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A Dark Shadow;

Or, A Coming Vengeance

CHAPTER X.—(Continued).

Mina hung upon his words; every one was preoccupied with her, thrilled through her. She had never imagined, much less heard, anything like it; and her hero became almost a divinity to her. Her eyes were chained to his face, which seemed to dazzle hers; she watched his lips as if to anticipate the words that passed them, now with the force of a tremendous torrent, now with the soft music of a brook. She was in a kind of dream, held in thrall by a spell which she wished might last for ever: not once while he was speaking did she remove her gaze from his face, yet, notwithstanding, she could see the rapt faces of those around her, could watch their flaming eyes, was conscious of their parted lips, through which their breath came jerkily.

No wonder they were awed, that they gazed at him open-eyed, open-mouthed. How they, too, must admire and worship him, the grand gentleman who was fighting their battles for them, who was sacrificing himself for their good, pleading, struggling for them as if he were one of themselves.

The speech was drawing to a close—she felt that, with a pang—and her eyes wandered towards the door for an instant; she would steal away before the crowd began to leave. But two men had come near her, and stood close by her side, and between her and the door. One was a thick-set, extremely ugly man with a big round head covered by short, bristling hair; his chin was stubby and his shirt band failed to hide a dingy collar and a still more dingy shirt front. He wore thick spectacles, through which his mean, restless eyes flashed in a furtive fashion. He had the unwholesome appearance of the low-class foreigner, and he spoke to the other man—a younger man with a weak face and receding chin, to which was called by a vivid scarlet tie—in broken English. "That's the way to talk, ain't it? He's what I call a speaker, if you like, eh, Koskhi?"

Koskhi shrugged his shoulders. "It is very well ash far ash it go; but it ish not strong enough. An' I ish too mealy-mouthed, he what you call it?—minces matters. He in! and for a good reason! He ish aristocrat himself; he has the loaves and fishes. You comprehend? It is all talk, talk, with these aristocrats that pretend to be the friends of the people. And where is the good of talk? Ze world is full of talk. It is deets, deets, nor words, ve down-trodden working men want. Ze time is past for words; ve have waited too long. We are tired of waiting. 'This is all very well,'—he jerked his bullet head towards the platform—"but what is the use of it? Ze oppressors do not mind, zey laugh. Zey say, 'Let zem talk, zey will wash them, and lowering his voice round him, but every one seemed intently listening to the speaker on the platform, especially intent and absorbed seemed the girl who leant against the wall near them, and, lowering his voice, he went on in a guttural whisper—"presently a blow—a blow, my friend—will be struck which will make zem laugh the other side of zeyr mouths. You comprehend, Johnson?"

Johnson nodded, but looked vacantly up at the fat face and small, furtive eyes. "Zen shall we see what our fient zere is made of; we shall see whether he can do something more than talk."

"You mean," said the youth, looking vaguely alarmed.

"I mean zat ve 'ave made our preparations, zat ve are only waiting till the proper hour shall strike, and ve will know whether our fine talker zere vill join us. If so, vell and good; if not—it vill be the worse for him!"

gan to make for the doors. Mina felt that it would be better to wait until the first crush had passed, and she pressed against the wall with her head bent, trying to escape notice. Clive had stepped down from the platform, and was talking to some of the men.

She saw that he was pale—it seemed to her that he looked tired—and once she noticed that his eyes wandered from the face of the man who was speaking to him and looked round absently. She trembled as they came her way, but he did not see her; and presently she moved towards the doors, but there was still a crush there, and she was compelled to wait. It was as she was standing there that Clive saw her. He started, said quickly to the men around him, "Excuse me!" and hurried to her side.

She heard him speak her name in a low voice; a thrill ran through her, and she turned her head slowly and caught her breath. He drew her arm within his, the crowd made way for them, cheering and waving their hats as he and Mina passed through, and with her arm still in his, they gained the street. He did not speak until they had turned the corner into quietude, then, smiling down at her, he said:

"Why, Miss Mina, how did you happen to be at the Hall to-night? And alone, too?"

She did not reply at once; the voice of the platform was still ringing in her ears; but this other voice, so low, so friendly, was a different, a sweeter music, and she was loath to lose it. Besides, her heart was beating against its arm so loudly that she could hardly speak, and when she did so the words came flutteringly.

"It was by chance," she said. "I was passing, and heard—she stopped. "Curiosity, thy name is Woman!" he said laughingly. "But you must have been a very brave little woman to make your way into that crowded den. I don't think it was very wise. And how are Elisha and Tibby? You are looking pale. He broke off without waiting for her reply. "You are working at the schools? You are not working too hard, Miss Mina?"

He called her "Miss" Mina now, but she remembered with a secret joy that he had called her Mina when he had come to her in the hall.

voice he was thinking of the girl herself, of the marvellous progress she had made, the subtle change in her manner, the natural self-confidence—now that she was speaking of the others—the beauty of the upturned face, the deep, liquid eyes. And over him stole a sense of peace, wistful, yet full of subtle pleasure that was half pain; the feeling that might come to the man who has found a rose growing in the wilderness, a lily by the dusty wayside. Such a flower, so rare, in such a place, the man might long to pluck and place in his bosom to still the vague aching of his heart.

He woke with a start as her voice stopped.

"Where are we?" he asked, as if he were waking from a dream.

She laughed softly. "We are nearly home—I mean at the Rents. It is round the next turning. Won't you come in and see Elisha?"

He bit his lip and hesitated; he could not tell her that he had promised Tibby not to come; then a genuine excuse came to his mind.

"I'm sorry," he said; "but I have to attend a committee meeting at the place we have just left. I quite forgot it! I must hurry back. I will go with you as far as the corner."

"There is no need," she said, and now the brightness had gone out of her voice and face, and her eyes were downcast. But he walked beside her to the corner, and there stopped and looked at her as he held her hand. The question that rose to his lips was, "When can I see you again?" but he could not put it.

"Good-night," he said; and she must have caught the wistfulness of his tone, for she raised her eyes and looked at him with an answering wistfulness.

"Good-night—and thank you, once more," she whispered; and went on her way.

Though she did not glance back she knew that he was waiting and watching her, guarding her; but presently as she reached the entrance to the Rents she heard his retreating footsteps, and they echoed sadly in her heart.

She was entering the house when suddenly she became conscious of a feeling of loss; and awoke to the fact that her books were not under her arm. She stopped aghast, and remembered that she had put them on the window ledge in the hall, near which she had been standing. Without her books she could not do her "preparation" for the next day's class. She thought for a moment in poignant distress, then she turned quickly and ran in the direction of the hall. She feared that the place would be closed, but she found one of the doors open and entered.

The hall itself was in darkness, but a light came from the transom over the door leading into a small room in which some persons were speaking; and, half guided by this light, and half feeling her way, she reached the spot where she had been standing.

Her beloved books were still there, and clasping them with a sense of relief and thanksgiving, she turned to go; but at that moment the door opened, and Clive came out. Behind him, within the room, she saw several men, amongst them the unwashed foreigner, Koskhi. Clive was looking grave and rather angry, and as Koskhi made way for him to pass through the crowd the Pole said suddenly:

"Za! that ish your last word, my friend?"

"Absolutely my last word," said Clive sternly. "Not only will I have nothing to do with your proceedings; but if I hear any more of such a proposal as that of the school business, I shall feel it my duty to denounce the scoundrels who contemplate this villainy to the proper authorities."

HONEST TEA IS THE BEST POLICY

LIPTON'S TEA

LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD

by apprehension, she went homewards. Her first impulse was to tell Elisha of all she had heard; but she reflected that, as he did not know Mr. Clive's address, he could not warn him, could not help him. She had read of the outrages perpetrated by the foreign Anarchists, and half-distraught by terror, she pictured her hero and benefactor maimed and bleeding, even done to death, by the scoundrels who were plotting in that inner room.

She knew that he was not afraid, and that in his contempt of danger lay the peril which threatened him. And she was powerless to help, to save him! She thought of the police; but she was afraid that Mr. Clive would be angry with her if she went to them and told them all she had heard; and, besides, it would be easy for the scoundrels to evade them, to lie in wait for their victim, and deal the deadly blow in secret. They had but to throw a bomb, to step or fell him as he passed through the streets.

She could not do her lessons that night, could not practise, and was so pale and distraught that Tibby insisted upon her going to bed; and she lay awake, listening to the shrill cries of the quarrelling women, the laughter and the oaths of the drunken men as they came staggering out of the public-houses at closing time.

But, with her heart throbbing and her eyes fixed on Clive's deep clear voice, and the eloquent words which had moved the audience so wonderfully. It thrilled through her even as she lay and quaked with anxiety, and asked herself the ceaseless question, "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

She fell asleep at last as the dawn, beautiful even in Benson's Rents, stole through the curtains, and fell like a balm on her pale face; but she woke with a start and a cry of terror from a dream in which she had seen her hero lying stricken and bleeding at her feet.

"Seems to me that there's too much of this school business," Tibby said, as she tied on her bonnet, and eyed Mina sternly. "You're as pale as a turnip; and you're getting as skinny as a chicken on a shop board. What with the pianer an' the singin' an' the everlasting studyin', you don't take precious good care you'll be playin' the arp and singin' in 'eaven before long. Just you chuck it for to-day and go out for a good traipse. You're one of the kind that wants air; I don't; I don't mind bein' shut up in a factory where it's thick enough to cut with aatchet; but you're different. You chuck it, and go out on the spree. D'yer mind me?"

Mina did not remonstrate, but promised that she would; and soon after breakfast she put on her best out-door things, and went out; of course, with the vague idea that she might by chance see Mr. Clive. It had occurred to her that he might be living in the neighborhood—that he had been going home the night they had first met; so she walked quickly yet observantly through the streets of the better class, pausing now and then to glance about her.

Her woman's wit did her service, for, with a sudden leap of the heart, and a rush of blood to her face, she saw Clive coming out of the house in Burligh Street.

He was walking quickly with a preoccupied air, and she shrank into a doorway, too nervous and shy to attract his attention now that he had come upon her suddenly; and he passed her. She fought for calmness, self-possession, then walked after him; but Clive had gained the main thoroughfare, and was looking for a "bus" before he heard her panting cry of, "Oh, stop!"

(To be continued.)

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CHAPTER XI.

Mina ran to the end of the street, but when she had got round the corner she stopped, and, breathing hard with her hand pressed to her bosom, looked about her anxiously; if she could only see Mr. Clive and warn him! But Clive was, of course, not in sight; and, weighed down



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