



"ECHOES of the Past;"

OR,
The Recompense of Love!"

CHAPTER XXX.

"They are," assented Clive, with a laugh. "Come round the corner and have a drink."

He led the way to the public house and called for a small whisky and a large soda. The cabman stared at him with tipsy surprise.

"If you was to order a sponge and a piece of soap as well, gunvor, I might have a bath," he said derisively.

He took a gulp of the sobering mixture and Clive waited, with a brain on fire, until it was finished, then he said slowly and gravely:

"Pull yourself together, my man. I want to know where you took that young lady." The cabman set down his glass and stared resentfully at Clive; but his gaze softened as Clive drew a five-pound note from his pocket and laid it on the counter.

"Pick it up and put it in your pocket," he said; "and take me to the place at which you left your fare. I'll discharge you there and you can drive away as if the business no further concerned you. Refuse, and you'll find yourself in serious trouble."

The man stretched his brows and shook himself as if with an effort to throw off the fumes of liquor, and, taking the note, carefully folded it and put it in his pocket.

"Dashed if I didn't think there was something wrong about it!" he said. "Jump in, gunvor. I'll take you there right enough. Your a 'tec, I suppose? But mind! I don't take no hand in this. I drives you to the place and I drives orf again; no questions asked, no questions answered. Is that straight?"

"That's straight," said Clive. "I'll be ready in less than one minute."

He ran up to Tibby's room, white and breathless.

"I have found out where they have taken her, Tibby!" he said. "No; I can't wait to tell you! There's not a moment to lose. Remain here. I'll bring her back to you, please God."

As he got into the cab, he gave the man a sovereign and told him to drive quickly. They went eastward. To Clive the way seemed interminable, and his heart sank lower and lower as they left the large and respectable thoroughfares and began to pierce the dingy slums of the far east. They were approaching the river, he knew that by the character

of the shops and the occasional sight of a sailor and longshoreman.

The night had grown dark and wet, and the faint and murky lights from the street lamps and the wretched houses partially revealed the squalor of the neighborhood; there was a smell of tar and of bilge-water in a thick atmosphere; and, late as it was, Clive could hear the clang of hammers proceeding from some of the blockmakers' shops where the men were working overtime.

Presently he heard the dull lapping of water against the slips which led down to the river; and as he leaned over the apron of the cab and looked about him, the misery of the narrow streets and alleys, the noisomeness of the whole place, smote him with a nameless dread.

The cabman pulled up, and Clive leaped out and looked round. They had stopped in a place close by the river, almost devoid of houses and so badly lighted that it was almost pitch dark. The cabman nodded toward a low, half-ruined shed which looked as if it had been deserted by some bankrupt blockmaker or mast-builder.

"They went in there," he said gruffly. "Queer kind o' place, ain't it, gunvor? The young lady, she didn't seem to fancy it, an' she drew back-like, but the gentleman that come out to meet her he says something to her—I didn't catch what it was—and they went in together. He come out again an' give me a drink—two or three drinks it was, for the matter o' that—an' I drove away. An' that's wot I'm goin' to do now. Don't catch me mixing meself up with anything queer. Good night, gunvor."

"I'll give you another five-pound note to remain," said Clive hurriedly.

But the cabman winked and shook his head. "One fiver in the 'and is worth two in the bush, sir," he said; "specially when there might be a beak and quod at the end of 'em," he added over his shoulder, as he drove off.

Clive went to the ruined shed and found a door. It seemed to be the only means of entrance; for he examined the side of the building that ran down to the water, and he went back to the door and knocked. The silence was so profound that it seemed impossible that any living thing could be within it; but he knocked again and his heart leaped as he heard footsteps approaching the door. A voice from behind it muttered cautiously:

"Is that you?"

Clive knew the voice, it was Koshki's. Almost by an inspiration Clive thought of Sara and, imitating her voice, replied, "Yes, quick!" The door was opened and Clive sprang in, thrust it to with his foot, and seized Koshki. There was a dim light burning somewhere in the shattered building, and Clive caught the gleam of a revolver in Koshki's hand. He struck him a blow on the arm, then gripped him by the throat; but he was not quick enough to prevent Koshki calling out.

There came a response from several voices and the hurrying of footsteps, and Clive knew that he would have to fight against odds. His grip on the scoundrel's throat tightened,

Doc Scrubbing Brush Works with a rush When Old Dutch Cleanser speeds him— Prevents attacks Of aching backs And guards the hand that leads him.



MADE IN CANADA



Koshki, nearly choking, staggered; with a twist of the leg Clive hurled him to the floor. Koshki's head must have fallen on a stone, for he gasped and became unconscious. Clive sprang to his feet and saw two figures coming toward him from the opening of the passage; a portion of the rough boarding that lined it had fallen away, and Clive pressed himself into the space thus made, and waited.

One of the men held aloft a ship's lantern, and Clive saw that the two coming assailants were foreigners; they looked like Poles or half-breed Russians, and scoundrels of even a lower class than Koshki. One of them had caught up an iron bar and he held this ready to strike as he rushed forward. They had passed Clive before they caught sight of Koshki lying by the door, and as they stopped Clive sprang onto the man with the bar, struck him between the eyes, and tore the bar from his hand.

Startled by his sudden onslaught, both men drew back, and Clive, seizing the moment of hesitation, felled one of the men with his own weapon. The other looked from right to left like a rat at bay, and Clive, with the bar raised, said thickly:

"Stand back, let me pass! There is a lady here—take me to her and I'll give you money, more money than you've got for this job." The man hesitated a moment then he said in broken English, and unintelligibly:

"I no understand. Are you see peered. We working-men—no lady here."

"Mina!" shouted Clive. There was a moment or two of silence, then he heard a faint cry, a cry that tore his heart in twain. It stopped suddenly, abruptly. Half-mad with dread, with fury, he struck the man down, caught up the lantern and rushed along the passage. It opened into a blockmaker's loft, a loft long since deserted and empty save for a few rotting pieces of timber, broken spars, and ends of rope; and, there, lying in the corner, with her arms bound to her sides, was Mina.

Mingling with the odor of rotting wood and bilge-water was a faint, heavy scent which clung to the thick, dank atmosphere. Clive knew it at once; it was chloroform. With her name on his lips, he sprang to her side and knelt over her.

"Mina, Mina!" he called to her, trying to keep the horror from his voice. "It is I—Clive! You are safe, quite safe!"

He knew that she was unconscious. He searched for his knife with which to cut the rope that bound her; and he actually got the edge of the knife against the rope when he felt a sharp pain in his side, followed by a heavy blow on the back of his head.

He managed to rise, and swung round upon Koshki, who gripped him and flung him heavily to the ground.

CHAPTER XXXI.

When Clive came to, it was to a consciousness of something cold at his feet. He opened his eyes heavily and looked about him, and memory returned with all its anguish. The dim light was still burning and by it he saw the motionless form of Mina lying, bound as he had last seen her, and only a few yards away from him. With a hoarse cry, he tried to move. to go to her; but he, too, was bound at arms and feet, and he could only move his head.

She was lying almost parallel with

him, and the water that was lapping at his feet was lapping at hers; and in a flash he understood the significance of their joint positions; the tide was rising slowly but surely; it would rise to the ledge just above their heads; then receding, would suck them out to the dark and filthy river, which would bear them on its mysterious bosom to the sea or wash them up to some muddy bank into which they would sink and be lost forever.

He and Mina were alone in that awful place, and yet not alone; for Death was hovering between them, waiting to strike. It was evident that Koshki had thought Clive already dead, or he would not have left him unguarded; but there was no hope for him in this; for Clive knew that his voice, weakened by exhaustion and loss of blood, could not carry many yards. And even if he could have made himself heard there was little chance of assistance coming to him in that place of ill-repute. Cries for help, even women's screams, were too frequent to attract attention, much less aid.

For himself—ah, well, he could have met death, if not with indifference, with calmness and composure. But Mina, Mina! The perspiration broke out on his forehead and he writhed in his bonds until the ropes cut into his flesh. He was not able even to writhe long, for his wounds were bleeding and he was scarcely able to stir. He lay still trying to summon all his fortitude—not for himself, but for Mina. He could almost hope that she was already dead; for, if so, she would be spared the unspeakable agony of watching and waiting for the death that was slowly approaching.

He began to grow delirious, and he fought against the mist that was creeping over him, but he thought that he had fought in vain, that he was really delirious when he heard something that sounded like a sign. He waited a moment or two, the sound came again, and, as calmly as he could, he said:

"Mina!"

The response he had scarcely dared hope for came back. It was only a breath, a quivering breath, but it made him thrill through all his aching veins. It was one word, breathed with infinite love and despair:

"Clive!"

He could not speak for a moment. The anguish of knowing that she was lying bound so near him and that yet he was powerless to help her, to set her free, to save her life, choked the words back; but presently he managed to control himself.

"Dearest!" he said. "Are you in pain? Have those scoundrels hurt you?"

"No," she replied faintly. "I can scarcely feel; I am drowsy, in a kind of stupor. Ah, but what does it matter about me? It is you, you, Clive, of whom I think! It was my folly, my senseless credulity which has

brought you, lured you into their hands. It was Koshki who sent the false message. It was he who sprang on me and bound me when one of the other men brought me into this place. I knew that they had snared me to spite you; and I was terrified, afraid; but I was glad, glad, Clive, that I did not leave word where I was going; the thought that I had not done so and that you could not follow me helped me to fight my fear. And now you are here in their hands!" She panted for breath. "How did you come here? Was it through some folly of mine that you traced me?"

"I found the cab, Mina, he said. "There was no folly on your part; it is I who have been wickedly, criminally foolish—for I did not leave word where I was following you; and no help can come to us! I tell you this, Mina, because I know you, I know that brave heart and soul of yours, and that you would turn from any affection or encouragement of delusive hope."

"Yes," she said, with a touch of loving pride in her voice. "I would not have you tell me anything but the truth. It would make it harder. And, indeed, it would not be hard to die, here so near to you, almost close by your side. If I could die alone, for life is not so precious to me."

A dry sob burst from Clive and he writhed in his bonds.

"There might yet be a chance for us, Mina," he said. "If I could make myself heard. The Thames police might be passing—"

(To be Continued.)

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