

HONOUR WITHOUT RENOWN

BY MRS. INNES BROWN

CHAPTER XXIII—CONTINUED

By this time he had succeeded in uncovering entirely the obstinate wound, and sat examining it very attentively. It needed no great knowledge or medical skill to perceive that mortification had already set in, and that the poor man's hours were numbered.

"There is still one thing," said the notary, with an intelligent glance at Dr. Arno—"one thing which seems to have escaped your attention. In the course of your narrative, Mr. Manfred, you informed us that the lawyer Thomas before dying had indicated, or had caused to be written, a full statement as to how he had himself altered the cheque, and, in fact, done all that for which Sir Edmund Leadbitter was unjustly condemned. Now where are those most important documents to be found?"

"Yes, where are they?" mechanically murmured the sick man. "Where can they be?"

"Try and recollect exactly where you placed them," urged Father Basil, pressing the man's head firmly, as though to recall him more fully to the present. "You put them somewhere for safety. Where was it?"

"I know I hid them somewhere away from the Thomas family. They were a grasping lot. . . They made out I owed them money; so, not caring to live at the Abbey Towers myself, I left it to them at a nominal rent, on the condition that they neither injured nor sold anything upon the estate."

"You are sure that you did not destroy the papers?" asked Monsieur Camard.

"No, I am positive I did not—absolutely certain I did not," he reiterated with some spirit. "Because on the release of my brother Edmund I had always resolved that, come what might, I would hand them over to him. Ah, gentlemen, he had such a proud, though generous nature, that I felt convinced if I but explained matters to him and threw myself upon his mercy, he would not only be ready to forgive me, but, in establishing his own innocence, would have regard to his brother's name."

"After this sudden burst Manfred seemed to collapse and to forget the allusion to the papers.

"Rouse yourself once more, Mr. Manfred, and for your brother's sake tell us where you hid the confession of that wretched Thomas," said Father Basil.

"Of course; I must not forget that," he answered, striving to concentrate his faculties once more. "Before the Thomas family went to live at the Abbey Towers I kept those papers in the secret drawer of an old bureau in Sir Hugh's library. Then where on earth did I put them?" There ensued a painful pause of a full minute; after which a sudden light seemed to dawn upon him, and he said excitedly:

"Ah, thank goodness? Now I remember where they are. Do you, one or all, go to the old Abbey ruins and enter the nave; then walk towards the end of the last transept. There at your feet lies a large broken slab of stone. The smaller portion of this you can raise, and, if you dig a few feet beneath, you will discover a small enamelled tin box. The key is on my bunch. Open it, and you will find the things for which you search."

Father Basil and Monsieur Camard looked at each other curiously; they were inclined to believe that the poor man's mind was wandering. It really sounded too romantic. "It sounds like a fairy tale," smiled the priest aside. "Are we all expected to go in a body and dig?"

"I, for one, shall go," said M. Camard quietly. "My word of honor is pledged to this sick man, not to leave a stone—he it a slab or otherwise—unturned, by which I can hasten his brother's release; in fact, though his story is full of romance from beginning to end, the poor fellow seems so rational and earnest—and dying men do not as a rule tell lies—that I am fully disposed to believe what he says. Moreover, I am all anxiety to get the telegraph off to the jail. Who knows, but it may in some measure mitigate the poor prisoner's sufferings? I shall never rest until he is safely out of that hole! Will you attend to it at once, Father?"

"No. My duty is here. I cannot leave him now; but we have pen and paper; I will write the message, if you will see to its speedy despatch."

"I will go at once, for I cannot remain here longer. My horses are impatient, and I am due elsewhere. Good-bye. You know where to find me, if I am wanted." M. Camard bowed, and hurried from the old building.

"You can do no more for me—can you?" asked Manfred, in a weary voice.

"No, Monsieur. I regret to say it, but no power on earth can heal your foot now," blurted out Dr. Arno, speaking abruptly in the effort to conceal his emotion.

"Thank you. I knew it well. Believe me, death for me has lost all its horrors. Leave me with Father de Woodville, and trouble no more about this worthless life. I could never have believed it possible that the pleasures of life, for which we barter so much, could appear so worthless and trivial as they do when viewed from the standpoint of the grave. Yet stay one moment longer, Dr. Arno. You have been very good to me, and did I not once swear that your services should not go unrequited? Take a sheet of paper, Father de Woodville, and write down what I dictate to you; it shall be my last will and testament."

"I leave to Dr. Henri Arno, of Paris—you can fill in the full address later—you who so kindly attended me during my last illness, the only landed property I possess, viz., the Manor farm and house adjoining Sir E. Leadbitter's estate, known as Abbey Towers, in Yorkshire, to do with as he pleases. The furniture, jewels, and any other valuables that may of right belong to me, are to be sold for the benefit of the Sisters of Charity."

Then for the last time, he strove to sign his name; and having done so, he handed the paper to Dr. Arno, saying: "Now, good-bye, doctor. Take care of that and leave me in peace. I would finish with this world, now, and turn my thoughts to higher things. Don't you leave also, dear Father de Woodville. Stay and help me to the end!"

"I had no intention of doing so," said the priest, as he reseated himself by the bedside, after seeing Dr. Arno to the door. "I was but explaining to him the contents of the paper, which he did not understand. Besides, it needed my name as a witness, and I wanted his last instructions regarding you. But come, we have other things to think of, other work to do. Let us ask for help to do it well."

What those two, left alone in that desolate abode thought of, and what they did, is known to none save themselves and God. But the fresh, keen breeze had lulled; the very sun, which Manfred deemed so sluggish in rising, had sunk to rest amid a bed of crimson and golden clouds, whilst a faint light glimmered in the east, heralding the approach of the queen of the night, ere one of them, dazed, hungry, and exhausted, emerged slowly and thoughtfully from that desolate building. He had devoted all his power and energy to preparing the soul of poor Manfred to meet his God. The weary but contrite spirit had found rest at last.

Some months later there rose a tablet over Manfred's grave; and the letters traced upon it told of the brave deed performed by the Englishman laid below. But his reckless act of daring scarce found an echo of renown in the hearts of his countrymen.

CHAPTER XXIV.

After her wearisome journey, Marion Leadbitter, as we will now call her, passed an uneasy and restless night. She arose early the following morning, feeling overwrought and unrefreshed.

Naturally of a timid and sensitive nature, and reared as she had been almost entirely in the quiet seclusion of her mountain home, with scarce any friends or companions save her gentle mother, to whom she was so devoted, it would have seemed that she was totally unfit to be suddenly dragged before a hard and pitiless world and made to share the sorrow and ignominy which fell to the lot of her unfortunate young husband. But the sea of woe, into the dark waves of which she found herself suddenly plunged, roused the fighting power of love and self-sacrifice within her. In her little barge of silent but loyal love she would breast the billows of scorn. Since men had so mercilessly and wrongfully condemned her husband, to heaven alone would she look for love and aid. God's will should mark her way, and in His own good time would he land them both upon a shore of love and hope. She would work—yes, night and day she would work—but she felt it must be in silence and seclusion. Nature would fail to support the brave spirit within if she must face daily scorn or pity. But Heaven was kind to her, and even beyond her utmost expectations did it come to her assistance now. How often is it that a kind action brings its own reward even in this life!

The day before Mr. MacDermot died, his heart was filled by a terrible anxiety as to the future of his poor little daughter. As he cast about in his mind for the memory of some friend to whom he could urge her to turn in her hour of need, one image alone rose before his mental vision, one form alone stood out in bold relief; and his eyes, dimmed by weakness and the shadow of death, dwelt upon the picture with hope. It was the form of a tall, slender girl,

who, looking up to him with shy, timid grace, said in a firm but pleading voice, "I will sing for you." It was only the memory of our old friend, dear Madge, who in all her girlish reserve and beauty visited the concert-manager in his last hours and seemed to fill his sinking heart with faith and courage. He felt sure that she would never turn a deaf ear to the cry of his daughter in her hour of need.

"Marion, darling," he said, "something tells me that I shall not be with you long. I will ask of you one promise before I die."

"And what is that, dear," she asked gently. "If it is possible surely it shall be done."

"It is this, dear child. When I have left you, and you are alone, go and seek Lady O'Hagan. Tell her that you are my daughter, and ask her, in memory of days gone by, to befriend you."

"Lady O'Hagan," she repeated, in a slow, puzzled tone; "who is she, father?"

"She is, like yourself, my darling, gently born; but once she was more like you still, for she was very poor and in great distress. Then it was that I was able to be kind to her. Recall the fact to her mind, and, I feel assured, she will gladly assist and befriend you. Surely you remember that night in Edinburgh, about eleven years ago—you were a child of thirteen or fourteen at the time—when I was suddenly called upon to arrange a concert at which the Royalty were to be present, and my young daughter, upon whose famous voice the furniture, jewels, and any other valuables that may of right belong to me, are to be sold for the benefit of the Sisters of Charity."

There had been a slight frost during the night, which had touched with gleaming silver the threads of myriads of shining webs; and these hung in gay festoons from branch to branch, or lay shining in gorgeous patterns upon the moss.

Close to an old turnpike gate, through which all the men must pass, stood a low wall, built up of sods, and upon this she climbed. Drawing a book from her pocket, she threw back her veil and seemed intent upon its pages. She looked like a nurse who, worn out with midnight watches, sought in the cool, fresh, morning air, strength for her worn nerves. And so, with ever quickening pulse and fast beating heart, poor Marion watched and waited.

The members of the small week-day congregation that attended Father Lawrence's church were somewhat surprised to find themselves so late for Mass that morning; or was it that the priest's clocks were disgracefully slow? At any rate, these were the words of some of the parishioners, as they entered the church. "Father Lawrence," said the Brother, in answer to inquiries, "is busily engaged; he has not time to attend to anything save a sick-call—leastwise, that's what he said. He scarcely touched his breakfast, but seized his hat and stick and left the house. I don't know where he's gone!"

Though he frequently wore his habit in the prison bounds, Father Lawrence seldom used it in the more public streets; and this morning he had gone out in his ordinary coat.

"Shall I be too late after all?" he said hurriedly, taking out his watch and looking at it. "And will she be there, I wonder. Perhaps not. At any rate, I should like to see how poor '75' is this morning. If unfit for work, perhaps he will give in and let me have him sent to the infirmary today. Ah, surely that regular stream of heads in front, now mounting the knoll, is a band of convicts. Yes, poor fellows, it is they, sure enough; and if I cut across this field I shall yet be first at the quarry gate." Instinct seemed to tell him that, should the poor wife be there at all, Nature would have led her to this lonely spot.

TO BE CONTINUED

GARRY MADDEN CALLED BACK

"No, Garry, I don't want to wait for the motor 'bus today," repeated his sister. "It stops at every camp on the way to pick up passengers. We waited last Sunday, and you remember that when we reached the chapel we couldn't get any farther than the outer fringe of the crowd that filled the vestibule."

"Oh, some were worse off than that," laughed her brother. "There were a dozen or more out on the steps who couldn't get in at all. And I'm not sure that they weren't more comfortable than those inside. These churches in the woods are always too small."

"They are too large for the parish at other times of the year," she reminded him.

"Well," he volunteered lightly, "the place I had last Sunday suited me, and if I can get there late enough today to have the same—"

"Garry!" she exclaimed disapprovingly, but added immediately. "Of course, you don't really mean that. You were just as disappointed as I was at the unavoidable delay last Sunday. But it must be different today. The priest hears confessions before Mass, and Ethel and I want to receive Communion today. So you simply

must row us across the lake. We can't wait to go around by the road, and if we start now, we'll get there in time. You will take us, won't you?"

"Oh, I suppose so," he drawled reluctantly. "But it just means a half hour wasted, Katherine, sitting there in a stuffy place."

Katherine laughed happily. "It isn't stuffy at all. Every window is wide open. They open like doors. And the breezes come in saturated with the fragrance of the woods. Furthermore, you need not come in a half hour ahead of time. You can wait out of doors. I saw a dozen of my friends there last Sunday—girls that I did not know were up this way at all. It seems to be quite a place for unexpected meetings."

"Renewing old acquaintances at church isn't any particular inducement to me, but I'll take you across. I don't see, though, why you have to go so early or why you have to go to confession up here. You'll be going home in another week. You could wait until then, couldn't you?"

"Certainly. But, you see, I don't want to wait. And I am just a bit disturbed about you, Garry. You seem indifferent about these things. Has the city changed you that much? I have always been so sure of you—"

"Don't worry about me, Katherine," he interrupted, smiling. "Can't a fellow assume that a pious little sister could go a week or two confessionless? And, if he so assumes, must he be accused of—"

"No, of course he mustn't," she replied. "I might have known that you wouldn't change in that."

But, as they rowed across the lake, Katherine's doubt returned, although she said no more about it. Her brother had lived in New York for the last few years, coming home only at Christmas. And while he always attended Mass when he was at home, was there any certainty that he did not neglect it when he was away from home? She had not thought of it before, but she wondered now if he received the sacraments frequently, and then she blamed herself for doubting him. It was the first vacation he had spent with her for years. He knew that she was to be in the Adirondacks at this time, and he had managed to come up for two weeks.

"You needn't come in just yet if you don't want to," she reminded him as they went up the path to the church. "Ethel and I are going up to the front pew, so as to be near the confessional. But you'll come inside in time to get a seat today, won't you?" she asked anxiously.

He nodded reassuringly as she went in. Then he retraced his steps to the main road and stood there watching the people coming from every direction to the church. He smiled patronizingly.

"Many of these are coming just for the novelty of the thing, I suppose, and some of them, perhaps, are like myself—coming just to please someone else. I wonder what Katherine would say if she knew that until last Sunday I had not been in a church since last winter when I was home for the holidays, and that I haven't been to confession since the year after I left home? Well, what she does not know won't bother her, and if I go to church when she is around it will be all right. She wouldn't understand that one can't keep that all the time if his friends don't go either. I suppose I've lost interest in Church, anyway, and, after all, perhaps it doesn't matter."

Remembering his promise, however, to be in time to get inside the church, he went back up the path. The pews were already occupied, but chairs had been placed in the aisle, and he sat down on one of these. There were no kneeling benches in front of the chairs, and he saw no reason for kneeling down until he had to. He idly watched the people about him. Nearly all had either beads or a prayer book. He looked through the open window where he could see the sunlight filtering through the trees and he wished he were out there. He was not at all interested in the Mass. Presently he found himself planning an afternoon trip to Eagle mountain, but his train of thought was interrupted by the priest's voice.

"... and so today," he was saying, "we can have congregational singing. I regretted last Sunday that we could have no music, and one of the ladies has been kind enough to offer her services as organist, and I am sure it will be very edifying to all and pleasing to God and to His Blessed Mother if you will each do your share."

Garry wished again that he were not there. He loved music, good music, and he possessed a rich tenor voice.

"Just to think," he complained, "that I will have to listen to all these voices around me, with most of them probably singing off key and half of them not knowing the words! I don't think I can stand it." He looked around. The vestibule was crowded. He knew the steps outside were also crowded. He would have to disturb many persons if he went out, and he would not deliberately subject anyone to unnecessary inconvenience.

"I'll have to see it through, I suppose," he decided. "It's only for this once, however. Next Sunday I'll be back where no one expects me to go

to church. I came here and I am staying here under protest, but I will listen just for the possibility of hearing some discords or something funny enough to score a point when I describe it to the boys at the club."

An old lady in a pew near him held out one of the cards containing the hymns.

"I don't need it. I know the words," she said, with a pleasant smile.

He took it and thanked her, but did not look at it. His thoughts were wandering again.

The organist was playing now, and the people around him were singing. It was not as bad as he had expected—in fact, it was very good. Not only that, but the air seemed to be one he had heard somewhere. He listened again for the words. Ah! he remembered them now. He used to sing it in the boys' choir. "Mother, dear, O pray for me."

He had insisted that he would not sing, but he had not supposed that it would be these old hymns that everyone had known from babyhood; why, his mother had sung that as a lullaby for him. He had not wanted to sing, and now it seemed as if he could not. The muscles of his throat contracted as if with pain. He felt now that he must sing that hymn. He did not need to look at the words. He could not have seen them anyway, his sight was so misty.

And now the cry in his heart broke through in a sob, unnoticed by the absorbed singers, and then his voice, full and sweet, made of the hymn a full prayer, a petition, a rhythmic entreaty to the Mother of God, as the vibrant tones seemed to lead the others in the familiar chorus:

"Mother, dear, remember me, And never cease thy care, Till in Heaven eternally Thy love and bliss I share."

The organ was again silent, and Garry Madden knelt at the consecration. He might have been alone so oblivious had he become of the hundreds around him. And then, after a while, through the hushed place came the priest's "Domine, non sum dignus," and he saw his sister with many others approach the Communion railing. And then came the soft strain of the Communion hymn. It is doubtful if ever in his life Garry Madden had made a more fervent act of contrition than the one he felt in his soul while his voice humbly and penitently blended with those he had so lately ridiculed. They were singing together, "O Lord, I am not worthy."

Katherine, in her thanksgiving, heard her brother's voice above the others and felt more unworthy herself in having doubted him for a moment.

"He could not sing like that if he were not sincere," she assured herself. "I'll never doubt him again."

When she joined him outside, she thought he looked a little more serious—or was he tired? Perhaps he had to stand, after all.

"Did you have a good seat, Garry?" "Yes, very good. In fact, I think it was probably the best one there."

She laughed merrily, as did her companion.

"You could see and hear well then?" "I saw much and heard many things," was the puzzling reply. She looked up questioningly. Somehow he seemed to mean more than he said, and yet, perhaps, he was only treating the subject lightly as usual.

"Well, I suppose you know what you are talking about, even if I don't. However, I am glad that you were at least comfortable since I brought you so early. I was afraid that—"

"You needn't have been. I am glad, after all, that I came early. The sight of so many people coming from every direction to a little chapel like this makes an impression on the mind that you can't get away from. You keep recalling it afterwards. At the time it seemed rather a commonplace incident, but now I am glad I saw them."

"I am glad, too, Garry. It will be a pleasant picture to remember."

"How soon after luncheon can you two be ready to go to Eagle mountain," he asked a little later. "I think a number of the others at the hotel are going, and we—"

"You had better not count on us Garry. The rest of you can go just the same, but we heard one of the ladies who was at church say that the priest, Father Hilton, is to have dinner at Cedarcrest today. He will be right near us. Ethel and I are going over to see him. We wanted to see him after Mass, but a car was waiting for him, and we did not like to detain him. We want to give him an offering for some Masses. You know the priests in these places have to depend upon the generosity of vacationists. During the rest of the year the congregation is pitifully small."

"I think I'll go over with you, Katherine. There is something I want to see him about, too. I just recall that there is a private matter that should be attended to, and I don't want to delay it any longer. I was afraid I would have to wait until I got back to New York, and I am glad to be able to settle it today. Some time I will tell you all about it."—S. Waldren Carney in Catholic Fireside.

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