

**HERBERT GREY; OR,
THE
LAWYER'S OFFICE**

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Herbert Grey; or, The Lawyer's Office by Mrs. H. Wilson

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MRS. H. WILSON

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CHAPTER I.

WHAT town or village is there of any note, which has not been, at some time or another, the scene of some tragedy. We will suppose that the picturesque town, we will call Leabridge, was no exception to this rule. In the memory no doubt of many, if not of most of its oldest inhabitants, there existed the remembrance of a famous trial for forgery, some years previously.

The aristocracy of Leabridge, in former years, had counted the Glendinning family, amongst its brightest ornaments.

Old Sir Philip Glendinning had been a noble specimen of a good old English gentleman. His two sons, Philip and Arthur, were considered as fine representatives of the ancient house of Glendinning.

Philip, the eldest son, had been an especial favorite. When old age incapacitated the father from taking an active part in the management of his large possessions, this son had been appointed as manager. The baronet owned extensive property in Scotland, besides a splendid estate in Leabridge, which was his favorite place of residence.

About four or five and twenty years previous to the opening of my tale, Sir Philip Glendinning had lost his wife, and the shock of her death had left a blank in his existence, which nothing seemed to fill up; but she had been a great invalid during the last ten years of her life, and had been almost entirely confined to her own apartments. The love which had unwaveringly been hers, during her lifetime, was continued towards her memory by the affectionate husband, but he shewed even increased love for the son, Philip, who had been ever his wife's constant attendant during her illness, and had, by his dutiful behaviour, won a deservedly large portion of his parent's love. Imagine, then, this father's horror, when Philip was accused of having committed forgery to a large extent. The Baronet, Sir Philip, persisted in his son's well-earned character for integrity. He endeavoured, by every means in his power, to prove him free from such an imputation; but other names besides his own had been forged, and justice must take its course. Everything in the course of the trial seemed to point so decidedly against Philip, the evidence being, however, only circumstantial, that the verdict had to be given against him. A special

request was made by the jury, that as the prisoner's previous character had been above suspicion, that the sentence be mitigated to transportation for life.

When his youngest son, Arthur, joined his testimony against his brother, all hope fled from the heart of the poor old man; and where deep, confiding love had before existed, the father now gave vent to bitter invectives against the son, whom he thought had so cruelly betrayed his confidence, and he refused to have anything to do with the maintenance of Philip's sorrowing wife and infant child.

This severe blow soon put an end to his sufferings. He spent a few months sunk in almost entire imbecility; and though, ere he expired, a few brief minutes of restored consciousness were granted him, during which he declared his forgiveness, and his earnest wish, that Arthur would seek out, and make a comfortable provision for Philip's worse than widowed wife, he had not time to alter his will in her favour. But there were unfortunately no witnesses to this conversation; and Arthur, though of course coming into possession of all his late father's estates, on account of Philip's disgrace—(for after the trial he had been transported for life, though to the last he persisted in declaring his perfect innocence of the crime imputed to him),—never took any notice of the late Baronet's wishes as regarded his brother's family.

Loud had been the complaints showered on the head of Arthur, for the cupidity of conduct he had exhibited on the occasion. Many voices were heard to utter

curses against the man who could dare to stand by and see his brother disgraced, without attempting to justify him in any way; and very frequent were the remarks which pointed out Arthur himself, as being more likely to be the real offender than their beloved young squire, Philip. Indeed, to those who were well acquainted with the character of Philip Glendinning, nothing seemed more improbable than the idea of his committing such a crime. However, as we have seen, the evidence appeared totally at variance with this suggestion, and the prisoner had been reminded that transportation was a more merciful punishment than that of hanging.

Philip had begged his wife to remain in England, assuring her that many months could not elapse before his innocence must be proved.

But years passed on, and the event which had caused so much attention and anxiety at first, had now passed away from the minds of the majority of the people, or was remembered only as a painful bye-gone event.

The present baronet, Sir Arthur, had retired to Scotland, and his mansion in Leabridge was vacated and committed to the care of his steward, and to the surveillance of his solicitor, Mr. Phillips. Soon after coming into possession of his property, he had married a very handsome and amiable lady, whom he persuaded into the idea that he was everything that heart could wish; but unfortunately, after a few short months of comparative happiness, she found out, too late, that he to whom she had given the whole warm affections of

her youthful nature, was utterly unworthy of the love she had bestowed. After giving birth to several children, only one of whom, a boy of most engaging disposition, lived to grow up, Lady Glendinning had at length succumbed under the neglect and ill-treatment to which she was daily exposed, and she had been carried to her grave as much beloved and regretted as the Baronet was disliked and despised. Her son Cuthbert had been her only tie to earth; he inherited much of his mother's amiability of disposition, and he had clung to her with an almost unparalleled devotion. Often had his young heart swelled with just indignation at the sight of his father's brutality towards his dear mother, and hard had been his struggles to keep from openly defying his cruel parent; but Cuthbert had early been taught by his mother the duty of honouring those whom God had placed over him. But as he grew to manhood, and his gentle mother's influence was removed from him, unable longer to brook the harsh treatment offered him, Cuthbert one day made a great shew of resistance. Enraged by this conduct, the Baronet stormed and raved, threatening to disinherit him if he did not implicitly obey him for the future; angry words followed on both sides, during which Sir Arthur bade his son leave the house immediately, and not shew his face again until he had begged his sire's forgiveness, and promised better behaviour for the future. That very night Cuthbert Glendinning collected his few treasures together, and taking with him the few trinkets which his mother had given him

at various times, he bade a long adieu to the home of his fathers, and before the morning light was far on his way. For some time no news had reached the Baronet about his son; but at length it was rumoured that Cuthbert had enlisted as a common soldier, and was passing by the assumed name of Thompson. None could tell what had been the father's feelings, when he discovered the loss he had sustained. But his cold heart had felt something like love for his noble son, even though he had sunk affection, in his love of undue discipline. He was never known to have alluded since then to the subject, and he seemed to have forgotten that he had ever had a child to call his own.

Strange as it may appear, Sir Arthur had always managed to keep up some sort of a friendship with the good vicar of Leabridge, the Rev. Edward Gordon. From boyhood they had been acquainted, and as the integrity of the Baronet's character rested only upon suspicion, Mr. Gordon was not the man, for the sake of a supposition, to refuse to acknowledge one to whom he might in some way be able to minister for good. Of the Baronet's behaviour to his wife and son, the vicar was not a competent judge, as Sir Arthur's married life had been spent, with but few exceptions, almost completely in Scotland. Mr. Gordon had only seen Sir Arthur on his best behaviour, when the Vicar had been their guest.

At the time of the commencement of my story, the Baronet had sent a most pressing invitation to the family of the Gordons, as he was anxious to make the