

HELEN MOIR

OR LOVE AND HONOUR. A TALE OF THE CLYDE. CHAPTER XXIII.

ANXIOUS DAYS AT ARDENHAM—EDWIN AND RITCHIE IN LONDON.

"My dear sir," he quietly observed, "your ardour carries you to a preposterous conclusion. Your uncle—if, indeed, he be your uncle—must have taken great pains to deceive you, and I fear—"

"Now, my dear Weggate, don't go too fast," said Edwin. "As a lawyer you deem yourself incapable of taking up hasty notions. Just wait till you hear my story, and you'll withdraw that insinuation. Why, so far from what you say being the case, he doesn't even suspect the truth himself. He still believes that he signed this bill. See, here it is, for my mother has kept it all these years. Did you see it at the time?"

"No, I think not," replied the lawyer, as he took into his hand the piece of paper which Edwin held out to him.

"I was sure of it. I am certain that my uncle's unfortunate admission closed the door against all examination."

"As well it might," returned the other. "Who was to think of investigating with a view to prove a man innocent of what he had already confessed himself guilty?"

"Quite so," said it was dreadfully unfortunate, for, notwithstanding that confession, it is my fixed belief that he never saw, never touched, that forged bill, and my sole business in London is to prove this, if it be possible."

"Aye, if it be possible," echoed Weggate, with the same incredulous smile.

"The difficulty does not lie in the direction you imagine. I tell you, Weggate, if I did not know you so well, I would be provoked to—to—I don't know what."

"Knock me down, perhaps," suggested the blandly smiling lawyer.

"I shan't say, but my time is coming. Before I leave this room I shall have the satisfaction of hearing you express a very different opinion."

"Your pardon, my dear sir, I have expressed no opinion. How can I without your statement? To which, however, I am ready to listen."

"Then, give orders to your clerks to allow no one to enter, for the story is a long one, and needs patient listening."

The lawyer gave the requisite order through a speaking tube, and subsided into his chair to listen, little imagining what an intensely interesting and highly romantic tale was to be communicated.

The reader knows the tale already, and can imagine the effect it had on Mr. Weggate. Edwin told it much in the order in which we have related it; consequently it embraced the love-story of Hermann and Helen, which was in truth the primary fact round which all the other facts gathered themselves. To that love-story and the course it took was it owing that all the wonderful discoveries and revelations had been made. But for that David Bridgenorth might have paid his sad visit to Kilman Churchyard, and gone away again without meeting his child, or indeed knowing of her existence. But all things had been providentially arranged, and out of the first trial—the painful opposition and harsh conduct of Herr Rheinbach—all these events had sprung.

The effect of the story on Mr. Weggate was very marked indeed. He was a thorough lawyer in his habits and modes of thought, and it was seldom that he was moved from his professional calmness. Nor did he manifest much external feeling even now, but the rapid attention with which he listened to Edwin, never once interrupting him, but following him from point to point and incident to incident with unflinching interest, betrayed the influence to which he was being subjected.

And this was the air and attitude he maintained till the close.

"Now," exclaimed Edwin, "when he had brought his narrative down to the very hour of their departure from Scotland, 'that is the story. What do you think of it?'"

"Think of it?" said the lawyer, drawing a long breath. "I have listened to many a tale in our law courts, but this surpasses anything I can remember. There are two things I must do before anything else is either said or done. I must ask pardon for making the insinuation of imposture."

"I knew that would vanish from your mind. My poor, noble, suffering uncle! you see how his heart was broken. But what is your opinion as to his guilt or innocence? Do you—"

"One moment, please, before we come to that. I said I had two things to do, and the second is to shake by the hand this worthy fellow who has acted such a noble part to the poor, friendless, unprotected girl. I honor you, Ritchie, from the bottom of my heart. I honor I respect, I admire you, beyond the power of words to utter."

"Bravo, bravo," exclaimed Edwin, as, to Ritchie's blushing astonishment, Mr. Weggate rose and, crossing to where he sat, took his hand, horny hand with the great favour."

I need not reiterate Ritchie's speechless with distress, which the lawyer understood and speedily relieved by returning to his seat and giving his attention once more to Edwin.

Dollinger on Luther.

In a recent lecture delivered at Munich the distinguished "old Catholic" made the following pertinent observations on the remarkable points of resemblance between the events of the last few years and those immediately preceding the Reformation—

Before the Reformation an Ecclesiastical Council—the fifth council of the Trent—was held by Leo X., which destroyed all the hopes of church reform, and only pursued one end—the unconditional elevation of the Papal power. Then, too, as now, the German bishops basely consented to the destruction of the organic constitution of the Church, and every attempt at concession or mutual understanding was rejected as heresy. The Reformation in Germany was, thus, Dr. Dollinger, a necessity based on the nature of the German people. 'Luther's overpowering greatness of mind and wonderful versatility made him the man of his time and of his people, and there has never been a German who understood his countrymen so intuitively, and was at the same time himself so impregnated with the national spirit. The wills and minds of the Germans were in his hand like the lyre in the hand of an artist. If he gave to his countrymen more than any man has given to his people in Christian times—language, popular school-books, the Bible, religious hymns—all this was poor and colourless by the side of his overpowering eloquence. His adversaries stammered—he spoke; he impressed his spirit on the German nation, and even those of the Germans who hate him as the deceiver and seducer of the people can only speak with his language and think with his thoughts. And yet more powerful than this Titan of the intellectual world was

the desire in the German people for liberation from the bonds of a corrupt Church. Even if there had been no Luther the Reformation would have taken place."

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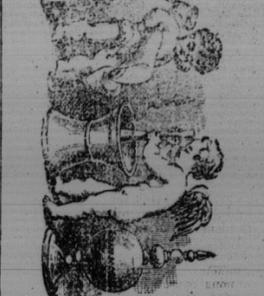
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