

Literature, &c.

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THE MOTHER'S PROPHECY.

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CHAPTER III.

That same evening there was a clear light gleaming from the window in Andrew Gordon's mansion, usually occupied by himself. He—its owner—sat there alone, with his folded hands lying upon the table, and his head resting upon them. At length he arose, and an observer might have seen that there was a bright, red spot upon either cheek, while his brow was knit, and there was an unusual, almost an angry gleam in his eye. Stepping to the window, and shading his eyes with his hands, he looked out for a moment, and then raising the sash, he called to a man who stood in the yard:

'John, tell my son to come hither.'

'Yes, sir,' replied the man, and Mr Gordon returned to his seat by the table.

A few moments had elapsed when Frederick entered. His father did not appear to notice his entrance, and, after pausing awhile, the young man asked—

'Did you send for me, sir?'

'Yes,' was his father's answer, as he pushed a chair toward him with his foot, and motioned him to be seated. 'I have a few things to say to you, sir: I happened to be an eye-witness of the love scene that took place in the woods, down yonder, this evening. No, I was no spy or eaves-dropper,' he continued, as the color flashed to Frederick's face, and he half rose from his chair. 'You may as well keep cool, young man: I was passing near there just as the girl was coming to her senses, and I could not well avoid seeing and hearing what passed. You were so taken up with her that you had no ears for any one besides, else you must have heard me. Permit me to congratulate you,' he added, with a mocking smile, 'upon enacting the lover most admirably. — May I be allowed to enquire who was the fair damsel who played Juliet to your Romeo?'

'Lily Grey, sir,' was the laconic reply.

'Lily Grey! And who, pray, is she?'

'She is a young lady from Massachusetts, I believe, who has been spending the last three months with Mr and Mrs. Mason. I presume she is a niece of theirs, as she calls them uncle and aunt.'

'Poor as a church mouse, then, of course,' said Mr Gordon, quickly. 'Frederick, do you love this girl?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And have been foolish enough to tell her so, I conclude, as I had the pleasure of hearing the declaration a little while ago.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Well, sir, let me tell you, once for all, that this foolery must have an end. I can never receive Miss Lily Grey as my daughter-in-law.'

'I have inherited so much of my father's meek and docile disposition,' said the young man proudly, with an ironical smile curling his lip, 'that I shall doubtless be lead as a lamb in this matter. Allow me to say, that in matrimonial affairs I intend to do as I choose.'

Mr Gordon must change his tactics. Frederick said rightly—he is too much like his father to be driven.

There was silence between the two for many minutes, but they sat looking in each others eyes as if reading the soul there. Then Andrew Gordon rose, drew his chair nearer to his son's, and taking his hand kindly in his own, said—

'I wish you to do as you choose, Frederick, all I hope is that I may induce you to choose wisely. Listen to me for awhile, and see if I do not present this matter before you in a different aspect. I came here as you know, my son, when this valley was an unbroken wilderness, a poor man, poor through the fraud and injustice of others; and I at once resolved, more for your sake than my own, to be rich. I toiled early and late; I struggled, in the early part of my career, with hardships and difficulties. But at length I was successful. My resources are ample; yours I should have said, but I cannot consent that the wealth, to the accumulation of which I have devoted all the best years of my life, should go to enrich a beggar. With your talents, your fine person, your graceful and winning address, together with the fortune which I had intended to place in your hands upon your next birth-day, (to say nothing of your expectations at my decease,) with all these advantages, I say, you might select a wife from the highest and wealthiest family in the land. There is a young girl, the orphan daughter of one whom I knew in my boyhood, whom I selected years ago as my future daughter-in-law. Her fortune must be immense, and every advantage that wealth can give will be lavished upon her. She is—let me see—she is about fifteen now, and is said to be very beautiful. There is a clause in her father's will, I am told, that will prevent her marrying before she is twenty-one. You have been long wishing to make the tour of Europe, and I was thinking, just previous to my unfortunate discovery this afternoon, that it would be well for you to start immediately, spend the next four years in travelling, and still have a year or two at your disposal, after your return, to secure your success with her. But

of course it is useless to say any thing about it now, as you have made your own choice.

Mr Gordon ceased, and for a long time Frederick sat silently revolving his father's words in his mind. He was not naturally the callous, cold-hearted being which the reader might judge him to be from the soliloquy we overheard in the woods. His noble and generous impulses had for many years given his father a deal of trouble, and even yet, as we have seen from his conduct this day, he occasionally acted without any regard to the 'almighty dollar.' But these instances had, of late, been rare. Andrew Gordon was naturally moulding him to his will, and even before receiving the summons to his presence this evening, the effect of the lessons that he had been taking through his whole life, was resuming its sway, and Ambition or Avarice—call it by which ever name best pleases you, was beginning to struggle with Love.

'What is the name of the young lady of whom you were speaking, sir?' he finally asked.

'Elizabeth Munro,' was the reply, and again there was a long pause.

'Let me retire now, if you please,' said Frederick, rising; 'I would fain think over this matter in my own room.'

'Thank you—thank you, Frederick. That is spoken like my own son,' was Mr Gordon's answer, as he cordially shook his hand. 'I have no fears that you will not gratify me, if you will but yield to the suggestions of your own good sense.'

Frederick Gordon slept not that night. We will not attempt to follow the workings of his mind. Suffice it to say, that the next morning, with a pale cheek, but with a voice that did not falter, he signified to his father his readiness to adopt the plan proposed by him the previous evening.

'Then you must go at once, this very day,' said Mr Gordon; 'there must no time for foolish regrets and sentimental nonsense. The Virginia sails for Europe upon the 20th of next month, and this—yes, this is the 17th. You have no time to lose—you must start for New York this evening, and you will then hardly have time to make the necessary preparations there.' And he hurried away to expedite his son's departure.

CHAPTER IV.

We must now return to sweet Lily Grey, whom we left so unceremoniously at Mr Mason's gate, after her adventure in the woods with Frederick Gordon. When she entered the house, she did not as usual repair immediately to the common parlor or sitting room as it was called, but ascending the stairs she sought her own chamber. Hastily throwing off her bonnet, she approached the small mirror, and slowly removing the handkerchief which was fastened around her temples, endeavored to ascertain the extent of the injury she had received. She found that it was nothing but a tolerably deep incision, made, apparently, by a very sharp stone. The bleeding had ceased, and she soon succeeded in closing the wound by the help of some narrow strips of plaster.

She then seated herself by the low window, and tried to recall the events of the day. Dear Lily Grey! what a fount of deep, pure, exquisite yet strange happiness had welled up in her young heart since she went forth that summer afternoon upon her errand of mercy to old Mrs Foster's cottage! Yet bright tears-drops were continually sparkling in her beautiful eyes, and her hands trembled so that she could scarcely smooth the shining curls that fell without restraint upon her shoulders.

For a long time she sat there by the window; darkness came on, but she heeded it not; there was no darkness of the spirit there, and her heart was illumined in its innermost recesses by light from within, light that depended not upon outward objects—light clearer than that of the sun at noonday.

'Why, Lily dear!' exclaimed the cheerful voice of Mrs Mason, 'are you here? We thought you had not come in yet; and fearing you were lost or in some trouble or other, George started in pursuit of you some time ago. And now, while he is tramping through the woods in search of you, here you are, ensconced in your own little room safe as a saint in the niche. But bless me, child! why, what a wound upon your forehead,' and dropping the bantering tone she had before used, and approaching quickly to Lily's side, the good lady asked seriously, 'What is the matter, Lily? What has happened?'

'There is nothing of consequence the matter now,' replied Lily, and she rapidly sketched the occurrences of the afternoon. She did not think it necessary to tell the whole story, and was thankful that the blush she felt rising to her very forehead, as she mentioned the name of Frederick Gordon, was concealed by the increasing darkness.

'Really, quite a romantic adventure you have had,' said her aunt, as Lily concluded her little story. 'I suppose that, as in duty bound, you intend falling in love with Mr Gordon forthwith. I fancy your bright eyes had done some mischief in that quarter already; and now wouldn't it be funny if we should have a wedding here, eh Lily? And thus she rattled on while they were descending the stairs, and proceeding to the parlor where tea was waiting never once dreaming that there was anything like truth in her playful jest. Had she done so she would have been very serious, for she well knew it was no light thing for a maiden to place that priceless treasure, her young heart's pure love, in another's keeping.

Lily escaped from the family circle soon after tea that evening, under plea of fatigue; and, in truth, she felt the need of rest. She

longed to be alone with her newly born happiness; to recall the looks and words that had so thrilled her heart. She was young—very young, almost a child in years; and she had not learned that the treasure she had found that day was one to be received with fear and trembling. She took the angel guest to her bosom, tearfully, it is true, but oh! most joyfully; and she lay upon her couch that night to dream only of long, long days of bliss. She knew, indeed, that something of sorrow must fall to the lot of mortals; but would not even that be sweet if shared with him? With such thoughts as these she knelt to offer up her evening prayer, and to bless her Father in Heaven for the new well-spring of joy that had sprung up in her pathway.

How bright and beautiful was every thing in the outer world when Lily awoke next morning! There had been a shower during the night, and a thousand gems were sparkling upon every tree and shrub and flower. The mist was rolling up from the mountains, but it yet lay heavily above the bed of the river, making its windings as far as the eye could reach. It seemed to Lily that earth was never so beautiful before; and there was melody in her young heart as she stood by the open window, listening to the trilling of the birds, the low murmur of the water-fall, and all the sweet sounds with which Nature welcomes the approach of the May god. When, her simple toilet completed, she descended to breakfast that morning, old Mr and Mrs. Mason noted with surprise her unwonted loveliness. She was, indeed, as Frederick Gordon had said, very lovely at all times; but now her face was radiant with happiness—that most efficacious of all cosmetics—and her eyes beamed with added lustre. Perhaps, too, she might have arranged her dress with rather more care than usual; for in those primitive days it was not considered necessary to attend to the duties of the toilet half-a-dozen times a day, and Lily had whispered to herself, 'Frederick will surely be here to-day.'

But the morning passed and no Frederick appeared. Hour after hour of the afternoon rolled away, and still no Frederick came. She listened, with a beating heart to every approaching footstep, and wondered what could keep him from her side. At length she heard in the distance the sound of approaching wheels. She looked from the window and saw Mr Gordon's carriage slowly toiling up the hill, and, shrinking behind the curtain, she watched it as it drew nearer and nearer. There was a figure upon the back seat, closely muffled in a cloak, which did not seem to be particularly needed at that season of the year; and her heart told her that it was the figure of him for whom she had watched and waited through the day. But the noble steed halted not; the carriage rolled slowly by, and the muffled figure drew the folds of the mantle still more closely about it, and shrank back still farther into its dark corner.

The young girl gazed upon the vehicle until it faded from her sight; then sinking back upon her seat she covered her face with her hands. When she removed them, although her cheek was pale as marble there was no other sign of suffering. She could not, even yet, doubt that the mystery would be yet explained—perhaps after all it was not Frederick and with that thought her spirits returned.

Just at dusk Mr Mason came in from the village, and turning to Lily, said—'Lily, why did you not tell us that Fred Gordon was to leave us to-day? Of course you knew, as you saw him yesterday?'

Lily was spared the necessity of replying, for her aunt immediately exclaimed—'Fred Gordon left us! where is he going pray?'

'Why, he goes to-night,' was the reply, 'in their own carriage as far as P—, and from that place takes the stage to-morrow for New York. His father tells me that he is to sail for Europe in the 'Virginia' next month, and will probably remain four or five years.'

Amid the hum of voices, the exclamations of surprise, and inquiries and surmises to which this intelligence gave rise—for he it remembered, a voyage to Europe was a much more formidable undertaking than in these days of steamships—no one noticed Lily. It was as we have said just at dusk, and with a dread foreboding of she knew not what evil, she had glided to the farthest corner of the room, and remained there effectually concealed by the gathering shadows. When the words that to her seemed the death-knell of every hope were pronounced, she did not even sigh, but standing motionless for a moment, with her eyes fixed wildly upon the speaker, she threw up her white arms once, twice convulsively, and then sank slowly to the floor—breathless and, inanimate. Poor, poor Lily Grey.

CHAPTER V.

It had been a gala day in New York—a day of feasting and rejoicing—a day of triumphal processions and martial pageantry—one of America's most honored sons, one whose days had been spent in the service of his country, and whose blood had flown more than once upon the battle-field, was the guest of the city, and its inhabitants laying aside for awhile their accustomed avocations, had assembled en masse to welcome him. The old Park theatre had been converted, for that one night into a splendid ball-room, and as darkness came on, in hundreds of dressing-rooms, the young and the lovely, ay, and many who were neither, were decking themselves for the festive scene. At a later hour innumerable carriages were rolling through the streets, bearing their precious freight to the appointed

place; and hosts of tiny satin-slipped feet tripped lightly up the broad stone steps and were lost in the crowd within. It was a splendid pageant. There were dancing plumes and sparkling gems—flashing eyes and flower-wreathed curls—the waving of banners—and over all and surrounding all, a dazzling radiance, shed from the massive chandeliers that were suspended, at no distant intervals, from the lofty ceiling. Two young men—one of them, from his foreign dress and ignorance of those around him, evidently a stranger—were leaning against one of the large pillars, engaged in earnest conversation. They used their opera-glasses quite freely, and were apparently commenting on the beauties around them. At length their attention was drawn toward the door by the hum of voices and murmurs of admiration that greeted the entrance of a young lady, who appeared leaning on the arm of a fine looking old gentleman, old enough to be her father. She was, indeed, surpassingly beautiful, but it was the swan-like grace and elegance of her movements, the soul that breathed from her features, the depth of feeling in her violet eyes, that involuntarily fixed the attention of the observer, and awoke in his breast an interest for which he could scarcely account. She was magnificently attired in a tunic dress of light blue satin, with a rich embroidery of silver—and costly pearls were clasped about her throat, her rounded arms, and gleamed amid the heavy masses of her braided hair.

The young men did not speak until she had crossed the room and was hidden from their sight by the intervening crowd; then drawing a long breath, the stranger asked his companion—'Frank, in the name of all that's beautiful, who is that beautiful creature?'

'That, said Frank Stanley, 'that is Miss Munro, our belle and heiress.'

'Miss Munro!' exclaimed the other, while his color was considerably heightened, 'is that Miss Munro?'

'Why yes. What is there so surprising about it? Do you know her?'

'No,' was the reply, 'but I have often heard of her.' Then after a pause, he added, 'Can you present me?'

'Certainly, if you wish it,' rejoined his friend, and they crossed the apartment.

'Miss Munro, permit me to present to you my friend, Mr Gordon.' There was a low bow on the part of the gentleman, a courteous salutation on that of the lady, and after a few commonplace remarks, Elizabetha Munro was led to the dance by Frederick Gordon.

'The handsomest couple in the room by all odds,' said Frank Stanley. 'I should not wonder if that should be a match yet. Gordon is half in love already, and if he undertakes to win her and does not succeed, I don't know who can.' And with these words he turned away to join a group of friends who were chatting merrily at a little distance.

Arthur Talmadge, the young artist addressed, gazed upon the dancers sadly and earnestly for a few moments, and then murmuring—'Stanley is right—he cannot win her who can? he hurried from the ball room. Nobly gifted, but poor and proud, he felt that he had nothing in common with that gay throng, and he bent his steps toward his own cheerless room.

And Frank Stanley and Arthur Talmadge were not the only ones who arrived at the same conclusion. One by one the admirers of Miss Munro—and their name was legion—dropped off until the field was left to Frederick Gordon.

As may be supposed, he was not negligent in improving the advantage thus given him. Yet at the end of six months he felt no more secure of her favor than at the time of their first acquaintance. Her demeanor toward him was always courteous, and such as became a lady; she received his attentions frankly, but yet so calmly and quietly, that it was evident she felt none of the timidity of dawning love. Her cheek never brightened at his approach; her voice never faltered as she addressed him; her eye never wandered in search of him, neither did she repulse him, and so he hovered round her hoping that success would yet be his. She listened with a pleased ear to his glowing descriptions of other lands; her fine eyes were lit up with enthusiasm, as he spoke of Italy, with her sunny skies, her gems of art, and her oppressed and degraded children; of Greece, with her temples, beautiful even in their decay; of Egypt, that land of fable and mystery, and of the East, thronging as it does with memories and associations that stir the heart to its innermost depths. He was a fine reader, his voice was deep and thrilling, and when he read or recited, the finest passages from Shakspeare, Milton or Wordsworth,

'Lending the rhyme of the poet

The beauty of his voice.'

Her cheek would glow, and her heart beat quickly. But all this might be without one throb of love for him, and he felt it. He could but observe, too, that she carefully avoided every thing like intimacy, and there was no heart communion between them—she never spoke of herself; there was interchange of thought, but none of feeling, and strive as he might, he could not lift the veil that seemed imperviously drawn between their souls.

And when Frederick Gordon became aware of this, a shadow deeper and darker than any that he had ever before known, rested upon his pathway. He had returned from Europe fully determined to woo and win her for the sake of her wealth. Love, or any congeniality of feeling that might exist between them was but a secondary consideration. When he saw her that night in the ball-room, more beauti-