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HONOUR WITHOUT RENOWN

BY MRS. INNES BROWN

author of "Three Daughters of the United Kingdom"

CHAPTER XIX.—CONTINUED

He listened half-dazed to the last faint sounds of retreating voices and steps; then with a cry of despair, sank back upon the pillow and wept for very misery and weakness.

A feeling of faintness almost overpowered him, but with a superhuman effort he contrived to creep a yard or two; then, his strength failing him, he fell prostrate.

Once more despair best him. After all, of what avail was hope or trust in God if this terrible death like this awaited him?

He did not catch the sound of her soft footfall as she bounded across the outer room; nor did he discern the sound of the key as, in answer to her touch, it revolved quickly in the lock.

One quick glance around and she instantly grasped the situation; and a glad Deo gratias rose from her heart when she discovered that she was still in time to save the life upon which so much depended.

Manfred followed her every action with fevered excitement, much as a drowning man watches the approach of the lifeboat which is hastening to his rescue.

hands beneath his shoulders, and dragged him on to the blanket. "Have courage," she said, "and aid me in my efforts. With God's help I will save you yet!

As she dropped upon her knees, gathering together the four corners of the blanket, he realised, as he had never done before, the sublime worth of charity.

She shook her head and smiled somewhat impatiently, endeavoring to complete her preparations; but with the untimely strength of a dying man he held her hand, repeating once more with wildest emphasis:

"Listen!—you shall, you must hear me. I—I am the scoundrel of whom I told you; he who for shame's sake I designated Manly myself, Harold Manfred. It is I who have allowed my brother to pine unjustly in a prison cell.

"Then haste and bid me now. And, for poor Edmund's sake, my God bless you as I do—I, Sister Marguerite, known to you once as Beatrice de Woodville."

While these sentences were quickly exchanged the apartment was filling fast with smoke. The skirting-board beneath Manfred's bed was being rapidly devoured by brick little tongues of fire; the glass from the window had cracked and dropped out, the framework was on fire; the door was threatening to fall in. Her patient seemed dazed and stupid now.

With both hands she seized the blanket; then putting forth all her strength, draw the helpless body through the first doorway and across Madame Corbette's room as far as the outer door. Here her passage seemed to be generally barred.

"Yes, I am close to you, doctor!" she cried bravely. "For God's sake help me to save my lives, I will push him out. Do you set him down the steps. I will follow, if possible."

frightened crowd such a ringing cheer as rent the air with its exultant tones of joy and admiration.

CHAPTER XX

The echo of that cry startled old Pierre as, with gaping mouth and wide open eyes, he hurried on his way, guiding the priest to the site of what was once old Mere Corbette's abode.

"Father, we are too late!" he cried, throwing up his arms in horror and despair. "All is over, and the place is in flames. What terrible times are these!"

It was three years since the brother and sister had seen each other, and was it thus they met at last? Father de Woodville's quick eye took in the burnt and blackened corset, which, however, had preserved unharmed the head within it.

"Is she seriously hurt?" he asked, quickly and nervously. "No, I trust not," answered the doctor. "But delay might prove serious. It is in consequence of her efforts to save the life of another that she lies thus! Let us move on, I beg. She shall wait for nothing. I will attend to her myself, for I know her well."

"So do I," said the priest, rising proudly, "for she is my only sister." Then tenderly bending over her once more, he whispered in her ears: "May God have you in His holy care, dear Sister! Fear nothing! For I, your brother Percy, am by your side."

"The flames had spread and were meeting now upon the upper portion of the wooden porch, so that it was barely possible to creep beneath them—and even so, she must leave behind her the helpless man for whom she had ventured so much. She could hear voices outside, and could see the gaping crowd gesticulating wildly. They had done their utmost to prevent her entering the burning building. It was no fault of theirs if she perished, they were assuring Dr. Arno, who, though busily engaged in professional duties, had observed the flames and hurried to the scene."

"You stand there gaping, and tell me that some one is still inside?" he cried savagely. "Yes, yes!—a mad nun: she would go and try to save her countryman."

"Great God! It must be she, none else would do it," he cried; and rushing close to the burning door he called frantically: "Sister Marguerite! Sister Marguerite! Sister Marguerite! Are you there?"

aid. She is good—she is an angel! Would that I were like her!"

"Be like her, then," he said kindly, seating himself on an old wooden box by her side. "There is yet time to ask for mercy. But—turning to the woman—"Where is the Englishman?"

"On the other side of that door, in another room. He is but just recovering consciousness. I will go and attend to him while you do all you can for the old woman, who we feared would die long ere this. She is a special patient of Sister Marguerite's, and has been a vile old wretch in her time; but she is, I hope, repentant now."

Father Basil nodded, and signed to the woman to leave them. The large window of the apartment was destitute of glass, and the voices of passers-by were carried in on the fresh morning breeze; but the inmates were far too occupied to heed them. The room spoke of desolation, the most abject misery and grief.

Few of the passers-by paused to look in at the vacant window, and those who did showed no surprise. It had grown such a familiar sight for months past—that of a priest bawling over the sick and dying in the open squares, the streets, and wherever else their fellow creatures were falling—that if they passed to look at all they but muttered a prayer, or it might be bowed reverently, of the bright morning sun, as they stole into the bare dismantled room, flooding it with a golden light, were but a figure of the sweet silent strains of grace as they flowed into that hardened old sinner's heart, filling it with penitential sorrow.

"The back of my hand and the heel of my foot to you for a contentious old maid," soliloquized Mrs. Casey, as she mounted the two flights of stairs to her apartment.

"Mike, avic, have you the coffee ready yet? I'm dying for a good strong brewer after that Mary Jane Collins. She'd talk a hole through an iron pot, so she would, and she carrying the troubles and frets of the whole Ninth Ward on her back! It's about the new tenants upstairs I'm worrying; they're being far-downs, she's afraid they'll be playing 'The Boyne Water' on the Victrola and yourself will be going in for chastising them. Mike, dear, the beating of that woman is not to be had in New York or the next parish to it and that's your own Galway."

"I see that flat above ye is rented. Mrs. Casey," said Mary Jane Collins, as the two women walked home from early Mass together. "Do ye know I had an eye on that flat myself, and intended seeing the agent tomorrow; but, glory to goodness, there was a sign down last night and a van load of furniture going up the steps."

"Nice, quiet people, I hear they are. Tom Gifford, that moved them, says they lived on North Avenue for years; but a sister of Mrs. McKee's—

young widow with one little boy—having come over from Belfast, they had to have a larger place."

"Oh," said Mary Jane, opening her eyes in a startled way, "they're far-downs then! How do you know, Ellen Casey, but it's a pack of Orangemen that's in it? And, sure enough, I remember seeing a long, yellow piece of something wrapped around a looking-glass. Sure as you're alive, woman, it is 'The Boyne Water' you'll be hearing on that Victrola, morning, noon and night, and maybe Mike will lose his temper like he did with the fellow who was learning the cornet a year ago, and tell them a few things by way of relieving his mind."

"Mike will do nothing of the kind, Mary Jane Collins," retorted Mrs. Casey, with a little show of heat. "There's not a more peaceable man within ten miles of him than Mike Casey, and the reason why he fished that cornet player was that every night about ten o'clock he'd begin squawking out 'The Star Spangled Banner' and he not knowing two notes right, Mike up and told him if he wanted to murder anything in the musical line to go after 'Rule Britannia' and he'd sit up all night listening to him. The fellow started right at once, seeing Mike was half his size, but changed his mind when he found his cornet stung out of the window and himself going after it. Well you know, Mary Jane Collins, that it wasn't my man alone but the whole block was all stirred up about that fellow and his cornet, but Mike was the only one with courage enough to silence him. The McKees are decent people and not ones to mix or meddle with any one, thank God, like some that are not far-downs."

"Well, I have neither false teeth nor lock jaw," snapped Mary Jane, bouncing off on her homeward way. "I believe in speaking out my mind and I'll tell you again, Mrs. Casey, that a far-down is a far-down, and sooner or later you'll find they have all got the same black drop in them, and if every one else in the world did the same it would be a place worth living in instead of what it is. There's nothing better for any one than a closed mouth."

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can't be happy except something is wrong around them, and when it isn't wrong, they'll make it so for pure divilment. Mary Jane was born to look for trouble, but you know, after all, she has a heart as kind as your own."

"I'm saying nothing against her heart, Mike, it's the way she has of making you upset and miserable you're trying to make the best of things that I'm blaming her for. Now here's myself, coming out of church this morning thinking of the new people upstairs just moving in and me planning to have the two tired looking women come in here for a bite of lunch or dinner with me today till they get their stove going. Then up comes Mary Jane, and in ten minutes has me so filled up about Orangemen and far-downs that I don't feel like speaking a word to those people I met them on the stairs. What has she against far-downs, anyhow? That's what I'd like to know."

"How old is Mary Jane Collins now?" asked Mike Casey thoughtfully, balancing a teaspoon in his fingers.

"I don't know what her age has to do with it," answered his wife, "but Mary Jane will never see fifty again. I often heard my mother say that Mrs. Downey's Katie, now married in Boston, Jack Duffy and Mary Jane Collins were born the same week. Why she remembered it so well was that there never was known such a storm of wind and rain in Ireland since the time of the Big Wind itself as when they were trying to get the children to Kilgar to be baptized. My father said at the time it looked like they'd be able to walk there, ten miles over the mountains if you please, before the weather cleared up."

"Well, you see," laughed Mike, "Mary Jane got a good exciting start in the world. Well, Ellen, if you'll pour me out another cup of coffee seeing you're sitting next to the stove, I'll just tell you a little story that will clear up a whole lot of what's troubling your mind. Did Mary Jane by any chance ever mention the name of Tom Finegan—a lad from somewhere near your own place—to you when talking about old times?"

"No, then, Mike, I don't think she ever did. Mary Jane talks more about other people, anyhow, than ever she does about herself or her own acquaintances. I wonder if that Tom Finegan was related to old Darby Finegan that used to peddle eggs? Many a time I remember seeing my mother, God rest her soul, arguing with him over the price he'd offer, and she with a crane ready for market. One day the old jannet ran away with himself and a load of eggs on the road to Cork, and such a sight was never witnessed as when poor Darby was pulled out of the wreck. My father said he scraped enough eggs off him to make omelets for a regiment."

"Very likely they were all of the same stock. Tom's father died when he was small and his mother married a north of Ireland Catholic doctor and went to Belfast to live. Tom stayed in Munster with his grandfather and grew up to manhood there. It appears himself and Mary Jane Collins went to school together while she was staying with the aunt that brought her up down near Yougal. A kind of understanding was between them about being married sometime or other and when Mary Jane Collins came out to this country Tom started too, only he went to Belfast first to see his mother and he never got any further till six months ago."

"Why, Mike Casey!" gasped Ellen. "Hill six months ago you tell me? And where is he now, and has Mary Jane met him? Where in the world did you hear all this?"

"One question at a time, woman dear. Tom Finegan at present is rooming with his step-sister, Mrs. McKee, upstairs. He stayed in Belfast till his mother died and when he got no answer to all the letters he wrote to Mary Jane he married a widow that kept a nice little shop there. The poor woman died after a few years leaving Tom pretty well fixed and it's from his own mouth I heard the whole story a week ago."

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