

The Rival Clansmen

A Scottish Vendetta.
CHAPTER X.

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

Ian felt stung by her words. There was a low clamish pride in his nature. He could neither brook taunts nor jeers, and, with a muttered oath he exclaimed—

"You are mistaken, Flora Macgregor, you have had enough of license and trifling. Remember you have determined men to deal with, who can ill bear to be duped, and who will give you no further opportunity of exercising your talents upon them. Listen! I shall not again lose sight of you until you are my wife."

"Never, never," gasped Flora.

"You shall be my wife before another sun sets."

The words were hissed rather than spoken.

"No, I shall not. I swear it."

"And I have sworn you shall."

"Why are you so eager to marry me? Lie not by telling me it is because you love me."

Ian started and hesitated before he replied. Assuming a careless air, however, he said—

"That it does not at present suit me to tell you, since you are in a mood to question my statements. Before long you will be compelled to believe I have given you my hand, whether you think you have the heart with it or not."

"Is your hand your own to give?"

He started when he heard the question as if he had been stabbed, then reddened to the temples, while he clenched his hands, set his teeth, and glared wildly at the questioner with eyes in which gleamed an ominous light. Then he recovered himself, and forcing a laugh, replied—

"Enough of banter now. Come, prepare to go with me at once. But I forgot you had a companion. You had better bid her good-bye. But I will go forward to see her; she looks sly, but the shyness may be assumed, in which case there may be a reason why I should ascertain whether I know her."

"There may be a reason," replied Flora, significantly; "but I have received no answer to the question I put."

With a muttered oath, Ian strode past her without deigning to reply, and now Flora's heart fluttered as she turned to watch how Jeannie Gordon would meet him.

As he approached, Jeannie rose slowly and calmly to her feet, and in a voice which sounded thrilling in its deep terrible expressiveness, said—

"Yes, Randal Murray, there may be a reason why you should know me."

With what an intense, eager interest did Flora watch the effect of the words! And it was such as caused her heart to bound with joy, replaced by a deeper sorrow for the girl who stood beside her.

Ian started, then stood as if transfixed, gazing at Jeannie with eyes that seemed about to start from their sockets—his face white and bloodless as that of a corpse. Then he involuntarily staggered back a pace, his whole frame quivering with furious excitement, as he hoarsely exclaimed—

"Who are you? What fiend sent you here?"

There was no sign of weakness about Jeannie Gordon now. Her cold, sad eyes gazed steadily at M'Kenzie, and without moving a muscle, she replied—

"Who am I? Why should you ask? I am Jeannie Gordon, the innocent girl whom I do now from the bottom of my heart believe that you purposely betrayed and ruined. I am the mother of your child, and before Heaven, if not before men, your wife. It was no fiend that sent me here, but a wise and good Providence, that I might check you in the performance of another act of villainy."

Guilt was manifest in every feature of M'Kenzie's face; but nevertheless he braved it out. Bestowing a glance of malignant hatred upon Jeannie, he cried fiercely—

"Woman, you lie. I know nothing of you. Nor shall your presence here cause me to quit my purpose. You are without the shadow of a claim. Come, Flora Macgregor; it is with you I have to deal at present. Step into this boat."

"No," replied Flora, indignation and contempt beaming in every feature. "Now you can desire nothing with me. It is impossible for you now to consummate your desire, while your own wife lives; still less possible is it for me to consent to any such proceeding while she stands beside you."

Ian had now somewhat recovered his composure.

"A pretty little plot," he sneered; "but it shall be unsuccessful." Then he stepped forward to Flora with a determined air as he continued—"If not with your consent, you must accompany me without it. Come away, I have your uncle's sanction."

Just as he was about to seize our heroine's wrist, Jeannie stepped forward, and with tears in her eyes, said mournfully—

"Randal, Randal, for the sake of your child, will you not recognise me, and forego your intention?"

"Curse you, woman! go and leave me, else I will—" and he scowled significantly as he clenched his fist, and assumed a threatening attitude.

Again did the tears vanish from the fair face, and the strange lustre return to the eyes.

"Randal Murray, you may think you have done well; you may live to realise that you have erred. For years with a woman's devotion I have endeavoured to search you out and show to you my love. I have found you, and you have changed my love into hatred. Henceforth I will devote my whole energies to prevent this child—yours and mine—lawfully begotten—from growing up with the brand of disgrace and infamy upon it. When that is accomplished, then will I live only as an avenger—to avenge myself and it upon you for the misery you have caused us. For your own sake, I earnestly implore you to leave Miss Macgregor. Heaven will not permit its holiest laws to be constantly broken with impunity."

Cuba is represented as arming, determined to resist any demand that may be made for the punishment of General Burriel.

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References: Sir John Rose, banker, London, England; F. W. Thomas, Esq., banker, Montreal; The Marine Company of Chicago, bankers; Hon. J. Carling, London, Ont. Messrs Gault Bros., merchants, Montreal; Senator F. Smith (Frank Smith & Co.) Toronto; J. M. Miller & Co., commission merchants, Chicago; W. Watson, Esq., banker, New York; D. Butters, Esq., Montreal; J. Whitehead, Esq., M. P., Clinton, Ont.; C. MacMillan, Esq., M. P., Hamilton, Ont.; T. C. Chisholm, Esq., S. B. Poole, Esq., Toronto.

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