

MILLY, the MELLER DRAMMER and FATE

By Ethel Watts Mumford.

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MILLY DONOVAN, known to the public as Milly the Meller Drammer, had true dramatic instincts. These it was the constant endeavor of Mrs. Donovan to suppress. For Mrs. Donovan had been reared among the traditions of the Fourteenth Street melodrama.

"Milly," she ordered sternly, "you say it the way I say it. I am not a fool. Remember the villain is kidnapping you. You are scared stiff—running—calling for help. Now, how would you call for help?"

Milly threw back her head and her golden curls bobbed. "Oh, Gosh!" she shrieked with a realism that brought Emmeline, her stage sister, from her room in the rear of the flat.

Mrs. Donovan turned red with annoyance. "None of your tricks, or I'll lay you with a stick."

Milly hung her head sullenly. "I am per-soo-ed!" she said in savage mimicry of her aunt's tone.

"There now, you can do it when you want to. I declare, you are the worst child! You're just like your mother was, and Heaven knows, nobody could stand for her. Now your next cue—'Gosh' on you!"

"Through I am but a child, yet I defy you!" shrieked Milly, hotly, flinging out a message arm in a heroic gesture. Providence had provided her with a ready-made "answer back" and she used it with her whole soul.

"Good," said her tormentor. "Next cue—'Waters of the bay close over you.'" Milly was silent. "You may rob me of my life—my soul; you cannot kill! Remorse shall bound you and I will be revenged!" read Mrs. Donovan. "Give plenty of r-r-r in revenge; no r-r-r—vangel! Now."

Milly was lost in thought. "I hate meller-drammer," she said at length. "I don't see why Mr. Carter wrote it that way. If that villain said he'd kidnap me in that bay, I'd let out like this—'Gosh' you do that, you nasty old, I'll come back and ha't yer, see if I don't!"

Milly continued to stare into the glass as if hypnotized, till, with a start of terror, she became aware of the reflection of some one behind her.

Some day she would tell her that she shouldn't speak like that about "Mama," that vague but dear dream of laughing eyes and glittering clothes that had been given the child to love for such a little while. Years of petty tyranny and cruel "discipline" had bred a sort of desperation in Milly, a desperation that was fast growing to an active bitterness.

"I wonder," she said aloud as she surveyed her reflection. "If I'm big enough to run away and go into yavvelling, I could do my millionaire baby horripole and slingshot the Prodigal Father ballad."

She shook her head sadly. The Gerry Society, that association of officious friends whom she had been taught to fear, would get her. No, there must be more years of Aunt Esther, unless, perhaps, the manager or the leading man should think she had a future; and have her educated, as had happened to Rosy Benson; but Rosy had quite a grown up look and couldn't have gone on playing little boys very much longer anyway.

Her aunt stood over her. With a grunt she turned and lit the gas jet, for the winter day had already drawn to a close. "You'll stay here and learn that," she said brutally. "Emmerline and I are going to eat. If you're not letter perfect when I get back you know what you'll get. And let me catch you prinking in front of the looking glass when you should be workin'!"

She flung out, slamming the door behind her. Milly heard her harsh voice calling "Emmerline," and the shutting and locking of the flat. She was alone. She sat up, rubbing her smarting shoulders. There was something warm and sticky. She looked at her fingers—they were red with blood. She shuddered. This was worse than ever before. Aunt Esther had punished her often and often—but this—

She ceased to moan. She remembered that when she played the martyr child in "The Arena's Triumph" she uttered beautiful sentiments, as a negro slave (played by one of the scene shifters, a cheerful soul), lashed her with a cat-o-nine-tails. The infant martyr was carried from the scene, faint and bleeding, but forgiving her enemies in a melodious voice. Milly did not believe the child martyr's tongue; they must have originated and cried, and hated impotently as she did now. Always in the plays somebody rescued her in time, or, with superhuman intelligence she had contrived her own escape—but nobody ever came in real life. She sat up suddenly. "Escape!" She'd been carried across the living bridge and swung from the steeple by a rope, and jumped across the chasm on the trained pony; and here was only the fire escape. It is prosaic, but practical.

Milly started to her feet. With nervous haste she ran to the wardrobe, took down her frilled and bowed-bust hat, and her velvet coat. Aunt Esther dressed her spectacularly for advertising purposes. And now, she must have money. Aunt Esther collected the salaries—her's and Emmeline's; but Milly knew where she hid the red Japanese fur she used as the family bank. A quail of conscience smote her. "I don't care," she said aloud. "I've made it, and I never get even a stick of candy." Four dollars and some small change rewarded her search and the little gold coins that had been her mother's. This she fastened about her

neck with a glow of comfort—such things were treasures in every play. Snatching up her stuff, she surveyed the dingy room.

"Farewell—may I never see you more! Now, heaven protect me!" Trembling with genuine emotion, she fled down the corridor to the kitchen window and, lifting the sash, looked out upon the tangle of fire escapes, the gleam of lights across the way and the dingy blackness of the courtyard below her. Milly's practice in escapes stood her in good stead—and it was all real. No papier maché engine or practical mountain trail. Cold iron met her head and a

and stared at her, but she was used to that. Her frail, childish beauty, contrasted with the theatrical headgear and flashy coat, always attracted attention. Occasionally some one flung a word at her—"Pipe the kid" or, "Where to, sis?" She smiled shyly and moved on.

A whiff of warm air from the quickly opened door of a stand-up restaurant reminded her that she was hungry. All at once she felt very lonely and rather frightened. She became aware of hard, coarse faces about her and a certain subtle element of threat in the air. Reminiscences of many melodramas; each stocked with overlying with sensational scenes, came to her mind. Her imagination conceived a new and awful menace at every turn, and to cap the climax her eye rested upon the illuminated street sign of the lamp, "Ball street, Bowery." The Bowery! "In how many thrillers had this locality figured, and always as a background to crime, murder, torture in dens, awful plots, heartless kidnappings, brutal beatings, relieved only by the usual dance hall scene and a "spiel." That was probably going on in the places from which the phonograph strains issued. She must escape, she must take a car and go back again. But her frightened mind that meant an

inevitable encounter with Aunt Esther. A drunken sailor lurched against her and muttered a curse as he staggered away. Milly bolted down the side street. A strange smell greeted her nostrils—the scent of Chinatown, an aroma made of incense, sandal, curious foods and cedar packing boxes. Milly stopped short. Decorated balconies, with twisted dragons and bulging lanterns, hung above her. Store windows showed leaped silks and embroideries, ivory carvings and heavy black carved furniture. About her silent footed, dark clad Chinese slunk about their business. Milly stopped short, her hand to her heart. Memories of "Nora, Queen of the Hatchet Men," flashed before her. This was the worst of all. Even in the theatre she had been mortally afraid of the Chinese "supers" employed to give realism to the play—and here she was surrounded by them. Back of her she heard the stumbling steps of the drunken sailor. In every door and every shop were silent-eyed, impassive Chinese. With a gasp she hurried on and passed, uncertain, near a street lamp. Its light gleamed upon the golden cross at her throat with a sudden sparkle. From a dark alley entrance a man emerged and stood looking at her. As she started on he came close. He was a heavily set, ill favored negro. Milly looked up, hesitated again, and half turned to retrace her steps. The man reached forth a giant paw and whirled her about.

"Ugh and me, villain!" In her blind terror the familiar words seemed to speak themselves. A hand closed over her mouth, and, struggling vainly, she felt herself dragged back. Then the violent hand released her and she sank to the pavement. Above her stood the negro—yes, the negro, and the villain was running to the mouth of the alley. A lady in furs bent down and raised her to her feet. Milly trembled and panted hysterically.

The negro swore—"Not a policeman in sight! Confound it—but I'll report this." Milly caught her breath. "My preserver" she gasped.

"What!" exclaimed the hero. "What's that?" "I am per-soo-ed! You will protect me," sobbed Milly, the mechanism of habit sending the words to her convulsed lips.

"What in the world!" cried the lady. Milly burst into frantic tears of relief. The lady in furs gathered her in her arms. "Come, dearie, it's all right now. Don't be frightened. We'll take you home."

"Oh, no-o-o!" shrieked Milly. "Gettried," said the hero, "let's go into the restaurant up here. It's a very decent place—sort of show kitchen for tourists and standing order—between hours,

now, we can be quiet there. Here, let me carry her, poor little kid." A moment later the odd group entered a shining, tiled entrance and ascended a broad staircase to a large room (panelled, decorated and gilded in Chinese fashion). The place was empty. The hero set Milly down and the lady in furs untied her voluminous hair strings and twisted back the yellow hair from the child's flushed and swollen face.

"Why—why, it's Millicent!" Milly lifted tearful eyes and was struck dumb with astonishment.

"Don't you remember me?" said the lady in furs. Of course you do. It's Miss Ostoyge. Why, I've been your mother and your grown up sister dozens of times," she laughed.

Milly put out her hands. "Oh, Miss Ostoyge, Miss Ostoyge! I'm so glad! Oh, I've had an awful time!"—a sob-choked cry.

The lovely lady patted her gently. "There, there. Perry, I wish you'd order some chop suey. (She must eat something and quiet down. Why, this is the very child I've begged you to take on—my little fellow-player in the melodrama days. It's perfectly extraordinary, the whole thing! And it's fate, I tell you—fate!"

The hero followed Miss Ostoyge's suggestion and soon the soothing influence of warm food brought Milly to herself again.

"She's a very pretty child," said the hero in a low voice, "but I hardly think—"

"Wait," said the lady. "By what a state your hair is in, dearie! What is it?" She lifted the heavy, matted curls and turned pale. "Blood!" she cried. "Did that brute hurt you? (Perry look at that!"

The man's face darkened and she struck the inland table with his clenched fist. "The bound!" he exclaimed. "I'll follow this thing up if I have to neglect you and the play for it!"

Milly twitched uneasily. "It was Aunt Esther, with the buckle on a trunk strap. Oh, please—she dropped the spoon, she had been industriously playing—'Please, please, don't—don't take me home!' " "Did your aunt—did Mrs. Donovan do that?" demanded the lady, drawing herself up like an outraged queen.

"What in the world were you doing?" asked the hero, amazed, but practical.

"I wouldn't learn the new part the way she wanted me to," wailed Milly. "Oh, Miss Ostoyge, you know how silly they make you do it; I know you think it's silly. I heard you when you told Mr. Carter you wouldn't speak all that when you was being fired off a roof; you'd just give him a dollar and a half shrick, you said."

"Can she have the part?" asked the leading lady eagerly.

"She surely can," said the author. Miss Ostoyge clasped her hands. "Milly, my dear, you are graduated to Broadway. And you'll not go back to Mrs. Donovan; you'll come with me, and if your aunt has anything to say she'll say it to the 'S. P. C. C.'"

Milly was overwhelmed. "Oh, Miss Ostoyge," she panted, "and there'll be never no more meller-drammer, never no more!"

"Let's hope so, at least," laughed the lady.

Millicent Travellan, the future Broadway favorite, sank into an unpicturesque heap. Then she rallied. "With my life I will repay you!" she sobbed. In spite of herself the beautiful lady laughed, and Milly, enraptured beyond speech, kissed the fluffy sleeves of the empressary.

Milly gazed at the recollection of her recent danger.

Miss Ostoyge laid a compelling hand upon her companion's arm, this attention must not waver.

"Now, in this plot there's a little girl, and her mother is forced to go away for a while and leave her with an aunt who hates the little girl's mamma. The aunt keeps saying nasty things until at last the little girl turns on her step-mother—it isn't true, and you, aunt's aunt, I know why mamma will come for me, and when she does I'm going with her, and I don't care where; and I love her and I hate you—there! Now, Milly, think that speech over, and say it—the way you'd like to say it; but don't say 'Father away.'"

Milly's sensitive face paled with excitement. She remembered Aunt Esther's threats and the quality of her wrongs. Turning toward the author, she shot forth the lines with an indignant vehemence that fairly startled him.

"There was a moment's pause. "What do you think now?" asked the lady in a low voice.

He looked at her and nodded. "She's everything you have said. The child's a genius."

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A LADY IN FURS BENT DOWN AND RAISED HER TO HER FEET

Gems That Have Dazzled the World

Romance in the Histories of Many Priceless Diamonds Which Have Been Famous for Centuries.

NEW YORK Jewellers are preparing for a more than ordinarily brisk trade in diamonds during the coming season. Last year, the sales weren't so heavy, because the "times" weren't so good, and the customers who ordinarily bought expensive gems held off and satisfied themselves with cheaper ones. This year, everybody says, it will be different. The country generally will buy larger stones. What size? Oh, an average of a carat.

A carat seems pretty large when it is the first diamond to come into one's possession, and it looks as big as the headlight of a locomotive to the wearer during the early days of its enjoyment. And it's only a carat. What would you say to a diamond weighing not less than 280 carats? What sort of gem would you give if you heard that some diamonds—of one diamond, at least—is valued at two million dollars?

Well, these are facts. There are 280 carat diamonds, and \$2,000,000 diamonds, but not a great many of them. You could count them almost on the fingers of one hand, but you couldn't wear them there.

The Kohinoor in the rough weighed 800 carats, the record weight of any diamond in the world. The cutter who originally handled the stone appears not to have been the most expert, and it was reduced to 279 carats. For many years it was changing hands among the various princes of India, who were not always particular how they came to acquire it. Its history for the last hundred years is pretty well ascertainable. In its early part of the nineteenth century it was in the possession of the Khan of Cabul, but a treacherous slave was instrumental in transferring it to Buzurg Singh, and then to that worthy's followers on the Lahore throne.