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HECKINGTON.

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS. GORE.



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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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VOL. II.

CHAPTER I.

“MY late client would, I am certain, have refrained from many explanations he has seen fit to make in this testamentary document,” said Mr. Harman, of Bedford Square, after reciting to Miss Corbet, shortly afterwards, the contents of William Enmore’s will; “had he been aware of the publicity necessarily attached to such instruments. He adverts, as he should scarcely have done in a legal paper, to the motives of dissension between him and his brother; as well as to the possibility that Miss Corbet may wish to repudiate his princely bequest — (nearer five thousand per annum, my dear madam, than four!) and provides against any such contingency, by leaving the Fredville estates, in remainder, to her brother Alfred Corbet of Grenfield House; or in case of his death during his minority, or afterwards intestate, and unmarried, to his younger brother Edgar — both, as I conceive, aliens to him in blood. — But it is much

to be regretted that he has coupled with this strong demonstration of attachment to one relative, and estrangement from his next of kin, certain strong animadversions on a family unconnected with his own. No one, in my opinion, has a right to vilify another in a document destined to publicity."

"And you are certain," was Miss Corbet's reply to this lengthy harangue, "that there is no way of setting aside this will, and restoring the property to the rightful heir?"

"None whatever. If wills could be cancelled by survivors, where would be the use of such instruments? — We have read, in history, of Kings who destroyed the wills of their predecessors. In private life," added the lawyer with a grim smile, — "such an act would come within reach of the criminal law. In the will before us, several persons are interested. Your cousin, Miss Lucretia Rawdon takes an annuity of a hundred a-year; and the due payment of Mrs. Enmore's jointure of eighteen hundred, rests with the executor, — my late father having been her trustee. — Your youngest brother, a child of tender age, has a reversionary interest in the whole. In short, my dear madam, all that remains for us is to apply for probate, here, as it has been already granted in the Colonial Court; and my brother will have the pleasure of inducting you, or whosoever you may appoint as your representative, into possession of the property: — or, if you prefer it, remitting to you half-

yearly, through my hands, the annual product, as well as the balance sheet of his accounts."

Already ill and flurried, poor Tiny looked thoroughly overcome by this announcement. A Druidess with the black veil of condemnation over her head, could scarcely have been more weighed down than Sophia Corbet by her compulsory heiresship! — To be in possession for life of nearly five thousand a year, of which two thousand five hundred were in immediate enjoyment, was, to a person reared within the narrow horizon of Grenfield House, like succeeding to the revenues of an Empire. — But it afforded her no satisfaction. This unsought wealth was the bequeathment of her dead cousin. This unsought wealth ought to have been the property of another.

Of Arthur's sentiments concerning his brother's will, she had no means of judging. He was giving himself up so entirely to consultations with medical and legal authorities concerning the evidence brought forward on the inquest, and the means of wreaking the utmost rigour of the law on the wretches it had served to unmask, that little was seen of him in Hertford Street. But it struck his cousin with some surprise that, when thanking her for her liberal though abortive intentions towards him, of which he had been apprised by Harman (who described Miss Sophia Corbet as a very charming young lady, but so romantic and ignorant of business that it was fortunate she had fallen into honourable

hands,) he added to his acknowledgment of her generosity — “Best as it is, Tiny, — *best* as it is! — In all respects, Willy has shown himself my superior. In all respects, Willy’s elections have been judicious. If poor now, I shall be rich enough in my old age, — the only time when riches are indispensable. Best as it is!” —

To be an heiress, therefore, Sophia Corbet was forced to resign herself; but it was not till she found the will unassailable, and her own desire to renounce the inheritance unaccomplishable, that she communicated to her father tidings of the golden shower which had fallen upon his house.

Right welcome was it to her feelings to see in how manly and gentlemanly a spirit the tidings were received. For his little girl, who deserved all the good that could befall her, and would deal honourably with any fortune she might inherit, Henry Corbet rejoiced at the miracle. — But as regarded the boys, he would prefer, he said, that neither of them ever heard of the reversion. “It would unsettle their minds for their own humble fortunes; and he trusted in God that they might never profit by William Enmore’s generous goodwill. Tiny must marry, and have heirs of her own.”

“But if such are his notions, I trust, my dear child,” observed Lucretia, on hearing how little Mr. Corbet appeared inclined to interfere in his daughter’s affairs, or plume himself on her accession of fortune, — “I sincerely trust Henry Corbet won’t be thinking of giving up