

## GRANTLEY MANOR.

## A TALE

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

## CHAPTER VII. Continued.

"Does he come back tomorrow?" asked Walter. How grateful Margaret felt to him for that question.

"I don't know," was the answer; "he did not say."

She looked for her father as the butler was pulling off her cloak, but he had turned aside and darted into his study, closing the door behind him. She walked straight to the library, but found it dark, and then recollected that she did not know which room her sister was in; she called the servant and asked him. He said Mrs. Dalton had not thought it proper to decide till the Colonel's arrival, but he believed that the lady's things had been taken to the chintz bedroom. Margaret ran up the oak staircase, and found her governess with a flat candlestick in her hand on the landing-place.

"O, where is she?" exclaimed the breathless girl.

"In your father's room, down-stairs; my dear. She was with me just now, but when she heard the Colonel's voice asking for her, she was off like a shot. He was at the bottom of the back-stairs, and she seemed to know her way by instinct. They were in the study, and the door closed, before one had time to turn one's self round."

"I suppose I ought to go down—I wish my father would call me. Tell me quick, Dolly—do you like her?"

"She seems a very nice young lady; but dear me, she is so much taller than you! Who would have thought that?"

"I must go," said Margaret, and she went down the stairs that led to her father's room. She expected to be called; she thought the door must open soon; she heard them speaking—she did not feel courage to open the door. She waited—nobody stirred—a low murmur was all that reached her ears; her heart began to swell, and a sense of pain and irritation to oppress it; tears came to her eyes, and were with difficulty kept from flowing. The night was intensely cold, and as she stood on the stone floor of that passage, the physical sensation seemed to correspond with the chilliness that was creeping over her heart. "I can bear it no longer!" she exclaimed, and turned towards the stairs with the intention of shutting herself up in her own room, and giving vent to her feelings; but as she mounted the first step, it did occur to her that it was possible that the fault might be on her side—that knowing where her sister was, it might be expected that she would rush to her without waiting to be called. She returned, and after a knock that was not answered, gently opened the door; she saw no one, but by the lights on the carpet perceived that those she had come in search of were in the further room, a sort of inner recess within the study.

"Idol! Treasure! Best gift of Heaven!" he exclaimed as he folded his child to his heart, "Ginevra! my Ginevra! Do I breathe again, in human hearing, that name which has never passed my lips for years, but as a cry of anguish. My own, my precious child, call me your father, or say, once—once only, 'my Henry.' No, do not say it; they were her last words, and no one, not even you, my angel, must utter them in my hearing."

A low sweet voice was murmuring in his ear, the child he had held in his arms sank on her knees by his side, her lips moved, her eyes turned from the mute canvass before her, first to Heaven and then on her father's agitated face. The color that had deepened in her cheek died away, her head was bent still lower than before, and her tears fell fast on the hand on which her brow was resting.

"My home! my English home!" she exclaimed aloud, "what do they care about you—those who make me wish myself away? After all, (now an evil spirit at her side) espied the favorable moment to suggest a bad thought, which easily took root in the ground which irritation and discontent had prepared, after all, I do not see why I should wish myself away, or take my father's indifference so much to heart! I am the eldest sister. Grandmother has often told me that I am the heiress of Grantley, and of all that surrounds it. Ginevra is the stranger here, and if I chose to make Grantley uncomfortable to her, I could do it far more easily than she could annoy me."

At that moment, there was a low knock at the door; Margaret started, and in a trembling voice, said—

"Come in."

Margaret felt as if a mother was speaking to her, a strange repose stole over her heart, she wept freely when a soft hand was laid on her forehead, and a gentle earnest kiss was pressed on her burning cheek. The Evil Spirit fled, the icy cord that had bound her heart gave way; she raised her head, smiled through her blinding tears, looked at a face which might have been an angel's, and again finding hers in that sheltering bosom, murmured—

"Sister, O sister! are you come at last? Not the one I have expected for a few weeks, but the one I dreamed of years ago."

Another soft kiss was pressed on her cheek, and Ginevra said—

"Do not talk now, sister—your hands are cold, your cheek is burning—I know your head is throbbing—my own! I know you are suffering; you must lie down and rest."

"Sister," she exclaimed, rousing herself for an instant, "you have come a long distance to-day; you must be tired. What are you doing here?"

"Resting—dearest—by your side. I should like to stay here all night, watching you sleep."

"No, no," cried Margaret, "you must not stay. Go, sister, go; but let me see you to-morrow when I awake. I shall be so afraid of having only dreamed of you. It is so strange; but I feel as if I had seen your face before. Kiss me again, before you go."

Ginevra bent over her sister, kissed and blessed her, and then sinking on her knees by the side of the bed, she said, in a low voice—

"Sister, shall we pray together?"

Margaret put her arm round her neck, and drawing her close to herself, whispered in her ear—

"Are there prayers that we may say together?"

"The one that God himself made,"

answered Ginevra, and her soft low voice repeated the Lord's Prayer, and as the Amen fell from Margaret's lips, a heavy sleep closed her eyes.

## CHAPTER VIII.

At the time of her arrival in England Colonel Leslie's youngest daughter was about seventeen years old, but she looked older, and was much taller than her sister. Both had small aquiline noses, high foreheads, very much rounded at the temples, dark pencilled eyebrows, and thick eyelashes; but while Margaret's eyes were of the hue of the violet, or of the hyacinth, those of Ginevra were of the color of the forget-me-not, or rather of that blue which lies, sometimes between the crimson clouds and the burnished gold of a gorgeous sunset, a blue which puts to shame the azure of the rest of the sky. Her hair was fair, and her cheeks were pale; her mouth was the only feature which was decidedly prettier in her than in her sister; it was full of sweetness and gentleness. Her face was calm, but it was the calmness of a smooth sea still, but not dull—quiet, but expressive.

It was a pretty sight to see Margaret wrapping a fur cloak round her pale sister, persuading her into the sledge, and looking at her side like a damask rose by a lily—it was pretty to see Ginevra weave the greenhouse flowers, the graceful fuchsias, or the many-colored heaths, into garlands, which each day she placed on her sister's fair brow—it was pretty to see them read together, to watch them at their Italian lessons, or with their English books before them, correcting each other's mistakes with childish pleasure, and chiding each other in sport—or in the old library when the twilight was closing, the shutters yet open, and the fire burning brightly, to hear Ginevra sing the songs of her own land, where Margaret set at her feet, and warbled a second, as she caught the melody of those wild strains.

"Sister," the eldest would say, as they sat up at night in each other's rooms, "sister, we must travel very fast over our past lives, and be in a few days like old sisters, who have always lived together."

"You have been very happy then, always, dearest?" the other would reply.

"Yes, the happiest child in the world; but I suppose a child's happiness cannot last."

"Have you found that out yet, sister?" "Guessed it, perhaps," she and Margaret bent her head over the flowers which she had just removed from her brow.

"Have you been happy, Ginevra?" "Sometimes," was the answer, and then she added quickly—

"Tell me more about yourself, my Margaret, my Reine Marguerite," she said, and gazed fondly on the face of her sister, while she drew from her the little histories of her past life, the expression of her sentiments, the statements of her opinions. She listened to her with unwearied interest, she responded with the keenest and most delicate sensibility, she threw a charm over these conversations, and their daily intercourse, which removed all constraint and embarrassment. Margaret was fascinated and subdued by the magic influence of that quiet and most intelligent sympathy; but at the same time she felt baffled in her efforts to obtain from Ginevra the same unlimited confidence which she involuntarily placed in her; and after a few days had elapsed her impression was that she had never met with any one who understood her so well, or whom she understood so little, as her younger sister. She was so unlike any one she had ever met with before, and all those about her seemed to feel this; even Mrs. Thornton, who generally was surprised at nothing, wondered that she could not dislike Ginevra. She tried to tell her that there was nothing in common between them, (not specifying whether she meant the room they were to sit in, or the subjects they were to talk about,) and the unaffected interest which Ginevra took in her grand-children, in her poor people, in her garden, forced her to acknowledge the contrary. She told her that English people could esteem foreigners, perhaps love them, but never get identified with them. Ginevra felt no wish to be identified with Mrs. Thornton, but with a sweet smile said "she would not claim more than her affection, but would never be satisfied with less." As Mrs. Dalton observed, "she did every thing well, great and small, important or insignificant," and Margaret could bear to hear this, and she could bear too to hear her sister reply, when, one day, she had asked her if she felt at ease with their father—

"O yes; when I am with him, I often think of the beautiful words of scripture, 'Perfect love casteth out fear,' and I think it is so with the purest and holiest of human affections."

"Do you indeed love him thus?" she exclaimed; "then no wonder that he has no affection to spare for me."

The tears sprang to her eyes, but afraid of being misunderstood, she hastily added—

"Do not mistake me, Ginevra. I once thought I should be jealous of you; but all that gave way at the first sound of your voice, at your first kiss, my own sister, and I shall never," she continued as Ginevra looked at her with anxious tenderness, "never regret that I am not the favorite, if you will but love me as I know he loves you."

The days went by, and Margaret wondered how she could have lived without Ginevra, so necessary did she now appear to her happiness. She was not, however, completely satisfied that she made her out, as Frederic Vincent would have said. There was an evident reluctance to enter into conversation on subjects personal to herself, that sometimes puzzled and almost provoked Margaret.

(To be Continued.)

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