



'ECHOES of the Past; OR, The Recompense of Love!'

CHAPTER V.

This woman, who was called Sara, and was not known by any other name, had been Lady Edith's nurse, and was the most important person in the domestic side of the household. She had almost taken the place of a mother to the girl, and had an affection for her which combined the maternal love with the devotion of the faithful slave. To say that she worshipped her young mistress would not be an extravagant assertion; she would have willingly laid down her life to give the girl a moment's transient pleasure, and would have cheerfully committed any crime for the like trifling result. She seemed to live with only one object; to watch over Lady Edith and minister to her ease and comfort; and in the pursuit of her object she was quite ready to sacrifice not only herself, but all the world.

No doubt the tireless ministrations had done not a little to foster the spirit of pride and it must be written—selfishness which characterized Lord Chesterleigh's daughter; but, even if she had been aware of the fact, Sara would have gloried in it. In her eyes the girl was perfect in body and mind. She was as vain of Lady Edith's beauty and grace as if they had belonged to a daughter of her own; and she spent most of her time planning and devising dresses and other adjuncts with which to set off that beauty.

Sara's origin was, and had been for many years, a subject for curiosity and debate, not only in the servants' hall, but among the Chesterleighs' friends; but beyond the fact that the woman had come from India as ayah, or nurse, to Lady Chesterleigh, no one knew anything about her. That she exercised a great though covert influence over her young mistress was evident, but not surprising; for it was only natural that the girl should repay the woman who, next to Lord Chesterleigh, had been her closest companion since babyhood, with a feeling somewhat warmer and more confidential than that with which her mistress generally rewards her maid, and permit her familiarities of speech and service with a complacency which astonished the girl's friends.

In the servants' hall Sara was by no means popular, for she was reserved and high-handed, and kept herself

aloof from her fellow servants, whose she appeared to regard as her inferiors; but they had come to bear her manner of superiority in silence—in her hearing, at any rate—for on one or two occasions the woman had displayed a temper so passionate, so volcanic, that they all were in absolute fear of her.

The dark eyes rested only for a moment on Lady Edith's face, and were then swiftly covered; but Sara, in that brief, flashing glance, saw that something had disturbed her young mistress' usual proud serenity. She said nothing; but in silence began to help Lady Edith to remove her dress. "I'm late, I think, Sara," said Lady Edith, rather listlessly.

"Yes, yes; I will be quick, missie," said the woman, in a subdued voice. "You will wear—"

"Anything you like," replied Lady Edith, as she sank into her chair before the glass. "I don't care which it is."

Sara wrapped her in a peignoir of white silk, and, unfastening the gold on hair, let it fall, a cascade of floss silk, over her hands, stroking it adoringly, dotingly, as a mother might have stroked the hair of her first-born.

"Your head ache, missie? Sara make it well. Yes, yes!"

Gently, as if she were touching thistledown, she poured some liquor from an Oriental flask into the palms of her hands and drew them caressingly over the white brow.

"That better, missie? How did it come? The heat, the talk—you were late at tea, and the sahibs pressed round you? Yes?" she said proudly.

"They always do and will."

"Not when I'm old and ugly, Sara," remarked Lady Edith.

"Never old and ugly!" responded the woman proudly and defiantly.

"There are some women who will never be old, and my child is one of them. She is a daughter of the gods—"

"That's Tennyson, though you don't know it," said Lady Edith, with a smile and a suppressed sigh. "No wonder I am vain, Sara; and I am."

Sara laughed softly as she bound up the hair, still caressingly, as if she were handling something more precious than the virgin gold it resembled.

"It is not Sara alone, missie," she said, with a vanity which surpassed Lady Edith's. "Does not every one who comes near my girl tell her that she is beautiful, if not with their lips, the eyes that cannot lie!"

A faint flush rose to Lady Edith's face, and she frowned slightly.

"No, not every one," she said, rather to herself than the woman.

Sara cast a keen glance at the mirror, and her hand paused for a moment in their rapid but smooth movements.

"Not every one? Then if it is a woman, she is envious; and if it is a man, he is a pig," she responded, with a flash of anger and contempt darting across her dark face.

Lady Edith laughed a trifle wearily. "I should like Mr. Clive Harvey to hear you call him a pig," she said.

Sara held the brush suspended and looked at the mirror again, and kept her eyes there while she repeated the name.

"Mr. Clive Harvey? I don't know him; but he is a pig, all the same," she added resentfully, as the flush grew deeper on the face reflected in the glass.

"No, he is not, Sara," said Lady Edith. "He is a very clever man, and beautifully mannered. And perhaps it shows his good taste that he does not admire your child."

"He must be blind, this Mr. Clive Harvey," said the woman, as if she were stating an incontrovertible and self-evident fact, "blind, or an imbecile. Who is he? I should like to meet him, to whisper 'Fool!' Just that: 'Fool!'"

Lady Edith laughed, but not very mirthfully.

"No, he is anything but a fool, Sara; he is going to be a great man, a very great man, I think. All the world will be talking of him—is beginning to talk already."

"Missie know him long?" asked Sara, with assumed indifference; but her eyes, though apparently cast down were watching her mistress' face.

"Not long, Sara. I saw him for the first time last night."

"What's he like, this clever—fool—man? Young?" asked Sara, still casually.

"Oh, yes; and very good-looking. You know the kind, Sara; tall and straight and strong—with dark-gray eyes."

The woman made a gesture of deprecation.

"It is just the young English sahib—they are all alike," she said contemptuously.

"Not quite," said Lady Edith. "This one is different, Sara. He says little, and he does not pay compliments and bow and smile like the others; at least, not to me," she added, with a laugh, the wistful note in which was not lost upon the woman's watchful ears.

"I would like to see him, this young sahib who is so different, so clever, and yet so imbecile," she said slowly.

Lady Edith shrugged her shoulders. "I don't think you will have a chance, Sara," she said, with a laugh that was a trifle wistful as well as scornful. "I'm not going to continue his acquaintance; and, for his part, he is too big a man to care to continue mine. He is not like the other men who have nothing to do—and how bored I am of them!" She broke off.

"They have nothing to say but the old, old things, and they think of nothing but their clothes and their clubs, and—I don't care, I'll wear anything you like; you know best what goes with this dress—the pearls? Very well."

She made a gesture of compliance, and sighed as Sara took the magnificent pearls from the jewel-case.

"Am I ready? My fan. Oh, how I wish there were no dinner-parties, no dances, no crowds and hot rooms, and that I could go somewhere and be quiet, Sara!" she exclaimed, and, as Sara put her arm round her, carefully yet caressingly, Lady Edith let her head rest for a minute or two on the woman's bosom. Sara uttered a little cry, a crooning cry, one with which she had soothed the girl when she was a child in Sara's arms.

"Missie tired," she said pityingly. "Missie come home soon and let Sara put her to bed early."

"Yes," said Lady Edith. "I should like to sleep for—oh, forever!" She put up her face for the woman to kiss, and the woman touched it with her lips as a devotee kisses the image of his patron saint—as a mother kisses the child who is all the world and more to her.

She went down to the carriage with her and—the footman making way for her—arranged the beautiful dress so that it should not be crushed.

"Good night, my angel!" she murmured; then, with a kind of salaam to Lord Chesterleigh, she said in an undertone: "Missie not stay long tonight, sahib; she tired."

Lord Chesterleigh nodded pleasantly, much as he would have nodded to one of his own family.

"All right, Sara," he said. "Are you tired, not well, Edith? Would you rather not go?"

"No, no!" she responded, with a touch of impatience. "Of course we are going! I am quite well and fit. Sara would fuss if I pricked my finger."

Sara watched the carriage until it had disappeared; then, ignoring the other servants as completely as if she were ignorant of their presence, she went up to Lady Edith's rooms and began to put away her mistress' things. Once or twice she paused and

looked before her with an expression of anxiety, foreboding, and anger.

"He has come at last!" she muttered. "He always comes sooner or later. And this man she loves, this pig— Her white teeth gleamed as she clicked them. "Pig as he is, she loves him—do I not know? And she shall have him!"

CHAPTER VI.

"What is it, a masquerade ball, or are you going to do a little bingling?" asked Quilton, pausing on the stairs and looking up at Clive, who was just coming out of his room. Clive, who was dressed in a shabby old suit of checks, with a cloth cap that had seen a deal of service in the worst of English weather, laughed with satisfaction.

"Look like that, do I?" he said. "That's all right! I'm going on a little expedition. Ever hear of Paradise Gardens?"

"No," said Quilton, in his impassive way. "Party on there?"

"Yes; there's always a party going on at the Gardens," said Clive; "and an especially good one on Saturday nights. It's a street in the slums, to be exact; and I want to see it. I'm old that I don't know what the slums are if I'm unacquainted with Paradise Gardens."

Quilton nodded. "I see. I will say his for you, that you do the thing thoroughly, Harvey. Going to take a bobby, 'tec, with you?"

"No," replied Clive. "I'm hoping to pass muster in this kit; besides, the police have plenty to do without playing escort to professional philanthropists."

Quilton was silent for a moment; then he said:

"Think I'll come with you, if you don't mind. I've a night off—Saturday, you know; and I'm inclined for a little beno."

Clive hesitated a moment. "It may be anything of a beno for us," he said significantly.

"Case of broken heads, or worse?" said Quilton nonchalantly. "Well, I've never had my head broken—not quite broken, you understand—and I'm pinning for a new sensation."

"Very well," said Clive. "But you'd better make yourself a little less respectable."

"Couldn't, if I tried," said Quilton, glancing down at his tobacco and tea-stained coat, his corkscrew trousers, and his bulky and ill-fitting boots.

Clive eyed him up and down. "Clean collars are barred at Paradise Gardens," he observed.

"Give me a minute," said Quilton; and he went up to his room and returned presently with a dingy counter round his neck in place of the offensively white collar.

(To be Continued.)

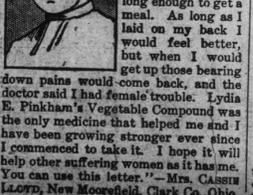
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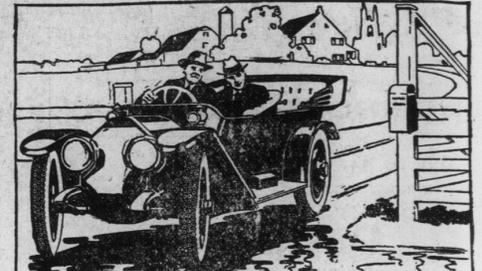
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