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"ECHOES of the Past;"

OR,
The Recompense of Love!"

CHAPTER XX.

"I wouldn't have thought of it, my dear," murmured Elisha sorrowfully. "He was always so good."
"So he was," admitted Tibby; "but so's most men when they're in love. Oh, I don't blame 'em. It's only natural. Look what a beautiful girl our Mina is, an' quite a lady in her ways and manner o' speakin'. He couldn't help falling in love with her; so I meant to stop it, and I 'ave," she wound up with a nod of her head.

"What have you done, Tibby?" Elisha asked in a low voice.
"Never you mind," replied Tibby defiantly. "I've stopped it an' that's enough. An' now if you don't want any more shrimps, father, you can go an' listen to the band. I'll take a cup of tea up to Mina, an' try to coax 'er to come out. She'd stop an' moon in 'er room all by herself all day, if I'd let 'er."

Strangely enough, something did turn up. Elisha went sadly down to the kursal, his heart aching for Mina and for his shaken trust in Clive. The band was playing, and Elisha, presently lifting his bowed head, saw that the conductor was his friend, the old man who had given singing-lessons to Mina. Elisha waited until the programme had been got through and the audience had dispersed, then he sought the conductor, whose name was Robinson, but who was known at Leigh-on-Sands as Chevalier Sordelli. Robinson, alias Chevalier Sordelli, received Elisha warmly.

"By Jingo!" he exclaimed. "The very man I want! Are you staying here, and are you disengaged? I want a first violin—mine's gone on the burst and I should like to sack him. You're the very man! Thirty shillings a week and a benefit at the end of the season. What do you say?"

Elisha closed at once, hurried back to tell Tibby and Mina of the good fortune that had befallen him, and, next morning, took his place in the band, in which his presence was promptly welcomed and his talent as promptly appreciated.

After a time Mina grew strong enough to go down to the kursal and hear the band—that is, Elisha—playing, and one day the chevalier said to Elisha:

"Didn't I see your daughter, Miss Mina, among the audience? I thought so. Looked rather pale and lackadaisical. She's got the voice; and I've taught her to use it; why shouldn't she use it here? I'll give her a turn on the programme, if she likes."

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Elisha went home to his modest lodgings, an old-fashioned cottage away back from the front, and informed Mina of the chevalier's offer. Her pale face flushed and a light stole into her eyes, of late so dim and listless, and she began to tremble, for though the heart may seem full of love, thwarted love, there is still room for art.

"I'll try," she said, in a low voice; "if you think it is any good. Yes, I'll try."
She began to practice that same day, and a date was fixed for her appearance. The chevalier attached so much importance to her debut that he "billed" her all over the place in huge letters, and, on the night appointed, Mina appeared—as Miss Veronica Vernon—before a fairly large and, fortunately, good-natured audience. Her heart throbbled as it had never throbbled when she was singing in the streets, as she looked down upon what, in her unsophistication, seemed like a sea of faces.

She was anxious and nervous enough before she began, but at the end of the first note of the song her nervousness and self-consciousness slid from her like a loose garment. The clear, well-trained voice—for the chevalier was a good master and had trained her well—rose, in the intense silence, as melodious as a bell. She had not only a good voice, but she sang with expression, for the chevalier had chosen one of Tosti's love-ballads, and Mina sang with her heart as well as her voice.

The outburst of hearty and generous applause startled her. She swept a curtsy and went off the platform, and was greeted by the chevalier with a nod and a smile of satisfaction and approval.

"They want some more," he said. "You must go on again. Sing them 'Home, Sweet Home.' That always fetches them, for, though they are within an hour and a half of London, of course, they feel as if they were a couple of thousand miles from home. Go on, my dear! What are you trembling about? Just you remember what I told you, and think only of the song, and forget that the people are here."

Mina went on again and sang the ballad which has stirred and racked so many thousands of hearts, and the applause was deafening. Even the orchestra joined in it, and, it need not be said, there were tears of love and pride in Elisha's eyes.

The chevalier saw that Mina was going to be a great success, and his vision carried beyond Leigh-on-Sands to the large provincial towns, to London itself, and, of course, he was eager to secure such a young goldmine; business is business. He offered there and then to give Mina three guineas a week for an engagement for three years, and it seemed such an enormous income to her and Elisha that they would have agreed to the proposal. But here Tibby stepped in.

Heaven knows where she had gained that knowledge of the world which, aided by her native shrewdness, made her, though seemingly little more than a child in years, a woman of business, capable of meeting the chevalier on equal terms. She had seen the effect which Mina's grace and beauty and her sweet, clear voice had wrought upon the audience, and she, too, saw that Mina was going to be a success.

"Three pounds a week!" she exclaimed. "It isn't likely. Why, that old Robinson must think we're a set

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of jugglisses. I don't say that two of us ain't," she put in darkly; "but he's got to take me into account. Three pounds a week! Why, Mina will be getting more than that presently for a single song, she'll be worth thirty or forty pounds a week; p'raps more, ever so much more. Don't you go an' sign no agreement, father. No; if he likes to take the management of Mina in hand, he'll have to be satisfied with a commission, like any other agent. You leave me to talk to 'im."

They did so; and, to his astonishment, the chevalier found himself confronted by a woman's wit and sharpness concealed in the form of a weird creature whose face was that of a precocious child, but whose mental acuteness proved more than a match for him. He had to content himself with a commission on Mina's earnings, and it may be hinted, to Tibby's credit, that it was by no means an exorbitant one. Tibby also secured an engagement for Elisha in the chevalier's orchestra during the terms of Mina's contract.

For some reason which has never been clearly defined, members of the dramatic and musical profession seem to prefer to work under any other names than their own. Under the rather high-flown name, Veronica Vernon, by which the chevalier had launched her, she continued to be known, and as she was as yet by no means strong, it was decided that she should remain for the present at Leigh-on-Sands. The chevalier was too wise to let her appear too often, and she sang at the kursal for only three nights in the week. On those nights the place was crowded, and she acquired such local fame that visitors came from the neighboring watering-places to her her sing.

Now, singing is one of the most beneficial exercises that man or woman can indulge in, and Mina's health improved rapidly, but, though both Elisha and Tibby were overjoyed by her success, Mina herself was not elated. As all true artists should, and indeed must, be, she was absorbed in her art—that is, while she was practising, or singing before an audience—but at other times she was preoccupied and melancholy. She seemed to be living in a world of her own, and it was a world of sadness; for she never laughed now, even at Tibby's queer ways and sharp speeches, and she rarely even smiled.

Strange to say, few of us live in the present; some of us live in the future, and most of us, alas! live in the past. And Mina was among the majority. They all told her that she was going to be famous, rich, and she was glad for Elisha's and Tibby's sakes, but the prospect brought no gladness for herself; she was living in that past in which Clive had moved as the chief factor in her life, as the centre in which all her thoughts, on which all her happiness had rested. But she was possessed of more good sense than falls to the lot of most girls of her age, and she reminded herself incessantly that he had—yes—deserted her; that on reflection he had decided he could not marry her. It was her duty to herself, to her self-respect, to forget him. But forgetfulness, like several other things, we sometimes crave, will not come at bidding.

Her joy in his supposed love for her had been too deep, too ecstatic, to be thrust aside by an effort of the will. And the worst of it was, for her peace of mind, she knew that she loved him still, and, girl as she still was, she had the woman's intense fear that she would not cease to love him. Her condition of mind made her long for solitude; and she went alone for long

walks about the pretty country round Leigh-on-Sands, in which she found opportunities of recalling the past and of futile battlings with a love which would be neither thrust aside by reasoning nor crushed out by determination.

The season is a short one at such places as Leigh-on-Sands; and, immediately the chevalier's engagement ran out, they started on a provincial tour. Tibby accompanied the others, but, of course, not as an idle member of the party. Elisha and Mina would require "looking after" more than ever, and, then, there was the matter of Mina's wardrobe, which Tibby declared would demand nearly all her time to superintend, for it is well known by ladies in Tibby's position that an evening dress marked eight guineas in a shop-window may, with cunning and perseverance, be satisfactorily copied at home at a quarter of the cost.

One of the first places on their route was Manchester. Of course, "Miss Veronica Vernon" was quite unknown in that metropolis not only of commerce but of art; therefore her name appeared quite modestly in the programme for a couple of songs only. The hall was a good one and crowded; her appearance immediately prepossessed the audience in her favor, as usual, and her first song was received with great admiration. With her second she achieved a marked success; she was not only encored, but at the end of the encore—she chose the chevalier's tour-de-force, "Home, Sweet Home"—the applause was vociferous, and she was called back to the platform until, pale and trembling under the strain of the general excitement, she clung to Tibby and refused to appear again.

Now, it chanced that there had been that afternoon a conference of the local members of the Liberal party at which Lord Chesterleigh was present. He had decided to remain until the next day to address another meeting, and after he had finished his dinner, he strolled out, the night being fine. He came upon the concert-hall, and, being passionately fond of music, went in, and was given a seat in a private box by the booking-office clerk, who recognized him; setting himself, his lordship leaned back and, putting politics away from him, was quite prepared to enjoy the music.

(To be Continued.)

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Serious Accident.

BOY FELL OVER EMBANKMENT THIRTY FEET HIGH AND IS DANGEROUSLY INJURED.

At the General Hospital now there lies a boy, who is between life and death as a result of an accident he met with yesterday evening. The victim is Thomas Codner, aged 9 years, son of Mr. Nicholas Codner, grocer, of Henry Street. The accident occurred between five and half-past five. The boy was playing with some schoolmates at the rear of Dr. Fraser's residence, on Duckworth Street, and was walking along on the top of the embankment holding on to a fence as he made each step. He kept too near the edge, missed his footing and went over the perpendicular embankment or cliff thirty feet high. He fell on his head and the wonder is that he was not killed outright.

NO DOCTOR AVAILABLE.

Mr. Healey, an aged Municipal Council employee, who is engaged watching on Duckworth Street, saw the boy falling and went to his aid. Workmen near were acquainted and Thomas Delahunty took the boy in his arms and brought him to Dr. Coperthwaite's surgery for attendance; the boy then appeared to be unconscious. That physician was out on a call and then the boy was taken to the police station. Detective Byrne telephoned to several places for a doctor, but failed to get one; several other officers went off looking for one, but were equally unsuccessful. The boy, who was made as comfortable as possible at the Police Station by Sergeant Courtney, appeared to be getting weaker. A bad wound was inflicted in the top of his head and blood flowed copiously from it. Suddenly he lapsed into unconsciousness. At this juncture his father arrived, took his injured boy tenderly in his arms and brought him home. Again all efforts to get a doctor proved futile and it was not until 6.30 p.m. or over an hour after the accident occurred that a physician was procured. Dr. Fraser, on learning of the accident, responded hurriedly. On examination he found that the boy's injuries were such that he could do nothing for him so he ordered him to Hospital where he was immediately taken in the ambulance. The patient is suffering from a fractured skull and other internal serious injuries and his recovery is doubtful.

A MENACE.

Dr. Fraser informs us that the place at the rear of his residence referred to is a menace to the safety of the children who congregate there.

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