

The Rival Clansmen

A Scottish Vendetta.

CHAPTER X.

A REVELATION—NED GORDON AGAIN THWARTS IAN M'KENZIE—BROTHER AND SISTER MEET—FORWARD TO CASTLE M'LEOD.

"Nay," exclaimed Jeannie, "say not that it was accidental. Our meeting was ordered by a Wise Power that we, weak of ourselves, might assist and strengthen each other. That, my dear brother, has been the result of the meeting, and I cannot doubt that it was ordered so. I owe an everlasting debt of gratitude to Miss Magregor, who saved me and my child from a sad and deplorable death, and cheered my soul by informing me that you were in this quarter, and that I might probably meet you."

"But little did I think at that time that he should arrive at the opportune moment to save me from the power of a villain," interposed Flora.

"A villain double-dyed," exclaimed Ned, with feeling. "By Auld Harry, if I had kent you time when I met him in the hut that he was my sister's betrayer, I could ha' knockt him as soond wi' my stick as Willie Tamsen o' Jaddart would an ox wi' a single draw. He'll mind on't whan we meet again, I tellin' him. But loosh, Jeannie, come and sit ye doon here—and you too, Miss Magregor, for there is little danger o' ocht comin' ower ye sae lang as Ned Gordon's by yer side—until I get yer story frae ye. Tell me what took ye awa', whar ye hae been, and hoo ye faund the villain ye hae socht sae lang aifter—for I kent brawly that wis yer object."

"Ah, Ned, it's a lang, lang story," replied Jeannie, looking up sadly into her brother's face; "and this is a strange place tae tell it in. But ye haena looket at my bairnie yet—surely ye dinna look strange at me because I'm a mither?" and a tear dimmed the poor girl's eye.

"Look strange at ye, Jeannie, my sister. God forbid. Ye hae been guilty o' naething but simplicity, lassie. For that—which is nae fau't—let me hear aye say a word against you. No, Na, Jeannie, I'm no lookin' strangely at you, nor yet at your bairnie either. I trust that I hae love aneuch tae be a share for baith. Gie's the bit thingie in my arms, lassie. Pair lammie! fu dae ye ca'd, Jeannie?"

"Jeannie," replied his sister, "no aifter myself, but aifter my mither. An' oh, Ned! I canna forbear langer frae speirin' at ye—tell me what my father and mither said about my leavin', an' hoo the auld folk are."

"Ah, lassie," said Ned, in a sorrowful tone. "I'm laith tae answer ye, but it's maybe as weel noo as again. Yer father an' yer mither took yer leavin' sair, sair tae heart—sae sair, Jeannie, that they sunk under it, an' you an' me the day are fatherless an' mitherless!"

"Fatherless, mitherless!" echoed the poor girl. "Heaven forgive me! this is a blow I did not expect. Ah, Ransald Murray! you hae much to answer for. And both are dead?" she murmured abstractedly, bursting into tears.

"Ay, lars, they lie side by side aneath the rowan tree in the auld kirkyard—you spot, ye mind, whar the mune glints sae bonnie through atween the twa tall poplars in the park."

"I ken the place, Ned—'ken the place. But, O that they had been livin', that I might hae down tae them an' asked their forgiveness, which they would not have withheld!"

"Dinna fret on that score, my sister. Baith forga'e ye afore they left this world; an' glad wad their auld hearts hae been had they but see ye sittin' here, an' me aside ye. Pit by yer sorrow, my lass. A' that remains tae be dune noo is tae punish this villain M'Kenzie, and that's a job I'm mair fittin' for than you; an' ane, I see red ye, that I'll carry out. Did he own ye ava in the noo?"

"No, Ned; I murthered me bitterly. Oh, I always hoped until to-day that he was not so bad as he seemed, and that we might yet be happy. But now, my husband though he is—and that, my brother, I swear is true—my love is turned into hatred. But for my child's sake, will you assist to prove my marriage? It will be no easy work, but it must be done."

"That I will, Jeannie," responded her brother, cheerily. "If ye can pit me on the richt track, I'll search it oot, though it suld cost me little trouble. I'll dae't no only for your sake an' for the sake of the bairnie—the brisk bit thingie—but I've a guess that Miss Magregor will be unco glad to hear that he can be proved a married man."

Flora had listened with much interest to the conversation between the brother and the sister; but had not thoughts of interrupting the pathetic flow of their thoughts until she was now indirectly invited to speak by Ned.

The Virginus Settlement.

The following are the terms agreed upon between Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State, and Rear-Admiral Don Jose Polo de Barnabie, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Spain, for the settlement of the Virginus difficulty, at the Conference held at the Department of State, Washington, on the 29th Nov., 1873.

First: The immediate delivery to the United States of the ship Virginus and all the surviving passengers and crew.

Second: A salute to the United States flag on the 25th of December next, unless in the mean time Spain shall satisfy the United States that the American flag was improperly borne on that vessel, and further that she had no right to the American flag or American papers. In this event the salute is to be spontaneously withdrawn, and Spain is formally to disclaim any intentional indignity to the flag in the acts committed by Spain against the Virginus.

Third: If it shall thus be shown that the Virginus had no right to carry the American flag and papers, the United States will institute proceedings against the vessel and the surviving parties who have violated the laws of the United States; and Spain guarantees to institute proceedings against any of her authorities who may have violated either law or treaty stipulations.

Fourth: The matter of reclamation of damages is reserved for future consideration.

These terms appear to have been conceived in a conciliatory spirit on both sides, and can be carried out with no loss of honour by both Spain and the United States.

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