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LED BY A DREAM OR How Madge Found Her Lover.

CHAPTER I.

Behold a sumptuous apartment—a polished, silver-mounted grate, filled to the topmost bar with glowing coals, before which a young girl sits in a low rocker, weeping bitterly. Everything which wealth can procure, or the most cultivated to desire, surrounds her. Soft, bright, Turkish carpets, curtains of richest and costly lace, gracefully flung back from the windows, with their single plate of French glass. Pictures of a prince might have envied, upon the tinted walls; bronzes, statuettes, and knickknacks representing a small fortune in themselves, scattered with lavish hand in every niche and corner, while the little lady herself is clad in robes of richest texture and most fashionable make.

Costly gems hung in her small ears and gleam upon her heaving bosom; her delicate wrists are clasped with finest gold, curiously wrought, while her fingers flash with the emerald, the opal and the diamond.

Judging from her surroundings, one would scarcely imagine that there could be sought in the world to cause so young and lovely such evident sorrow, to make the tears flow so copiously from her soft, brown eyes.

She was of rather a slender make, graceful and airy as a young gazelle. Her complexion was clear, rich and creamy, with a delicate flush upon her rounded cheeks. Eyes brown as a hazel and bright as two stars; teeth of glowing whiteness, and lips which one would delight to kiss.

An elderly matron sat upon the opposite side of the room, an expression of sadness upon her motherly face, as every now and then she glanced toward the drooping figure and bowed head of her daughter.

She was not less richly, though more plainly clad, than her daughter, and was evidently one of those rare women whose life has not been warped and cramped by unlimited prosperity, whose only sin had not been a worldly desire to be a leader of fashion, an automaton of style, like hosts of our merchant princes' wives; but a pure and noble soul shone forth from her mild, blue eyes; there was a loveliness, a sweet dignity which pervaded her every movement that could not fail to strike the beholder at once, and impress one with her superiority.

Her heart was wrapped up in her family, and all her best powers and influence were laid upon the altar of love. She was the charm, the connecting link, as it were, of its yet unbroken circle.

There, Margaret, she at length gravely said to the sobbing girl, I think you have wept long enough; your father will soon return, and he will not like to see such a flushed and tear-stained face.

The young lady raised her head at these words, and flashed upon her mother a look of unbated love, mingled with one half defiant; then, after another and wilder burst of tears, she sobbed out:

Oh, mamma, to think that I must go to that horrid, hateful school to-morrow!

A slight smile of amusement curved the matron's sweet lips at this outburst, and she replied:

My dear, please be more choice of your adjectives, and a little less emphatic in expressing your dislike of this particular school. You really know nothing about it, as you have not even visited it, and are, therefore, incapable of judging of its merits.

"PUT OUT THE FIRE"
Dr. Agnew's Ointment will relieve and cure any skin disease just as surely as it cures this soldier's Erysipelas—the first application kills the "sting."

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No; but I've seen the catalogue of rules and so forth, and that is sufficient for me, returned the little lady, adding, indignantly, though a trifle roughly: To think that I, Margaret Dispeau, of the house of Dispeau, a descendant of a titled family, whose uncle is a count, that I should be sent to a school where I must work

so obnoxious to you. Such work is given to those hired for that purpose, and only the lighter work given to the pupils, and all whom I saw employed seemed to enjoy it, and carried cheerfully, happy faces. The body of instruction in ———— Institute, I think is very superior; and some of the most talented women of our land have graduated from this very school. We feel that you, darling, have talents of no mean order, and we wish to cultivate them in the best possible manner; so just try and make up your mind to accede cheerfully to our wishes, concluded Mrs. Dispeau, earnestly.

Mamma, what is the reason you are unwillingly I should remain at home and attend Mademoiselle Matteaux's school as Aunt Fan proposed? I know you like mademoiselle, and I could then have had more liberty, and, perhaps, have gone out some this winter, said Madge, without appearing to notice her mother's request, and fixing a piercing look upon her.

Your Aunt Fan proposes some strange things, dear, and I should not think of your entering society under two years, at least, it is true I admire Mademoiselle Matteaux, and her system of teaching, but considering all things, I think it best for you to go away for a year or two.

I suspect Aunt Fan and her exquisite hopeful have something to do with this most unjust decision; or, in other words, you wish to get me out of the way of my most polished and fascinating cousin, Fred Pontiac, said Madge, an expression of scorn curling her full lips.

You are sarcastic, Madge; but I am at a loss to determine whether your wish is directed against me or your Cousin Fred, replied Mrs. Dispeau, reproachfully, while she scrutinized her daughter closely.

Oh, mamma, you know I would not treat you so meanly; it was Fred Pontiac I meant the sarcasm for. I hate him! returned Margaret, passionately.

Why, Madge, what do you mean? Just what I say, mamma, I hate him, and I wish there was a worse word to express what I feel.

Brownie, I am amazed, said Mrs. Dispeau, her look confirming her words, as she noticed Madge's angry eyes and flushed cheeks.

You do not know what a viper there is in this house, mamma, Madge answered, excitedly, adding: You have always desired to possess my confidence, and I have bestowed it fully in all except concerning one thing. I cannot go away from you now to stay so long with even one secret on your conscience. Mamma—don't look at me, please, or I cannot tell you—Fred Pontiac has been making love to me for the past six months, and—

Madge! Is it true, Madge went on, speaking rapidly, her cheek glowing a deeper crimson from shame and anger; and it is in vain that I have told him I am too young for such things, and he still loves him in return—no, I have even told him that I detest him. He only laughs and says I will learn to love him in time. I have avoided him, treated him coldly and rudely, but all to no purpose. He persists in saying he will wait for me if it is ten years, and calls me his little bride since until I am disgusted with—yes, and fairly hate him. In fact, he persecutes me almost to death when he is not by; and, what is worse, I believe Aunt Fan helps him along in it.

Mamma! Madge had gasped at her daughter in speechless amazement during this recital, and it was now some seconds before she could find voice to reply.

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Oh, I know you practice daily upon the harp and piano, besides doing a little fancy work, but it is time you were learning to be useful in life.

I'd a good deal rather be ornamental, mamma. A thing of beauty is a joy forever, you know, she retorted, with twinkling eyes.

Such presumption! laughed her mother, with a fond look, then added: But, seriously, my child, your father and I decided upon your going to this particular school for the simple reason that we think you need the discipline, and desire to make a true woman of you. These fashionable institutions, where nothing is thought of but dress, and the number of congress they have at dinner, are not fit places to which to send a young lady to be thoroughly educated. We visited several with the view of giving you the very best advantages possible, but I was disgusted with the so-called style which the teachers, as well as the pupils, and looking more like the wax figures in a dressmaker's show-window than sensible girls who were there for the purpose of storing their mind with useful knowledge. Now, do be reasonable, Madge, dear, and give this school a trial before you condemn it utterly.

But papa is able to send me to the best school in the land, and he might at least have selected one where I need not work; that seems so strange, and the girls are full of sneers at it. Madge, my dear, replied her mother, a shade of annoyance crossing her fine features, how often must I tell you not to mind those vulgar things. Do right, and be independent. It is enough that your father thinks it best for you to attend this institution, and it is ill-bred in the extreme for your young friends to sneer at what they know nothing of.

That is true, mamma.

As for the work, Mrs. Dispeau continued, your duties will be very simple; you will not be troubled with the dirty pots and kettles that seem

ing in Broadway just at dusk the next day, and just as we were passing the St. Dennis, who should come out but Fred and another man. They did not see us, and were laughing and jesting about something. The strange man seemed to be very much pleased with what Fred had been telling him, for after laughing heartily a moment, he said:

Spunky, wasn't she? So the little beauty wouldn't accept the diamonds you won from Nichols, poor devil, who had'n't any money, and so staked his dead mother's jewels. It's a pity, though, your fiancée did not take them; they would have been very becoming to her style of beauty.

I was so angry, mamma, to think that Fred Pontiac should make free with my name, call me his fiancée, and boast of his attention and intentions to such men, that for a moment I almost believe there was murder in my heart.

Hush, my darling; I shall inform your father the moment he enters the house of this strange development of affairs, and we will see if this thing is to go on, said Mrs. Dispeau, decidedly, looking very pale, and feeling very angry in her heart that such notions should have been instigated into her daughter's mind, when she has always been so careful about her associates, and that none but the purest sentiments should be inculcated in her heart.

Here was a villain double-dyed, a gambler—a viper whom they had been nourishing in their midst for years, and who had now turned and stung them cruelly in a vital part.

Both mother and daughter sat quietly thinking for a few moments, when Madge suddenly started, held up a warning finger, and whispered:

"Hush, mamma! Did you not hear some one move about the door?"

Mrs. Dispeau shook her head with a heavy sigh, and, gliding with swift, light steps across the room, in an instant threw the door wide open.

He! I thought so! she cried, lifting her head proudly, while biting her score rag out through her clear tones.

Standing just outside the door with his head inclined in a listening attitude, was a tall, slender young man of about twenty-eight years.

He was of light complexion, with sandy hair and whiskers; he had light, glazy, blue eyes, in which lurked evil, hateful gleam, while a sinister smile played about the corners of his handsome mouth.

He was now pale with passion, his eyes gleamed and scintillated, and his lips were fiercely compressed, as he stood thus betrayed, playing the wretched profligate.

Madge, on the contrary flushed crimson as she confronted him. Encouraged by her mother's presence, she drew her slight figure haughtily erect, her fine eyes flashing angry scorn, and said:

To be Continued.

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Willie (at his lessons)—Say, pa, what's a fortification?
Pa—A fortification, my son, is a large fort.
Willie—Then is a ratification a large rat?

Jack—That little girl I'm in love with now is a perfect little wild flower, fresh as a daisy. Why, she's never even been waltzed with!
George—Well, well!
Jack—That's true. Never been anything but engaged a few times.

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