

# "ECHOES of the Past; The Recompense of Love!"

OR, CHAPTER XVII.

Tibby read the telegram through, counting the words and estimating the cost; then, with a savage nod of the head, she thrust the telegram in her pocket, and muttered:

"Of course. Just what might have been expected of the likes of him and his class. He'll write, will he? Not him! An' if he does, he's got me to tackle. Her mind's set on him," she stifled a fierce sigh, "I can see that. It's lucky for 'er that she's got a sensible woman to protect her."

That day Mina suffered all the agonies of the sickness that comes from hope deferred, which precedes actual despair. Of course, he had been prevented from coming, but why had he not written? Just one line, one little line, to tell her why he had not come, to assure her that he had not changed his mind, now that he was well again? In after years Mina was never able to look back upon that day or the two that followed it without a dull aching pain. The dark shadow of a vague trouble seemed to fall not only upon her, but on the other two.

Tibby appeared to have suddenly lost her capacity for scolding and was almost as silent as Mina, at whom she every now and then glanced with a strange pity and yearning in her old young eyes; and on the evening of the third day she said suddenly and without any leading up to the subject: "What did you say that trip to Margit would cost, father?"

Mina happened to be out of the room, or he would have winked at her triumphantly; but with every sign of meekness he went into details with Tibby.

"Well, it's a ridiculous notion," she said at last, with an air of resignation; "but if you've set your mind on it, I s'pose we shall be forced to go, for you'll worrit and worrit until we do, I know. An' if we're goin', we'd better go at once," she added.

"Pr'aps Mina won't care to go now," remarked Elisha, with an affectation of doubt.

"Oh, yes, she will—won't you, Min-a?" said Tibby, as Mina, white and wan, entered the room. "Father's got this foolish notion of goin' away still running in his head. Got a cravin' for sea-bathin' and catchin' periwinkles—softenin' of the brain or old age, I s'pose. What do you say, Mina?"

Mina's face flushed and a feverish eagerness shone in her eyes.

"Yes, yes! Oh, yes," she said, her usually clear voice dry and hoarse. "Let us go; oh, let us go. Let us go at once, Tibby, dear! I—I am not well. I feel as if I were choking, as if there were no air—I want to go away—far away."

Tibby sprang up and caught her just in time.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Clive reached his rooms in the state of mind which will be easily understood by every man who has been in love and is fortunate enough to be loved in return.

Notwithstanding his severance from his family and his solitary life, he had had happy moments, the moments immediately following a successful speech, during a long burst with the hounds, a strong pull-up-stream, a tussle with a twenty-pound salmon;

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The happy moments which come to a man when he is young and strong and his pulse is bounding with health. But he had never known such happiness as this which thrilled him through and through and set his being dancing to the music of joy.

He knew the gravity of the step he was about to take, knew that the world, not only the world of his own class, but the larger one which was also interested in his movements, would declare that he was acting a fool's part, was ruining his career by "marrying beneath him"; that everybody would laugh and sneer at what they would deem his folly, his infatuation for a girl who was so very far below him in social position. The ever-busy and ubiquitous reporter would rake up Mina's antecedents and dilate upon her lowly, not to say vulgar, surroundings. In his mind's eye he already saw the "spicy" paragraphs which would inevitably appear in the daily and weekly papers; he knew that his father and his two brothers would be furious with him, and that he would be still more of an outcast than he was at present.

But all this counted as nothing with Clive compared with the fact of his great love for Mina and her love for him. He began to plan out his course of action; it would not be fair that Mina should face his world without some preparation. Though he himself was not only not ashamed of her, but proud of her beauty, her grace and her innate refinement, he was too worldly-wise to be ignorant of the fact that she would be shy and fearful, and very likely unhappy, if she were plunged, all unprepared for the change, into the society to which he belonged, and in which he must continue to move unless he abandoned his career. And he had no intention of doing so, for he knew that under proper auspices Mina would take her place by his side and would not only be a joy to him, but a helpmate in every sense of the word.

There was absolutely no reason why she should not be what is called "a social success." Again, in his mind's eye, he could see her moving, the admired of all admirers, in the circles to which she belonged.

He would send her to a good school, one of the schools at Brighton, for instance, where she would associate with the daughters of people of rank and fashion, so that she might be armed at all points. He was quite satisfied with her as she was; and his resolve was made for her sake and hers only, so that she should not be handicapped and embarrassed in her new sphere. He could go down and see her frequently—every day that parted her from him would be a lost day—and as soon as possible they would be married and begin their life together.

He had a bath and changed, and then fell to at the pile of letters on his table. While he was reading them there came a knock at the door and, in response to Clive's invitation, Quilton came in.

"Sorry to disturb you," he said, his eyes fixed a foot above Clive's head. "Just looked in to see how you were."

Clive lifted his radiant face and laughed. "First-rate," he replied.

"You look it," said Quilton. "You appear to take a lot of killing. But I imagine you were very carefully nursed by those humble friends of yours."

"I was, indeed," said Clive, with devout gratitude.

"Yes." Quilton paused a moment, his colorless eyes fixed on a picture above Clive's shoulder. "One of the young ladies is rather eccentric, isn't she? But the other atones for her—sister's little peculiarities. A very beautiful girl, don't often see that peculiarly refined type among her class."

Clive colored and his eyes flashed, but Quilton did not appear to notice

it or the tone in which Clive said: "She is as good as she is beautiful. Look here, Quilton—"

He hesitated a moment. "No; I won't tell you just yet."

"There isn't any need," said Quilton impassively. "I am aware that when you have made up your mind that I am worthy of your confidence, you will tell me that you are in love with her. Oh, my dear fellow, don't look so surprised; give me credit for the ordinary intelligence of a boiled owl. Besides, the young lady gave herself away the day I went to see you. I mentioned that you were excited and might need her, and she flew past me with an expression on her face which might have been read by a blind man."

Clive drew a long breath, nodded, and smiled. "You've guessed it at once, Quilton," he said. "I am in love with her, and please God we are going to be married."

"Quite so," said Quilton, as if he were assenting to a statement respecting the weather. "Why not? She is not exactly of the class of Vere de Vere to which you belong, but that will not matter to you who are so prominent a democrat, who go in for the 'equality of man' and have justly earned the title of 'The Friend of the People'; in fact, I admire the consistency of your proceedings. Ignoring the claims of the daughters of a thousand earls, some of whom are doubtless quite willing to marry you, you go to the People—capital P, please—and choose a bride from among them. It doesn't matter that her father plays the fiddle in the streets and that her sister is a freak who has no business outside a sideshow—I beg your pardon—"

Clive leaned back and laughed. "Not at all, my dear Quilton. What you say is absolutely true, but it makes no difference to me. I would marry the girl I love, if her father were 'doing time' and her sister danced in the ballet. Love levels all distinctions, you know."

"Quite so. Good old copy-book wheeze. By the way," he said, as if suddenly recollecting, "they aren't her father and sister, are they? You said as much the other day, if I remember?" He put the question in the casual and indifferent way.

"That's so," replied Clive, as indifferently.

"You don't know who she is, have you idea?" asked Quilton, as indifferently as before.

"Not the slightest," replied Clive. Quilton nodded. "You are content to take her as she is, do not care enough about the mystery—she may be a princess, like the girls in the story-books, you know."

Clive laughed. "She has a higher title than that, my dear fellow," he said, with absolutely boyish ardor. "She is a queen, queen of my heart."

"Beautiful!" murmured Quilton. "You've got love's young dream as badly as they make it. And this lack of curiosity on your part will continue you think you will not want to hunt

up her origin, employ detectives, worry the girl herself?"

Clive laughed again. "I certainly shall not," he said. "It will be enough for me that I have got the girl I love, that she is my wife—but why do you ask?"

"Ah, why?" echoed Quilton. "I'm sure I don't know; just the journalist's interest in a little love-romance."

"I see," said Clive. "Is there any news?" he asked, as he turned to his letters again.

"Yes," said Quilton. "The Earl of Raiborough has been taken ill—but no doubt those telegrams will tell you."

He nodded to two or three telegrams in the pile, and Clive tore them open and sprang to his feet.

"My father is very ill!" he said. "Why didn't you tell me at first?"

"I was trying to break it to you," said Quilton; "but I saw that you would come upon the telegram before I could do so. He was taken ill at his place in the country, Raiborough; you will want to go at once. Is there anything I can do for you? Look here, I'll help you pack while you look up a train. He was taken ill yesterday—there is no need to look so remorseful. We only got the news last night. I should have come and told you if you had not returned today. I'll find your things—there's a Bradshaw, on that table."

"You're a good fellow," said Clive. "Throw some things into a portmanteau. He must be very ill, must want me badly. There are four telegrams. There is just time to catch a train. Quick, Quilton!"

Clive reached the station only just in time. He was fond of his father, had long since forgiven him, and all the way down to Raiborough was gripped and anxious about him. He did not forget Mina; but it was just possible that his father had recovered, that he, Clive, might return to town and see Mina next day; in any case, he could telegraph or write to her.

At Raiborough he found a carriage waiting for him, for the ready-witted Quilton had wired to say that Clive was coming. The old coachman, who had been in the service of the family since boyhood, touched his hat and shook his head gravely at Clive's anxious inquiry.

"I am glad you've come, Master Clive," he said. Clive would be always "master" to the old servant who had held him on a pony and taught him to drive. "The earl's mortal bad. It's some kind of a stroke, I believe. We was afeared that you were abroad somewhere and that the earl might die—he left alone."

"Is my brother Adolphus not there?" asked Clive.

The coachman shook his head. "No, Master Clive, his lordship is very ill with something or other at a Nursing Home. And Mr. Bertie—he hesitated—"I don't exactly know where he is, sir."

(To Be Continued.)

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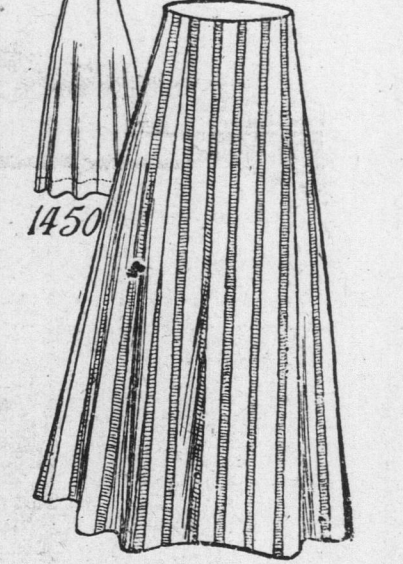


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