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A Dark Shadow;

Or, A Coming Vengeance

CHAPTER VI.—(Continued).

Clive and Quilton looked on for a moment or two; then, feeling that it would be useless to attempt to interfere, they turned away, and left Paradise Gardens to its usual condition of felicity.

At the opening of the larger street, and opposite one of the gin-palaces, Clive heard the strains of a violin. He started from the sad and bitter reverie which had held him, and saw Elisha fiddling away in the garish daylight.

Elisha saw him, and stopping his fiddling, shuffled up to him.

"Oh, is it you, sir?" he said. "I wanted to tell you, to thank you—"

Clive's hand fell upon the dwarf's shoulder, and stopped him; and turning to Quilton, he said:

"You can find your way home, Quilton, I suppose? Right! Good night!"

Quilton nodded, without an ounce of expression in his face, and walked off; and Clive turned to Elisha with a suppressed eagerness; for not until that moment did he realize how constantly the girl, Mina, had been in his mind, and how anxiously he wanted to hear more of her.

CHAPTER VII.

"You are a long way from home, Elisha," remarked Clive, as they walked along.

"Not so far as I sometimes get, sir," said Elisha. "It don't do to stick to one place; they get tired of the same tunes, and more tired of you. Why, even the swell players and singers have to go on tour sometimes," he added, with his sad shy smile.

"That's so," assented Clive. He did not remind himself of the musician of the pavement that his more fortunate brethren and sisters travelled first-class, and put up at palatial hotels, instead of tramping through the London streets to a second-floor back in Benson's Rents.

"I wanted to thank you, to tell you how—how surprised—regularly staggered—we were by the piano," said Elisha, with a flushed face and a tremulous voice. "But I didn't know where to find you; the man that brought the piano said he didn't know who'd sent it. If Tibby could have found out she'd have sent it back; as it was, there was a row, and I thought she'd have made 'em take it away in the van again."

Clive nodded. "Perhaps that's why I did not let them know who sent it; but I was afraid you'd guess. I hope you forgive me, don't think I've taken a liberty—"

Elisha shook his head. "No, sir; I knew it was meant in simple kindness—and so I told Tibby."

"And Miss Mina, was she annoyed?" Clive could not help asking.

"No, sir; Miss Mina was very quiet at first; and hasn't said much since; but she was pleased. It's a magnificent instrument, he went on, his eyes kindling with enthusiasm; "a beautiful tone, and a touch as kind as kind could be." He spoke as if the piano were alive and sensitive. "It was very good of you, sir, and I'm kind of overwhelmed—it's as if I couldn't thank you properly."

"That's all right," said Clive. "And has Miss Mina begun her lessons—?"

"Yes, sir, as soon as we'd got the piano in place. She was all eagerness, like a young hound straining at the leash. It was like a starving person going for a piece of bread. She was just wild for it. All she wanted was to thank you, and she'll be pleased to hear that I've met you; though she'd be more content and pacified if she could thank you herself, of course."

"You think she would?" said Clive hesitatingly. They had got into the White-chapel Road by this time, and Clive hailed a solitary hansom. "If you are sure I shall not be intruding, I should like to come home with you."

He opened the door of the cab, but Elisha hesitated and looked frightened.

"It's a long way—a biggish fare—there's the buses—"

"I'd forgotten the buses for the moment," said Clive. "Never mind. Jump in—take care of your violin."

Elisha screwed himself into his corner, and looked about him with a nervous and fearful joy; he had never been in a hansom before, and only once in a four-wheeler—on his way to a hospital after an accident. He was so absorbed in the novelty and the luxury of this shabby, dilapidated vehicle that he started when Clive, who had been musing on the strange fate which seemed to throw his across the dwarf's path, said:

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"Elisha, I want to ask you something. You won't mind, won't think I'm impudently curious? I've noticed that Miss Mina talks much better than—"

"She has been to school, of course."

"I know what you mean, sir. Yes; you've noticed that she speaks better than most girls, almost like a lady—if I may make so bold as to say so."

Clive nodded.

"I've noticed it myself, and I'm proud of it, of course. You see, it's this way: Mina's different to the other girls in the Rents, different even to Tibby, oh, very much so. I'm not saying anything against Tibby, you'll understand, Mr. Clive."

As Elisha hesitated, Clive gave his name, but the cabman saw reached one of the crowded thoroughfares, and in the rattle of the buses and carts Elisha only caught the Christian name.

"Tibby's as good a girl as there is, Mr. Clive; but she's not one for her books. She didn't take to schooling; there was rows between her and the teachers; most nights every day, and she soon chucked it. Whereas Mina—well, Mina was all the other way. She was quite a scholar, and took to her books like a young duck takes to water. Never missed a day, she didn't; and not a cross word with the teachers. They was all fond of her, and proud of her, as you may say. They were anxious, 'aveing passed the standard—you know what I mean, sir?—for her to go on in the continuation classes, as they call 'em; but Mina, though she wanted to had enough—I could see that—wouldn't hear of my spending more money on her education, and for all her gentle ways, she's as obstinate as other women when she's made up her mind, Mr. Clive."

"I see," said Clive. "She preferred to go out with you and earn some money."

"That's it, sir," assented Elisha; "and p'raps she was right. Of course we take a good deal more money when she's with me."

Clive took out his cigar-case. "Have a cigar, Elisha?" he said. "Yes do, please; I always enjoy a smoke better with company. Got a match?"

Elisha leant back and puffed at the cigar with nervous enjoyment, and Clive smoked in silence and profound cogitation for some time; then he said:

"See here, Elisha; I want to make a bargain with you."

The dwarf looked up with his big pathetic eyes.

"I'm afraid it'll be all on one side, sir," he said, shrewdly.

"Well, it's this," he said. "I think I can get you some teaching to do, a pupil or two. If I can, you'd like to spend a part of the money in this way: schooling for Miss Mina. The dwarf's face brightened with grateful appreciation of Clive's tact. If Clive had offered him money he would have refused it. "I share your belief in Miss Mina's future musical future," Clive went on quietly and in a matter-of-fact way; "and I think you'll have a better chance of succeeding if she were better educated, properly prepared for the position you would like her to rise to."

Elisha nodded eagerly. "That's it, sir," he said. "It isn't the voice only; it's the style, the manner of saying her words, that will tell a girl wants to speak and look like a lady, if she's going to be a concert singer—"

"That's what I meant," said Clive. "With so beautiful a voice as hers, so promising a one, she should have every chance—"

"And you're going to give it to her? Oh, sir—"

"Excuse me," said Clive, "you are going to give it to her, not I; don't forget that, Elisha. You won't find teaching the violin easy work by any means; and you'll earn all you'll get by it, for certain. Here we are, aren't we?" He stood on the pavement hesitatingly after he had paid the cabman. "I don't know whether to come in or not," he said more to himself than to the dwarf.

"I hope you will, sir," said Elisha. "It will ease Mina's heart to thank you, and Tibby will be out marketing," he added, naively; "she gets the things a bit cheaper if it's late, and Saturday specially."

"Well, then," assented Clive, but still hesitatingly.

As they went up the rickety stairs they heard the sound of the piano: five-finger exercises; and Elisha glanced at Clive with shy pride.

"She'd keep at it all day if I'd let her, sir," he remarked.

They entered the room, but Mina was so absorbed that she did not hear them; and Clive stood and looked at the slim, girlish figure, and the small head, with its dark silken hair, bent forward as if the whole body were in rhythm with the notes. Then, as Elisha said, "Mina!" she turned, at first with dreamy eyes that seemed scarcely to see them; but in a moment the eyes flashed, the pale face was suffused with color, and she sprang up and stood, one hand resting on the piano, the other pressed to her lips, as if to suppress a cry; her dark grey eyes fixed on Clive's with an inexpressible wonder at his presence, and a boundless gratitude.

"The gentleman—Mr. Clive—we met, and I thanked him, Mina," stammered Elisha; "but I told him you'd like to thank him yourself."

She did not move until Clive crossed the room, and held out his hand.

"I'm more than sufficiently thanked by the pleasure of seeing you playing, Miss Mina," he said. "I can hear how wonderfully you have got on—"

"Seems to come natural to her, sir," said Elisha. "It is so with some people. I'd

a brother as played by ear; just let him hear a song or a piece of music once, and he'd sit down and play it, and play it correct, too. But I don't want Mina to say that way. I want her to be able to stick up a piece of music, and play it at sight."

Mina looked from one to the other with breathless eagerness; then her eyes rested on Clive's.

"Do you think I ever shall?" she asked.

"Yes; I think you will; I am sure you will," he said confidently.

She drew a long breath. "Yes; I will!" she murmured almost audibly. "Why did you send it?" she asked after a pause.

Elisha laid down his violin, and, in doing so, had caught sight of his hands, and he went into the next room to wash them.

By this direct question Clive was somewhat embarrassed; but more so by the steadfast gaze of the great childish eyes. "I meant it as a little remembrance of our adventure the other night," he said. "You weren't angry—offended?"

"No," she said. Then, after a moment, her eyes fell, and as she raised them again there was a faint doubt, trouble in them. "Ought I to have been?"

"No, I don't think you ought," he returned with a quietness and gravity that reassured her. "Let me put it this way: if you were me, and you had sent me something that I wanted very badly and could not get, would you have expected me to be angry, offended?"

She shook her head at this piece of sophistry.

"But—but I told you about the piano; it was as if—as if I had asked for it," she said in a low voice, the trouble more plainly showing in her eyes and the quiver of her lips.

"Nothing was further from your thoughts, I know," he said, earnestly. "But she was not satisfied; and she stood, her hands—once again Clive noticed how long and slender they were—working nervously."

"I did not think—I was so glad, so pleased—it was as if it had come from the skies—that I did not think that I—I ought not to have it."

"If the sight of me has made you unhappy about it, I'm sorry I came," he said. There was silence for a moment; then a way out of the difficulty occurred to him. "See here, Miss Mina—"

She raised her head quickly, and the color rushed to her face.

"Why do you call me Miss Mina, as if—as if I were a young lady?" she asked half-resentfully.

Clive drew up a chair and sat down; he knew that she would sit, and she did so.

"If I were so impolite as to call you 'Mina,' you would have to call me 'Clive'—and you wouldn't like to do that," he said laughingly.

"No," she faltered, her brows bent.

"Elisha, why should you think yourself better mannered than I am?"

She sighed as if she knew herself vanquished by his argument, but was not satisfied.

"I sing in the streets for my living; I'm not a young lady," she said.

"Excuse me; I don't agree with you. But we won't argue it. I was going to make a suggestion to you."

She looked at him with a shy suspicion at the corners of her delicate lips, and kept her eyes on him.

"If you'd rather not accept my little memento of the other night, you shall have your way, and pay me for the piano."

Her eyes and lips opened, and she stared at him.

"Pay you! Why, you know I couldn't. It must have cost a great deal of money. Elisha says that it is one of the grandest and most beautiful pianos he ever heard, and Elisha knows."

"Quite so," said Clive. "Well, when you are a piano singer, earning so many pounds for a couple of songs, you shall pay me for the piano—five-and-twenty pounds. Is that a bargain?"

She drew a long breath, and her face paled.

"Do you think I shall ever sing well enough to earn enough to pay for it? Do you? Ah, don't say 'Yes' just to please—just to deceive me!" Her hands gripped each other, and she held her breath for a moment, her eyes searching him as if to wring the truth from them; then she went on, in a lower voice. "I don't know why you are so kind—I don't understand. Nobody, even rich people, are very rich, I suppose?"

Clive was about to declare laughingly that he was anything but a Croesus; but he beheld him that his modest income would seem an enormous one to her, and he contented himself with a non-committal shrug of the shoulders.

"Other people don't give away pianos," she said.

"You forget our bargain. I'm not giving you this—"

Elisha came back with clean hands, and face flushed.

"I'll ask you to hear Miss Mina sing to it, sir," he said, nervously. "It gives her voice a better chance than the violin does."

He put a hassock on the chair, lifted himself up, and began the prelude to one of Clive's simple melodies; but, strangely enough, the girl—a street singer—seemed shy and reluctant; the color came and went in her face, and her lips quivered with timidity; but Elisha struck the chords again, and looked up at her with faint surprise and interrogation, and she began, her voice shook for a moment, then, like all true artists, she forgot her audience, and the notes rose clearly but with infinite softness. It was a pathetic little song, and deeply moved Clive, whose love for music amounted to a passion.

He did not watch the girl's face pale now, and spiritual with the artistic afflatus, but sat with downcast eyes and compressed lips.

"A beautiful instrument, sir," said Elisha; but the exquisite melody of the young voice was ringing in Clive's ears. "Yes," he said, "it's all show. But Miss Mina, may I sing in the open air again. It is too delicate a voice for so fierce an ordeal."

Elisha nodded a quick concurrence. "You hear, Mina?" he said, as if he had been arguing the question. "It is far better to wait until you can get a show at a concert; there's more money in it, isn't there, Mr. Clive? It's what I've been telling you."

"Far better," assented Clive emphatically. "And you'll be able to pay me all the sooner, Miss Mina." She flushed, and her eyes rested on him with mute appeal.

"And now I must not stay any longer." He held out his slender hand, and she quivered with the flutter, the warmth, of an imprisoned bird; then she withdrew it quickly, as if she were suddenly conscious that it was trembling, and turned away.

Clive went down the stairs and into the street; the sweet voice was still ringing in his ears; he felt confused by an emotion which he could not understand, much less name to himself; and he stood for a moment outside the door as if in deep thought.

The little cul-de-sac was almost crowded with women and girls coming from their marketing at the costers' barrows; and they jolted against him with their baskets of fish and meat, and vegetables. Some of the women had children hanging on to their skirts, and one of the mites stumbled and fell close to Clive's feet. He picked it up, and held it at arm's length as it yelled lugubriously.

"I don't think you're hurt," he said in a confidential tone, and with the smile which, when it shines in a man's eyes, which find it irresistible. "A big little child, when it's irresistible."

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girl like you doesn't cry, you know.

The child stopped its yell, and taking its dirty feet from its eyes stared down at him in amazement, and still waiting for the accustomed smacking. The mother also stared.

"Troublesome little toad!" she shouted.

"I'll give you something, Emily Mord—"

No, of course, she ain't hurt; she's allers tumbling and fallin' about," she added to Clive, as she snatched the child from him and commenced to shake it.

"Oh, I wouldn't do that," said Clive in his persuasive way. "She couldn't help it; I saw how it happened. All good kiddies who are worth anything tumble about, something into the woman's hand. "Buy her a doll, and they'll learn together to keep their feet, you'll see. Good night."

As he turned away, the woman stopping the traffic to stare at him in open-eyed wonder, he ran against some one, and a voice cried sharply: "Where's your dawg?"

Clive recognized the voice, and looked down with a smile and a nod at the quaint little figure of Tibby.

(To be continued.)

How Could He?

Pat and Mike were walking along the side of a bog when Mike had the misfortune to fall in. On seeing this Pat turned and ran back to a house, and knocking at the door, shouted out—"For the love of Heaven give me a spade! Mike has fallen into the bog!" "How far in is he, Pat?" asked the occupant.

"Sure, he's up to the ankles," answered Pat. "If he's only up to the ankles he can surely walk out."

"Sure and how could he when he's in head first?"

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Asked Her Age.

A woman was in a law court when she was asked her age, and answered—"Thirty-five." "But," objected the judge, "you were before me two years ago, and you said then that you were thirty-five." "Your Honor," she loftily replied, "I am not one who would say one thing at one time and another thing at another time."

Pat Again.

One of the inmates of a lunatic asylum, an Irishman, was sent to an adjoining ward to find out the correct time. He returned in a moment and announced—"Twenty minutes 't'welve." "Pat, are you sure that clock is right?" he was asked. "Roight, is it?" he replied. "D'ye think it wud be in this place if it was roight?"

An Old Farmer from the County Derry

really couldn't believe that people who were miles apart were able to converse over a telephone wire. One day his wife went to a distant friend, who had a telephone, in her house. During the afternoon the farmer sought shelter from the thunderstorm at the house of a neighbor who also possessed a telephone, and who persuaded the farmer to call his wife as a little surprise. Following instruction, the farmer put the receiver to his ear, and after the usual preliminaries he shouted "Hello, Jane." Just then a flash of lightning struck the wire and he fell to the floor under the force of the shock. Rising to his feet and shaking his head wisely he said, "It's wonderful, that was Jane right enough."

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