

HONOR O'HARA

VOL. II.

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HONOR O'HARA.

A Novel,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

MISS A. M. PORTER,

AUTHOR OF "THE HUNGARIAN BROTHERS,"
"THE RECLUSE OF NORWAY,"

&c. &c. &c.

"O when shall I regain my orbit of peace and glory!"

ERSKINE'S *Internal Evidence*, &c.

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER I.

HONORIA first heard of Fitz Arthur's journey, at her second home, at Hazeldean, where she went to spend a long day with Mrs. Preston, whilst the Miss Prestons went somewhere else. She was busily making up one of her plain-dressing friend's lawn caps, when the latter took occasion to revert to the good-natured jests which had followed Captain Fitz Arthur's departure from her house a few days before. She did not herself spare Honoria upon the subject of her affected indifference to her favourite.

Our naughty heroine defended herself as well as she was able ; yet maintaining her actual indifference to Fitz Arthur's pre-

ference, in spite of a certain exuberant pleasure, of which she really felt ashamed, and which might have told her she did not in truth set so lightly by his affection as she idly fancied. Mrs. Preston pressed the subject more seriously; vouching for the depth and sincerity of her favourite's sentiments.

Honorina did not choose to let the seriousness continue: — “ Well, well !” she cried, laughing, though she blushed, “ he won't die of it, you see, since he can go hither and thither, at will, without coming to say good bye, or with your leave; he's a mighty cavalier, careless sort of a lover, — if he be one, which I doubt. I tell you, Captain Fitz Arthur is not the sort of man to feel a profound, absorbing passion, such as one reads of, and wishes for. I am dying to inspire such a passion: for all my swains, hitherto, have been either so silly with their constancy, or so easily consoled by their strong sense, that I am determined to look out for a genius. Genius and great sensibility are inseparable: and I would as soon build my house

beside a standing pool as marry a man without all the fine sensibilities. No, no, Captain Fitz Arthur is far too rational and self-commanded to suit me. Do you think I could ever make myself wretched about Captain Fitz Arthur? He is so straightforward and undisguised; so sure, too, never to do any thing wrong or foolish, — that it is quite hopeless to think of agitation on his account. Now don't you think that living all one's life with him would be like reading a good book? I should go to sleep over it!"

"Wicked girl! wicked girl!" repeated Mrs. Preston, smartly tapping her cheek. "I know you don't mean half this nonsense to be taken seriously. Nobody reads more good books than yourself, or would be half as angry to hear good books huffed. I believe you are using poor Delaval after the same fashion, flouting him with your saucy lips, and wrapping him up in your heart."

"Indeed, indeed, dear Mrs. Preston," replied Honoria, with instant earnestness, "if I know my own feelings, this is my

opinion of Captain Fitz Arthur:—his heart I think one of the best in the world, — his mind of the first order of merely rational minds, (for I doubt if he has much imagination,) — his principles, a rock, — his temper, as sweet as your own, — his fortune, far superior to what a portionless girl like me should pretend to, — his person, as God made it !”

“ You little scornful, good-for-nothing” — interrupted Mrs. Preston, beating her again half in earnest ; — for the shrugged-up shoulder and drawn-down lip of Honoria marked her estimate of Captain Fitz Arthur’s pretensions to manly beauty : — “ Why, I vow to Heaven he is considered a very handsome man by every-body but yourself. If you have any quarrel with his features, tell me where you will see such a countenance, or eyes with half the sense, and sweetness, and nobleness of his ?”

“ Well, I’ll grant you he *has* an amiable, benevolent face ; certainly I would run to it for protection in a crowd, — if I saw no other !” Honoria laughed at her

own bull, and her maternal friend resumed: — “I am glad you have the grace to own this. His figure, perhaps, you will have a fling at !”

“No, no, I leave his figure standing ;” answered our heroine, her spirits rising ; “abating a certain military swing and cadence of step ; a sort of sway of the body and toss of the head, every now and then, as if balancing the long feather, I presume he wears in his hat when cap-à-pied in garrison ; he is very tolerable in point of figure. I never should have found that out by myself, though ; it was one of the Lady Lumleys’ admiration of him at his own ball, which I overheard, that made me take a good look at him ; and then I saw that he was really *fait à peindre*, or *si hommasse*, as Bella would say.”

Mrs Preston, protesting against the use of French words, smilingly noticed what had preceded them. “Well ! I see no reason for my favourite to despair yet : if you were going to marry Captain Fitz-Arthur to-morrow, you could not have

said more to prove he was to your taste. Charming countenance! fine figure! the best heart, sense, principle, and temper in the world! I don't see what you could have said more!" —and in the singleness of her own good heart, Mrs. Preston actually thought what she said.

Honorina cut her benevolent pleasure short, by exclaiming, — "Oh, my dear Mrs. Preston, have I told you I think him perfect in manly grace and beauty, with the light of genius in every look? Have I praised him for talents and accomplishments that make him the envy of one half of the world, and the admiration of the other? Have I said a single word of his eloquence-charm — fire — sensibility — subduing sensibility?"

"Mercy, my dear! you would have me think you mad!" was Mrs. Preston's artless exclamation: "We read of such things as all-accomplished Lovelaces, that dress themselves up, too, into Adonises; but your sterling good men are too busy with the work and worry of this hard-going world, to have time for learning to

cut capers like a figure-dancer, or to play on as many instruments as the band of a regiment."

"I know that, dearest Mrs. Preston," cried Honoria; "and that is precisely the reason why I insist upon genius in the man I am to marry. Genius is inspiration, — intuition! A man of universal genius has a talent for poetry, painting, and music born with him; so he requires no *time* to learn these divine arts. Give me genius, and I care not if I must live in a desert island with the possessor of it."

"Oh, my child, how little do you know yourself!" exclaimed the excellent Mrs. Preston: "you are too kind, too dear to many, to bear living only for one. I am mistaken if you could be happy without trying to make scores happy too. What power you would have if you were the mistress of Arthur's Court. Good Sir Everard doting on you so! Poor Hilton so fond of you! The dear Captain's heart so ready to outrun yours in every thing that is kind, and good, and gracious! O, if I shall live to see that

day !” Mrs. Preston’s large benign eyes were floating in delightful tears as she spoke, and her voice was full of motherly emotion.

Honorina was afraid of infection ; and rallying her spirits, she said gaily, — “ Now why will you try to talk me into falling violently in love with — being the mistress of Arthur’s Court? For, to say truth, the old house is more exactly to my fancy than the heir himself.”

“ Get you gone, foolish wronghead !” exclaimed Mrs. Preston, getting vexed for her favourite, and wishing to pique Honorina a very little : “ I believe you are right to stop me : I ought not to wish you should like Captain Fitz Arthur ; since I am rather led to think he is seriously endeavouring to prevent this affection from getting the better of him. If his father has really involved the estates, as people say he has, in truth it would be almost impossible for poor Delaval to marry without adding to the family troubles. However, this I will say for him, at any rate, — you may go all over the

world, and never meet with such another heart."

"Why then, after my pilgrimage is over," said Honoria lightly, "I'll come back and take it."

"And do you fancy it will stay and wait for you, saucebox?" asked the still rustic widow of Dr. Preston.

"O, if a man's love cannot stand a few years' trial, it is sorry stuff indeed. What water-gruel happiness must follow the marrying such a person!"

"Get you gone, I say, for a provoking, high-flown girl, that you are!" cried Mrs. Preston, flinging back Honoria's arms from the neck she was going to encircle in girlish playfulness and security of being loved. Mrs. Preston's benevolent countenance was red with the only sort of anger she could ever feel; that which boils up and sinks with the blood colouring the cheek. She tried to turn away; but Honoria forced herself upon her breast, crying out, — "Only forgive my flippancy, dear, dear Mamma Preston, and

I'll never jest again at your darling Delaval."

The endearing tone, the silver sweetness of the voice itself, the fond caress which accompanied them, and the very youthful face looking up in that of Mrs. Preston's, were not to be resisted. She pressed Honoria to her breast, repeating, "There, there! you are my own good child again."

Ere she could resume the subject, which she now hoped to treat with better success and more seriousness, Mrs. Preston's plain-liveried servant opened the door, announcing with the same breath, "Mrs. and Miss Matilda Shafto," and "Colonel Mason."

The latter was a well-drilled elderly soldier, commanding an infantry regiment quartered in the county.

Every thing about Colonel Mason was as thoroughly disciplined as himself. His belt, boots, queue, curls, had a more regimental air than those of any other officer. His black stock kept his head more

stiffly in the air : his doe-skin gloves held his fingers more firmly separate : he strode up to his best friend as if he were advancing to meet an enemy ; but, as he made the advance with that old-fashioned politesse which we are told caused one of our great commanders to take off his hat on the field, and apologize to his adversary for his future proceedings, the manner was rather gallant than alarming. The Colonel being known to have risen by merit alone, and to live upon his pay, was suffered to go at large through the county, without springes being set for him, or fear of his decoying any of its fair inhabitants to his quarters.

Colonel Mason was most felicitously plain and agreeable, and of such a determined age, that young ladies netted him purses, made him gorget-roses, invited him to sit by them, engaged him on their side in all their little causes, and openly quarrelled about his attractions before his face, with the most perfect security. He was the ally of the young men, and the escort of their fair sisters ; he kept

fathers and mothers in good humour by playing at cards, or listening to stories ; he brought gossip for maiden aunts, and sugar-plums for little children ; promoted parties ; patronized strolling actors ; lent his regimental band to help on a ball or a breakfast ; managed to get persons asked where they had not previously visited ; contrived accidental meetings between admirers and their admired ; in short, did all manner of good-natured things, without ostentation ; and made every one his friend without meanness.

Colonel Mason was neither a young man, nor a rich man, nor a clever man, nor an amusing man, nor a marrying man, — he was simply a cheerful man, of an obliging disposition, and, as such, he was a popular man.

As the Colonel did not belong to Mrs. Shafto, he kept politely in the rear, till that lady had gone through her usual evolutions of smile, curtsey, and caress, and was fairly seated : he then advanced boldly into the middle of Mrs. Preston's sunny parlour, bowing his neatly-pow-