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Maddolena's Story
AND
The Cameo Bracelet.

CHAPTER VII.

However, he was destined to be startled into remembering the existence of the usurper's niece, for one intensely hot night in July, when Lady Ormsby and Lily, to gratify Lord Erffingham, had gone to a conversation at the house of one of that gentleman's relatives, he strolled into the garden to smoke a cigar. He had been sitting beside his son till the latter, who had suffered much with the heat, sank into a profound slumber, and Sir George, glad to be released, shuffled downstairs in his slippers, and was enjoying the change from the stifling atmosphere of the house, when he heard his own name softly pronounced.

The night was dark, for thunder-clouds were gathering overhead; but on glancing around him, the baronet discovered that some one was standing outside the elaborately wrought entrance gates, and as he moved toward the spot, he could discern the outline of a childish, feminine figure. That this could be Liz did not enter his mind, for he was so compassionate to every ragged urchin, or flower girl, who came in his way, that Lady Ormsby was wont to declare her good husband encouraged mendicancy to a disgraceful extent; and when he asked "Who is it?—what do you want, child?" he anticipated one of the soft-repeated appeals to his benevolence in reply.

He was therefore astonished and embarrassed when he caught a fuller view of a pale, upraised face, and knew that it was Liz who had called him. He could not help thinking Heaven mentally that his wife and daughter were from home, and no one else near who was likely to interrupt this tete-a-tete. He began to say something civilly, but the girl, who had seen him recoil as soon as he caught sight of her, and look over his shoulder to ascertain that none of the servants were within sight or hearing, broke in upon his polite phrases with a touch of scorn in her low, plaintive tones.

"Don't be afraid! I have my shawl here with which I can hide my face if any one comes near. I have only one question to ask, and then I will go away, and trouble you no more. Is he dead?"

"My son?—no, no. He still lingers, and sometimes we venture to hope that he may yet be spared to us."

"Thank you," said Liz, and she was retreating as noiselessly and rapidly as she approached, when Sir George, who was beginning to recover his presence of mind, prevented her departure by putting his hand between the bars of the gate, and seizing her shawl.

"Stop—stop, my good girl; I have a great deal to say to you; many questions to ask, and—arrangements to make respecting your future, but we cannot talk here; we are liable at any moment to interruption."

"Well?" queried Liz, bluntly. "I can go as soon as any one appears, and you—who will find fault with you for speaking at your own gate to such an insignificant creature as I am?"

"But I want to know where you are staying, and why you left your uncle's house so strangely. Are you aware that he accuses you of having robbed him?"

"It is false!" she exclaimed, with energy. "I did not take what was my own. It is he who would have robbed the orphan without remorse."

"Well, well, of course, I can have nothing to say in a matter of which I know so little," Sir George observed, pacifically. "But you must permit me to tell you that my son and I were much surprised and disappointed when you went away, without leaving any clue to your abode."

"Surprised?" she mused. "Yes; perhaps you were. I have wondered myself sometimes that I mustered courage to plan and execute such a flight; but disappointed?—oh, no, no. Who cared where I went or what became of me?"

"You forget," said her auditor, affected by the hopelessness with which she spoke—"you forget that you are my son's wife, and that it is his duty to see that you want for nothing."

"Would he have brought me here?" she demanded, abruptly.

Sir George coughed, and felt embarrassed.

"Charlie—Mr. Ormsby thought you would be more comfortable in apartments of your own. At his request, I had rented for you a very pleasant, cheerful suite at Holloway."

"Then he did not mean to bring me here. Uncle Lucas led me when he said that I should nurse him, and wait upon him, and be with him always. I guessed as much. When did Uncle Lucas hesitate to deceive me, if he could gain his ends by it?"

"Mr. Goldring is not the most amiable or truthful of men," the baronet remarked. "But if you can rebut the charge he has brought against you concerning the jewels he professes to have lost, you are quite out of his power. I will protect you from him."

"Thank you; but I am not afraid now of anything that he can say or do. Tell him, if you please, that I claim my mother's trinkets as my own, and that the deed is destroyed. If he were to find me, and drag me back to his prison-house, and beat me till I nearly died beneath his blows, I would not sign such another. He shall not add my kind father's money to his hoards."

Sir George secretly applauded this speech; but he was beginning to be very much afraid of the carriage with Lady Ormsby and her daughter would return ere he had come to some understanding with his eccentric visitor, and so he changed the subject.

"You have not told me where you are staying."

"With friends," was the curt reply.

"Very good. If you will give me their address, I will call upon you tomorrow; and in the meantime I can tell Mr. Ormsby I have seen you, and learn from him where he wishes you to reside. Of course you will obey the wishes of your husband, my child?"

"I should like to see him," said Liz, as abruptly as before. "I should like to see him now—at once."

"This was a startling proposition, and Sir George did not know how to answer it.

"Hem! I am afraid he is not well enough to drive any distance; but, if

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you particularly wish it, I suppose a meeting must be arranged."

"I do not want him to see me, or know that I am here," she went on, without appearing to have heard anything Sir George said. She was laboring under a repressed excitement that made her eyes glitter, and her voice, though carefully subdued, ring with strange vehemence. "Was he sleeping when you left him? I thought so. I have been watching for you ever so long. Take me to his room, and let me have one look at him before—before I go away."

She had put her thin arms through the bars, and clasped them round one of Sir George's, to give force to her pleadings; and when he hesitated, she repeated, again and again: "Once—only this once let me look at him! I will not speak—I will not let him know that I am near; only let me—let me see him!"

"But if we should discuss him," the perplexed baronet objected, "or if Lady Ormsby should return? I really think I must ask you to postpone the interview until a more favorable opportunity."

"There never will be one; you will not see me again."

"But, my good child, you must not say this! I cannot think of letting you go away and be lost to us in this manner; you are too young to be living anywhere in London without proper protectors."

"I shall leave London at daybreak, so let me see him now—now!" she persisted.

"Leave London, and without Mr. Ormsby's sanction? No, no—you must not do this. You forget that you bear his name, and must do nothing to disgrace it."

"Who says that I shall ever disgrace it?" she asked, so proudly, that the baronet began to apologize.

"I beg your pardon; but your independence may lead you to do many things of which he would not approve."

She laughed bitterly.

"As if he would care so that I never get in his way! You are very good, Sir George, but you can't understand what I think and feel. Though you speak to me kindly, I can see that you are eager to get rid of me. And I am going right away, where you will never hear of me again; but I must see him first. His face haunts me—it does—it does! I shall feel happier when I have seen it once more; not full of loathing, as it was when he looked at me, but calm and kind, as it was before he saw my miserable, hateful face."

Poor Sir George was almost at his wit's end.

The girl, whom he began to pity and sympathize with, had an undoubted right to have her wish granted. She was the wife of his son, and if she chose to insist on being admitted and openly acknowledged, he would not be justified in preventing it. How, then, deny her so simple a request? especially after it had been urged in such an affecting manner.

"If I were sure that no one would meet us," he began, hesitatingly; "but you must be aware that if we encounter any of the servants—"

"Are you afraid of what they will say?" asked Liz, impatiently. "Would you rather that I run boldly at the gate and bade whoever came lead me to Mr. Ormsby?"

(To be continued.)

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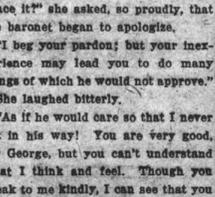
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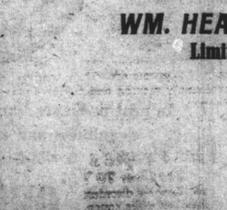
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