

GRANTLEY MANOR

A TALE.

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

CHAPTER XI—Continued.

He lingered in the studio, he visited the chapel, he explored the ruins, he spent hours and days with Leonardo, whose spirits seemed to revive in this intercourse with one whose manners and whose language reminded him of the only happy period of his blighted existence. He told him the story of Colonel Leslie's second marriage, and the secret of Ginevra's half-English origin. He clung to his society with a morbid predilection, and when he saw the signs of a dawning passion in his piercing eyes, and the impetuous working of that passion when once aroused, he felt as if a load of care had been removed from breast. He saw that the spell that had bound him was as powerful as it was intense; and that Ginevra herself, at first unconsciously, then with heart-misgivings, and at last with all the earnest tenderness and simplicity of her character, yielded to his influence, and in return for his ardent and devoted affection, gave the deep enduring love of her young heart. He saw it and rejoiced; for he never doubted the purity of Neville's intentions, and he would have done him justice if he had. Whether such a temptation had ever crossed his mind in the early days of his intercourse with Ginevra, and before he was aware of her relationship with Colonel Leslie, none can tell, but if it ever did, no traces of it remained, as he became acquainted with her character, and instinctively felt that she was one of those with whom, even in thought, he dared not connect aught of shame or dishonor. The only son of over-indulgent parents, whose prejudices he had never yet opposed, of whose boundless kindness to him he had repeated proofs; far from his own country, from his old associations, he lost sight of the immense difficulties which a marriage with Ginevra would present. Blinded by passion, he foresaw indeed that his father would refuse his consent if it was asked, but never doubted for an instant that his marriage was accomplished he should soon be received into favor, for he knew that his parents would be pushing themselves by withholding their forgiveness; the alliance with Colonel Leslie's family was honorable, and the fact of his second marriage had long ago been recognized by his relations. His only desire, therefore, was to obtain Ginevra's consent to an immediate union, and in this object he was well seconded by Leonardo; to him he diminished the amount of opposition which his family were likely to offer to his wishes, and from her he altogether concealed it. He was of age, he was independent; his parents, he told her, had always wished him to marry young, Colonel Leslie had been a friend of his father's at college, and would certainly approve of his daughter's marriage with an Englishman, whose fortune was ample, and whose family was ancient. Ginevra was inexperienced, and totally ignorant of the ways of the world; but her instinctive delicacy of feeling, and tenderness of conscience, revolted from the idea of marrying without the express consent of her own father, or of Father Francesco; and with her arm around Leonardo's neck, and a deep flush on her cheeks, she implored him not to urge her to become Neville's wife for at least a year, and to write to both her absent guardians, before a final consent was given to—

"To your happiness, Ginevra and to what will secure my peace of mind—to what will enable me," he vehemently continued, "to die without the anguish of leaving you alone in the world—to die without the burden of earthly cares to draw my soul back from the opening vision of eternity."

Ginevra pressed his hand to her heart, and her lips quivered. "You are quite wrong in supposing," he continued, with feverish eagerness, "that I have not the right to sanction your marriage. You know how uncertain all communication with Father Francesco must inevitably be; and as to Leslie, he had but one fear which, through your childhood, has ever haunted him, and that is that you would take the veil, and never see him again but through the grate of a convent parlor. He made me promise that I would never consent to your residing, even for a short time, in a monastery, lest it might induce you to renounce the world."

"There is no danger," she said, and gazed at a letter in her hand, one of Neville's ardent and impassioned declarations of eternal affection; "no hope of it," she added, and her tears fell fast on the paper.

"I have promised," continued Leonardo; "I have promised, and now when I die, Ginevra—when I have left you alone in the world—child of my heart! where will you go, what can you do? Fair as an angel, and helpless as an infant, who will care for thee who will watch over thee? my flower, my treasure, my spotless lily! You do not know all I know. You cannot understand the dangers—the difficulties that will beset you. Here, in your home, you may not remain, when I am gone; and if—" A sudden thought blanched his cheeks, and his agitation grew so great that he almost gasped for breath.

"I can never be alone, never forsaken, Leonardo, mio," she gently whispered, and kissed his burning brow. He was ill, very ill, and fever and weakness were struggling for mastery in his exhausted frame.

"One last effort I must make," he feebly murmured, and raised himself on this couch. "Ginevra, if you did not love Edmund Neville, I would not ask you to give me peace at the expense of your own—to ease my aching heart and my harassed brain at the cost of one sigh or one tear of yours—"

"You!" exclaimed his niece, as she fell on her knees at his side. "if I did not love him I might obey you, and not tremble; but—" "You do love him: your heart is his, and nothing stops you but vague misgiving."

"A nameless terror," she murmured. "O Father Francesco! Father Francesco!" "You know that Edmund has promised that he respects your faith. Ginevra, my strength is failing. Hear my dying prayer. Do not call obstinacy conscience

or self-will self sacrifice, Ginevra, dearest!"

A change came over his face, an expression of such intense anxiety that the poor child at his side could withstand it no longer, and murmured in broken accents— "Do with me as you will, uncle Leonardo."

At that moment Edmund Neville joined them, the pale thin hand of Leonardo grasped his, and in a faint voice said— "She has promised." "Here is Ginevra," said Ginevra, as the little Milanese waiting-maid approached, with something raised above her head. "A post letter, signora," she exclaimed, and threw it into her mistress's lap. (To be continued.)

CATHOLIC EDUCATION DAY.

At the World's Fair.

The Most Rev. the Archbishop of Chicago has issued invitations to friends of Catholic schools, to honor Christian Education by their presence at the exercises of Catholic Education Day, World's Columbian Exposition, in Festival Hall, Jackson Park, on Saturday, September 2nd, 1893, at 9 o'clock a. m.

The Committee of Arrangements are: Right Rev. J. L. Spalding, bishop of Peoria, President Catholic Educational Exhibit.

Rev. Hugh McGuire, pastor St. James church, Chicago, chairman Chicago Archdiocesan exhibit.

Rev. P. J. Muldoon, Chancellor, Archdiocese of Chicago. Brother Maurilian, Secretary and Manager, Catholic Educational exhibit. His Grace, Most Rev. P. A. Feehan, D. D., Archbishop of Chicago, will preside, and Right Rev. John Lancaster Spalding, bishop of Peoria, and President of the Catholic Educational Exhibit will be Director of ceremonies.

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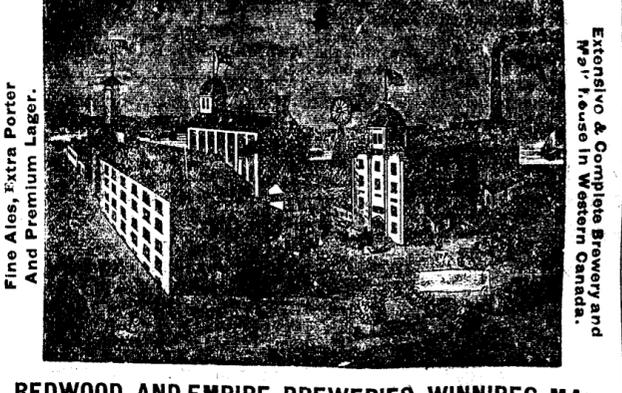
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