

'LENA RIVERS.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

About eight Mr. Graham arose, and after a more than usually careful toilet, he sat down to collect his scattered thoughts...

"I will wait until his return, and let him tell her," thought he, but when a half hour or more went by and Durward did not come, he concluded to go down and ask to see her by himself.

In order to do this, it was necessary for him to pass Lena's room, the door of which was ajar. She was awake, and hearing his step, thought it was Mrs. Aldergass, and called to her.

"Do you ask what I mean? I have only to refer you to what this morning took place between you and the vicar man once called father, and whom I believed to be the soul of truth and honor."

"And now, my once loved, but erring Lena, farewell. I am going away—whither I know not, care not, so that I never bear your name coupled with disgrace."

"Then, at the deep bitterness of his spirit, he cursed his father, whom he believed to be far more guilty than she."

"He was a good pedestrian, and preferred solitude in his present state of feeling, he determined to go on to Manhattan, a distance of little more than a dozen miles."

"At this juncture Mrs. Aldergass, who had been at one of her brother's camps in appearing greatly surprised at the sight of the stranger, whom Lena quietly introduced as her father, while Mr. Graham colored painfully as Mrs. Aldergass curtsying very low, hoped Mr. Rivers was well."

"Let it go," whispered Lena as she saw her father about to speak, and then observing how anxiously his daughter's eyes sought the doorway, whenever a footstep was heard, he asked Mrs. Aldergass for Mr. Belmont, saying he would like to see him, if he had returned.

manner was so strange as to induce a suspicion of insanity on the part of those who saw him.

Taking the package, Mr. Graham repaired to Lena's room, giving her her letter, and then reading his, which was full of bitterness, denouncing him as a villain, and cautioning him, as he valued his life, never again to cross the track of his outraged step-son.

"You have robbed me!" he wrote, "of all I hold most dear, and while I do not censure her the less, I blame you the more, for you are older in experience, older in years, and ten-fold older in sin, and I know you have not even every art your four nature could suggest, ere you won my lost Lena from the path of rectitude."

"In the utmost astonishment Mr. Graham looked up at Lena, who had fainted. It was long ere she returned to consciousness, and then her fainting fit was followed by another more severe, if possible, than the first, while in speechless agony Mr. Graham hung over her."

"I killed the mother, and now I am killing the child," thought he, and taking from the pillow the crumpled note she passed it toward her father, bidding him read it. It was as follows:

"My lost Lena!—By this title it seems appropriate for me to call you, for you are more surely lost to me than you would be were you this summer sun shining upon your grave. And, Lena, never name when I say I would rather, far rather, see you dead than the guilty thing you are, for then your memory would be to me a joy, and a blessing, leading me on to a better world, where, coming here to greet you as my spirit bride, but how, alas! how dark the cloud which shrouds you from my sight!"

"Do you ask what I mean? I have only to refer you to what this morning took place between you and the vicar man once called father, and whom I believed to be the soul of truth and honor. With a heart full of tenderness toward you, I was hastening to your side, when a scene met my view which filled the beatings of my pulse and curdled the very blood in my veins. I saw you throw your arms around his neck—the husband of my mother, and I saw you lay your head upon his bosom. I heard him as he called you dearest, and said you would never be parted again."

"You know you all that has passed heretofore, and can you wonder that my worst fears are now confirmed? God knows how I struggled against those doubts, which were nearly removed, when by the evidence of your own eye sight, uncertainty was made sure."

"And now, my once loved, but erring Lena, farewell. I am going away—whither I know not, care not, so that I never bear your name coupled with disgrace. Another reason why I go, is that the hot blood of the south burns too fiercely in me, and I cannot see you without a pang, and I must see you no more."

"Gradually as Mr. Graham read, he felt a glow of indignation at Durward's baseness. "Rash boy! he might at last have spoken with me," said he, as he finished the letter, but Lena would hear no word of censure against him. She did not blame him. She saw all, understood it all, and as she recalled the contents of his letter, her own heart sadly echoed, "Lost forever!"

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