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GEOFFREY MONCTON.

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*Continued from our last Number.*

CHAPTER XI.

"THE sorrows of my childhood were great, but the joys which counterbalanced them were yet greater," said George, recommencing his story. "Though I laboured under many disadvantages, my gay elastic spirit surmounted them all. Instead of shrinking from difficulties, I loved, even from a child, to meet and overcome them. If I could not readily accomplish this at the time, I lived in the hope that the day would arrive, when, by perseverance and energy, I should ultimately conquer. I have lived to prove, what I early felt a proud conviction of, that it is no easy matter for a wicked person, let him be ever so clever, to subdue a strong mind, that dares to be true to itself. But as Dinah North was ever ready to sell herself to the perpetration of any crime, she felt my superiority, and though the mortifying consciousness increased her hatred, she feared the lofty spirit of the child that her tyrannical temper could not tame. I laughed at her threats, and defied her malice; and when freed from her control, enjoyed my liberty in a tenfold degree.

Sir Alexander put me to a day school in the neighbourhood, where I learned the first rudiments of my native tongue—writing, simple arithmetic, and the use of the globes. I returned home at four o'clock every afternoon, to wander among the dusky dells of that beautiful park, leading by the hand two of the sweetest children nature ever formed. Alice Mornington and Margaret Moncton were six years younger than myself, and being very different in their appearance and disposition, formed a beautiful contrast to each other. Alice was all life and animation—the first in every sport, and the last to yield to fatigue, or own to satiety. Her passions were warm and headstrong—her temper irritable, her affections lively and constant, and her manner so frank and winning, that whilst owning that she had a thousand faults, you could but admire and love her. A stranger might have thought her capricious, but her love of variety arose more from the exuberance of her fancy than from any love of change. She was a fair and happy child—the idol of her fond brother's heart. How cruelly did one baneful passion mar what God and nature formed so beautiful.

Margaret Moncton was less gifted by nature than Alice Mornington, but far surpassed her foster sister in mental endowments. Her stature was small, almost diminutive. Her features were neither regular nor striking, except the dark eyes, the beauty of which I never saw surpassed. Her complexion was pure, but very pale, and the lofty, thoughtful brow, wore a serious expression from infancy. You seldom heard Margaret laugh, but she had the most bewitching smile, which lighted up her calm countenance till every feature beamed with an inexpressible grace. Her face was the mirror of truth—you felt, whilst looking upon it, that it was impossible for Margaret Moncton to deceive. How could I be unhappy, whilst I had these two sweet girls for my daily companions, and the most beautiful rural scenery at our immediate command.

Sir Alexander came every day to the lodge to visit his child, and always lavished on me the most flattering marks of his favour. At first, his manner to my mother was shy and reserved. This wore off by degrees; and before two years had expired from the death of his wife, his attentions to her were so kind and lover-like, that Dinah once more began to entertain hopes, that her ambitious dreams might yet be realized. These hopes were frustrated by the sudden death of the object which inspired them. My mother had complained for some weeks of an acute pain in her left side, just under the breast, and the medicines she procured from the doctor afforded her no relief.

She grew nervous, and apprehensive of the consequences—but as her personal appearance was not at all injured by her complaint, Dinah ridiculed her fears.

"You may laugh as you please, mother," she said, the day before she died; "but I feel that this pain will be the death of me, and I so unfit to die."

"Nonsense," returned the old woman; "you will wear your wedding clothes a second time, before you are in your shroud."

My mother only answered by a heavy sigh—she passed a sleepless night. The doctor called in the morning, gave her a composing draught—told her to make her mind easy, for she had nothing to fear.

I always slept in the same bed with my mother—