

MIRAMICHI ADVANCE; OR THE DETECTIVE'S DAUGHTER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

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

CHAPTER IX.—GONE.

Hours that seemed days; days that seemed years; weeks that seemed centuries; yet they all passed, and Madeline Payne scarce knew when they were actually gone, because they were not all a dream.

Life, after that first yielding of heart and brain, had been a delirium; then a conscious torture of mind; then a burden almost too great to bear; and then a dreary lethargy. Heaven be praised for such moods; they are saviours of life and reason in great such as this through which the stricken girl was passing.

Madness had wrought upon her, and her ravings had revealed some otherwise dark places and blanks in her history to her guardian and nurse. Pain had tortured her. Death wrestled with her, and then, because he could not mock at her terrors and wood him, fled away.

In his place came life, to whom she gave no welcoming smile. But life stayed, for life is as regardless of our wishes as is death.

Forms had moved about her; kindly voices, sweet voices, had murmured her bedside. At times, an angel had held the cooling draught to her thirsty lips. At last these dreams, creatures resolved themselves into realities.

Doctor Vaughan, who had ministered to her with the solitude of a brother, the gentleness of a woman, and the goodness of an angel.

Oliver Girard, who, leaving all other cares, was ever at her bedside, and who came to that place at a sacrifice of feeling, after a wrestling with pride, bringing a bitterness of memory, and a patient courage of heart, that the girl could not then realize.

Henry, too, black of skin, warm of heart; who waited in the outer court, and seemed to allow himself full and free respiration only when the girl was pronounced out of danger.

Out of danger! What a misapprehension of words! From the scene of conflict, at the last flutter of Death's gloomy mantle, came the man of medicine; watch in hand, boots a tip-toe, face grave but triumphant. His voice bids a subdued note to the somberness proper to a probable death-bed, coming up just a note higher in the scale of solemnities, as it announces to the eager, trembling, waiting ones.

"The danger is past!" "Death, the calm, the restful, the never weary; Death, the friend of long suffering, and world-weariness and despair; Death, the rescuer, the sometime comforter—has gone away with empty arms and reluctant tread. He has brushed triumphantly, seizes his rescued subject and flings her out into the sea of human lives, perchance to alight upon some tiny green islet, or like other wanderers, to find among black waters, or encounter winds and storms, upheld only by a half-reckless raft or floated by a scarce-suspecting spigot."

And she is out of danger! Hedged around about by sorrow, assailed by temptation, overshadowed by sin. And "the danger is over!"

Battered by the waves of adversity; longing for things out of reach; running after ignis fatui with eager, outstretched hands, and, here, here, here, among pitfalls and snares. And out of danger!

Open your eyes, Madeline Payne; lift up your voice in thanksgiving; you have come back to the world. Back where the sun shines and the dew falls; where the flowers are shedding their perfume and the song birds are making glad music; where men make merry and women smile; where gold shapes itself into vain; and where the future seems a far, noble bower; where beauty crown and valor kisses the lips of duty. And where the rivers sparkle in the sunlight, and the meadows yield up their embraces cold, dripping, dead things, that yet bear the semblance of your kind—all that is left of beings that were once like you!

Out of danger! Where want and poverty, and—God help us!—vice, hide their heads in dim alleys, and under smoky garret roofs. Where beaten children, and starving children dare hardly aspire to the pure air and sunlight, the whole world of them being enshroued in a crust of bread. Where thieves mount upwards on ladders, beaten from pilfered gold, and command cities and sway nations. Where wantonness laughs and thrives in gilded excess, and straws and dries in moldy collars.

Out of danger! Madeline, the place that was almost yours, in the land of the unknowable, is given to another, and that another, who have cast you back upon the shores of the living. You are "out of danger!"

What was to become of Madeline, now that they had returned to life? It was a question which occurred to the two who so kindly interested themselves in the fate of the unknown and least-known girl.

"Can't I? We will see. My dear, if you have left a little corner of your heart behind you in far-away Baltimore. You didn't come to pay any more visits to your father's grave?"

Anyone wishing to gain an insight into the character of Claire Keith might have taken a long step in that direction, could she have seen the girl's reception of this unexpected shot. She opened her dark eyes in comic amazement, and dropping into a gasping chair, she looked at her visitor.

"Now, however could you guess that?" "Because," said Madeline, in a constrained voice, and with all the laughter fading from her eyes; "because, I know the symptoms."

"See," dropping her voice suddenly. "Oh, Madeline, how I wish you could forget that!"

"Why should I forget my love dream?" "Sorrowfully," "any more than you said you had ceased to care for him; that you should never mourn his loss."

"Mourn his loss?" turning upon Claire, fiercely. "Do you think it is for him I mourn my dead? My lost happiness? My shattered dreams, my life made a bitter, barren waste? Mourning him? I have not a tear for him, but for the woman who loved him, and who is now a widow, and who, to love, in the story and the character of the unfortunate girl, possessing a frank, sunny nature, and never having known an equal in her own life, she could not conceive what it would be like to live on when faith had departed and hope had fled."

"Mrs. Girard," said the girl, resting her pale cheek in the palm of a thin, tiny hand, "you once said something to me about—about some one who had been wronged by—"

"Something sadder than that," she said, "is the story of the girl who was wronged by her father, and who was then wronged by her husband, and who was then wronged by her mother, and who was then wronged by her brother, and who was then wronged by her sister, and who was then wronged by her father, and who was then wronged by her husband, and who was then wronged by her mother, and who was then wronged by her brother, and who was then wronged by her sister."

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Then, as a new thought occurred to her, she caught her breath. "Claire's lover," named Percy; but it was the same? Did not this occur to her sooner? Did not ask for his first name, and description of him? If this man, named Edward Percy should be one and the same? Pshaw! the name is not an uncommon one, and it may be only a coincidence. But your face is a bad copy of Edward Percy, and I shall know it when I see it again."

"The sun was not high in the heavens, Madeline was still, for she was so much that strong excitement rendered rest impossible. Moving impatiently about the grounds, she saw a familiar form approaching through the shrubbery, and hastened to meet it.

The black visage of Henry hurried forth, and he made a hurried bow, and placed in her hand a letter, saying: "Master was preparing for a two-day's journey when this letter came. He shows it into his desk, and I have not seen it, and bring him the key. His back was turned, and I took the letter before I locked the desk. It was a long one, and from her; I thought you might want to see it."

"Right, Henry," said the girl, quietly as she opened the letter. "You will wait for it?" "Yes, miss; it must not be missing when he comes."

"Certainly not," she said, and she returned to the letter, and this is what she read: Oakley, October 11. Lucian, Mon Brave:

I am a fine fellow—have made a startling discovery. Mr. A— has been sick, and the mischief is to pay; and his sickness has brought some ugly facts to light.

The old man is not the sole proprietor of the Oakley wealth. That girl who ran away so mysteriously, and has never been heard of, will inherit at his death. Why, he is often wrong, and I have seen her in his delirium of her and her words at parting. They must have been searches.

Well, to add to the general interest, Miss Arthur, aged fifty or so, is here. She is a juvenile old maid, who has a fortune of about \$100,000, and is a cultivated. She dresses like a fool, principally about a certain admirer, a "blond demi-god"—her word—named Percy. Something must be done; things must be talked over. Come down and make love to Miss Arthur. Her money is not yours in disgust.

Yours in disgust, Cora Munc. Arthur.

To be Continued

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