "that each year he and his family should for a few months, at least, inhabit his house and estate in England—meaning the Manor Farm, your brother's bequest to him; so you will have him for a neighbor; and he is a very pleasant sort of a man. I liked him."

"Yes, And he shall also visit the home of her whose life he so skilfully saved. On her account alone we all owe him an immense debt of gratitude," said the Earl.

"Never will friends be dearer to us than those who stood by my wife and me in our day of trial and dishonor," remarked Sir Edmund, deeply moved.

"We shall accompany you home, Leadbitter, and from all I gather your reception there is likely to do you honor. I hear on good authority that the tenants are thoroughly disgusted and tired of the dominion of the usurpers, and long for a scion of the old house to reign over them once more. They are full of impatience to welcome you back; and wherever you are seen for some time now you will be a marked man. Seldom have I read of or heard half so much public sympathy or feeling expressed in any individual case before."

"Nor I," chimed in O'Hagan. "From north to south of the British Isles every paper has had its say, and rejoices that you are free. Thousands will be glad to look upon you—would be proud to shake you by the hand."

"Sir Edmund bowed his head. The spontaneous outpouring of his countrymen's hearts was sweet to him; for of their own free will they acknowledged now that not only had they condemned him wrongfully, but that his honor was untarnished.

"A telegram, father!" cried the voice of little Granthuse, the son and heir, as he bounded into their

midst, bearing the missive in his hand. "Open it quickly!" he added. "It may be from dear little mother, to say she is coming home."

De Woodville's face lit up as he read it aloud: "We are returning to Baron Court tomorrow; little Margaret alone remains."

MARIE AND MADGE.

Now there was stir and bustle within the Court and joy in every heart; only a pang shot through O'Hagan's breast; he would miss his little girl. Madge must tell him why she stayed behind.

Yes, she would tell him with what persistence the little school friends entreated that Margaret the Third might remain longer with them; and what a pretty picture the child made as, surrounded by a crowd of girls about her own age, she stood in an attitude of hesitation, divided, it seemed, between a sense of the pleasure a prolonged visit amid such congenial companionship would afford, and a doubt as to whether, for her own pleasure, she were not tempted to neglect the dear ones at home. But, as usual, Lady Abbess came to the rescue, and uniting her petition to that of the children, promised to see that every care was lavished upon the child and, as being well, she should in a few weeks return to the home that cherished her so fondly.

Then Madge, with the words of old Father Egbert still ringing in her heart, yielded a cheerful assent to their wishes, leaving her darling bright and happy in the kind home that had been her own when none other had offered her shelter. She felt sure that the gentle spirit of dear Margaret the First would watch over and guard her little grandchild.

Nor must Madge omit to tell her husband of the half-defiant tone in which old Mary expressed her sentiments, when she heard of the new plan of their movements.

"Well, I'm blessed!" she exclaimed in a tone of open disapproval. "What ivver is there, I'd like to know, about this 'ere spot that it fair bewitches every one and sends them clean deaf? Why, here's me own little bairnie nigh as far gone over it as her poor mother was afore her. But—very decidedly—I'll stop and see the end of this 'ere plot anyhow—that I will! and"—turning to her mistress, and speaking loudly so that all might hear and understand—"I'll bring her back to ye safe and sound, see if I don't. I'll do her, as I did be her mother afore her; ay, and be her grandmother too, for the matter o' that. Them as deals with aught under Mary's charge had best be fair and square, above board! There, now. I've had me say and feel easier for it." And so we part with poor old Yorkshire Mary—one whose rough tongue hid true and faithful heart. Would that there were more like her!

And she, who has played such a prominent part in these pages! Well, we will leave her to Him for whom she lives. We have ventured to raise the veil—for a brief space only—which hides the life of one of England's daughters. In this world of ours there are many who, like Sister Marguerite, are hidden heroes, and they know it not. So from us she shall receive neither praise nor renown. For her sake we will try to look upon her life in the light in which she views it—as of little value, her generous deeds but acts of necessary duty. But she cannot prevent our hearts from rejoicing with a secret joy when we contemplate the sweet surprise that will inundate her humble soul when He, for whom she has wrought such deeds of charity, shall mete to her, in His own measure, her eternal reward.

THE END

SOLDIER AND SEER

A TRUE STORY OF THE GREAT WAR

By E. M. Goldingham in Rosary Magazine

"It is an odd faculty, that second-sight!" said Bradshaw as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe on to the hearth. "It seems natural, in so far as it is not supernatural, but it stumps me altogether! What do you think about it?"

He was addressing "the Padre" as he was generally called both in and out of the regiment which he served as chaplain—the most beloved and popular of Padres, and he was the only other occupant of Bradshaw's cosy bachelor sitting-room in Gray's Inn Court.

"It is certainly not supernatural," he replied, "as the Church understands the word. I think myself it is one of those imperfectly investigated natural powers—a remnant perhaps of higher faculties lost to us—which some few individuals still possess."

"Yes, one must admit it isn't a common faculty, though it may be an uncommonly useful one. And why, for instance, should it be part and parcel of the mental mechanism of the seventh child of the seventh child?"

"Seven is a mystic number—even in the Church, as one knows. But you must be a Celt I think, to inherit that peculiarity.—Irish or Scotch."

"No—I cannot make that claim and the case I am thinking of was that of an ordinary English lady. She might have had Celtic forbears—I don't know. But her gift of it was most uncanny. Did I ever tell you what I owed to it in that famous

case I defended of Eyre vs. Stoneham? No? Oh, it was most uncanny. You may remember my client Eyre was charged with the supposed murder of Stoneham. All the evidence was against him, and yet I felt sure he was innocent. There was a clue—I sighted it now and again—then lost it. I was getting desperate when I happened to visit the Arbuthnots. Mrs. Arbuthnot was a quiet, motherly little body, of Church of England persuasion, and somehow I found myself telling her of Eyre's case, and my fears for his acquittal. She was sympathetic, and looking at me closely with her curiously penetrating blue eyes, she said she felt certain she could help me. I stared at her in some amazement and thought she was joking. But no, quite in earnest she repeated her offer. I put her in possession of certain facts, and on the next day if she didn't post off to Chislebury, the scene of the murder, scented out witnesses, collected most valuable evidence, and in short put into my hands the means of completely vindicating poor Eyre. It was a triumph, I can assure you! And she told me she had done it all through that gift of second-sight, which she, being the seventh child of a seventh child, happened to possess."

"That was certainly a most remarkable instance," said the Padre. "The only case I know—apart from those professional ladies and gentlemen—Frauds most of them—who claim such powers, is quite as interesting, but rather of a more supernatural character, if one may say so. In fact, I am inclined to think, taking into account the piety of the subject, that it was the gift of prophecy. I will tell you about it if you care to hear."

Bradshaw assented readily enough, and settled himself with a fresh pipe in the depths of his arm-chair. "It is the story of Rob, a poor Scotch laddie. He may have been the seventh child of a seventh child, but from the time I knew him he was rather like Melchisedech, without father or mother, and always had been! However it is certain he hailed from the land of the Scot. He came across my path again in the opening years of the War, when I was acting as chaplain to Catholic troops of—Division, in Mesopotamia. Imagine a wide expanse of burning brushwood and dried tufted grass—a sort of prairie, a sheet of flame rolling up towards you, and some poor fellows all knocked about, with hardly a sound limb between them, trying to get out of the deadly region of advancing flame. Rob was one of these. He lay on the edge of it, unable to move, thinking his last hour was come. Yet he prayed, prayed to see a priest before the end. Then the whole scene faded before him,—he saw when and how his last hour would come and it was not then. He lost consciousness, until he found himself being hauled along between two lumps—poor brave fellow—with only one arm apiece. By a superhuman effort they dragged him along out of the zone of flame, and threw him down in safety on the ground. How long he lay there he did not know, but before the life had ebbed out of him, he felt some one stirring him with the foot, and a voice speaking over him. It was the Commandant, with a salvage party.

"Get up, my boy," he said cheerily. "You'll soon be all right now."

"I can't," Rob groaned, "I've lost both my legs."

"Not a bit of it," was the answer. "You've got them on all right, only you've forgotten how to use them!"

Another groan from Rob was the only reply. Finally they got him on to a stretcher, took him down to the coast, and shipped him off to the hospital at the base. He must have been pretty tough to have survived at all. Once in hospital and conscious, his first words were a request for a Catholic priest. After a bit a parson came along and looked at him.

"Well, my boy," he said, "what can I do for you?"

He was dressed just like one of us—Roman collar and the rest.

"Nothing, thank you, sir," says Rob respectfully but firmly. "I want the Padre."

"I am a Padre. What can I do for you?"

"I want the Padre, sir. Ye canna help me, sir, unless ye'll kindly bring him to me."

"Very well," was the reply. "I'll fetch him along. Its an R. C. you are."

"And so will you be, sir!" said Rob, fixing his eyes on the parson's face, and putting out his hand to detain him. "God will reward you for your goodness to me. Ye'll have the Faith before ye die."

"The parson laughed and went his way, took some trouble in finding me, and sent me along. (I may tell you now, therefore I forget, that by a most curious series of events that parson sent for me before he died and asked me to receive him into the Church.)"

"Well, I found my way to Rob's bed. There I saw before me just a young raw-boned Scot, but when he opened his eyes they rivetted me. Like Mrs. Arbuthnot's, there was something peculiar about them—so clear, so bright and penetrating—as if they saw through this world into the next. They were the only living part of him too—otherwise he might have been a corpse. A smile of intense joy passed over his pale, wasted face when he saw me, and knew he had got the right Padre at

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