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

CHAPTER XXIII.

Again Clive fancied that there was a touch of bitterness, of sarcasm in the impassive voice.

"You might wait until she does before you jeer at me, Quilton," he said. "Oh, by the way, I met with that woman again—you remember, the woman with whom I had a tussle at the gate of Palace Yard?—I saw her in Grosvenor Square; she was standing glowering at the carriage in which Lady Edith was sitting. I went up and spoke to her, and it seemed to me that she fancied that she had a kind of grievance against the Chesterleighs; but she was very incoherent, and I could make nothing of it. I came to the conclusion that she was mad. I mention the matter because I told you of my first encounter with her."

"Ah, yes; I remember," said Quilton. He had risen and stood with his hand on the handle of the door, and was looking above Clive's head, with his usual indifferent, expressionless countenance. "She is mad, no doubt." He opened the door, then closed it again and said:

"Fraid I've been rather expansive this evening. 'Fraid you'll think I was insinuating that your engagement with Lady Edith would be one of convenience."

Clive colored. "I am sure you would not suggest anything of the kind, Quilton," he said gravely. "Quite so," said Quilton, slowly lowering his eyes to Clive's well-worn carpet. "I'm quite sure that if Lady Edith were 'poor and lowly,' as the poets put it, it would make no difference to you. It wouldn't, would it?"

Clive laughed. "It certainly would not," he said. "I am as little likely to marry for rank or wealth or position as well as you are."

"That's all right," said Quilton. "I believe you. Good-night." He paused again. "By the way, I shouldn't burn too much midnight oil if I were you. You're beginning to look like a beastly politician—no offense—this, tight about the lips, dark under the eyes; you know the kind of look; you see it in the House when you meet the poor wretches who have reached the giddy height of a seat in Parliament—and wish they hadn't, some of them."

"By what right does the pot call the kettle black," retorted Clive. "Why do you work so hard—and look as if you did?"

"I work hard to live—and to wipe out the past," said Quilton. Clive colored and winced as if he had been pricked.

"Do you know, Quilton, sometimes I think I should like to know some-

thing of that past of yours?" "It wouldn't interest you," said Quilton. "Good-night."

One night, about a week later, Clive was in the library of the House, looking up a reference, when Mr. Graham, the Liberal leader, entered quickly, as if in search of some one, and with an exclamation of satisfaction came to Clive and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"I thought I should find you here," he said. "Devereux is speaking about the Unemployed Bill—there is going to be a row—some of his followers are turning restive and I shouldn't be surprised if we get a majority on the motion. Will you speak? Better come at once."

Clive got up with a quickened pulse and they returned to the chamber. It was full of excitement, and it was evident that Devereux was playing a losing game and was aware of it. The House was crowded, continual interruptions came from the Liberal side, interruptions broken with sharp, eager laughter as if the Liberals were aware that Devereux was at bay, and that soon they would pull him down. It was a wonderful sight to see the great, the astute statesman, fighting inch by inch with unbroken calmness, and regarding his foes, now reinforced by a number of his own party, with a smile half-amused, half-contemptuous.

He was on his defence, and he was never better than when he was wriggling—as the Liberals put it—out of a difficulty, but this difficulty was too serious and complex to be wriggled out of, even by the clever and resourceful Mr. Devereux.

He sat down, cheered by the remnant of his followers; and howled at by his foes. Mr. Graham, who had already spoken, glanced at Clive. As Clive rose, amid wild anticipatory cheers of his party, he happened to glance up at the ladies' gallery; Lady Edith had said that she was coming down to the House that night, and he thought he caught a glimpse of her face. Mr. Devereux's case was a weak one and Clive had an easy task before him. It is probable that he had never spoken better; he was armed by his intimate knowledge of the subject, and inspired, not by ambition—of late it had seemed dead in him—but by the desire to lose, to drown his thoughts, to forget the past in some strenuous effort, some excitement.

He spoke with astonishing fluency, considering the numerous interruptions from the other side, and he absolutely demolished Mr. Devereux's plausible arguments. That gentleman went on smiling, but he whispered to the man next him: "That settles us, a fine speech!" And he actually nodded in a friendly way to Clive as he sank into his seat. The division was quickly taken; and when it was seen that the Liberals had a large majority and that the Conservatives were at last overthrown, a roar went up from the Liberal benches, and a scene of wild confusion and

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mad excitement ensued. Men stood on their seats and waved their hats and yelled; one or two actually danced in their glee, and it was with difficulty that the speaker enforced sufficient order to permit Mr. Devereux to announce the resignation of the government.

The members of the victorious party shook hands with each other and, red, and hot, and exultant, crowded round Mr. Graham with exclamations and congratulations. And not a few crowded round Clive, for they knew that he was the coming man; indeed, he had almost arrived.

Lord Chesterleigh had great difficulty in getting at him in the crowd, so closely was he surrounded.

"My dear boy!" he said, laying a hand on Clive's shoulder. "This is splendid! Edith is outside—but you will not be able to come, will you? You will want to see Graham?"

"No; I will come at once," said Clive, and, gradually breaking away from the noisy throng, he went out with Lord Chesterleigh. Lady Edith was in the carriage waiting—just as she had been on that night a year ago. There were a number of persons watching her, for the news of the downfall of the government had already spread and the Yard was crowded, but she seemed unconscious of the eyes fixed on her, and she leaned forward, her face flushed, her lips tremulous with triumph and held out both hands to Clive, murmuring: "Oh, Clive," with passionate admiration and love.

The crowd saw the action, almost heard the words, and some one shouted, "Three cheers for Mr. Clive Harvey, the Friend of the People!" Lady Edith looked round proudly, delightedly, as the cheer went up, and actually waved her handkerchief. "That's unlike Edith," said Lord Chesterleigh in a low voice. "But it is for your sake, my boy. Let us go home!"

They got in and the carriage made its way, necessarily slowly, into the street, many of the crowd following and still cheering. At the corner of Parliament Street, the crowd seemed to swerve and stop; then concentrate on one spot on the pavement. Something had happened. Clive stood up in the carriage and, as a couple of stalwart policemen pushed their way through the mob, he caught sight of a woman lying on the pavement.

"There has been an accident, I'm afraid," he said. "I'll see what it is. You go on, sir. I'll take a hansom and follow you."

He got out quickly and made his way through the crowd to the side of the policeman who was bending over the woman. Clive recognized her at once; it was the woman, who, strangely enough, he had seen near the same spot a year ago.

"What is it?" he asked. "Is she faint, hurt?"

"Been knocked down, run over, sir," said the policeman, touching his helmet. "My mate here saw her trying to pass the road among the carriages. She has fainted, I don't know whether she's much hurt. We've sent for a stretcher and we'll take her to St. Thomas's here."

The stretcher quickly arrived and Clive went on to the hospital, and waited until the examination had been made.

"Yes; she's rather badly hurt," said the house surgeon. "She's not conscious yet. Bad subject, I'm afraid. 'I'll come in the morning to see how she is," said Clive.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Clive asked himself, as he walked from the hospital to Grosvenor Square, whether he should tell the Chesterleighs of his former encounters with the woman, but he decided that he would not do so; why should he distress them needlessly? So he confined himself to reporting the woman's condition; and the affair made little or no impression upon Lord Chesterleigh and Lady Edith, beyond that which was caused by pity and sympathy for this victim of our overcrowded streets.

Next morning Clive went up to Quilton's rooms, and Quilton called out to him from his bed: "House on fire?" he said indolently, as Clive entered.

"I beg your pardon for disturbing you," explained Clive, "but the woman has turned up again; she was knock-

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ed down in the street last night and I want you to go round to St. Thomas's with me."

"That woman?" said Quilton, as if trying to remember. "Oh, ah, yes! but why do you want me?"

"I don't know," said Clive, with a laugh. "I've a sort of idea that you might know her; I don't know why, but you know so many people."

"All right," said Quilton, not too readily. "I'll be down in a quarter of an hour; though I don't see why you should expect me to know every member of these populous isles."

"Come and breakfast with me," said Clive.

"Never take breakfast," responded Quilton. "You remember of the story of the man who, when he was asked, after a heavy night before, what he had had for breakfast, replied, 'A chop, soda and whisky, and a dog,' explaining that he had the dog to eat the chop. That's my case."

However, he had a cup of coffee with Clive and they went down to the hospital together. The house surgeon came to them and gave some account of the patient.

"Consciousness has returned," he said, "and she is better; but the shock seems to have affected her mind. She is quite quiet, but her memory appears to have gone; she doesn't remember even her own name and can give no account of herself."

Quilton, who was standing a little behind Clive, drew a sharp breath between his teeth, then coughed as if to hide the sound.

"You can come up and see her," said the house surgeon; "you won't disturb her, for her mind's a perfect blank and she takes no interest in anything or anyone about her."

(To be Continued.)

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