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AN ADVENTURE WITH A MADMAN.

BY KITTIE GRANT.

Some years ago, I was engaged as a teacher in the western part of Ontario, where I had an encounter with a madman the remembrance of which, even now with kind friends around me, causes my blood to thrill with horror, and a sensation of almost frozen terror to creep over me.

I was educated for the profession of a teacher. My parents dying when I was quite young left me to the guardianship of well-to-do but niggardly relatives, and as I had little or no money, they resolved to rid themselves of the responsibility as soon as possible by placing me in a position to care for myself. I was sent to the district school with my two cousins, and finding I was "apt to learn," to use their expression, they decided to give me what education could be obtained in their country school, and a few months' finishing at the High School in the town of B— which ought, in their estimation, to fit me for the arduous duties of a public school-teacher, and at the same time satisfy their own conscience by having "done the best they could for poor Mary's child."

I pursued my studies with that avidity and eagerness which a young ardent spirit panting to escape from a loveless and unsympathetic life alone could give, and at the age of seventeen, found myself after a hardly contested examination, the possessor of a third class certificate of qualification, and duly installed as "mistress," of a country school in the township of L—, county H—, then in almost a state of primitive wilderness.

It was hardly the situation I had looked for or expected, but it was an escape from my almost intolerable life at the farm-house, where I was made to feel too plainly my dependent position, and I gladly accepted it as a stepping-stone to better things, resolved to do almost anything rather than return to my uncle's and be pronounced a failure.

Then too, my blood was fired with indignation by the remembrance of the meagre manner, and grudging spirit in which his small pittances had been dealt out to me, his petted sister's only child, and I mentally determined to repay to the uttermost farthing the expense he had been to in giving me an education, and which I was doomed to hear of continually while under his roof.

"Now, Kitty," so they called me, declaring my own name Henrietta too long for Christian use; "I have spent a great deal of money in givin' you your larnin', gal, a great deal, and the last you can do now is to be a credit to yourself and them that's eddicated ye. Let me see; not reckonin' your expenses to hum for vittals, clothes and sick like, which amounts to purty considerable, and you've never been a sixpence worth of profit to us, I've laid out for you, let me see." And here my uncle produced a well worn memorandum book, and proceeded to read the items (which items, by the way, were carefully written out, and stowed away in the bottom of my box for future use.) "Board and lodging at B—, for six months at five dollars a month, £7.10s., tuition fee, 15 shillings, Grey's Elementary Arithmetic, two and sixpence, Lennie's Grammar, one and threepence, a quire of paper, one shilling, a bottle of ink, twopenny, total, £8 9s. 11d. Counts up, Kitty. Counts up." Such was the farewell that sounded drearily in my ears, as the lumbering old stage bore me away from Highgate farm for my first encounter with the world.

I found a warm welcome awaiting me at the house of the worthy couple where it had been arranged I should board; for, longing for some quiet nook that I could at last call home, I had steadily refused the urgent request of the committee that I should "board round," as had been the custom of previous teachers, and even consented to some reduction of my salary that I might be permitted this luxury.

I was very happy there in that secluded spot, for besides the sweet consciousness of independence that gave new life and spirit to my whole being, I learned to dearly love those wild woodland blossoms entrusted to my care, and teaching was with me a labour of love as well as a necessity.

But I fear I am digressing. Your pardon, gentle reader; but I dearly love to linger over the memory of those happy days, when I rivalled in careless gaiety and freedom the joyous warblers of the woods and groves, where merry little songs helped to make my life so beautiful that pleasant summer.

I had been in my situation about six months, when on returning from school, one evening, I found a letter awaiting me (quite an advent in my then quiet life) and in a gentleman's handwriting, as the neat superscription "Miss Henrietta Williams," evidently attested.

Noting my look of wondering surprise as I took it up, Mr. Atkins jocosely remarked, "Sly puss, some poor youth no doubt smitten with the charms of our demure little school-mistress has penned his glowing thoughts where 'rushing river,' rhymes with 'Cupid's quiver,' &c. It proved however to be a note from the County Inspector containing an order for \$45.67, the Legislative grant apportioned to School Section No. 13, Township of L—. It was payable at the Town Hall, a building situated in the centre of the township, and about four miles distant from my school. I had all a child's eagerness to see and touch this my first earnings, and as the succeeding day was bright and beautiful, I determined to walk to the hall after school duties were over to receive the money; so sending word to Mrs. Atkins with one of my pupils where I intended going, and instructing her not to wait tea for me, I set out buoyantly for my destination. My road lay partly through a thick wood, and altogether remote from any dwelling; but I was entirely fearless and really enjoyed a ramble through the dense, magnificent forest, the lofty trees towering above each side of my path, and casting strange, grotesque shadows around the immense net-work of green leaves, with here and there a patch of blue sky or golden sunbeam visible, the peaceful, quiet stillness that pervaded all around were charms of which I never wearied. It was very beautiful this evening; for Autumn had begun to deck my grand old forest in her robe of sadness, scarlet, green, and yellow were blended together fantastically and beautifully, and I lingered longer than I intended collecting autumn leaves, the most beautiful to be kept as souvenirs of that happy summer.

The sun was just visible above the tree-tops when I reached the hall, and I had already formed some forebodings about my long walk back, when to add to my uneasiness I was obliged to wait some twenty minutes before the clerk was at leisure to wait upon me; for in addition to his other duties he was

a tailor I believe, and busily engaged in doing up, and settling a bill for a suit of grey homespun, his customer being evidently a farmer of the better class.

The preliminaries were at last gone through with, and my apprehensions entirely vanished when I found myself the happy possessor of four new crisp bank notes and some additional silver. Safely securing my treasure I started home at once, and though I walked fast I found to my dismay that the sun had already sunk in a bank of crimson and gold ere I reached the edge of the wood. The almost impenetrable forest very nearly shut out what little daylight there was left, and I could not repress a little shiver of terror as I left the open road and stepped briskly into the wooded highway.

There was a by-path that led through the wood direct to L—, but fearful of losing my way when darkness had once set in I determined to go by the longer and as I thought safer route—the general highway. I had gone but a short distance, when the sound of carriage wheels coming at a furious rate attracted my attention, and turning I saw a carriage drawn by a pair of bays dashing rapidly on, and but a short distance behind. I quickly stepped aside in the bushes to allow it to pass unperceived, but too late. I had already been seen; as was apparent from the fact that the driver reined in his horses to a walk, and actually to a halt as he came opposite my hiding place. A pair of bright, piercing eyes peered eagerly through the bushes, and at last rested significantly upon the leafy screen behind which I had ensconced myself. Seeing I was discovered I stepped boldly into the highway, and with a look of angry annoyance was passing swiftly on, when the gentleman politely lifted his hat, and in a condescending manner said:

"Pardon my perhaps impertinent curiosity, but it grows late for a lady to be travelling alone here; you are doubtless going to L—, and as I am travelling in the same direction I shall only be too happy to give you a lift?"

He had alighted while speaking, and now stood waiting to assist me in the carriage. His quiet gentlemanly tone reassured me at once, and with a few hurried words of thank I accepted his offer. Soon we were whirling along at as rapid a pace as before.

While mentally congratulating myself upon having escaped from the dilemma of being benighted in the woods I suddenly became aware that my companion's eyes were searching my face with more than ordinary scrutiny. I bore the ordeal as well as possible for a few moments, during which the very intensity of his gaze seemed to scorch me, when venturing to steal a glance at my companion astonishment was changed to terror. There was a look of deadly ferocity and hate in his eyes, as they met my own for a second, that it was impossible to mistake, and with an irrepressible shudder I drew farther back in the carriage. My movement, slight as it was, was quickly observed, for turning suddenly he violently grasped my wrist, and hissed in my ear:

"If you do that again, if you stir or make the slightest movement I shall kill you at once! Do you think I have dodged your path for the last fifteen years to be cheated of my revenge now?"

Almost paralysed with fear, perplexity, and wonder, I gazed helplessly into his face, and there—merciful Heavens! read the confirmation of my worst fears. *I was alone with a madman.*

"Take your eyes off my face," he commanded, menacingly, "how dare you look at me in that way? Years ago, it was foretold me, that a black-eyed siren would be my destruction. But I have you now. Ha! Ha! I have you now! I will kill you and then the spell shall be broken. Aint it splendid to think how I have outwitted them all?" And he laughed a low, exultant laugh.

With the courage of desperation I tore myself from his grasp, and while trying to jump from the carriage shrieked wildly for aid.

"Fool, poor little fool," he hissed, as he held me with a grip of iron, "what help can reach you here? You shall die, girl, die. Nothing but blood can break the spell; nothing but blood, and I shall have it too."

And again his low, unearthly chuckle sounded in my ears. What a lifetime of horror I seemed to live in those few moments, with the madman's fierce grasp upon my wrists, his burning eyes peering into mine, his hot breath upon my cheek. I shut my eyes and I tried to pray, for I felt that my last hour had indeed come, but I could think of nothing save death in that lonely wood, and merciful Heaven, such a death! My very senses seemed frozen with terror.

The horses, evidently frightened by my shrieks, had become extremely restive, and their frantic plunges served to divert his attention somewhat, as with a fierce threat, he loosed his hold of me and turned to the management of his team. Oh, how ardently I wished a strap or a line might break, as with whip and rein he maintained a fierce struggle with the animals, and that I might at least have a chance of escape, even if it would be through the peril of a runaway. But no—the man was perfectly at home in the management of his team, and I could scarce restrain a feeling of admiration, as I saw with what perfect skill he brought the panting terrified creatures into complete subjection to his will. His admirable coolness and dexterity in controlling his horses drew my thoughts from my own imminent danger, and recalled me to my senses again (for fear had completely overcome all my powers of mind) so that when the madman turned to me with a smile of sardonic triumph I was astonished at my own nerve and calmness.

"Admirable," I exclaimed, enthusiastically, "that was well done."

"So you admire my horsemanship," he asked.

"Admire is a feeble word. It was perfect."

"Girl," he returned quickly, the cunning of madness in his eyes, "don't think to cajole me by flatteries, die you must. I must have your life, girl, your life!"

"Oh, I had forgotten that," I returned, coolly; "but why do you wish to kill me?"

"Haven't I told you? There is a spell put on me by a black-eyed enchantress. I loved her once, oh, how I loved her! I loved her as I now hate her. But she would have none of me. She put a spell on me, and I swore to kill her."

"But I am no enchantress. I have never seen you before. I am only a poor school-teacher who—"

"Silence," he thundered, "do you think I wouldn't know you under any disguise. You have her hair, complexion, form, and those fatal eyes. Bah," and he laughed scornfully, "I knew we should meet again. It is useless to try to deceive me. The time has come at last, and this meeting shall be death to you." He drew a large knife as he spoke, and held it

threateningly toward me. I shuddered and recoiled as I saw the glitter of the keen blade.

But my courage did not forsake me. Coolly, almost indifferently I answered: "I am not your enchantress, and I know nothing of her. But I am not afraid of you, sir, and am perfectly willing to die."

He looked at me suspiciously a moment, but I returned his gaze with steady frankness.

"I have no friends to grieve for me," I continued, "and I am almost tired of living; only promise me to do your work well and quickly, for I do not like to suffer."

"I will promise to sever your head almost from your body at a single stroke," he answered, savagely, and I felt the cold steel drawn backwards across my throat.

I felt blood creeping through my veins with icy chilliness at the touch, but quietly I continued: "I have a few affairs to settle before I die, but as I cannot return to do it, you will be so kind as to attend to it for me. This money which I have just received," and I drew my hoarded treasure from my bosom, "you will please forward to Mrs. Atkins in L—, for my board; my trunk and clothes can be returned to my uncle at Highgate farm; my watch and a few other valuables I will give to you as a reward for sending me from present misery to lasting peace."

I could scarce repress a great cry of sorrow as I handed him the watch, for it was my mother's, and the only thing of value of hers that I possessed, but it was my only chance of life.

The madman's eyes never left my face while I was speaking, but my voice did not lose its even monotone, and my movements were as calm and collected as if I were speaking of the commonest topics of the day instead of a matter of life and death. I saw at a glance that he was completely deceived.

With a steady hand I loosened a small scarf from my neck, unfastened my collar and brooch, and announced: "Now, I am quite ready."

He turned to me with the deadly weapon in his hand.

"But would it not be as well, sir," I exclaimed, glancing around, as if struck by an idea, "to alight from the carriage. It would be a great pity to dabble it with blood, and besides it might prove disagreeable for you."

He seemed greatly pleased with the suggestion:

"The very thing. The very thing. How stupid of me not to think of it. It would never do to stain the carriage."

He jumped quickly to the ground, throwing the reins loosely over the front of the carriage, and politely offered his hand to assist me out.

Now was my time. I must make one final effort to escape. Quick as a flash I grasped the reins, as they fell from his hand, and by my voice and a lash of the whip urged the team into a gallop.

Though my movements were quick the madman was still quicker. With a fierce imprecation he caught the bridle of the horse nearest him, and now commenced a frightful struggle; for knowing it was my only chance I plied the whip with desperate energy. The maddened, infuriated animals leaped frantically forward, but still he maintained a firm hold of the bridle—the strength of ten men seemed to be in his arm, and I saw with a sickening sensation of terror that eventually he must conquer.

Rising in my seat I brought the whip down with all the force I could command on the haunches of the animals, a more frantic plunge brought the madman to his knees, and before he could recover himself the whip descended a second time, another desperate leap and the bridle is jerked from his hand, he is trampled beneath their feet, and the horses speed away with the rapidity of a bird.

I caught a glimpse of a white, still face lying across the path as we dashed madly on, and then—my overtaken nerves gave way and I remember nothing more. When I recovered consciousness I was for a moment puzzled to comprehend the meaning of the anxious faces bending over me, but a glance at my bandaged arm, and the dull, dizzy pain in my head slowly revealed the truth.

"The madman," I gasped, "where is he?"

"Gone to appear before a higher tribunal," was the solemn answer, "but think of him no more. Poor child! You have sustained a terrible shock, and the greatest quiet is necessary, or the consequences may be fatal."

Yes, he was indeed dead, that terrible maniac. The carriage wheel had passed directly over his head, killing him almost instantly. He had escaped from the asylum a short time previously, and was recognized as one of the most daring and dangerous of its inmates, whose cool craftiness had more than once circumvented the officials in charge.

With careful nursing I soon recovered from the injuries received on being thrown from the carriage; but it was long, long before I regained my usual spirits, and to my dying day I shall never forget that fearful night in the forest.

In a recent lecture on "Caricaturing," delivered before an immense audience in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Mr. Thomas Nast remarked that he was often requested by different persons to draw a caricature of them. But a caricature was rarely pleasing to the subject of it, who seldom could take any joke of which he was the point. In general he would laugh when he first saw the picture, say it was very funny, but then gravely remark, "But you don't mean that for me? I don't see the slightest resemblance—not a bit!" Toward the close of the lecture Mr. Nast, turning his eyes toward one of the front seats, said, "I wish to draw a historical picture, and I wish one gentleman in the audience would request me to draw his caricature." Assent was manifestly given, and the lecturer sketched in an off-hand manner an exaggerated portrait of Mr. Beecher, from a small photograph which he held in one hand, while the subject of it shook with laughter. The artist then speedily developed a small caricature of himself in the lower corner of the same sheet of paper. Pointing to the picture of Mr. Beecher, he said, "From the sublime"—then pointing to his own—"to the ridiculous!" In the midst of the mirth of the audience, Mr. Beecher rose, and with mock-gravity said, "Perhaps some here think you mean me by that picture, but I don't see the slightest resemblance!"—a remark which sent the entire audience into long continued bursts of laughter and applause.