

# **YOUNG MUSGRAVE**

BY  
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## YOUNG MUSGRAVE.

“Touching sacrifice: of thy worldly possessions give all, even to the spoiling of thy goods; for thus teaches our Lord Christ, and our blessed master San Francesco. If a poor person, more poor than thou, would have thy habit, which it is not permitted by the rule of the order to give, let him take it from thee: so wilt thou do no wrong; but thy life, which is not thine, give not: it is but given to thee for God’s service; thou canst not take it up, neither canst thou lay it down. This rule obey if thou wouldest be free from presumption. For our Lord Christ alone, whose life was His own, hath power and privilege to give it away.”—*Sermons, BB. Frati Ginepro e Lausdeo, dei Frati Minori.*

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**YOUNG MUSGRAVE.**

# PART I.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE FAMILY.

IT would be difficult to say how Penninghame Castle had got that imposing name. It was an old house standing almost on the roadside, at least at the termination of a rough country road leading from the village, which widened into a square space at the side of the house. The village road was lined with trees, and it pleased the Musgraves to believe that it had been in happier days the avenue to their ancient dwelling, while the rough square at the end had been the courtyard. The place itself consisted of a small mansion not important enough to be very distinctive in architecture, built on to the end of an old hall, the only remaining portion of a much older and greater house. This hall was entered directly by a great door of heavy oak, from which a slope of ancient causeway descended into the road below—an entrance which was the only thing like a castle in the whole *ensemble*, though it ought to have led to an ancient gateway and portcullis rather than to the great door generally wide open, through which, according to the story, a horseman once entered to scare the guests at their feast and defy the master at the head of the table. The hall was not used for such festive purposes now, nor threatened by such warlike intruders. It had known evil fortune in its day and had been degraded into a barn, its windows blocked up, its decorations destroyed—but had come to life again for the last fifty years and had come back to human use, though no longer as of old. Round the corner was the front of the old mansion, built in that pallid grey stone, which adds a sentiment of age, like

the ashy paleness of very old people, to the robust antiquity of mason-work more lasting than any that is done now. Successive squires had nibbled at this old front, making windows there and doorways here: windows which cut through the string-courses above, and a prim Georgian front door, not even in the centre of the old arched entrance which had been filled up, which gave a certain air of disreputable irregularity to the pale and stern old dwelling-place. Ivy and other clinging growths fortunately hid a great deal of this, and added importance to the four great stacks of chimneys, which, mantled in its short, large leaves and perpetual greenness, looked like turrets, and dignified the house. A lake behind somewhat coldly blue, and a great hill in front somewhat coldly green, showed all the features of that north country which was not far enough north for the wild vigour and vivifying tints of brown bracken and heather. The lake came closely up in a little bay behind the older part of the house where there was a rocky harbour for the boats of the family; and between this little bay and the grey walls was the flower-garden, old-fashioned and bright, though turned to the unkindly east. Beyond this was a kind of broken park with some fine trees and a great deal of rough underwood, which stretched along the further shore of the lake and gave an air of dignity to the dwelling on that side. This was still called "the Chase" as the house was called the Castle, in memory it might be supposed of better days. The Musgraves had been Cavaliers, and had wasted their substance in favour of the Charleses, and their lands had been ravaged, their park broken up into fields, their avenue made a common road, half by hostile neighbours, half by vulgar intrusion, in the days when the Revolutionists had the upper hand. So they said, at least, and pleas of this kind are respected generally, save by the very cynical. Certainly the present occupants of the house believed it fervently,

and so did the village; and if it was nothing more it was a great comfort and support to the family, and made them regard the rude approach to “the Castle” with forbearance. The public right of way had been established in those stormy times. It was a sign even of the old greatness of the house. It was better than trim lawns and smiling gardens, which would have required a great deal of keeping up. It was, however, a family understanding that the first Musgrave who made a rich marriage, or who in any other way became a favourite of fortune, should by some vague means—an act of parliament or otherwise—reclaim the old courtyard and avenue, and plant a pair of magnificent gates between the castle and the village: also buy back all the old property; also revive the title of Baron of Penninghame, which had been in abeyance for the last two hundred years; and do many other things to glorify and elevate the family to its pristine position; and no Musgrave doubted that this deliverer would come sooner or later, which took the bitterness out of their patience in the meantime and gave them courage to wait.

Another encouraging circumstance in their lot was that they were fully acknowledged as the oldest family in the county. Other and richer persons pushed in before them to its dignities, and they were no doubt very much left out of its gaieties and pleasures; but no one doubted that they had a right to take the lead, if ever they were rich enough. This, however, did not seem likely, for the moment at least. The family at Penninghame had, what is much to be avoided by families which would be happy, a history, and a very recent one. There were two sons, but neither of them had been seen at the Castle for nearly fifteen years, and with the name of the elder of these there was connected a dark and painful story, not much known to the new generation, but very well remembered by

all the middle-aged people in the county. Young Musgrave had been for a year or two the most popular young squire in the north country, but his brightness had ended in dismal clouds of misfortune and trouble and bloodshedding, with perhaps crime involved, and certainly many of the penalties of crime. He had not been seen in the north country since the crisis which made all the world acquainted with his unfortunate name; and his younger brother had re-appeared but once in their father's house, which was thus left desolate, except for the one daughter, who had been its delight before and was now its only stay. So far as the county knew, young Musgrave still lived, though he was never mentioned, for there had been no signs of mourning in the house, such as must have intimated to the neighbours the fact of John's death—which also of course would have made Randolph the heir. And save that once, not even Randolph had ever come to break the monotony of life in his father's house. Squire Musgrave and his daughter lived there alone now. They had been alone these fifteen years. They had little society, and did not keep up a large establishment. He was old, and she was no longer young enough to care for the gaities of the rural neighbourhood. Thus they had fallen out of the current of affairs. The family was "much respected," but comparatively little heard of after the undesired and undesirable notoriety it had once gained.

Thus abandoned by its sons, and denuded of the strongest elements of life, it may well be supposed that the castle at Penninghame was a melancholy house. What more easy than to conjure up the saddest picture of such a dwelling? The old man, seated in his desolate home, brooding over perhaps the sins of his sons, perhaps his own—some injudicious indulgence, or untimely severity which had driven them from him; while the sister, worn

out by the monotony of her solitary life, shut herself out from all society, and spent her life in longing for the absent, and pleading for them—a sad, solitary woman, with no pleasure in her lot, except that of the past. The picture would have been as appropriate as touching, but it would not have been true. Old Mr. Musgrave was not the erring father of romance. He was a well-preserved and spare little man, over seventy, with cheeks of streaky red like winter apples, and white hair, which he wore rather long, falling on the velvet collar of his old-fashioned coat. He had been an outdoor man in his day, and had farmed, and shot, and hunted, like others of his kind, so far as his straitened means and limited stables permitted; but when years and circumstances had impaired his activity he had been strong enough to retire, of his own free will, while graceful abdication was still in his power. He spent most of his time now in his library, with only a constitutional walk, or easy ramble upon his steady old cob, to vary his life, except when quarter sessions called him forth, or any other duty of the magistracy, to which he still paid the most conscientious attention. The Musgraves were not people whom it was easy to crush, and Fate had a hard bargain in the old squire, who found himself one occupation when deprived of another with a spirit not often existing in old age. He had committed plenty of mistakes in his day, and some which had been followed by tragical consequences, a practical demonstration of evil which fortunately does not attend all the errors of life; but he did not brood over them in his old library, nor indulge unavailing compunctions, nor consider himself under any doom; but on the contrary studied his favourite problems in genealogy and heraldry, and county history, and corresponded with *Notes and Queries*, and was in his way very comfortable. He it was who first pointed out that doubtful blazoning of Marmion's shield, "colour upon colour," which raised so lively a discussion;

and in questions of this kind he was an authority, and thoroughly enjoyed the little tilts and controversies involved, many of which were as warm as their subjects were insignificant. His family was dropping, or rather had dropped, into decay; his eldest son was virtually lost to his family and to society; his youngest son alienated and a stranger; and some of this at least was the father's fault. But neither the decay of the house, nor the reflection that he was at least partially to blame, made any great difference to the squire. There had no doubt been moments, and even hours, when he had felt it bitterly; but these moments, though perhaps they count for more than years in a man's life, do not certainly last so long, and age has a way of counterfeiting virtue, which is generally very successful, even to its personal consciousness. Mr. Musgrave was generally respected, and he felt himself to be entirely respectable. He sat in his library and worked away among his county histories, without either compunction or regret—who could throw a stone at him? He had been rather unfortunate in his family, that was all that could be said.

And Mary Musgrave, his daughter, was just as little disposed to brood upon the past. She had shed many tears in her day, and suffered many things. Perhaps it was in consequence of the family troubles which had come upon her just at the turning-point in her life that she had never married; for she had been one of the beauties of the district—courted and admired by everybody, and wooed by many: by some who indeed still found her beautiful, and by some who had learned to laugh at the old unhappiness of which she was the cause. Miss Musgrave did not like these last, which was perhaps natural; and even now there would be a tone of satire in her voice when she noted the late marriage of one or another of her old adorers. Women do not like men whose hearts they have

broken, to get quite healed, and console themselves; this is perhaps a poor feeling, but it is instinctive, and though it may be stoutly struggled against in some cases, and chidden into silence in many, it still maintains an untolerated yet obstinate life. But neither the failure of the adorations she once inspired nor the family misfortunes had crushed her spirit. She lived a not unhappy life, notwithstanding all that had happened. It was she who did everything that was done at Penninghame. The reins which her father had dropped almost unawares she had taken up. She managed the estate; kept the bailiff in order; did all business that was necessary with the lawyer; and what was a greater feat still, kept her father unaware of the almost absolute authority which she exercised in his affairs. It had to be done, and she had not hesitated to do it; and on the whole, she, too, though she had suffered many heartaches in her day, was not unhappy now, but lived a life full of activity and occupation. She was forty, and her hair began to be touched by grey—she who had been one of the fairest flowers of the north country. A woman always has to come down from that eminence somehow; whether she does it by becoming some one's wife or by merely falling back into the silence of the past and leaving the place free for others, does not much matter. Perhaps, indeed, it is the old maid who has the best of it. A little romance continues to encircle her in the eyes of most of those who have worshipped her youth. She has not married; why has she not married—that once admired of all admirers? Has it been that she, too, sharing the lot which she inflicted on so many, was not loved where she loved? or was it perhaps that she had made a mistake—sent away some one, perhaps, who knows, the very man who thought of her thus kindly and regretfully—whom she was afterwards sorry to have sent away? Nobody said this in words, but Mary Musgrave at forty was more tenderly thought of than Lady



Stanton, who had been the rival queen of the county. Lady Stanton was stout now-a-days; in men's minds, when they met her sailing into a ball-room, prematurely indued with the duties of chaperon to her husband's grown-up daughters, there would arise a half-amused wonder how they could have worshipped at her feet as they once did. "Can this muckle wife be my true love Jean?" they said to themselves. But Miss Musgrave, who was slim as a girl in her unwedded obscurity, and whose eyes some people thought as bright as ever, though her hair was grey, gave rise to no such irreverent thoughts. There were men scattered through the world who had a romantic regard, a profound respect still, for this woman whom they had loved, and who had preserved the distinction of loving no one in return. Nobody had died for love of her, though, some had threatened it; but this visionary atmosphere of past adoration supplied a delicate homage, such as is agreeable even to an old maiden's heart.

And Miss Musgrave's life was spent chiefly in the old hall, as her father's was spent in his library. She had been full of gay activity in her youth, a bold and graceful horsewoman, ready for anything that was going; but, with the same sense of fitness that led the squire to his retirement, she too had retired. She had put aside her riding-habits along with, her muslins, and wore nothing but rich neutral-tinted silk gowns. Her only extravagance was a pair of ponies, which she drove into the county town when she had business to do, or to pay an occasional visit to her friends: but by far the greater part of her life was spent in the old hall, where all her favourites and allies came, and all her poor people from the village, who found her seated like a scriptural potentate in the gate, ready to settle all quarrels and administer impartial justice. The hall was connected with the house by a short passage and two

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