

A Dark Shadow;

Or, A Coming Vengeance

CHAPTER XXVI.—(Continued.)

"To whom? What would Mina gain by acquiring Lord Chesterleigh for a father? Rank? Of what use would it be to her? Money? She will earn, in the most delightful way more than she will know what to do with. What would Lord Chesterleigh gain by the revelation of the truth? A daughter of whom he knows nothing; and, on the other hand, to lose a daughter, Lady Edith, to whom he is devotedly attached. And think of her!" "I am thinking of her," said Clive hoarsely.

"Quite so. Of course, you, with your correct and highly-toned mind—" "For goodness sake, don't mock me!" groaned Clive. "Pardon. But you are thinking of the ethical, the moral side of a question; of course, the duty of revealing the truth. My dear fellow, do you imagine this case of Mina's is without parallel, that it stands alone? What about the Wardsdale peevage? It is generally known that the present duke's mother, in the backwoods of America. What about the Pensleigh baronetcy? The man who bears the title is the cousin of the real man, who, for family reasons, keeps a store in British Columbia. What about—oh, I could recall several cases to your memory. And in this one, bear in mind, it is not a question of succession. They are both women; no title, excepting the most courtesy one, is at stake. It is just probable that Mina will marry a title; she is beautiful, gifted enough to catch half the peevage. And Lady Edith—"

"He paused, and Clive turned and faced him with a drawn face. "Lady Edith will marry me," he said. Quilton said nothing, but stood, his face absolutely impassive and expressionless. "That is now certain."

"And yet you love Mina?" remarked Quilton in a matter-of-fact tone. Clive eyed him steadily. "And yet I love Mina," he said grimly. "Quilton, I have seen her, spoken to her again. It was a mistake. She—God help us both!—she cares for me still. And I had resolved to tell Lady Edith the truth, to give her her freedom, to obtain mine, and marry Mina—if she would have me. But now, now that Lady Edith is—trouble—she has this dark cloud hanging over her life, I—I must stand by her."

Quilton nodded. "Noblest oblige," he commented. "Exactly. Well, that's your affair. So you see that Lady Edith will have a title of her own—oh, you will end in the House of Lords, of course!" "Lord Chesterleigh suspects nothing," said Clive after a pause. "I spoke in the dull voice of a man who has lost all interest in life, who has slipped back into the row of spectators."

"Nothing. He does not know that I was Juanita's, his wife's, lover, before he married her. I was at Quetta with him, but did not make myself known. I did not meet him after his second marriage; and I should not have attempted to stop it, if I had known him; for I, too, believed Juanita to be dead; until I saw her that night at Palace Yard. I stood close beside you, but in the excitement you did not see me—"

There came a knock at the door, and Quilton stepped out. He came back in a moment or two, his face pale, his eyelids almost covering his eyes. "She is dead," he said.

CHAPTER XXVII.

One night, some months later, Clive was coming out of the House; and as he passed through the usual crowd, who made a lane for him, he was gazed at with eager curiosity and interest, and those of the spectators who were familiar with the House and its members nudged those who were not so fortunate, and who asked, "What's Mr. Olive Harvey, the Right Hon. Clive Harvey, President of the Local Government Board?" They watched him as he went down the steps and along the corridor, some of them no doubt enviously, but possibly a few with another kind of feeling; for he could not fail to see that the successful politician did not look, notwithstanding his success, as happy as you still think a man ought to look when he has gained his heart's desire.

They could not fail to see that he was thin and pale and careworn; his well-knit frame was held erect, and the keen grey eyes looked straight before them; but there was no glow of satisfaction in them, no indication that he was reveling in the triumph of gratified ambition. His was not only a look of overwork—for it is possible to be overworked and yet to be happy—but that of a man who has some secret outside his public life, something preying on his mind.

The Liberals were in with a big majority; and it was they who now lounged with an air of complacency in their seats, and talked and laughed with the manner of men who have been victors in the fight, and are enjoying the spoils; and Clive's friends and colleagues thought and expected that he would have been enjoying his share of the good things; for he had been made President of the Local Government Board, and his appointment had been received with general approval. It was said quite openly that, if luck stood by him, he would one day be Premier. But if he displayed no satisfaction or gratification in the honor which had been bestowed upon him, he certainly proved the wisdom of Mr. Graham's choice; and Clive quickly earned the reputation of being "a glutton for work."

Indeed, he seemed to share his time between his Office, the House, and Grosvenor Square, where Lord Chesterleigh and Lady Edith frankly and openly displayed the delight and pride in his appointment which appeared to be lacking in Clive himself. And yet they, too, seemed to be uneasily aware that there was something wrong. Lord Chesterleigh ascribed it to overwork; and Lady Edith tried to accept and to share this diagnosis of Clive's condition; but she was possessed by a vague and indefinite sense of "something wrong," which not even Clive's devoted attention to her could dispel. And, indeed, he was the most devoted of fiancés.

felt certain that a passionate love for her lay behind it; but he was never impatient, never brusque, always courteous and eager to forestall her slightest desire, to gratify every whim. The pride which was her chief characteristic had been lulled, hypnotized by her love for him; but it was only lulled, only sleeping, and it might be awakened any moment, and cast forth flames and ashes like any aroused volcano.

Clive was thinking of her as he passed out of the House that night; in fact, he was always thinking of her. He lived in the endeavor to thrust Mina out of his mental sight, out of his memory, and to implant Lady Edith there. The House had settled down to legislation. Hitherto his marriage had been an impossibility; but now that he had well started his work at the Office, it might be possible for him to marry and get away for a short honeymoon.

In his condition of mind, a decisive step, like that of his marriage to Lady Edith, was most welcome: it would settle things for ever; it would place an insurmountable barrier between him and the past, which meant, of course, between him and Mina. He found Lady Edith in her boudoir. She had just returned from a reception, and Sara was removing her mistress's light opera cloak. The woman salaamed as Clive entered, and moved to the door with downcast eyes, but at the door she paused in an inappreciable moment, and shot a glance of doubt, suspicion, and something like malice at Clive, a glance which he did not notice.

"How tired you look, dearest!" said Lady Edith, as he took a seat beside her, and raised her hand to his lips. "It's quite wicked the way you're working. Father says that you must go away for a rest and change."

"I'm afraid I'm very late; but I had to speak to-night; there was an attack on me by some of the Socialist party; and I had to answer it. Not that it did much good; for they are implacable." He smiled. "They appear to bear me a personal grudge. But never mind that. I have decided to go away—if you will go with me."

His face crimsoned, and she caught her breath. "Yes, dearest," he went on. "I want you to marry me at once. There is no reason why we should wait any longer. We must be married quickly. I'm afraid we shan't be able to afford a long honeymoon; there is so much to do at the Office; and they want me in the House."

Her bosom heaved and her eyes glistened. She drew a little nearer to him, and leant her head on his breast. "I will do whatever you wish, Clive," she said. "Yes; I will marry you whenever you like. But—but are you sure that you want to marry me so soon? You are so busy, so absorbed. Oh, I know it is inevitable. But sometimes I feel as if—as if I only occupied a subordinate position in your life; as if you loved your work first and me afterwards."

He put his arm round her and essayed to caress and smile her doubts to rest; but to-night her vague apprehensions found a voice, forced her into speech. "Clive, sometimes I am conscious of a terrible, horrible feeling that I do not possess the whole of your heart; that that you do not love me as I love you. Ah, but that would be impossible; but I fear sometimes—it creeps over me like a chill, like the touch of death itself—that if, by some evil chance, we were separated, that if all were over between us, you would not care, would not suffer."

"My dear Edith," he began, with a chill like that of which she had spoken creepingly over him; but she broke in again before he could continue: "If there are any grounds for my fear, if for any reason I am right in this dread of mine, I want you to tell me. I could bear it from your lips. It would kill me, but I should not complain. What I could not endure would be to discover it in other ways. That would not kill me, but would drive me mad." She drew herself from him and stood erect, her face white, her eyes flashing; she was at that moment the personification of the pride that is all-devouring, implacable.

Clive took her hands and drew her down beside him again. "My marriage with you is the one aim and desire of my life, Edith," he said gravely. "Put all such thoughts away from you. Believe me when I say that my whole life shall be devoted to making you happy."

"You can make me happy with a word, a look," she said; "and you know it. Oh, Clive, if you knew how I loved you—but you never will know! Yes; I will marry you whenever you like—you know that."

Lord Chesterleigh knocked at the door while they were talking and arranging the marriage; and he entered into the discussion with a joy and a pleasure not obvious for concealment. Lady Edith decided that she could get her trousseau together in three weeks; and an approximate date for the marriage was chosen towards the end of that period; and Clive went home with that sense of relief which follows on a momentous decision.

Notwithstanding his exalted political position and his increased income, he still occupied his old rooms in Burleigh Street, still very often dined off a mutton chop, and still smoked his old briar. Now and again he met Quilton on the stairs, or Quilton came to his rooms; but the conversation of the two men was almost entirely confined to political and similar subjects. Mina and the unhappy woman, her mother, were never mentioned. Quilton's manner to Clive was as imperturbable and indifferent as it had been in the early stages of their acquaintance; or, if there was any change, it was indicated by a certain tone of pity and sympathy; anyway, Quilton had not treated Clive lately with the touch of sardonic irony which he displayed on one or two occasions some months before.

That night Clive paused at his own door, and then went up to Quilton's room. He was conscious of a desire to tell him of the approaching marriage. He knocked at the door, and Quilton opened it cautiously; a very little way; but, seeing that it was Clive, at once opened it widely and beckoned him to enter. Quilton cleared a chair by the simple operation of tilting the books and papers upon it to the floor, and Clive sat down and leant his head on his hands. He was the Right Hon. Clive Harvey, a possible Premier; but at that moment he felt that he would willingly change places with the solitary worker who lived in that cheerless room. Quilton pushed his tobacco pouch across the table, and seating himself on the arm of his writing-chair, filled his own pipe.

"Anything the matter?" he inquired in a casual way.

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TRADITIONS OF THE DEAD

VIGIL FOR DEAD PRIEST KEPT FOUR CENTURIES.

Remains Known to Be in Cave Somewhere With Guards in Attendance.

Peter Oleson, a Danish mining engineer and mill owner, declares that he owes the escape of himself and his wife from Zacapu, in the State of Michoacan, Mexico, to the influence of a Danish monk who lived in that part of Mexico nearly 400 years ago. He tells the following story:

Father Dacio, a Danish monk, went to Mexico in the early part of the sixteenth century. In 1540 he founded the Town of Zinsonsa. He worked among the Indians and so far endeared himself to them that the memory of his life is to-day their most treasured tradition.

When Father Dacio died his body was embalmed and hidden away in a subterranean cave, where it was installed in a sitting posture in an armchair carved out of solid rock. From the day of his death until now, so tradition goes, candles have been kept burning in his underground resting-place, and three Indians have kept constant vigil over the place, the location of which is said to be

Known to the Guards Only, who never leave until taken by death, and the two oldest Indians of the tribe, which treasures the tradition.

For 300 years the secret had been handed down by its custodians to those selected by virtue of their age to receive it and keep it and pass it along at the approach of the reaper.

Several of the Popes, so the story goes, have sought to have the remains of Father Dacio removed to

Rome, but the Indians have refused either to give them up or to reveal their location. There is a tradition, says Oleson, of one priest sent out by Rome to learn the location of the subterranean tomb who won the confidence of the Indians to the extent of inducing them to show him the embalmed body of the monk. He was blindfolded and led to the place. When the cloth was tied over his eyes the priest cut the string of his rosary and, under protection of his cloak, dropped a bead at frequent intervals. The beads were to guide him to the place when a chance offered later on to make the trip without escort.

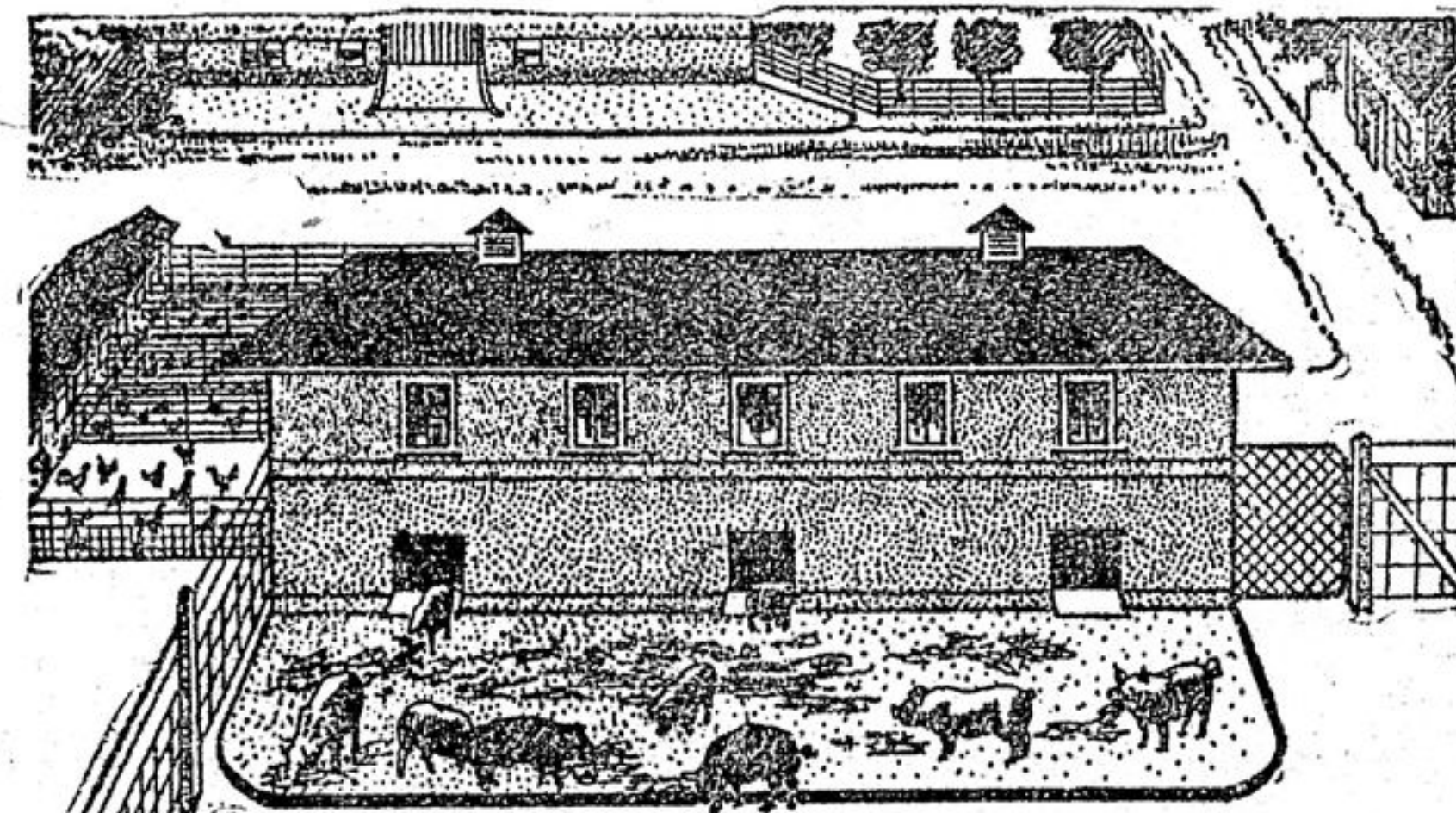
Indians Honest and Faithful.

The Indians kept their word and led him to the candle-lighted cave where he saw the silent figure of the ancient monk, sitting upright in his chair of stone. He was blindfolded again and led back. When the aged Indian who had led him to the tomb removed the bandage from his eyes the other holder of the secret, who had accompanied them, handed to the priest a handful of beads with the remark: "You dropped these."

Oleson says that he had many warm friends among the Indians and has every reason to believe the story is true and that somewhere in the vicinity of Zinsonsa the embalmed body of that missionary of long ago sits in a stone chair, staring with unseeing eyes at the everlasting candlelight which keeps alive in the hearts of the descendants of the people he loved and worked for the memory of

His Own Good Deeds.

"The Indians believe it to be true. I have talked with one of the old chiefs who is said to have the secret of the subterranean tomb. I have heard the story of Father Dacio from his lips. I knew that I and my property were safe solely because I was a Dane. When the Indians first learned that I came from Denmark they were deeply interested, but surprised that I had not known Father Dacio. I tried to explain that 1540 was a long time ago. They said they knew that, but that Father Dacio was such a great man that every body must have known him. They accepted me because I was a Dane, and I know when I go back my property will be just as I left it. If the Indians who promised to care for it are dead, they will have delegated the duty to somebody else. They may be ignorant, as the world's idea of knowledge goes, but they have the capacity for remembering a friend. When Judgment Day comes Father Dacio will be able to testify."



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CHAPTER XXVIII.

The weeks rolled on, and Clive moved through them like a man in a dream. Now, Nature keenly resents the kind of affront he was offering to her, and she retaliated with insomnia.

He could not sleep, and he dared not take narcotics; for, clever as he was nowadays, no chemist has been able to discover a narcotic that will not affect the brain; and of course, Mr. Clive Harvey, the Cabinet Minister, had to keep his clear and in working order.

Meanwhile Lady Edith was busy with her trousseau; and it engaged so much of her time that she saw very little of Clive, excepting at night, when, flushed with his Parliamentary work, he did not look as bad as he really was. And yet, at times, she caught a look on his face which awakened her vague uneasiness; but she lulled it to rest by the reflection that in a little while they would have left London, and Clive would get the rest he so sorely needed.

They were within a week of the wedding, when one night a telegram was brought into the House for Clive. He opened it listlessly; then started and stared at it like a man who has received a sudden shock.

"No bad news, I hope?" said Mr. Graham, who was sitting beside him. Clive mechanically handed him the telegram. "My Brother Adolphus is dead," he said.

He left the House at once and went round to Grosvenor Square. Both Lord Chesterleigh and Edith happened to be in; they were, of course, aghast at the news; and Lady Edith went white; for in an instant she saw that the wedding would have to be postponed.

"My poor Clive!" said Lord Chesterleigh. "It is so sudden, so unexpected—and yet he was always delicate and ailing!" "Yes," said Clive in a low voice; "and that is why I did not attach any great importance to some of his letters. God forgive me! I must go down at once; he is at Rathfrong, and I don't know where Bertie is." He got up and looked round him vaguely. (To be continued.)