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**CHAPTER XVII. A MADWOMAN'S REFRAIN.**

"It is about your sister. Pray excuse the apparent impertinence of the inquiry," he returns, "but I have grave reasons for wishing to know whether she is engaged to Mr. Warden? Believe, in asking this question, I am not actuated by mere idle curiosity."

"Then I am puzzled to understand what can actuate you," I reply, with a touch of hauteur that surprises myself. "I am not in the habit of discussing my sister's affairs with any one, least of all with a comparative stranger."

"I cannot blame you for resenting what must have struck you as a strange inquiry," my companion replies, with a grave bow, and an indescribable something in the kindly, patient face that disarms my resentment in a moment. "Believe me, I had wise reasons for asking it; and allow me to beg your pardon."

"It is granted freely!" I return, impressed, in spite of myself, by the earnestness of his manner, and sorry from my heart that I have spoken so sharply. "By the way, Mr. Smiles, you seem to be greatly interested in Mr. Warden. Have you remembered yet under what remarkable circumstances it was that you first met him?"

Without a word, he turns and looks thoughtfully into my face, as if doubtful what to say to me. "Yes," he says, at last, a strange, impressive earnestness in his manner. "I have remembered!"

"Well, and where was it—or do you mean to keep that important event a secret?" I ask. "Yes—no—it will depend upon circumstances. Believe me, my dear Miss Kendrick, I shall strive to do my duty as soon as I see it clearly," is the enigmatical reply.

**CHAPTER XVIII. THE TANGLED WEB OF TROUBLE.**

"THE one thing in this business that puzzles me is the secrecy that has been maintained about it."

It is Len who speaks, and there is a tone of suspicion in his voice very unusual with frank, easy-going Len, who is generally only too ready to take people exactly at their own valuation.

"If that poor soul's friends—and, by the way, who are her friends?—choose to shut her up in that little

cottage, yonder, instead of sending her to an asylum, well and good; but, for Heaven's sake, why make a mystery of it?" he adds, as we sit chatting together for a few minutes in the parlor at Deepdene before separating for the night.

"Who has made a mystery of it?" Addie inquires, her brows contracting as if with some secret pain, and her delicate, sensitive, little face paling and changing as I have never seen it pale and change before.

"Warden and Mrs. Martin, to be sure," Len goes on, unconscious, perhaps, of the pain he is giving. "That woman has been in and out this house almost daily, yet has she ever dropped a word that could lead any one to suppose that the mysterious inmate of Ivy Cottage, about whom we have all been so intensely curious, was a poor, crazy creature over whom she was keeping guard? If that isn't secrecy, pray, what is it?"

"If there has been any secrecy, Ernest—Mr. Warden, I mean—must have had his motives for maintaining it," Addie replies, loyally anxious to defend her lover from even a suspicion of wrongdoing.

"Undoubtedly; but the question is: what are those motives? Mystery does not always presuppose wrong, but, at the same time, I'm not fond of it," Len returns, with very unusual gravity; "but come, girls, it is getting late. We are losing our beauty sleep. It is time we went to bed, I think; and you may bless your lucky stars as you go upstairs to-night that there is no longer any danger of meeting the ghost!"

That mystery has been, rather summarily knocked on the head, at all events," he adds. "I go up to my room this evening with a good deal more confidence than I have ever felt since we first came to Deepdene. The dread of that mysterious apparition, which has haunted me since the evening of our first arrival, is dispelled at last."

I know now that the weird figure which puzzled me so much—is mere commonplace flesh and blood like myself, and quite as incapable of creeping through keyholes and solid masonry; and, under any circumstances, I have nothing more to fear from its visitations.

"I little thought, until Len told me about her startling Lesley and Doctor Fuller in the garden that night, that poor Maud, Lennox had become a source of alarm to my friends at Deepdene," Mr. Warden remarked, as he walked home from Forton rectory with Addie and me a little earlier in the evening. "I am sorry it should have happened," he added, rather hesitatingly, as if in doubt as to the light in which we might be disposed to regard the affair; "but it is one of poor

Maud's fancies to wander about in that spectral way whenever she can manage to give her attendant the slip, and Mrs. Martin will have to be more careful for the future. I'm afraid she has been rather neglectful of her duties of late; but why did you not tell me of her startlingly uncomfortable visits?" he asks, speaking to Addie rather than to me.

"I did not know of them until now. I never saw her myself; and neither Len nor Lesley ever mentioned the subject to me until to-day," she replied, a little coldly and constrainedly, I thought. "Who is this Mrs. Lennox, Ernest? Poor thing! how shocking to be bereft of reason! Has she been so long? But what did she mean by—by talking and clinging to you like that?"

"Mean!" he repeated, with a short, uneasy laugh; "good heavens, Addie! you do not expect me to explain a madwoman's vagaries, surely? Lunatics seldom know what they mean themselves; nor are they very clear, as a rule, either as to their own identity or other people's. There is no knowing for whom she took me."

"Yet she seemed to know you—she called you 'Ernest,'" she persisted.

"Yes, for five minutes. The next time she sees me I may be his satanic majesty or the Prince of Wales in her eyes. The only way to treat a lunatic's flights of fancy is to ignore them altogether. But suppose we change the subject. I did not wish to alarm you by the knowledge that you had a madwoman for a neighbor; but now that you know it, there is nothing more to be said; and I'll take care that she does not annoy you again."

The explanation is simple enough, surely; and yet, like Len, I am still disposed to regard the affair with a good deal of secret suspicion. Alas! what a tangled web of trouble and mystery I seem to have got into since we came to Deepdene. I think, as standing before the glass in my own room, I brush out my hair and reflect over all that has happened to us since we left London; at Leonard's situation, with Miss Clitheroe—the secret marriage to which Addie stands pledged—and of my own very dubious prospects, with a sudden sinking of my heart as I wonder what and how it is all to end!

But that is a question time alone can solve, I conclude, with a sigh. And then, having set up my little night light on the dressing table—somehow I have such a dread of the darkness of late—I prepare to retire to the bed that looks so big and solemn with its old-fashioned tester top, and heavy curtains of dull red, shrouded just now, like everything else in the dusk-laden room, in dull gloom.

It is not a cheerful apartment by any means, even with the broad light of day streaming down through the queer, little diamond-shaped panes of the drafty old window, that is so deeply sunk into the thick masonry of the wall that the sill is like a table—a quaint, stone-set window that looks like the window of a church, and that really belonged to the little chapel of the monks in the old days when Deepdene was a monastery.

Nor do I like it any the better for



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The fact that it is separated from that part of the house in which Len and Addie's rooms are situated, by a long passage that cuts me off from every body, and impresses me with such a terrible sense of loneliness, at times, that nothing save my dread at being laughed at as a believer in ghosts has ever induced me to occupy it at all.

In London Addie and I were always compelled, by the limited accommodation of lodgings, to share the same room; but since we came to Deepdene we have had what I am secretly disposed to regard as the very doubtful advantage of a separate chamber; and no one but myself will ever know how often of a night I have crept into bed with a little creepy shudder, to life there preternaturally wide awake, listening to the hair and mice holding demonic revels behind the wainscoting, with the horrible feeling that something was lurking among the shadows of the old-fashioned curtains and furniture, ready to walk out upon me like a pale ghost in the still watches of the night.

For many reasons I have striven to be very brave, but somehow the old house, with its queer noises, its romantic history, and shut-up rooms—in one of which the body of Mrs. Erroll, with her half-written confession in her hand, was found one dreary winter's day many years ago—have not been altogether without its effect upon my mind; and, tired though I am, I lie awake for a long time thinking of the afternoon in Friary Wood; of my new-found friend, Mr. Denton; of Mr. Smiles' strange manner; of the crazy lady at Ivy Cottage; and last, but not least, of Doctor Fuller and his singular display of emotion at the sight of that weird figure in the garden that night.

But at last, in spite of the confusion of my thoughts, and the squeaking and scratching of the mice in the wall, I drop off into a quiet, dreamless sleep, from which I am brought back, as with a sudden jerk, to perfect consciousness.

Something—a touch or sound, perhaps, I cannot tell what—has aroused me, and, wide awake as ever I was in my life, I open my eyes, surprised, but without a shadow of fear, to behold a motionless figure standing in the dim light by the side of my bed.

"Addie!" I exclaim, never for an instant doubting that it is my sister, who has come to call me for some reason; "what is the matter, dear? Are you ill? Do you want me?"

There is no reply; but, turning away, the figure glides round the foot of my bed, passing between me and the dim night light on the dressing table opposite, toward the door.

"Addie, what is it?" I repeat, springing up from my pillow, as, having gained the door, the figure gives me a backward glance from over its shoulder, and vanishes.

(To be Continued.)

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**Cable News.**

**WAR REVIEW.**

Evidently it is not in the plan of the Entente Allies to leave the Germans secure in their possession of the line they are now holding in the region between the Somme and the Oise. Although the front from the south of the Somme past Chaumes and running through Roye to Noyon has been studded with fresh reinforcements and innumerable guns in order to keep back the Allied troops the Germans nevertheless again have been forced to give ground and at points where seemingly their defenses seem most crumpled and the road eastward be resumed. French and Canadian troops on Friday night, between Gouyencourt and Lanoy, a front of about three miles, had fought their way west of Roye until they were virtually knocking at the doors of the town, which is one of the key positions of the German defence in Picardy, while to the immediate north British troops fighting alone were still in possession of Danery and Parvillers, following heavy counter attacks made by the Germans to dislodge them. West of Roye the Allied line is now only a scant mile and a quarter distant, adding materially to the danger of Roye by direct assault on the part of the French and Canadians at its western gates, and from a flanking movement by the British on the northwest. The French have carried out successfully an advance five miles in the south, which seemingly lays the town open to a turning movement from the English wood which has been penetrated deeply. Not alone, however, is Roye menaced by this latter advance, but debouching from the woods south-eastward the French are in a position to outflank Lassigny, and with the French troops in the Oise valley near Ribecourt, also strategically placed to begin a rolling up process, which if successful, would obliterate the hill and wooded country, now standing as a barrier to the capture of the town of Noyon. Taken altogether the position of the Allied troops on the Somme Oise salient is materially better than it has been for several days past. The retirement of the Germans on parts of the northern front continues, but these manoeuvres as yet lack definite explanation. Following closely upon the evacuation of front line positions north of Albert which were taken over by the British, has come another voluntary relinquishment of trenches in the Lys sector. The village of Viesperquin has been given up, and ground over a front of about nine miles to a depth of about one to two miles has been ceded without fight.

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