

Maud Percy's Secret

BY MAY AGNES FLEMING

(CONTINUED.)

"Very well, I will be here — you need come with me no farther," said Keturah, dismissing him with a wave of her hand; and ere he could expostulate at this summary dismissal, she turned a corner and disappeared. That night a trusty messenger was dispatched by Keturah to the gipsy camp for little Raymond, who arrived the following night. His free gipsy life seemed to agree wonderfully well with that young gentleman. Five years old now he was tall and well grown for his age, could climb the highest trees like a squirrel, set bird traps and rabbit snares, and was as lithe, supple, and active as a young deer. The eyes of Keturah lit up with pride as she gazed upon him; and for the first time the idea occurred to her that he might live to avenge his father's wrongs when she was dead. She would bring him up to hate all the house of De Courcy; that hate should grow with his growth until it should become the one ruling passion and aim of his life, swamping, by its very intensity, every other feeling.

Master Raymond, who seemed quite as chary of caresses as his grandmother herself, met her with a good deal of indifference; but no sooner did he see little Erminie, than a rash and violent attachment was the result. Accustomed to the dirty, dusky, gipsy babies, who rolled all day unheeded in the grass, this little snowy-skinned, golden-haired, blue-eyed infant seemed so wondrously lovely that he had to give her sundry pokes with his finger to convince himself she was real, and not an illusion. Miss Erminie did not seem at all displeased by these attentions, but favored him with a coquettish smile, and with her finger in her rosy mouth, gave him every encouragement he could reasonably expect on so short an acquaintance. Being left alone together, Master Raymond, who did not altogether approve of her wasting her time, lying blinking at him in her cradle, began to think it was only a common act of politeness she owed him, to get up, and seeing no symptoms of any such intention on the young lady's part, he resolved to give her a hint to that effect. Catching her, therefore, by one little plump leg and arm, he gave her a jerk that swung her completely out, and then grasping her by the waist, he dumped her down on the floor beside him, upon which she immediately clapped another finger in her mouth, and there they sat, silently staring at each other, until both were despatched to bed.

Early in the morning Master Raymond and Miss Erminie found themselves awakened from an exceedingly sound slumber, and undergoing the unpleasant operation of dressing. The young gentleman kicked and plunged manfully for a while, but finding it all of no use, he gave up the struggle and yielded to fate in a second nap. Erminie, after crying a little, followed his example, and then the gipsy, taking her in her arms, and followed by one of the tribe bearing the sleeping Raymond, hurried to the trysting place.

There they found Mr. Toosyeggs, looking green and sea-sick already, from anticipation. In a few words the gipsy gave him to understand that she wished to go on board immediately—a proposition which rather pleased Mr. Toosyeggs, who was inwardly afraid she might desire to be brought to his house, where she would be confronted by Miss Toosyeggs, of whom he stood in whole-some awe.

Half an hour brought them to the pier where the vessel lay; and consigning little Raymond to the care of one of the female passengers, she sought her berth with Erminie. Until England was out of sight she still dreaded detection; and therefore, she sat, with feverish impatience, longing to catch the last glimpse of the land where she was born.

Once she caught a passing glimpse of Mr. Toosyeggs, a victim to "green and yellow melancholy" in its most aggravated form, as he walked toward his berth in an exceedingly limp state of mind and shirt collar. Mr. Toosyeggs knew what sea-sickness was from experience; he had a distinct and sad recollection of what he endured the last time he crossed the Atlantic; and with many an ominous foreboding he ensconced himself in an armchair in the cabin, while the vessel rose and fell as she danced over the waves. Silently he sat, as men sit who await the heaviest blow Fate has in store for them. Suddenly a stentorian voice from the deck rose high above the creaking and straining of ropes, and trampling of feet, with the thrilling words, "Heave ahead!" Mr. Toosyeggs gave a convulsive start, an expression of intense anguish passed over his face, and suddenly clapping his handkerchief to his mouth, he fled to the silent depths of the state room, where, hidden from human view, what passed was never known.

Author of
"The Fatal Wedding"
"The Unseen Bridegroom,"
"A Terrible Secret."

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contempt. On the fifth day, Mr. Toosyeggs made his appearance on deck, a walking skeleton.

As every one but Miss Priscilla laughed at him, and she scolded him unmercifully, the unhappy young man was forced to fly for relief to Keturah, whose silent grimace was quite delightful compared with either of the others. Feeling that she owed him something for his kindness, she listened in silence to all his doleful complaints, and this so won upon the susceptible heart of that unfortunate youth, that he contracted quite an affection for her—just as a lap-dog has been known to make friends with a tiger before now.

(To be Continued.)

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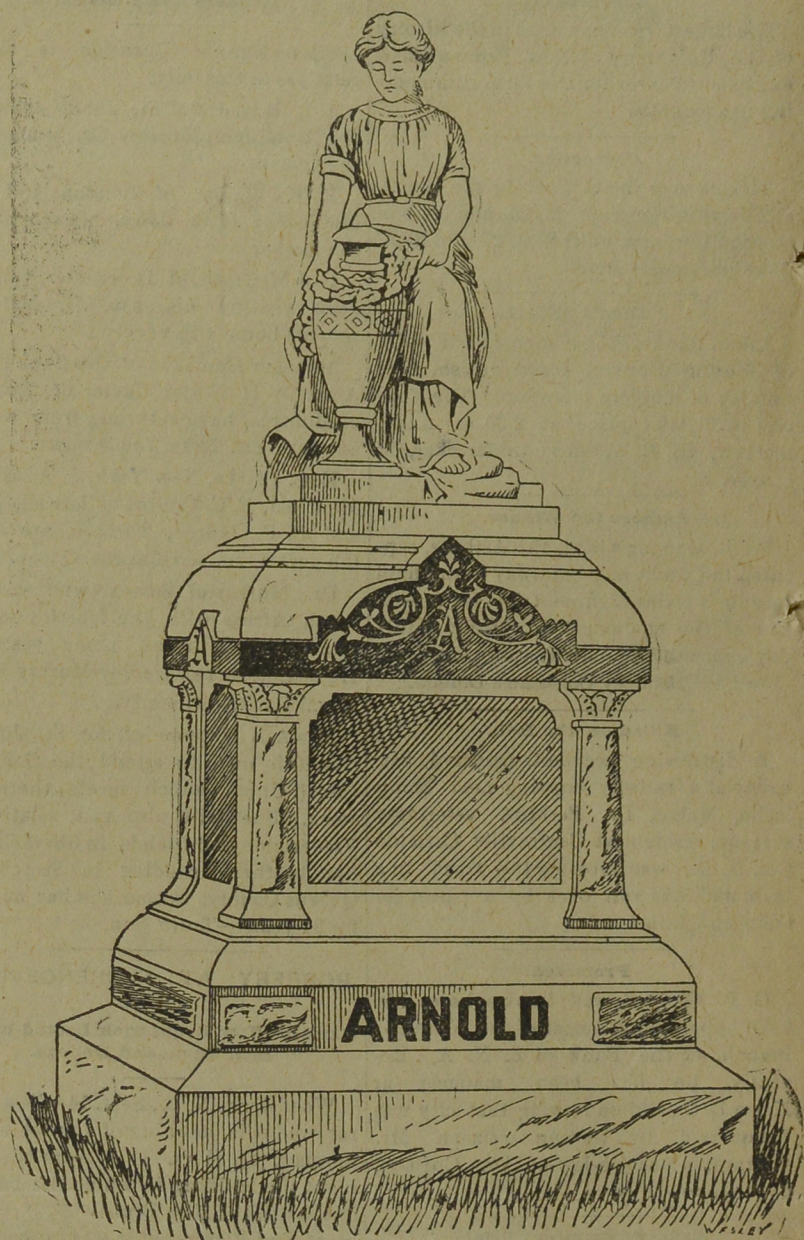
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