

ARLIND'S WARD;  
OR THE DETECTIVE'S DAUGHTER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"A Woman's Crime," "The Missing Diamond,"  
Etc., Etc.

Claire found herself thinking that Doctor Vaughan was a noble-looking man not at all unattractive as was Edward Percy; not possessing the magnetic fascination that Madeline had described as belonging to Lucian Davlin. But he had a fine face, nay, a grand face, full of strength and sweetness; not devoid of beauty, but having in it something infinitely truer, truer, and more godlike than mere physical beauty can impart to any face.

She thought of Madeline, of her loneliness, her sorrow, and her need of such a strong, gentle nature to lean upon, to look up to, and to obey. "She would obey him," quoth Claire to herself. Next she fell to watching Madeline through half-closed eyelashes. She saw how the girl listened to his every word; now, when his eyes were not upon her, she seemed to devour him with a hungry, longing, sorrowful gaze.

"As if she were taking leave of him forever," thought Claire. And that is what Madeline was doing. When she came to the city, it was with the determination to win the love of this man, if it could be won; to let nothing stand between herself and the fulfillment of that purpose. But all this Claire bore the shock of her lover's rejection how proudly, how nobly, she commanded herself, Madeline had abandoned her purpose.

"I am not worthy of him, and she is," she told herself. When she declared that Claire should be happy, she had a secret aim; she would help him to win the girl he loved, and then she would be content to die; aye, more than content.

To-night, therefore, she was saying in her heart a farewell to this man, who was so dear to her. She had almost hoped that she should not meet him again for the present, and yet she was so glad to have seen him once more. She was glad of his presence, yet fearful lest her good resolution might be shaken. She would not let him think her ungrateful, anything—what could it matter now?

"Shall you not come back to the city soon, Miss Percy? Surely your old home can be the most charming place in your eyes," questioned Claire, after a time. "I don't intend returning to the city—at least not for some time, Doctor Vaughan."

Claire looked perplexed. To break the silence that ensued, Claire crossed the piano and began playing soft, dreamy fragments of melody. Presently she turned to her sister, and when Madeline again turned her face toward him, she was listening to Olive and looking at Claire. It was the same look, yearning, tender, and full of love, that she had seen in the eyes of Claire, as she played softly.

As Olive and Clarence talked, Claire saw the eyes of the girl grow dark; she saw her face full of a hungry, despairing light, and gradually there crept upon her the same look, only not so woful, in the eyes of Clarence Vaughan; that same look flashed upon her. Involuntarily her fingers slipped from the keys, and she turned from the instrument to encounter the same gaze fastened upon her now; ardent, tender, and full of love, and her own fall before them.

Claire Keith was troubled. She wanted to be alone, to think. She murmured an excuse; her head ached; she would retire. Clarence had noted an unusual brightness in her eyes, and a feverish flush upon her cheek. Now, however, she was quite pale, and as she extended her hand to him with a strange, new sensation of diffidence and consciousness, he clasped it for a moment in his own, and said, "You do not look at all well, Miss Keith; you are sure it is only a headache?"

"Quite sure," smiling faintly. "Then good-night. I shall inquire after your head to-morrow."

"Thank you," she murmured. Then nodding to her sister and Madeline, she glided from the room. It had all come upon her once. Edward Percy was an impostor; Edward Percy, as she believed in him, had never existed. The love that she had believed hers was no longer, or, if it were, she no longer desired it. Almost simultaneously with this knowledge, came the unspoken assurance that she was the possessor of a worthier love, a manlier heart, a nobler soul.

She could not feel glad to know this, yet she was not sorry. Somehow it soothed her to know that she was not forsaken, loved, and missed. It was something to possess the love of so good a man, even if she could make it no return.

But Madeline. Poor Madeline; she loved this man; she needed his love, she must have it. Claire pulled the curtains from her window, and gazed out into the starry night. "She needs this love," the girl murmured. "Claire, if I can bring it about, yes, even if I loved him, I would give him up to her."

CHAPTER XX.—STRUGGLING AGAINST FATE. When Claire left the drawing room, Madeline had started to follow her. Recalling herself, she sat down again, keeping, as before, near to Olive, and taking as usual part in the conversation as was possible. "Claire," she said to herself too much; her good resolves were strong, but not stronger than was the charm of his voice and presence.

"Let them think me unwell," she murmured to herself; "what does it matter now?" But her trial was not over. Olive and Clarence had held frequent council together concerning the wayward girl, and how they could best influence her aright without breaking the latter's promise to her. And the absence of Claire added to their freedom of speech.

Olive had intimated to Doctor Vaughan that Madeline had taken some, perhaps unsafe, steps in the pursuit of her enemies. He, understanding the impetuosity of the girl, as well as her reckless fearlessness, could not conceal the anxiety he felt. Acting under an impulse of disinterested kindness, Clarence crossed the room and sat down by Madeline's side.

"Miss Madeline," he said, as respectively as to an empress, "we, Mrs. Percy and myself, cannot get rid of the idea that somehow you partly belong to us; that we ought to be given a little, just a very little, authority over you."

There was a shade of bitterness in the girl's answer. "You have the right to exercise authority over me, if you choose to do so. You are my benefactors."

"Yes," very softly, and trembling under his hand. "Then we will say no more about all this, but you have a right to know about your strength, and if you don't get rest and sleep we shall have to ill-gain, and then what would become of our little detective?"

Olive came forward with outstretched hands and pleading eyes. "I can't wait any longer to be forgiven for my thoughtless words," she said. "Madeline will forgive me."

"Of course Madeline will," replied Clarence. "Now you had better forgive Madeline for putting such a perverse construction upon your words, and then we will send her away to get the rest she must have."

"I was abominable, Olive," said the girl, so ruefully that Clarence smiled outright. "Of course, I know you are too kind to say a cruel thing. I—I believe I was trying to quarrel with you; do forgive me, you know—well, if I do."

"Of course you were trying to quarrel with us; and I haven't a bit of faith in your penitence now, young lady," said Clarence, rising and saying, "I don't believe in you until I am assured that you will go to bed straightway, and swallow every drop of the wine I shall send up to you."

"With something nice in it," suggested Olive. "With something very nice in it, of course. Now will you obey so tyrannical a prescription without making a face?"

"I will obey," said the girl, and she brought a thrill of gladness to the girl's heart, and some of the old debauched, half-dimmed light back to her eyes, as she replied, with a smile, "I will obey, in obedience to a gesture of playful authority from Clarence. Will I accept a scolding and go to bed, that means?"

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in a short time, as the two minutes on our regular (once a night) - we should at last get a rest, and they failed to do so."

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