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GEOFFREY MONCTON.

BY MRS. MOODIE.

*Continued from our last Number.—Conclusion.*

CHAPTER XIX.

DAY was waning into night, when I again unclosed my eyes. A sober calm had succeeded the burning agitation of the morning. I was no longer a lover—or at least the lover of Catherine Lee; my thoughts had returned to Moncton Park, and in my dreams the fairy figure of Margaret had flitted, with me, through its green arcades. My heart was free to love one who loved me, and I eagerly opened up the letters, which I still had grasped during slumber in my hand. The first was from my fair cousin. It ran as follows:

“DEAR GEOFFREY,

“We parted with an assurance of mutual friendship, I shall not waste words in apologizing for writing to you. As my friend, I may continue to love and value you, convinced that the heart in which I trust will never condemn me for the confidence I repose in it.

I have suffered a severe affliction, since you left us, in the death of poor Alice, which took place a fortnight ago. She died in a very unsatisfactory frame of mind, anxious, to the last, to behold her unprincipled husband, or Dinah North. The latter however has disappeared, and no traces of her can be discovered. There was something which lay very heavy upon her conscience, which she appeared eager to communicate after the powers of utterance had fled. The repeated mention of the name of Philip Mornington, led me to imagine, that whatever secret she had to divulge was connected with him.

“And this is the first time, Geoffrey, that I have looked upon death—the death of one, who from infancy I had so tenderly loved. The sight has filled me with awe and horror; the more so, because I feel a strange presentiment, that my own end, is not far distant. You will say, my dear cousin, that this is the natural result of watching the decay of one so young and beautiful as Alice Mornington; one who a few brief months ago, was full of life and health, and hope—that her death has brought more forcibly before me a shadow of my own mortality. Perhaps

it is so. I do not wish to die, Geoffrey; I love my dear father tenderly; to his fond eyes, I am the light of life; the sole thing which remains to him of my mother. I would live for his sake, to cherish and comfort him in his old age. I love the glorious face of nature, the fields and flowers, the glad bright sunbeams, the rejoicing song of birds, the voice of waters, the whispering melodies of wind-stirred leaves, the solitudes of the dim mysterious forest; all these are dear to my heart and memory, yet I wander discontentedly among my favourite haunts; my eyes are ever turned to the earth, a spirit seems to whisper to me in low tones. “Open thy arms, mother, and receive thy child.” I struggle with these waking phantasies, my eyes are full of tears, I feel the want of companionship. I long for some friendly bosom to share my grief, to wipe away my tears. The sunshine of my heart has vanished. Ah, my dear friend, how earnestly I long for your return. Do write to me, and let me know how you have sped. My father returned the day after the funeral of poor Alice. He marvels at your long silence; he has important news to communicate, which I will not forestall. Write soon, and let us know that you are well, and happy. A line from you will cheer my sinking heart. Yours, in the sincerity of friendship,  
MARGARET MONCTON.

Moncton Park, June 2, 18—

“I read this letter over, and over, until my dim eyes, and the shades of night obliterated the characters and left me in darkness. A thousand times I pressed it to my lips, and vowed eternal fidelity to the dear writer. Yet what a mournful tale it told—the love but half concealed was apparent in every line—I felt that I was the cause of her dejection—that hopeless affection for me, was undermining her health. I would write to her instantly—I would tell her all. Alas! my hand, unnerved by long illness, could no longer guide the pen; and how could I employ the hand of another? I cursed my unhappy accident, and the unworthy cause of it; and in order to divert my thoughts into another channel, I eagerly tore open my uncle's letter.