

GYPSY.

BY MISS F. M. MUSGRAVE.

(Continued.)

"I don't wish to live," said Gypsy, faintly. "I think you do wish to live," was the answer given very decidedly. "You are laboring under a delusion. You believe your Uncle—" he never finished. Gypsy sprang up with a strength that surprised the man of science even, only to fall back weak and panting. "Quick." She cried: "This suspense is killing me. O my God! how I will bless you if—if you will only tell me—"

"That he is alive," finished the doctor, "—and only anxious to know one thing, that you are out of danger."

"Tell him I am quite well" was all Gypsy whispered, and then she lay there very white and very still—but not at all with a *quite-well* look on her face.

For many days Gypsy lay in this condition without any change whatever. She was quite conscious; but it was the mere consciousness of an utter indifference. Nothing seemed to have any effect on her; she took no interest in anything. There she lay quite still, never uttering a word unless spoken to, and even then it seemed an effort to her to speak. She never voluntarily spoke to any one. She apparently lived a life quite apart from that around her.

Once she had asked if she might not see her Uncle, but on the doctor's telling her that it was impossible till she was really quite well, she never again alluded in any way to him.

It was a warm sultry day. Gypsy had been allowed for the first time to get up and dress and move to a sofa in her room. She had not expressed herself as particularly anxious even to make that first move towards convalescence.

She was lying on the sofa in her room in a half-sleepy state, quite alone—when a slight noise disturbed her, and made her open her eyes.

Bertrand had entered and was standing beside her. Neither spoke for some seconds. But there was something in the look that Bertrand gave Gypsy that made her close her eyes again—then she spoke with a little effort, never raising her eyes.

"Why have you never been to see me before, Uncle Bertrand?"

"I have been to see you, Gypsy."

She looked up at him then a long half-frightened look, and instantly her hand went out and grasped his.

"O Uncle Bertrand, was it all for me? Oh, it was too much! How ill you look! She raised his hand to her lips before Bertrand could prevent it. He was a strong man, but that soft, almost reverent touch of Gypsy's soft lips on his hand unmanned him completely; he fell on his knees beside Gypsy's sofa and a low sob broke from his generous heart.

"O Uncle Bertrand! Uncle Bertrand!" Gypsy murmured, "I will never, never leave you. God help me!" And Gypsy's quick eyes took in all the change that had taken place in Uncle Bertrand. Many years older he had grown in appearance since she had last seen him. His hair had become very white in that short time.

"O Uncle Bertrand, papa never guessed how much it was to be. How much I should owe you.

He rose hastily as if those words had hurt him, and moved away.

"You owe me nothing," he said almost impatiently, "nothing whatever. Never say that again." Gypsy smiled to herself, but her eyes filled with tears at the same time.

Perhaps there is nothing so touching as a perfectly and purely unconscious generosity. There is so much conscious generosity in the world. A man can be so generous and at the same time so painfully conscious of that generosity. You admire the act although you cannot help shrinking from the manner in which that act is performed.

"Uncle Bertrand, come back to me and talk to me. Tell me all about it. How you were saved?"

But Bertrand refused to talk about it, as he had been previously instructed by the doctor that she was not to be encouraged to dwell on that subject, that it was to be avoided utterly for some time. It was not till long after that Gypsy knew that Uncle Bertrand had been saved by the prompt heroism of a sailor who had sprung in after him and saved him at the risk of his own life.

"I must not talk to you, Gypsy, I am afraid already I have not done you any good." Bertrand looked anxiously at the very frail figure lying on the sofa.

"You have done me good," Gypsy said with something of her own wilfulness. "You will come again soon, Uncle Bertrand?" There was something almost suspicious about Gypsy's tone. Bertrand started. But there was no eluding Gypsy, once her suspicion was aroused.

"Uncle Bertrand, what is it? There is something the matter with you—tell me what it is? You don't know me. I would do anything to make you happy."

"I am quite sure of it," he said gently. "I know you better than you know yourself." "No," she cried, "that is impossible. You don't know me. You think I am like yourself, *painfully* unselfish. But I am not. No, Uncle Bertrand, I wish you would believe the truth—that I am really selfish. Oh, if you only, only would," she cried, "but you never will. You never think for yourself, it is only for me that you think—always me. And then you do mistake me so utterly."

Bertrand smiled a little in redulous smile—a most irritating smile it was to Gypsy.

"My child," he said, with the calm superiority of age, "Do you think

I have watched my Gypsy all these years and really don't know her? Do you think I don't know all her warm-hearted impulsiveness—all her wilfulness?" Bertrand smiled again.

"I think," said Gypsy, almost faintly, "that you may know a great deal about me and yet on one point you may be absolutely ignorant, utterly blind."

"On what point, my child?" was said with the innocence of a child.

Gypsy half rose; a delicate flush crept into her pale cheeks.

"You never would have put that question," was the answer given almost despairingly, "if you really knew me, because you would know without asking." Bertrand looked rather mystified; he began to understand that Gypsy had some meaning in what she was saying that he did not understand.

He felt that this was not the first time that Gypsy had been incomprehensible to him.

CHAPTER XI.

Some days after it got to Gypsy ears somehow that Uncle Bertrand was preparing to go away. She pondered long and wearily, though she wrote these lines and sent them to him.

"I must see you as soon as possible, in fact I wish you to come to me at once."

"A few minutes after she received this answer "it is impossible for me to see you at present." Gypsy frowned on reading these words, then a very solemn look came into her face, then a very determined expression. She waited till it was nearly dark, then she escaped from her room without being seen by any one. There was a decided gleam in Gypsy's eyes as she left that room, although weakness obliged her to hold on to something every now and then for support. She went straight to the library door, for she knew and then for support. She went straight to the library door, for she Bertrand was there; but it was locked. She felt it was locked against her but she was not to be foiled in that way. Once Gypsy was determined about something it took more than a locked door to repulse her. She stole round noiselessly to a glass door of the library which opened out on a verandah. She stood there trembling, then she peered in—yes, there he was, sitting with his head bowed wearily on his hands; an aged broken-down looking man. Her heart reproached her. How could she have been so blind? She tried the door; it was not locked. Softly she entered. Bertrand glanced up as the door opened. His brow knit impatiently; almost fiercely he spoke—

"I said I could see no one to-night, Gypsy."

She smiled; her quick eye took in a sealed letter addressed to her.

"I know you did not wish to see me," she answered in her old tone of defiance, "but it is not the first time I have rebelled and disobeyed you, but you shall punish me as you please afterwards."

Gypsy drew near to him, she shook both his large hands in her very small cold ones, mute and trembling he felt now he was helpless in her hands. He could never resist her when she touched him with that soft caressing touch of hers.

"Come here and sit beside me," she whispered drawing him almost like a child to the sofa. She took her seat beside him.

"I am going to tell you a little story," she began, "now you must be very attentive and *not* stupid, Uncle Bertrand."

He smiled sadly.

"Are you listening?"

He nodded his head, but she knew he had never taken in a word.

"You will be ill," he said anxiously, "you never should have done this. Why are you here? You can do me no good. The doctor has ordered me to travel!"

"You can tell me all your plans afterwards," repeated Gypsy, "but now I have come here to tell you a little story; listen to me. Once on a time—I believe that is the orthodox way of beginning a narrative isn't it?—Well, once on a time there was a little girl, a little orphan—mind Well, before her father died he left this little girl to the care of a very old friend!"

"Not you, Gypsy?"

"Don't interrupt rudely," pronounced Gypsy with decision, "there you have broken the thread of my narrative. Where was it? Oh, at the friend, —well this friend was, oh, a very good man"

Here Bertrand shook his head a little deprecatingly.

"He was so good," persisted Gypsy, "he didn't know how good he was. He seems to have been modest, and the little girl," continued Gypsy "grew up."

"Well, little girls generally do, that is if they don't die."

"Hush, you must not interrupt me. And this little girl was just, just—well, there is no use in mincing matters. Well, she was—"

"Well, what was she? You said not to mince matters, so don't mince."

"Well the truth of the matter is she was just a little d-e-v-i-l," spelt Gypsy.

"No, no, no, no a thousand times no," thundered her listener, "I don't like your story at all; there is no point to it, and it has a most untruthful tone."

"But you haven't heard it all yet; wait till you hear the last. Well, this friend was strangely blind to the faults of this little vixen—we'll say vixen now—Why do you suppose he was so blind to all the faults of this little friend?"

There was no smile on Bertrand's face now; he only looked at Gypsy reproachfully.

"He was blind, blind" went on Gypsy steadily, "so blind, blind in every way about this little vixen—and she—well, she would have done any—"