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## THE FAMILY HONOUR.

BY MRS. C. L. BALFOUR.

Continued from page 53.

## CHAPTER XXXVI. PROFESSOR GRIESBACH.

"I could not be unthankful—I who was Entreated thus and holpen. In the room I speak of, ere the house was well awake, And also after it was well asleep, I sat alone, and drew the blessing in."

MRS BARRETT BROWNING.

Nothing could well be more strange than the dwelling which, as we have said, Norman reached at nightfall. It was full half a mile out of the village of Woodford, in the forest. If the intention of those who built it had been to seclude themselves from seeing any of the pleasant woodland round about, they could not have more completely effected it, for a high wall was erected that enclosed the house in a complete square. A green path, diverging from the forest glade, led up to a door in this wall, which opened into a gravelled yard, from whence every sign of vegetation was removed. Two dog-kennels held mastiffs, that barked in concert in answer to his ring. A small substantial old house, with many chimneys and rather grimy, stood in the centre of the enclosure. There were outside shutters to the lower windows, closed halfway up; no curtains or blinds shielded or decorated the upper casements. At a glance it might be inferred that no feminine care had been bestowed on the arrangement of the dwelling. It did not look either dilapidated or deserted, but rather given up to some worker who had so completely utilised it, that he excluded all ornament as an impertinent intrusion on the business or study carried on there. But that Nature's decorative hand would persist in hanging a festoon of ivy, and tracing an arabesque of moss upon the walls, the place would have been dull indeed. As it was, the shadow of the mural out-works made the yard very sombre. Norman conjectured rightly that, when the house had been first built, it was a lodge with a garden amid umbrageous forest trees, but that the wall had been added since.

A tall wiry old man, with a military air, and habited in what seemed more like shabby regimentals than a livery, opened the door, took the letter, glanced at it, evidently recognizing the hand-writing, and telling Norman, in words almost unintelligible from their foreign accent, to follow him, commanded the dogs to be silent and ushered the youth into a little hall paved with red tiles, out of which different doors opened into the lower rooms. He was left there nearly half an hour and his heart became heavy with apprehension. "Was there any doubt that he would be received? If so what should he do?" were his mental queries. Just as, having shifted himself from one foot to another, he was ready to fall with weariness after his long walk from London a door opened, and he was beckoned into a room well lighted with gas, where the only article of furniture was a large centre dining-table, to which there was a sort of annex, in the shape of a tray on legs covered with a coarse cloth, and bearing a knife and plate, a trencher with a dark brown loaf, flanked by a jug of milk.

"See—your rations," said the same man who had let him in, pointing to the table, and adding one word, "Eat."

Norman did not wait for further directions. He sat down, and made so hearty a meal of the very plain fare, that he felt half angry with himself as he looked at the diminished loaf.

"You can be active enough when it pleases you, young man," said a sharp voice startlingly near.

Norman turned, and saw standing at the back of his chair a small, thin, arid looking old man, with a stoop in the shoulders, whose head and face were so bare of hair that it might be inferred it had dried and rubbed off, leaving a little grizzled fluff all except the eyebrows, which were quite white, and very bushy, hiding the small, keen eyes, that yet at times flickered out brightly under their shadow. The forehead was prominent and large—seemed, indeed, to have drawn the head forward by its weight and caused the stoop. There was nothing reassuring in the old man's manner,

as Norman, rising instantly, said, apologetically, "I beg pardon, Mr. Griesbach—"

"Yes, Professor Griesbach is my same. Sit down. Have you done?" looking at the viands on the table, and, without pausing for an answer, continuing, "I don't know why Max—Dr. Griesbach, I mean—has sent you to me, Mr. Driftwood," he looked at a letter in his hand to make sure of the name, and added, dubiously, "I've nothing that I know of for you to do. Fritz helps me. Fritz is worth any dozen of the idle young gormandizing scrapegraces I have ever had. Don't interrupt me," observing Norman about to speak. "Of course you'll promise fair, and all that. I don't want talk, I'm no talker, not like——" He checked himself, but Norman thought he was going to name his relative, Dr. Griesbach; but he added, "I do like work. So I may as well give you a trial, as he has asked me; but you'll be sure not to suit me—sure."

He pressed a knob at the corner of the mantelshelf, and a side door in a panel flew open. Fritz appeared, and, with a touch of his hand, wheeled away the tray from the table. The fire had gone low, and when Fritz had withdrawn himself, as summarily as the retreating tray, Norman noticed that Professor Griesbach sat down in a low chair, and pressing on the arm, sent out a blast of air through a tube that roused the fire into a blaze, as from a powerful bellows.

"What a clever contrivance!" exclaimed Norman, surprised out of silence.

"Clever! Bah! Hold your tongue. What do you know about clever?" said the professor, testily. Then he held his thin hands over the blaze, and, looking intently at it, sunk into profound silence. He sat thus for full an hour, to Norman's annoyance, who felt afraid to move; he then rose, and without taking the least notice of the lad, left the room by the panel-door, his slippers making no more sound than when he had entered. In a few minutes after Fritz returned, and beckoning Norman, led him out of the room.

The hall and staircase were now lighted up, and the youth, notwithstanding the sort of seal of silence on the inmates of the house, could not forbear saying, inquiringly, "Gas here, in this remote house in the forest?"

"Why not? we make it. The professor likes light."

The man's manner was so little conciliatory, that Norman did not again speak. He was ushered into a small chamber, nearly as empty as the hall. A narrow bed on trestles, in the middle of the room, and a three-legged stool, comprised the furniture; but, to Norman's comfort, a door opposite stood open, and showed a bathroom. He uttered a pleased exclamation at the sight, and the very faintest indication of a smile relaxed the grim face of old Fritz, who said—

"Light and water in plenty, stranger. Good night."

He was gone just as Norman longed to ask him a few questions, so he was fain to be silent. The hour was yet early, but it was evident he was to go to bed at once. He lost no time in refreshing himself, after his weary day, with a good plunge in the bath, and then could certainly have slept on the boards, with a log for a pillow; and his bed was not much softer, though a German padded quilt, or upper bed, soon made him so warm, that he rested as if seven nights were condensed in one.

He was awake next morning, before daylight, by Fritz entering into his room with a light, and saying, "I'd advise you, Mr. Driftwood, to get up and turn that handle, before Douche calls." He pointed to a bit of rail at the bed-head.

"Who's Douche?" thought Norman, as Fritz left the room; and, notwithstanding his capital sleep, feeling tired from the previous day, he was inclined to lay awhile; but shaking off his drowsiness, he rose, forgetting however, or not caring, to touch the handle Fritz had pointed to. He had been rather slowly dressing himself, trying to rub his closely-clipped hair into some form, and make himself as presentable as possible, when he was startled by a sound, and looking round, saw the tube at the head of the bed rise with a click, and jut out over the place where his head had lain, and a little jet of water rushed