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AILEY MOORE;

A TALE OF THE TIMES.

CHAPTER XX—THE DREADFUL STORY CECILY HAD TO TELL.

Grosvenor-square keeps its own—that is, in the vicissitudes of fortune and taste Grosvenor-square has felt very little the changes of the last ten years. Hence Grosvenor-square is now what it was then, one of the patronised localities of gentle blood and perennial purses, of music-givers, monkeys, and dancing poodles. An Italian with a trained tortoise, attempted some time ago to introduce that species among the foreign animals that vegetated in Grosvenor-square: but an old gentleman was persuaded that the tame tortoise was a satire upon his third wife, who had grown blind from fatness, and with becoming spirit he drove the Italian boy away with his stick, and with threats of the police.

'Deh! ma, detemi qual che cosa, signore!' 'No cause at all—be off!' 'Ma! ma! signore!' 'What do I care for your mamma,' asked the insulted Grosvenorian; 'be off, I say.' And by way of assisting him in the operation, he poked him in the back with his stick, so that the stranger was fain to take his poor pet in his little arms, and turning his large dark, melancholy eyes on the Englishman to move on. But the Italian boy talked about 'rich' people of England not being 'Christian,' and said Piedmont without wealth was much happier, and in this way was muttering hard, when the surly Englishman again addressed him.

'You, sir!' 'Signore!' 'Here, I say, you talked of your mamma.' 'Ah, signore, non capisco niente.' 'Ah, yes, to be sure—but your mamma. Here, said the big tyrant, 'here,' and the Italian boy's eyes brightened like his own skies, for he found a golden sovereign in his hand.

'Confound the rascal and his mamma,' the big Anglican muttered to himself. 'Heh!' he continued. 'But I certainly understood that Italian,' he went on. And this idea evidently pleased him greatly, for he kicked several things smartly before him as he went, and he looked from one side of the flags to the other, to show any one who came the way that he 'was not the man they took him for.'

There are many beautiful houses in Grosvenor-square, but on the left hand as you come from the park, if you have an eye to taste, and therefore can value even external arrangement, there is one which will strike you as peculiarly noble-looking. The majestic spread of the steps, the proud elevation of the entrance, the rich silk hangings, which in half-veiled luxury look down upon you, the freshness, order, symmetry of every thing, even to the parrot-cage which you behold on a pedestal inside one of the drawing-room windows, every thing bespeaks wealth and intellect at No. —, Grosvenor-square, in Nov., 1844.

This is Frank Tyrrell's house, and with him lives the rich and beautiful Cecily, his sister.—Frank and Cecily had lost their parents some two years and a half before: but their independence only made them love one another more dearly. For the vindication of Lord Kinacarra's lady-sister, we must say that many a one besides her ladyship remarked that their attachment was 'truly absurd.'

Cecily is at home to-day. She is sitting at a mosaic table, a handsome round mosaic, with golden frame, and giving a charming view of the Roman capitol. She is a few yards behind the parrot's cage, of which we have appraised the reader; for though apparently in the drawing-room, Poll is really in a beautiful boudoir, conveniently upon the more august apartments.—Cecily is surrounded by everything rich and recherche, and beautiful, and suggestive: but to-day (every day, but to-day particularly) Cecily far outshines them all. She is dressed in dark, rich Irish tulle, with the daintiest little collar or Limerick lace; through her raven hair there look out a few, very few, shining pearls: and the transparent fairness of her cheek is relieved by a rose tint, so soft, so faint, that it looks the reflection of the damask couch beside her. Cecily has attempted to improve a pencil-sketch, and she has spoiled it: she has opened a volume of Macaulay, and thought it 'insipid'; a volume of Thackeray, and pronounced it 'nonsense'; she read a few lines of Hugo, and a page or two of Baudrand's ascetic writings: but it was no use; nothing fixed Cecily Tyrrell's attention to-day. Yes, we should say one thing astonished her, that is to say, the length of the interval between breakfast and noon. She first thought her watch had stopped, and then she thought the house-clock had conspired with her watch, and finally, when beaten out of the chronometer-theory, she had sense enough to laugh at herself, and courage enough to ask herself the meaning of her impatience.

That plague of all sentiment, a barrel-organ, put a momentary end to her disposition. One of them came under the window playing 'Strike the light guitar;' and the parrot, who seemed to have been roused to a sense of its own rights by the call thus made for music, commenced to sing out most lustily. A parrot's screech is not a melodious thing.

'Poll, Poll! oh, Poll!' 'Play for Poll,' replied the parrot.

'Silence, Poll! silence!' 'Play for Poll,' repeated the impatient bird.

There was silence for a minute, and the plague of musicians moved off. Then Poll commenced grunting and chattering, and crying, 'Play for Paul;' so that she effectually drowned every noise. A door opened on the left of Cecily, and a servant—white coat, silver-heraldry buttons, white stockings, red vest, black velvet shorts, and powdered hair—all made a low bow.

'The gentleman is in the drawing-room, Miss.'

'Mr. Moore?' half exclaimed Cecily.

'The handsome gentleman as was here yesterday, and brought the handsome lady with 'em,' answered the servant.

Cecily was all fire—and the servant at once saw the affair to the end. He went down, and informed all in the kitchen in strict confidence that Miss Tyrrell was to be married in a week or two, and that the 'handsome gentleman' was the same who nearly lost his life in saving her from falling over a precipice, and had shot two men, and wounded another for saying she was not as handsome as Cleopatra—a most wonderful young gentleman of £16,000 a-year.

Before he went down, however, he told the 'handsome gentleman' that Miss Tyrrell would be forthcoming in a moment; and according to the law in that case made to him, he told 'a knock at the door' that his 'missus' would not be home 'for the day.'

'Cecily, on opening the entrance to the drawing-room, found Gerald Moore gazing earnestly on a picture over the mantelpiece. It was a noble water-color drawing of a lady in full ball costume. At her feet was a young girl who has just stopped to pick up a bouquet of flowers which seemingly had fallen from the hand of the lady. Beside her, on a pedestal, was a parrot's cage and a parrot, which was easily recognised as 'Poll;' and on the left-hand side of the apartment in which she stood, there opened a light terrace glass door, that looked out on a landscape such as only a southern clime could furnish.

'Welcome!' cried Cecily, rapidly walking over, and presenting her hand. 'Welcome! a thousand times.'

Gerald for a moment—just for a moment—was off his guard; but do not blame him. The idea of a 'vision' really crossed his mind—a vision of beauty—peerless beauty and power irresistible. Gerald had been sketching a 'Judith,' and partly coloring it—a creature from whom beamed forth the spirited charm which the hand of Heaven had flung around the heroine of Israel; he had thought upon it until the 'ideal' used to make his heart throb and his eye moisten; every one that shadowed forth any of its perfections had an inexplicable interest for him; he had an artist's ethereal though impassioned love for the creation of his fancy; she stood before him embodied.

Cecily saw in a moment that she had made an impression; but she felt convinced that much of the effect she had produced was owing to association.

'Come now, Mr. Moore. Mamma's picture—poor mamma! Mamma's picture has brought some one to your mind—is it not so?' 'Quite true. Mamma was very, very beautiful.'

'And the little girl?' 'Is the growing bud of a fair flower too?' 'Who is it?'

Gerald only looked at Cecily, and smiled ever so gently.

'Yes, but you thought of some one else since you came into the room.'

Gerald looked a little surprised, and he frankly answered,

'Yes.'

'Do not compliment my sagacity,' she said, blushing a little more deeply, 'for surprise was eminently depicted on your countenance.'

Cecily did not add, 'admiration,' but she spoke of his countenance; she looked into a face ingenious as spring, and indexing a spirit like her own.

There was a minute's silence. In fact, Gerald began to think he might make a little coquetish complication; a man coquette is hideous; Gerald Moore contemned such a character supremely.

'In fact,' he said, 'I was reminded of an ideal—more, however, than a dream—and I was training the features of my thought in that splendid picture, when you entered.'

'And spoiled the illusion?' 'No; gave the picture its last light!' And

Gerald looked down—not embarrassed, but thoughtful; he had gone a little in another extreme, and his soul was rigidly true.

'Judith,' he continued, without any affectation of carelessness, or of deep feeling, 'Judith is a favorite character of mine, and I have seen a picture of her that singularly resembles your mother, and would almost make a portrait for you.'

The labyrinth of feeling! We find ourselves descending, and the ordinary world disappearing; and bonds entwining us and our power of returning every moment growing less, and less, and less,—and yet we have not the courage to fly. A species of curiosity deepens our interest, and opposes the resolution of reason, and we proceed on, on, on, from twilight to darkness. Light shines at length; we are in a world far from our own, and the flowers are blooming in the sunshine, while the fountain of immortality flows in through gardens that are never to wither! Poor dreamer—you will wake in the region from which you descended, and memory will mock you with the creations which experience will not permit you to resist. Pause!—proceed not farther.

The parrot in the boudoir began to admire herself in a very subdued tone—the bass voice of that singular mimic—and said 'Pretty Poll! pretty Poll!'

'You have got a parrot.'

'Yes, come and see; we shall be free from intrusion, and I want to have some serious conversation with you; in truth, I want to unfold a tale. I wearied you about Ailey the last evening.'

'Certainly not.'

'Pretty Poll,' cried out the parrot as they entered the boudoir. And then immediately, 'Play for Poll,' he grated out hoarsely, 'Play for Poll.'

'What shall I play?' asked Cecily, going over to the cage.

'Hurra!' cried the parrot.

'What shall I play?' again demanded Cecily.

'What shall I play, Poll?'

Poll got on her perch, and looked very wise; flapped her wings two or three times, and then to Gerald's utter amazement, sang out, 'Did you ne'er hear of our own Ailey Moore?'

'Is that the tune?' said Cecily.

'That's the tune,' answered Poll; 'that's the tune; that's the tune.'

Poll murmured.

'Hurra, Ailey M-o-o-r-e!' cried the bird; and then it laughed and clapped its wings, and swung round on its perch.

'You see Frank has not been idle,' said Cecily. 'Only I would not tell Frank's secrets,' said Cecily, 'I could guess something. And Mr. Moore,' she continued after a pause, 'very gravely she spoke—'I would lay down my life to see Frank—happy.'

Gerald made no observation, but sat down upon the sofa, to which Cecily pointed, while she sat in her former seat, near the mosaic table, and beat her dark eyes upon the capitol.

'Your friend, the poor soldier?'

'In joy and gratitude he leaves to-night for Ireland, and bears your presents to the banks of the Shannon—to Ailey.'

'You found no difficulty in purchasing him out?'

'Only with himself, for he feared any one should say he went over to the trial to do justice for pay.'

'Your meeting with him saved the life of Lucy.'

'It is incredible with what patience he watched the door. But the whole succession of events has been quite providential. His meeting that monster of a man and woman in an omnibus; his overhearing their intention to victimise a young girl; his passing by while their cab stood for a moment at a shop door, two days after, and seeing poor Lucy inside, and the villain sitting with the driver; his pursuing the cab, and watching the house for so many hours, for the chance of something to compel the attendance of the police; and his meeting me as I passed by the house, to my hotel, at the moment of the shrieking, and recognising me as I ordered the cabman to draw up—all is most wonderful. And, indeed, I may add, meeting you and Baron St. John, at a moment when you were so much needed, both to me and the poor girl.'

'She is nearly quite restored, and you must see her,' said Cecily, looking fixedly at Gerald.

'Assuredly, if she wish it,' answered Gerald quite composed.

'She is very handsome,' said Cecily.

'I dare say, poor thing. Better for her to have been born a cripple than have ever run through such a danger.'

Cecily acquired no information by her 'probing'—that is, she knew perfectly well what Gerald Moore was, and was likely to answer, yet she had a secret satisfaction in hearing him speak unimpassionedly of a handsome woman.

'Lucy shall take Emma's place. I am quite

satisfied Lucy is respectable, and she shall be my companion, more than my maid.'

'God will bless you!'

'And now of poor Emma. I am afraid to speak of her. See is not mad. I cannot, and I will not,' she added, with energy, 'I will not believe Emma an impostor; and yet what am I to believe?'

'How, Miss Tyrrell?'

'Well, really, I cannot proceed, unless 'Miss Tyrrell' and 'Mr. Moore' be given up. I am forward, I suppose; but there is a pleasure in being true as well as in appearing proper. I want, Gerald,' she said, and her voice softened as she pronounced the word, 'I want a—will you call me Cecily?' she asked.

'Assuredly.'

'Well, I want you to be my friend—like Frank in some way,—yet I do not know what way. Could you think of me in any such way as you think of Ailey? I love her, dear Ailey, and I would like to please you, Gerald, as she does.'

Gerald Moore was touched, deeply touched. He felt he was in danger, and that she, without knowing it, was floating on to 'the course' which 'never doth run smooth.' But the rational soul rose up and seized the growing feeling, and there was a struggle—strong but decisive; Gerald shook for a minute—it was only for a minute—the sensitive was crushed.

The nearly vain man would pursue this conversation to its last word, and this state to its ultimate development; but the merely vain man Cecily would have known only to pity. The merely selfish man would have worked the growing regard into profit, and only weigh what it was worth. The man of honor would fix his eye upon the far issue, and ask himself was he prepared; he would examine every step of the way, and demand of himself whether he was a legitimate traveller. The ultimate honorable issue Gerald looked upon as impossible; the road, even the spot of it he stood upon, forbidden ground for such a journey; he therefore answered—

'Certainly, I shall call you Cecily, and place you with my sister before my mind.'

It was all Cecily Tyrrell asked. Yet Cecily Tyrrell was not satisfied. Gerald said too little for her—he was reserved. He ought to feel more, and he was a man of deep feeling. But perhaps he did feel. Aye, perhaps, he asked himself what Frank Tyrrell would expect from Ailey's brother. Well done, Cecily. She has done him justice. He is in her brother's house, paying a visit of the extremest confidence on both sides; and he is—poor.

Cecily rose, and walked over to where Gerald Moore sat, she gave him her hand. He rose, looking quite perplexed. Cecily saw his heart with a glance.

'Gerald,' she said, 'do not be alarmed; and she smiled angelically. 'I want to pledge and seal the sisterhood with Ailey. Heaven has sent you and Ailey in my path—and now of Emma. Do you believe in spirits?'

'Spirits?'

'Oh, well, Gerald, I mean in spirits—bad spirits assuming bodily shape and form? Cecily was pale and grave.

'I have never seen an example, but I have no reason for disbelief.'

'No?'

'By no means. In the time of our divine Lord, such manifestations were frequently permitted, and in the unbaptised countries they are by no means uninfrequent. But whence or how are you interested?'

'Poor Emma Crane, my maid, seems—nay, I believe, she is a victim.'

'How?'

'She came to me only on Monday, and her melancholy look interested me in her behalf.—Her testimonials were admirable; and one day—just in one day, she convinced me that she had had a fine education, and possessed the kind of soul I love. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, yesterday passed; and I was quite in raptures with my little Irish maid. Last night she was discovered lying on the floor, torn and bleeding, head, face, and neck, and shoulders; and for a long while after the discovery scarcely able to explain her sad fate.'

'But—'

'I was about to say, she believes she is 'obsessed' by a devil.'

'Oh, a vain fear. She is epileptic, and having fallen, has injured her person on the floor.'

'No, no, no—by no means—no, no,' said Cecily, with her usual ardour. 'No fall, and no scraping could inflict the kind of wounds which she carries.'

'How did it happen, does she say?'

'You can see her—but listen. On a calm summer evening, just the 20th of last May, she sat in an arbor, which belonged to the garden of a dwelling, in which she had been employed. Poor Emma had a mind to see the delicate

beauties of the fresh young leaves, and her eyes wandered from her work, and traversed the garden, enjoying the munificence of God, in blossom and velvet green—tree, flower, and fountain, when her heart began to beat, and she became alarmed. She called back her thoughts, and forcing her looks on the path before her, she saw crouched with bared teeth and blazing eye, a huge greyish rat. She screamed, called upon God, and she adds, the Virgin Mary, and fainted. The poor girl heard and felt no more till she found herself in bed. With various application to her head and neck, and wailing in her blood. Oh, my God.

'Freddo d'alle vene—
'Fuge il mio sangue al cor!
'Gold from my veins,
'The icy blood rushes to my heart!'

What think you?'

'Well, I am really interested.'

'I thought you would. Poor Emma had only 'her two hands,' she says, 'to earn a living,' and even her own story was sufficient to turn her out. She was mad or 'haunted,' the good folk remarked, and neither quality of servant would answer their purpose. But she says they were kind to her, and relieved her wants, and never spoke to her of going to the 'poor-house,' as she calls the workhouse.'

'The Irish have a horror of the workhouse. Our girls cannot bear the thought of mixing with those whom they find there. But,' continued Gerald, 'in six months she should exhibit much more numerous traces of those assaults than would have been a recommendation to your confidence, Cecily.'

'Now, that is kind, Gerald, though you nearly failed in courage. Well, I made the same remark, and I did feel a little dissatisfied with the explanation; but she cannot—she cannot be an impostor.'

'What account does she give, then, of these six months?'

'She will only say, that I could not understand her.'

'Understand her?'

'Yes.'

Gerald began to think. After a few seconds he said—

'Can I see her, Cecily?'

'Oh, poor Emma will be so glad,' answered the warm-hearted girl.

Cecily rang—and the white coat, buttons, and powdered hair, appeared.

'Is Miss Crane in her room?'

'I think so, ma'am.'

'Well, beg of her to come to the boudoir.'

In a quarter of an hour or less Emma Crane presented herself in the boudoir. She was an interesting young woman of one-and-twenty.—She was above the middle height, with large blue eyes and sharply-defined mouth, and well-formed nose. Emma was deadly pale, and her neck was all swathed with lincens. She stopped short on seeing a gentleman before her in the boudoir, but Cecily prayed her to enter. Having had a seat beside her mistress, she was informed by her that Mr. Moore had a deep interest in her case and condition, and was a gentleman who did not disbelieve her, and wished to do her a service.

Poor Emma wept. It was like saying 'who can do me a service.'

'But,' continued Cecily, 'he is just as desirous as I am to know how the six months, from May until this time, have been spent; you will surely gratify him.'

Emma looked doubtfully at Gerald and shook her head.

The young man slipped his watch-guard from his neck, and approaching Emma he showed her a silver medal of the Immaculate Conception, which, in presenting to her he kissed; he wore it just over his heart.

'Dolcisima Madre!' ejaculated Cecily,— 'How they love Our Lady!' thought she.

'My dear Emma,' said Cecily, 'I have a medal of Our Lady—look.' She continued undoing the cameo which she always wore. 'See here, Emma,' said the young lady.

This time Emma presented her lips to the Madonna: and Cecily felt the hot tears falling on her hands.

Cecily wept for company, with the unfortunate; and she thought again this is religion at all events.

'Ah, Miss Tyrrell, what an angel you would be, if you were a daughter of Mary.'

'And how shall I become one, Emma—how?' asked Cecily, in her earnest way.

'Ah!' sighed Emma—and she shook her head.

'Perhaps you would speak to Mr. Moore with more freedom, were I away, Emma.'

'I'll tell everything as well before you, Miss Tyrrell—he will understand—and he can explain.'

'Poor Emma,' murmured Cecily.

(To be Continued.)