

A Dark Shadow;

Or, A Coming Vengeance

CHAPTER XXIX—(Continued).

Lady Edith gripped her by the shoulders as she knelt, and bending forward looked into the dark glowing eyes with an expression which reflected that in them. "Are you sure, are you sure?" she panted. "Can you—can you reach him—reach her—can you reach her?" "Can you make her suffer—through her? What am I saying? What could I do? And if I could—No, no, let him go—let her go—let that girl—a common girl!"

Sara's distorted face twisted into a smile; she laughed, a low, harsh laugh, and nodded two or three times with an expression of vindictive triumph. "Can I not, dearie?" she hissed. "You shall see. And seeing, you shall be satisfied. Yes, satisfied. Be calm, wisely possess your soul in patience. You will not have long to wait. Sara promises you that—Sara, who nursed you on her bosom, Sara who knows how to strike when her beloved one is hurt, and wounded to the heart."

But Lady Edith scarcely heeded or head; or did she?

CHAPTER XXX.

Clive did not go round to Grosvenor Square that night; for he felt that he could not meet Lady Edith, and play his part in what had become a tragedy, with Mina's voice still ringing in his ears, the remembrance of her tears, the touch of her hand, so keen and vivid. He worked at his office up to a very late hour, and, of course, got very little sleep during what remained of the night, or, rather, the early morning.

He was at his office again a little after ten, and looked so fagged and wan that his secretary was moved to remonstrate. "You're rushing on to a breakdown, Mr. Harvey," he said. "I know the signs very well; I saw them in Mr. Mervyn—Mr. Mervyn was a former Home Secretary—he just looked as you look, and he wouldn't listen to any of us when we warned him, but he had to leave in: he had a very bad time."

Clive laughed indifferently. "I'm stronger than I look, my dear fellow," he said. "I thank you all the same. I'll knock off for a bit while we get through this present batch of work."

The secretary had scarcely gone off with his pile of letters when Lord Chesterleigh was announced; and the moment he entered the room Clive saw that something was the matter. "Edith?" he said, anxiously. "Yes; it's Edith," responded Lord Chesterleigh. "She is not well—there is no cause for alarm, dear Clive—she was taken ill last night. I sent for Sir Andrew as soon as I could this morning; and he said that she was suffering from some strain, that it was a kind of nervous colic, and she would be all right in a few days and see no one. He added that she ought to go out of town, up North somewhere; and Edith took it into her head to start for Scotland."

"To Scotland?" echoed Clive. "Do you mean that she is already gone?" "Yes," replied Lord Chesterleigh gravely. "She insisted upon going at once; she would not let me send for you or even let you know. I have just taken her to the station."

Clive rose, and need not and down with a troubled air at the news of work on his table. "It is impossible for me to go to her," he said. "She knows that. Lord Chesterleigh said quickly, 'and she does not wish you to. Don't be hurt, my dear boy. Sir Andrew thinks it would be better for her to be quiet and alone. If she is ill, it is a good thing to have her alone. There is nothing to be alarmed about; or, of course, I should not have let her go, or should have come with her. As it is, I shall run up as soon as I can get away. He was bent on Scotland again, of course. He sighed. 'One hears a great deal about the sweets of office, and we fellows who are in are envied by those who know nothing about it.' He looked at the table before him, and let his fingers play with the letters and letters. 'Here are two slaves as City clerks never have slaves; and all the thanks we shall get at the end of our term will be vituperation and abuse. Even at this moment I know that I must not keep you; and, indeed, I must go back to my own den.'

"I'll write to Edith at once," said Clive in a low voice. Lord Chesterleigh turned, with his hand upon the door. "Yes, do. But don't be alarmed or worried if she should not reply quickly; for she told me, just as the train started, that Sir Andrew said she was not to write letters or worry about anything."

She broke in upon him with a cry half-threatening, half-implored: "Where is she?" she demanded fiercely. "Where is she? What have you done with her? I've searched for her in your room. She's not here—you needn't tell me that. What have you done with her?" Clive's heart sank with a terrible foreboding. "Do you mean Mina, Tibby?" he asked. "Of course," she said. "Mina?" she retorted. "No lies! I want her, I want her at once! You have spirited her away somewhere."

Clive set his teeth hard; fear, dread of her, of what she threatened to overwhelm him. Mina was lost, perhaps in danger—of what?—and it behoved him to retain his calm, to command all his faculties to meet the case. He pulled himself together, and laid his hand on Tibby's shoulder. "You think I have spirited Mina away, Tibby?" he said. "Look in my face. You know that I have not done so, that I do not know where she is. Be calm, Tibby—it's easy to give way; I myself could give way, but we must not do so; for we want all our wits, all our courage."

She had shaken his hand from her shoulder; but she had obeyed his command, and had looked into his eyes; and she knew that he was speaking the truth, her lips quivered, and her eyes filled with tears, but she dashed them away fiercely. "Where is she, then?" she demanded. "I'm frightened out of my life." She was shaking violently. Clive gently forced her into a chair, poured out some wine and insisted, with a gesture, on her drinking it. "Now, tell me everything," he said. "Mind! Everything."

Gulping down a sob and struggling for her words, Tibby said: "She went away this afternoon. She was alone there—father had gone to see after a place in a band, and I was at the factory. When I got home to tea I found she'd gone. She had left a note for me—I saw it at once it was a spoof, though it deceived her. For why? because she'd go to the end of the earth if she thought you were in trouble, and wanted her."

"In trouble? Wanted her? Where?" "The note, Tibby, the note—Ah, don't say that you've not brought it, girl!" "I've brought it right enough," Tibby said chokingly, as she produced it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Clive almost snatched the note from Tibby's hand. It was written on half a sheet of notepaper, and consisted only of a few lines. He read them aloud through his clenched teeth: "Mr. Harvey has met with an accident, and is badly hurt. He has sent for me and I must go—your note—I must go, by I am so afraid in such dread, that I can scarcely write. I will come back as soon as possible, or send for you. Oh, Tibby, if he should be badly hurt, dying!"

Clive folded the note, and put it in his waistcoat pocket near his heart. "I did not send for her," he said, almost to himself. "Who can have done it—with what motive?" "I know you wasn't hurt," said Tibby. "You wouldn't have sent for her and frightened her if you had been; but I thought it was a plant to get her to come to you."

Clive began to pace up and down the room; but he knew that he must remain absolutely calm, and he sat down again. "And you came to me at once, Tibby? Quite right! Don't be frightened. She cannot be in any danger; how can she? It is some foolish trick, some practical joke. But even as he spoke he knew that the explanation was a feeble one. "Is it possible to find out how she got the supposed message from me?"

"A messenger boy brought it," replied Tibby sharply. "Of course, I asked the landlady and Amelia Gertrude—that's the slavey. A messenger boy came with it. He must have brought a letter; but if he did, she took it with her." Clive stifled a groan. "If she had only left it, if she had only said in her note where she was going," he said. "Is there no other clue? Think, think! Every little thing, any little incident, that may be connected however indirectly—have you noticed any strangers about the Rents?"

Tibby made an impatient posture. "There's always strangers going in and out; an I don't take no notice of 'em. Why should I?" She was silent a moment, then she looked up with an acute expression on her shrewd face. "Stop! There was that man that dirty furrin chap that helped to bash you at the 'all that night—I saw him crossing the archway—why, it was the day I met you, and let you go to Mina's."

"Koshki!" said Clive. "Yes," assented Tibby. "An' come to speaking of furriners, there was a kind of Italian woman or an Indian, an old woman wrapped up in shawls like, with gold ear-rings. I've seen her once or twice, and I saw her walking on the other side of the road to Koshki; but they didn't speak to each other."

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BLACK, GREEN or MIXED

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the port of London carried a drugged man, hidden away under the hatches. All large cities have their dark and hidden crimes; and no city has such mysterious slums, such infernos of vice, such dens of infamy, as London.

His heart sank with fear, and yet it throbbled with a sense of fury; but he maintained a show of composure; for Tibby's eyes were on him, full of pathetic anxiety and a nameless terror.

They went down in a cab, and while Tibby ran upstairs in the vain hope of finding Mina there, or some message from her, Clive looked about him almost as hopelessly. He had kept the cab waiting at the archway, and half a dozen urchins were larking round it and chaffing the cabman.

One boy, older than the rest, was especially impudent, and the cabman flicked at him with the whip, and said severely: "Ain't you never seen a decent cab afore, you young savages? I s'pose you're an 'un it's a regular treat for you."

"Garn!" yelled the boy. "Why, we've got a cabman as lives here, an' keeps 'is orse in that stable." He kicked his leg in the direction of a shed. "An' wot's more, he's a regular treat for you."

The blood rushed to Clive's face, and he turned away so that the cabman and the boys should not observe the excitement, the wild excitement of drops which he knew displayed itself in his face. Then he sauntered towards the group, lounged against the archway for a minute or two, and, eventually catching the boy's eye, nodded again, and held up a shilling, and, after a time, the boy sidled towards him.

"Look here," said Clive, drawing him apart, "I'll give you this, and another one on the top of it, if you'll tell me where the young lady told the cabman to drive her."

The boy eyed the shilling hungrily, but his face fell. "Wish I could, gu'nor," he said; "but I dunno. I see her start; but she didn't give no orders; she seemed flustered and upset, an' she anded up a paper to Bill, the cabman."

"No," replied the boy 'cutely; 'he'll come back ere, 'cos he's a day cab, an' he puts 'is orse up early."

An Eternal Question.

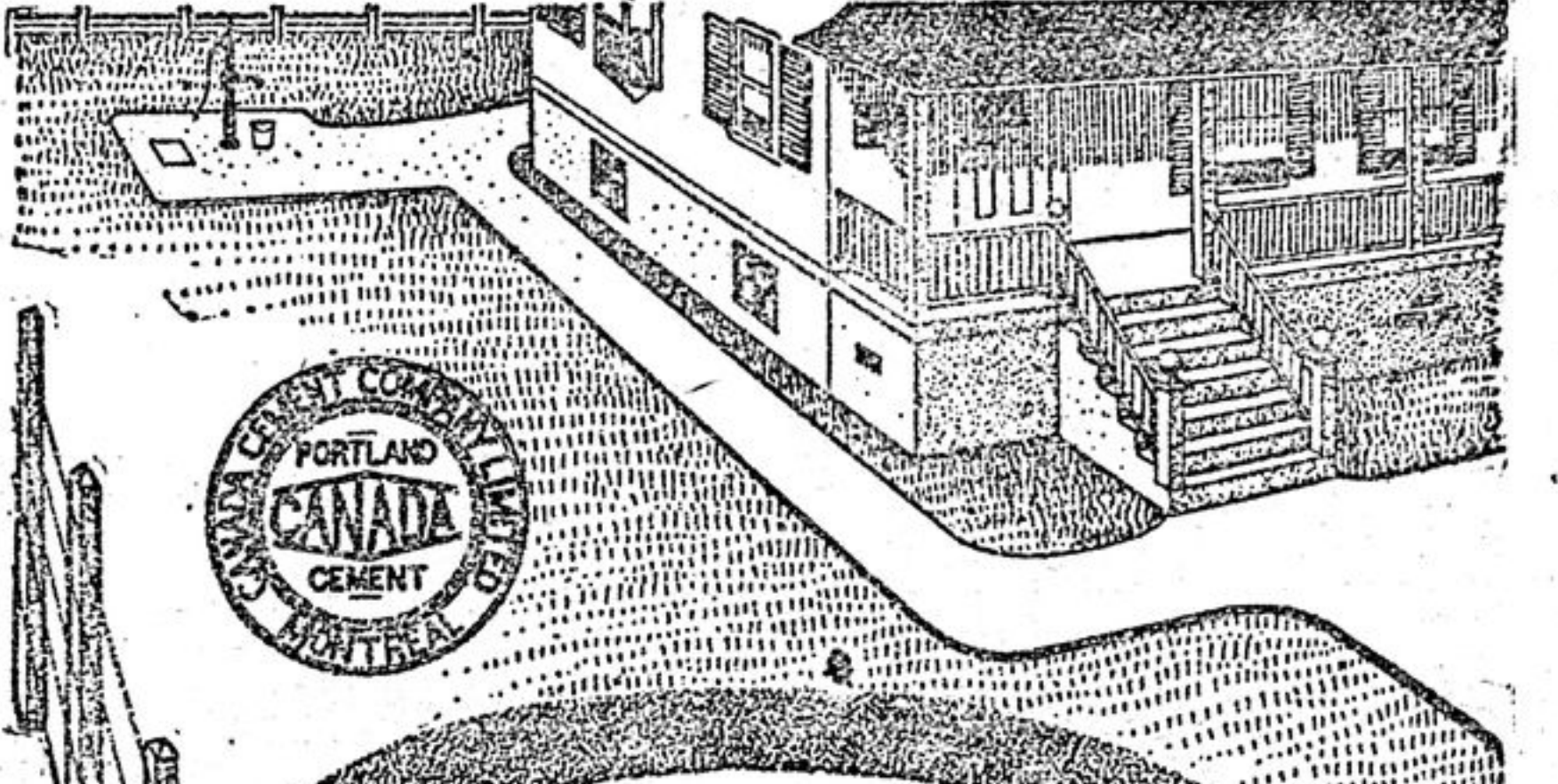
There is much talk at present by eminent scientists as to what form the spirit takes after death. Through all the ages men have sought the clue to this great mystery, and, in all probability, the theories which are being expounded to-day were expounded thousands of years ago by the wise Eastern men. It is certain, however, that there are moments in the course of the average person's life when the spirit of death hovers perilously near. It is just after birth that the angels of life and death fight their fiercest battle, and the next most dangerous age is that of seventy-one. The age of three comes next in importance in this respect. Almost one-fourth of all babies born die during the third year. From three to forty-five is a comparatively safe period, but the latter age is admittedly a trying and dangerous one. Reach forty-five safely, and you may reasonably hope to reach seventy-one, the period second in danger to the first few hours after birth.



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