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## WON AT LAST.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"How do you mean?" she questioned.

"Well, I mean who were his father and his mother, and the rest of his relations? Do you know that, handsome as he is, he looks to me as if he had in him what they call a touch of the 'tar-brush'?"

"I know," she returned, quietly.

"He has."

"I thought so. How was it?"

"From his mother. His father was white and English."

"And his mother was a mulatto, or something of that sort, I suppose?" I said; and Nat laughed.

"A mulatto? No, you stupid! She was a creole, and very beautiful, as creoles often are. His family were in an awful rage with Mr. St. George for marrying her, but he would do it. I have heard my father say that she was beautiful enough to tempt a man into making a worse fool of himself than that. I remember her a little, but she was old and faded then."

"And the son is like her, eh?"

"Oh, yes; it is from her he inherits both his beauty and the look you noticed? He has her nature too. His temper is terrible—he loses all control of himself. I have seen it once or twice," and she shivered. "At such times I don't think he really knows what he is about."

"This Raby St. George is really half a creole, then, Nat?"

"Of course; but he hates to hear it even hinted at. He is morbidly sensitive about it. Once—dropping her voice—when he was quite a boy, he tried to kill another boy who taunted him with it—so mind you say nothing."

"For fear he might go for me, eh?" I said, laughing.

"He might. Hush—here comes madame!"

Madame came in, hiding a covert yawn behind her white hand, and amazed to see the hand of the clock pointing to ten minutes to twelve. She ordered Nat off to bed forthwith; and I, feeling sleepy, too, took my candle and followed her. Passing Virtue Dent on the stairs, carrying something on a waiter, that damsel returned my good-night in her usual soft, demure tones, and with her usual neat little courtesy, and passed on.

"I perfectly self-possessed a figure as though I had never found her crouching by that clump of bushes by the park pallings, scared and shivering, not half an hour before."

Somehow I did not sleep well that night. I tossed and turned and dreamed incessantly, and all my dreams took one direction—Roger Yorke was in some terrible trouble, and I was trying to help him out of it. But, try as I would, there always came to balk me in the very moment of success the face and figure of Raby St. George. We were struggling under a tottering roof which threatened every moment to fall upon us, and I saw the heavy beams come crashing down, hiding the crushed and writhing form of my friend from sight. Then I was on the bank of the sullen river, close by the group of pollard willows, and in the dark water I saw a hand and arm outstretched imploringly for aid; then Roger's face, drawn, haggard, changed and dreadful as I had never seen it, was visible, ghastly white in the moonlight. I called to him to take my hand, but he cried out that he was being dragged down; and then, as with a terrible shriek he disappeared, I looked down into the shifting depths of the water, to see little arms coiled around him tightly, forcing him yet lower and lower. Then a face flashed into view—the face of Raby

St. George, a terrible smile of cruelty and cunning upon it, which changed its dark beauty into something infinitely more horrible and diabolical than any ugliness I would have been, and, with a scream as I thus watched my friend die, I awoke to find that it was morning and that my hair and forehead were damp with perspiration.

Sunday came and went, and, despite my prediction to Nat, Roger Yorke did not come home, while each day saw Raby St. George at Mount Chasse.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Really, Ned, you had better ask Adonis to take up his abode beneath his humble roof for the rest of his natural life," Alice Deeping declared, merrily.

We were all in the big morning-room—Alice and her major, and a pretty girl, Rosa Thrale, a cousin of hers, Nat and myself. The three from the rectory had walked over to Chasse in the morning, and were to stay for an early luncheon. Madame and the governess were not there. On the following night we were going to give a grand ball, and Chasse was in a state of bustle and excitement in consequence. The ball was to be something quite out of the usual run, even of Chasse entertainments, which madame always had upon a grand scale when they took place at all; and it was an understood thing besides that Nat was to make her real formal entry into Daleshire society. But the morning-room was free from the general stir and bustle, being left in its usual state of cozy comfort, and I do not think that just now any of the group in it much missed either madame's stately figure or mademoiselle's pale face. Gathered about the fire and the window we were laughing and talking to our hearts' content. Glancing up in the middle of some gay jest with which she was making us laugh, Miss Alice's bright eyes encountered a figure coming up the drive, of which the window commanded a view, and she gave vent to the speech I have set down. By the nickname of "Adonis" the lively young woman, had dubbed Raby St. George upon the day of his first introduction to her, and by it she always called him.

So far there was no sign of his leaving Whittleford; he never spoke of it or mentioned the probable length of his stay. He had left the draughty Station Hotel, and had taken up his

quarters over Haddon's shop—Haddon was the High Street tailor—next door to Bovere the saddler, where the Rev. Titus Poinsett lived. Every day he came to Chasse, and every day, to the best of her power, Natalie Orme remorsefully chilled and snubbed him, and held him in check.

I may add that after his second visit madame contrived to worm out of me all that Nat had told me, and, although I do not think she spoke to the little lady about it, she was not inclined to regard the dark-faced young fellow favorably in the light of her lover, rich as we had by this time found out that he was. Madame hoped and meant great things for her pretty ward, knowing how charming was the sweet little dark animated face after the faces of most English girls. Certainly to have her whisked back to Jamaica would not be at all to her taste. So, although she was always gracious to St. George, I do not think that madame herself would have been sorry had Whittleford seen the last of him.

I looked up at Alice's speech from the orange I was peeling for Rosa Thrale, while Nat, perched upon the edge of a table, and swinging her feet in a manner which would have horrified madame had she seen it, jumped down with a frown and a shrug.

"Oh, he's coming again, is he?" I said.

"He is; and most uncommonly chilly he looks. Nat, my dear, if you bestow a frown upon him when he appears, you will positively freeze the last spark of life out of the poor man."

Nat looked as though she wished she could.

With an amused look upon his fine face, Major Constable rose and approached the window.

"Who is Adonis, Alice?"

"He is," answered Alice, nodding her fur-capped head toward the drive. "Oh, you can't see him now—he has got round the corner! Never mind—you will directly; and then both you and Ned had better openly confess that you never saw a prettier face in your life!" Alice cried, laughing, as she pulled at one of Nat's curls. "You never saw, George, such a perfect pair of gypsies as these two make. Seriously, though, he's awfully handsome, isn't he, Nat?"

(To be continued.)

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