

GRANTLEY MANOR

A TALE

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

CHAPTER XI.—Continued.

It was directed in an English hand to Edmund, and he seized it with impatience, and tore it open. A dark cloud passed over his face as he read it. His color deepened, his eyebrows contracted, his lip curled, and his whole bearing denoted agitation. He rose from the bench where they had been sitting, and walked up and down the avenue with hurried steps. When a vague presentiment of evil has haunted the soul, and it suddenly fastens on the truth, it encounters it with a desperate calmness that astonishes itself. Genevra had never explained to herself what she feared; now she seemed to understand it at once, and like a flash of lightning through her brain darted the thought—"He is ruined, and through me!" Her hopes, her fears, her fate, her peace, were nothing—less than nothing—dust in the balance,—in comparison with that one thought. She went up to him and said, gently, "Edmund, I must see this letter. There must be no secrets between us." He was rolling the paper in his hands while his eyes were darting fire, and his thin lips were tightly compressed. There was a mixture of childish passion and fierce concentration in his countenance and in the tone in which he repeated, without listening to her—"They shall yield—by heaven, they shall yield."

She turned very pale, and leant against a tree for support. "Edmund, have you deceived me?" she faintly murmured, but did not repeat the words, when he turned toward her with a look of love and misery which pierced her to the heart, and held out his arms to her. She sank on the seat by his side, and took the letter from his hand; she read it, and a thousand new and startling thoughts seemed to rise in her mind during that moment. She understood the past—she foresaw the future; a fearful revolution was taking place within her. In his blind and selfish passion, this man, who was by her side, who was holding her hand, who was watching her while she read—this man had made her the instrument of his own ruin; had placed her, in her unsuspected helplessness, between himself and duty, and honor, and happiness, and there—she must remain like the angel's sword in the apostate prophet's path, where the hand of God had placed her,—and from that path of duty and of misery she must not swerve. She saw it, she felt it; her heart sickened within her, even love might have failed in that hour of need, but religion was there, and the torrent was stemmed, and the path was clear, and the victory was won. The past was irrevocable; the future must be met by him and by herself in the spirit of expiation, where sin or error had been,—of resignation, where the sin or the error had been involuntary. No reproach passed her lips; there was reproach, and he felt it, in the increased paleness of her cheek, and in the tremulous accents of her voice as she asked him in a subdued tone—"And now, my Edmund, what can we do?"

At last, with a strong effort, he mastered himself, and in rapid and incoherent language described the impossibility of owning his marriage at once, and braving the anger of his father. He told her that for her sake, as well as for his, he must use prudence and discretion in this matter; and as he spoke, he sought to deceive himself as well as her, and partly succeeded. Every word that he had said to her before marriage, every evasive answer with which he had baffled her timid but off-repeated inquiries about the sentiments of his family, were present to her mind, as he rapidly detailed the difficulties that beset their path. The dark clouds that hung over their destiny, and the plan of conduct they must follow. Still she did not reproach him, but once she laid her hand on his and said—"Edmund, you are the master of my fate, the ruler of my destiny. Ignorant and helpless, I cannot withstand your will, or overrule your decisions; but bear with me for a moment. I would not give you pain, dearest, or add to the bitterness at this hour; but pause, before you engage yourself and me in a course where truth will be a danger and deceit a duty. The sufferings of this hour (her voice faltered and her hand trembled) are the result of—"

"My boundless love for you—it knew no measure, Genevra, and it feared no dangers." "Be true to it, and true to yourself," she exclaimed; "take me to the feet of your father, and let my deep love, and my fatal ignorance, and—"

"Your too bewitching beauty, your transporting loveliness," interrupted Edmund, as she stood before him, with tears streaming down her cheeks, and a deep flush tinging those cheeks which were usually as pure and white as the Parian marble.

"Plead my excuse and your," she continued. "O Edmund, dearest Edmund, truth—truth, for heaven's sake; truth, and then misery and wretchedness, if God pleases. Life is short, my beloved, and eternity is long." "She was looking more beautiful than the instant before, for her eyes were raised to heaven, and the spirit of hope and faith was kindling in her glance and shining on her brow; but she had risen to high for him—she had scaled the mount where he could not follow; and soared through the clouds he could not pierce. The sound of those words, misery and wretchedness, had dragged him down to earth again, and he exclaimed with bitterness—"Proclaim to the world, if you will, that we are married. Refuse to grant me the short period of delay and of silence which I ask, and we are both undone; or consent for a while to submit to a painful necessity. Bear for my sake few months of trial and suspense, and then—at your feet, in my arms, my Genevra," he continued, as he knelt before her, and drew her fondly to his breast, "and then years of bliss will follow, you will pardon the clouds which have obscured the first dawn of our happiness. You will forgive me, dearest, for having bound you to myself, for having seized on the priceless treasure of your love, and taught you to suffer through me—for me," he added, as her

lips were pressed to his, and she murmured—"Must you leave me Edmund?" "Not now, not yet." She turned very pale, and said no more. That evening she glanced at her wedding-ring, and then drawing it from her finger she passed through it a black velvet riband and hid it in her bosom.

(To be continued.)

The Catholic Young Men's National Union will hold its annual convention in Chicago, September 6 and 7. St. James church on Wabash avenue, has been chosen as the place for the opening, when a solemn high mass will be celebrated, and the business of the convention will be done in the Art Institute.



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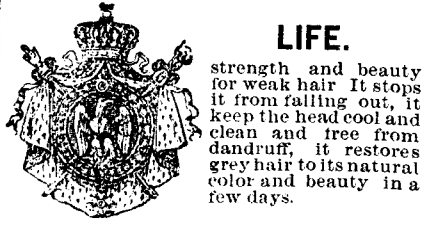
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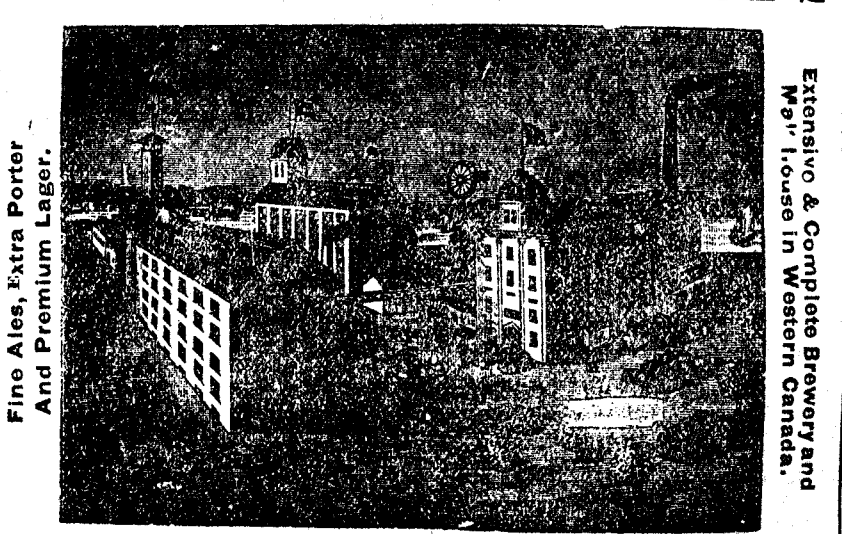
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