A Dark Shadow;

Or, A Coming Vengeance

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Steadily Clive looked at him. "Tell me," he said in his feeble voice.

"This is what it was," returned Quilton. "'Tell him,' he said, 'to remember the love, the affection that has spent all between us, and, remembering that love and trust, to forgive me and mine.' He gave me a letter for you from Lady Edith; here it is."

Clive read it and drew a long breath. "Have I been lying here long?" he asked.

"Well, it seems a deuce of a time to me," said Quilton evasively, "and I shall not be at all sorry when you can get up, and begin getting yourself into some further trouble. Now I've said all I'm going to say, and your best way of spending the time will be by going to sleep."

"Tibby?" asked Clive, in his apology for a voice.

A curious change came over Quilton's face; its impassiveness seemed to break up for an instant, and something like a shadow of a smile, as curious as the change in his countenance, a smile, like some teas, much mixed, played about his lips.

"Tibby," he replied reflectively. "Tibby is all right."

"Not hurt, not ill, by that—that—that—" murmured Clive.

"Not at all," Quilton assured him, with just a suspicion of pride in his voice. "Nothing but an earthquake, or a new Fire of London, or the refusal of Elijah to do as she told him, would break Tibby's spirit. Some day, when you are strong enough to bear it, Harvey, I should like to tell you what I think of Tibby. It will take some time in the telling, for Tibby is a study to a fresh man, being a reasonably devoted and moderately long life; and then he'd die with out knowing much about her. She has the wisdom of a female Solomon, the pluck of a Nubian lioness, and the tenderness of a mother with her first baby. I was going to add that she is one of Nature's nonlewomen; but it would be an outrage to apply such a hackneyed expression to a girl like Tibby. When I think of her and talk of her—— But I'm going to do neither now. I can hear the nurse on the stairs, and I'm going to my room to earn a little money, and to try to forget your troublesome existence."

He smoothed the bedclothes, and in doing so laid his hand gently on Clive's shoulder, gave it as gentle a pressure, and, with a nod, went out, Clive's eyes following him with more gratitude and affection.

From that day forward Clive moved rapidly towards convalescence. Quilton, who spent most of his time by his side, would not let him see letters or even talk very much: visitors were, of course, out of the question. One day, when Clive had regained sufficient strength to permit of his looking from the bed to a capacious chair, he said, after a long silence:

"I am going to resign the Presidentship and my seat, Quilton."

Quilton nodded. "Thought that would," he said. "My opinion isn't of any consequence, but I think you're right. You've got too much originality for a President of the Local Government Board, and indulge in adventures which are quite unsuited to so grave and important an office. Yes; I should seek a change of occupation. How would it do if you fitted up a small yacht, a rakish craft, I believe, is the accepted way of describing it, and started off to unknown seas in search of hidden treasure? Or you might go into training for the prize ring; you'd make a splendid pugilist. There may be an opening in the pirate business. I can quite easily picture you disciplining a bloodthirsty and unruly crew with his revolver. Seriously, not so right, Harvey. Anyhow, give Parliament and politics a rest, and let the people, with a capital P, please—find another friend to abuse and villify."

Clive shook his head. "The people are all right, Quilton," he said; "it is I. How soon do you think I shall be able to go out? I want to go to her; I am starving for a sight of her. Day and night I picture her as she lay waiting for death."

Quilton laid his hand firmly on Clive's arm.

"That kind of talk is not allowed. That was madness, lies. You shall go to her the instant I can drag you down to a cab. Until then, possess that harassed soul of yours in patience. I admit that she is worth worrying about, but it is my duty to point out to you that the more you worry, the longer you put off the happy hour when two hearts, etc."

"Did you give her my last message?" asked Clive with suppressed eagerness.

"I did," replied Quilton; "and she said—nothing. I never knew any woman's silence so eloquent as Mina's. By the way, her voice has come back."

"Oh, thank God," breathed Clive.

"Yes. It was the careful nursing after her illness; perhaps the relief, the joy of knowing that a certain Mr. Clive Harvey was progressing favorably. You can never account for any of these things, these sudden recoveries, especially in women. Who's that coming up the stairs? Why, it's that——!"

He went to the door and opened it. Tibby was standing on the threshold, Quilton and Clive (even in his joy seeing her) were struck dumb by the change in her appearance. It was Tibby right enough; but a new, transformed Tibby. She was dressed, not in the nondescript garments, but in a tailor-made coat and skirt of blue serge; and in place of the extraordinary bonnet she wore a neat and exceedingly becoming hat properly disposed on an equally neat and becomingly arranged head of hair. She looked exceedingly, amazingly pretty; and, most marvellous change of all, she had blossomed suddenly from her old dull self into a young woman of trim though fairy-like proportions.

Quilton's eyes, which for the moment, had become as sugary as quickly hidden under their thick fringe and with his wonted imperturbability, he said, with a bow:

"Come in, Miss Tibby. The interesting invalid is now on view. Admission sixpence; free list entirely suspended."

As Tibby entered, he went out, and softly closed the door behind him.

Clive took her hand, and held it; he could scarcely speak, and when he did so, he was only able at first to murmur:

"Tibby!"

She scanned him with her keen eyes, and shook her head sharply.

"You've been very ill, I can see," she said.

He broke in upon her with:

"Mina! You've come from her, you've come to tell me about her? It's like you, Tibby. But you know all that, you know what I feel, Tibby dear!"

"Mina's all right." As she spoke Clive noticed a change in her tone, which corresponded with that of her dress and appearance; it was more gentle, less aggressive, and, in some indescribable way, a kind of faint echo of Mina's; as if she had cast off an affectation of roughness and commonness; but there was still enough of the old manner in her speech and voice to prevent the change from jarring.

"Mina's all right," she repeated. "She's stronger than she looks, as I allus told you. Yes; I've come to tell you about her; and I've come for something else." She tried to look at him defiantly, but her voice quavered. "I've come to beg your pardon, Mr. Harvey."

Clive laughed. "That sounds odd from you, Tibby!" he said affectionately. "What on earth have you got to beg my pardon for?—Tell me about Mina."

"You wait a bit," said Tibby, with a sharp return of her old form. "Business first and pleasure after. Besides, I want to get it off my chest; it's worritin' me. I want to say that I mistook you; and that I'm sorry that I—I came atween you and Mina. Yes; I mistook you. I thought myself precious clever, but I was only making a fool of myself and spoilin' 'er happiness; and I expect that's what most people do when they set about interfering in other people's business."

"That'll do, Tibby," said Clive, his own voice unsteady. "You acted for the best; and in accordance with that true, that faithful spirit on yours I honored you for it at the time. I honor you for it still. But, Mina?"

"Mina's goin' to make a fool of herself," said Tibby, shutting her lips tightly and nodding at the fireplace. "Her voice is coming back, and she's written to that old Robinson—the Shuvellier, as he calls himself—tellin' him that she is ready to go on with her engagement; an' of course he jumped at 'er, an' she's goin' to sing next week. He wants her to go abroad to Parlaios the Continong, I forget which." Clive clasped the arms of his chair and rose. "You needn't jump up. Keep still. She ain't gone yet; there's plenty o' time. But I thought I ought to come and tell you; it's only the fair thing, seein' how I've behaved. And I owe you one for sayin' her life. If I'd ever had any doubts as to your loving her true and honest, that night settled 'em. Yes; I'm on your side, Mr. Harvey. And you'll want some help. I can tell you. Of course you can see what Mina's feelin'; she's got an idea into her head that she ought to have died that night—that she ain't ought to take advantage, as she calls it, of what passed atween you."

Clive groaned, and wiped the sweat from his face. "I know, I know, Tibby!" he said, with impotent impatience. "And I'm tied here in this beastly chair, and I can't go to her!"

"And you'll be stuck there till it's too late, if you don't keep quiet," Tibby adjured him firmly. "What you've got to do is to get well enough to come to her soon even if it's on a stretcher. I tell you strite, I can't do anything with her, no more can father; and we've both of us tried; for fair play is fair play, and we both of us know that, in a manner o' speaking, you've got a right to her."

"God bless you, Tibby!" said Clive. "Yes; the right that love alone can give."

"Jus' so," said Tibby. "That's a proper way to put it. You always had a nice way of speakin', Mr. Harvey; I admitted that, even when I was most a'ri' you. Howsomever, if you want Mina, you'd better get well in double quick time."

The door opened, and Quilton came in; he looked from one to the other, and for the first time in Clive's experience, actually appeared embarrassed.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"It's a fine day, Miss Tibby," remarked Quilton almost feebly.

"Who said it wasn't?" retorted Tibby. "You'll be telling us next that Queen Anne is dead."

Quilton seemed quite abashed by this onslaught, and his eyes wandered over her figure as if he were trying to think of something else to say.

"A great many people in the Park now," he remarked.

"There's a good many more outside it," said Tibby. "You seem to be full o' useless information this morning, Mr. Quilton; been listenin' to other people talkin', I suppose. No wonder I find Mr. Harvey humped to death. I suppose he's had a lot of your society?"

Quilton looked helplessly, appealingly to Clive. "This is the way she always treats me," he said.

Tibby eyed him with a compassionate gaze with which a mother might survey her imbecile child.

"No doubt you mean well," she said leniently; "but you can't express yourself, as the man said to the boiled egg. Well, I'm off. Keep up your spirits Mr. Harvey; and don't let him depress you more'n you can help."

Notwithstanding his anxiety, Clive could not help bursting into a laugh.

"Oh, go to the deuce," said Quilton; and he went out again, slamming the door after him.

No convalescence is so rapid as that of the man whose recovery is to him as important as life and death. Two days later, Clive crawled down on Quilton's arm to a cab, and was driven to Benson's Rents. Quilton helped him up the stairs, but, after knocking at the door for him, seated himself on the top step. Mina's voice said "Come in," and, with his heart thumping at his side, Clive entered.

She was seated at the piano, the notes of which he had heard as he laboriously climbed the stairs, and she rose and looked at him, her face crimson, then white, her hands pressed to her bosom; and her blush, her attitude, recalled old times to Clive, and gave him courage.

"Mina!" he said, in his still feeble voice. "Ah, come to me, Mina!"

She stood for a moment battling with herself, struggling with the magnetic influence of his voice, fighting against the desire to obey. Where were all her resolutions, her carefully laid plans to avoid, to separate herself from him?

"Come to me!" he said again. And all the resolutions and plans melted into thin air at sight of his pale and wasted face, his hollow eyes. She remembered at that moment only the bound figure lying beside her, the weak voice, scarcely sounding above the lapping of the water, murmuring hoarsely, "I love you, Mina." Against her will she was drawn towards him; she moved to him slowly; his arms were round her, her head was on his breast. But as his kisses rained on her hair, she raised her head, and, with her eyes drowned in tears, she murmured in broken accents:

"Oh, Clive, Clive, I cannot help it! I love you! I can't let you go. I can't, I can't!"

. . . . . .

Quilton lit a cigarette, and sat on the stairs with admirable patience. Presently a step sounded from below, and a voice said in shrill tones:

"You just come off them stairs, young 'Arry Marks. I s'pose your mother thinks she owns the whole of the 'ouse instead of the top attic, and as the right to let her kids play soap-bubbles all over the place, and make a sloppy mess that chucks everybody down? There! there ain't no occasion to cry. Got no more soap, 'aven't yer? Well, 'ere's a penny to buy some. But, you mark my words, you'll be the death of some one some day, and there'll be a hinquest; and your mother 'll be took up for murder in the fust degree. There, wipe your noise, for goodness sake, an' go an' spend that penny sharp!"

The steps ascended, and Tibby stopped short, and surveyed Quilton with a critical and indignant air.

"Can't you find anything better to do than sit there poisoning the hatmosphere with cheap cigarettes, and settin' a bad example to the other brats?" she demanded.

Quilton disregarded this inquiry, and jerked his head over his shoulder.

"He's in there—with Mina," he said. "Two's company, four's none. Sit down, Tibby."

Her face brightened, her eyes glowed; she hesitated a moment, then she sat down beside him, her sharp little chin resting on her hand. There was silence for a minute or two; then Quilton said, in a low voice and with a face as inexpressive as a ship's figurehead:

"How old are you, Tibby?"

"You mind your own business," she replied. "How old are you, if it comes to that?"

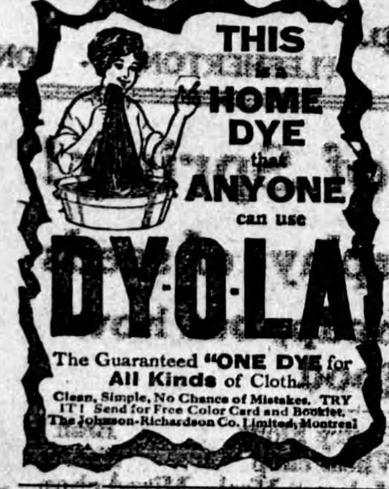
"Twenty-two," replied Quilton promptly. "Will you marry me, Tibby?"

Tibby surveyed him with infinite scorn.

"I don't marry infants," she said.

"I'm old enough to be your father," he said, shaking his head, as if he were driven by an all-compelling fate. It was useless to fight against it. "I'm old enough to know better than to make a fool of myself; but still I'm doing it. I'll even go so far as to admit, if you insist upon it, that I love you. It sounds curious; but the more curious thing is that it's absolutely true. Do not strike me, Tibby, for I am old and an orphan, I am also an imbecile, and an idiot, for I am possessed by the firm conviction that if you say you will not marry me, I shall be a remarkably wretched and unhappy individual. Don't ask me to account for this strange and ludicrous condition of mind; but believe me that it is a kind of insanity, which in my case at any rate, will prove quite incurable. Therefore, Tibby, I ask you again, will you marry me?"

(To be continued.)



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BLACK, GREEN or MIXED

TRAINS HELD UP.

Strange Ways in Which Railway Traffic Has Been Stopped.

The "human element" has been a great deal talked about in connection with the recent railway disasters; but the "insect element" is an equally important factor to be reckoned with on railway lines abroad.

In South Africa, for example, the locusts are the particular pests, as they swoop down on to the line in myriads, and, as the wheels of the engine crush them, the rails become so excessively slippery that it is frequently impossible to negotiate an incline without the liberal use of sand.

Another kind of insect danger was illustrated in Kentucky two years ago, when, during the height of the holiday season, a swarm of angry wasps invaded the signalman's cabin just as he was about to change the points to enable an express excursion train to pass.

He was stung to the point of collapse over face, arms, and neck; but the screech of the oncoming express brought him to his senses in the nick of time, and, pluckily risking for the levers, he was able to save that express from crashing into a freight train on the same line.

It was another holiday express train which was a short time ago brought to a standstill at Minden, Germany, the line not being signalled clear. The signalman found it impossible to get a certain lever to work, and the train had to wait. An examination subsequently showed that a large rat had got entangled in the mechanism, and might have occasioned a disaster.

Insects have even interfered with the railway system of England, for, on one occasion, the fine electric turret clock at Wolferton Station, on the Great Eastern Railway, was stopped through swarms of flies getting between the dial and the glass covering, thus preventing the hands from working.

Again, Burgess Hill railway station, Sussex, was, not very long ago, dominated for many hours by a swarm of angry bees, whose hive had been inadvertently smashed on the platform, and who stung the porters badly and caused a mild panic among the passengers.

NEW SORT OF DIVINING ROD.

The Phonendoscope Reveals the Presence of Water.

A German invention, the "phonendoscope," for locating underground streams of water, is described in Himmel und Erde. The apparatus, which is not unlike the sounding board of a gramophone, is intended, like the ordinary stethoscope, to collect and intensify sound.

A certain scientific man was led to experiment with this new device after an experience in well-digging where the underground source had sufficient volume to be faintly audible to the unassisted ear.

His experiments were quite successful. When he put the instrument on the ground, about ten yards from a spring, he could hear a faint murmur of running water, and this sound grew stronger or weaker as he moved the phonendoscope in various directions. The conclusion was unavoidable that the sound was loudest when the contrivance was directly above the underground current of the spring. He made tests on an isolated mountain peak, where it was extremely improbable that water would be found. As he expected, no sound was heard.

Lastly, the inventor tried to find with his instrument a subterranean current in the neighborhood of a new house whose owners wished to avoid the delay of sinking trial well shafts. The phonendoscope quickly revealed the presence of water, and the most favorable spot for digging. The well shaft encountered a layer of moist earth fifteen feet below the surface, and at a depth of thirty-two feet, the

...tunnel was found in a bed of gravel.

Another use for the contrivance in mines, where it is frequently important to know the presence and trend of watercourses before cutting across them. Possibly, too, it may be found useful in detecting the dull rumblings that imprisoned gases cause in the vicinity of volcanoes, and in giving warning of impending eruptions.

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TWO IMAGE