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THE GIPSY'S PROPHECY.

BY IRENE.

"Do let's rest here, girls, I cannot go a step farther in this intolerable heat. Where can the rest of the party be?" and little Eva Turner threw herself wearily on the grass beneath a large oak tree, while the others, Grace and Marian Carrington, Esta Stanley, and Carrie Wentworth, proceeded to follow the example.

"Was there ever such a warm day before?" said Esta Stanley, fanning herself vigorously with her wide-brimmed hat. "How I wished I'd stayed at home; I'm not enjoying myself at all."

"Oh!" lisped little Carrie Wentworth, "that's because George is absent; now if he!"

"No such thing, you little prattler; but who is this coming?—a gipsy, as I live. Well, this is good—yes, yes, tell my fortune and predict a sunny fate for me or I'll give you to the authorities as a witch."

"Cross my hand w' silver first, my pretty lady," croaked the old woman, and Esta at once laid a shining piece on the old woman's outstretched palm.

"Now be quick," said Esta. "I'm going to marry a count, ain't I? a prince in disguise, or some other equally as grand."

"Ho, there's no count or prince, but there's a light haired gentleman who is devoted to you. You love him," she continued, "and it will be a happy union, but you will outlive him; he will die—the line is indistinct. Ah, yes, he will die from a fall from a horse."

"That is enough; I don't like the dark side of the future, so predict something for the rest. Here, Marian, Grace, come here, let's hear what the fickle goddess has in store for us."

"Esta, this is foolishness," said Marian, turning her flashing black eyes full upon the gipsy. "I don't wish to have my fortune told."

"Oh, phaw, Marian, you have all heard mine, and I don't propose to be the only one out of pocket, so just step up here."

"Here, tell mine," said Grace, at the same time laying a piece of money in the fortune-teller's hand.

"Yes, my pretty lady—oh! She shuddered, and looking around dropped her eyes on Marian, "She is your sister!"

"Yes, yes," the girls cried in one voice.

"You will die from poison given to you by her—a brief happiness for you, and a terrible end."

"Oh, lie, lie," the girls uttered at the prediction. "Why Marian poison Grace—oh, its too ridiculous," said Esta.

"See there, Esta, how white Grace is by all this foolishness; it's a shame girls," and Marian tried to look very indignant.

"Why! of course, it's all folly, and we're only doing it to test this woman's imagination; but now, Marian, do come and have yours told, and let's see why you are going to poison Grace. Come now do."

"Well, well, if you are so anxious—here," she said holding out her hand and throwing the money on the ground.

"Take it back," said the gipsy, "I don't want to tell your fortune; you are evil—yes, wicked—I cannot predict anything good, so I'll remain silent—but remember the gipsy's prophecy! Beware of the dark-complexioned man—you love him, but, he loves—not you but her, your sister. He will cause you all of your trouble. Shun him; leave England—oh, be warned, fly!"

"Oh! nonsense, how many dark-complexioned gentleman do I know?

Let's see, there is Phil and Ronald, and —"

"But do you love them all lady?" said she.

"Love them? Well, I hardly know—however, I'll cut all of their acquaintance and retire to a convent."

"You jest, lady; beware!"

"There they come now; well, thank heaven, for I am tired to death," said Esta Stanley. "Go away, woman, for you have frightened the ladies half out of their wits now, and we'll be teased till we're quite dead if you are seen here; so go off now," and drawing her little red cape around her closely, the old woman obeyed Esta's command.

The rest of the party now having joined the girls under the trees, preparations were commenced for lunch. An impromptu table was constructed by a couple of young gentlemen and then the elderly ladies bustled around, soon spreading before the always hungry young people a most delicious luncheon. Never was there a merrier party of picnickers. Jokes flew around from mouth to mouth and the joyous laughter fairly set the birds to shame.

"Oh, I say, Esta," said Ronald Derby, "who was that person you were commanding to leave as we came up? Now, I'll wager—let me see—well, a box of gloves, that you girls have been trying to peep through the heavy curtain which hides the future; ain't I right? Were you not trying to get some nomad to deduce from the crossing and re-crossing of the lines of your hand some brilliant fate for you? Ah, my fair friend, your blushes convict you. Now I am going to inflict upon you as a penalty a rehearsal of the facts given you by this sybil."

"Oh, yes, do, do!" chorused in a half dozen voices.

"O, dear," replied Esta. "Why, Ronald, it was the wife of that poor man to whom you talked so long this morning, and, as you both stood directly under my window, why I think if I narrate the conversation you two carried on, our friends here will feel highly edified, and, indeed, much more so than over our conversation. What say the company, shall I tell what Ronald and the stroller were conversing on?"

"By all means," again said the party.

"Come, come, Esta, we're quits now; I'll see you alone."

"Good," said little Eva Turner. "I am so glad some one can hold that irrepressible Ronald in check; Esta, will you let me in the secret?"

"Certainly; till to-night, when Miss Cla—"

"Stop, Esta—don't please," and Ronald's brown eye looked so earnestly at Esta that she resisted.

"Well, well, Ronald, I'll let you off this time; but remember, I'm very revengeful, so don't provoke my ire."

"Command me, and I will obey," said he.

"Well, then, do find out what has come over Marian Carrington, for ever since we sat down to lunch she has been so abstracted that she has not heard me speak once, and she tries so hard to get up a smile, succeeding only so far as to look like 'Patience on a monument smiling at Grief.' I say, Marrie, why so pensive?"

All eyes turned upon Marian, but she bore the scrutiny well, and, shaking back her heavy curls, seemed at once to be inspired with new vigor, for she at once began such an animated discourse as to surprise even herself.

"I will not do," she murmured to herself, "to act so. I must not show how the woman's words affect me."

But the gipsy's words annoyed her, and, even in her gayest moment; "he loves not you, but her," seemed to dance before her eyes in letters of fire. The sun in the sky showed that night was fast approaching, and now that it was cooler, the gay party began to think of home.

"Oh, I'll be entirely unfit for to-night's dance," said Eva Turner; "my face is all burnt and —"

"Phillip won't look at you, poor little sunburnt, freckled red-head!" broke in the tantalizing Esta. "Why, Eva, if I were you, I'd go right home, and wrap my face up in sour milk, lemon or bran poultices. Seems to me Hænetta has an edition of 'Ladies Toilette' which contains infallible remedies."

"Yes? I suppose you can vouch for the infallibility of every one of them; humph! You are getting so that can declare your soul is your own, ain't you? Well, peace, peace; give us the olive branch—whose going home? For my part, I'm off," and, trilling some "away dull care" song, Esta danced away, to leave some one who could assert her rights with more vivacity than little red-head," as Esta saucily dubbed the auburn-haired Eva.

The party who had been spending the day in the woods were the Summer guests of Lord Carrington, at his Summer residence—the Hemlocks—and royally did he amuse them, so that willingly would any one of them give up any rare pleasure for the sake of accepting his invitation to visit the Hemlocks. It was a marvelously beautiful place, built of pure white marble and surrounded by lawns, lakes and delicious little fairy-like retreats. Balconies beautifully sculptured, large enough for two whereon to be inspired with the most unpoetical love. Exquisite marbles and bronzes, brought from Italy, gleamed and dazzled amidst the rarest plants. Miniature boats rocked on the ripples of the lakes, and lights gleamed through the colored globes of the lamp-posts in the groves.

And to-night all the wondrous beauty is shown off to the best advantage. Lights shimmer and shine through every portion of the vast garden and in every pane of heavy plate glass in the mansion. Delicious strains of music steal through the massive curtains of the windows, and as they waft out on the air, the wearied dancers resting on the balconies beat time to its notes with heart and foot. Through this gay assemblage Marian Carrington slowly wends her way, walking as a queen, and receiving the homage of one. She leans on the arm of Malcolm Brooks, and although her head is turned toward him her eyes sweeps through the brilliant rooms until they rest on a couple slowly promenading toward her. 'Tis Grace, her sister, looking too ethereal for this world. A robe of the most delicate peach-blossom satin trails far over the rich carpet; a e.o.b. web lace overskirt, caught up with sprays of pearls, and the same jewels glistening in her golden hair, and on her rounded throat and arms well become her angelic beauty. Her companion, Marshall Leighton, a dashing Captain in the Queen's service, has his handsome head bent low to catch her soft, low words. Love flashes from his liquid brown eyes, and she knows she is loved, by the tenderness of his voice. Admiration everywhere meets the handsome couple, and all smile upon them. Lord Carrington gazes fondly upon them, and wishes that it may be; for he loves his child and knows that she loves Leighton. The *deus tempe* is struck up by the orchestra, and clasping his dainty one in his arms, Marshall whirls her into the mazy dance. Round and round they go, and when the

last note is struck he leads her to a little alcove which opens on to a balcony. Drawing aside the curtain, they enter, and sinking on a divan, Grace—at first surprised, then inexpressibly happy listens to the outpouring of her admirer's heart:

"Never was one loved before as I love you, my only, my darling love," cried he. "Surely, such love must be requited. Am I wrong? Ah! you are silent; but that gives me hope—it inspires me. Oh! dare I hope for such happiness? Do not droop your eyes. Tell me, love, will you be mine? Mine—how much in that word!—to know that nothing can wrest you from me; that your eye lights up at my step, and that you miss me in my absence. Gracie, Gracie, answer me before I sink into apprehension."

A soft blush and a tender kiss were his answers, and when they left the alcove a new light shone in their eyes and a new jeweled ring glistened on Gracie's hand. Too absorbed in each other were they to see the shrinking figure draw closer to the wall, as Marshall drew aside the curtain for Gracie to pass out. The half-broken sob fell not on their ears as the bent figure tottered from her place of concealment and fell prone on the heavy carpet. No sound penetrated the ears of the outside guests informing them of the wretchedness of the boasted beauty of the Hemlocks.

"Take me, God, oh take me!" she gasped—"I cannot live and see him wedded to her—Grace his wife? Oh, God, no—I love him! oh so dearly. Why is Fate so cruel?" and sob after sob rent the air, seeming sadly out of place in that festive scene.

But grief cannot last forever, and rising from the place where she had fallen, Marian, for it was she, with weary, trembling hands smoothed the folds from the lavender satin dress. Listlessly she put back the curling waves from her marble-like brow, and with an effort only gained by her great self-control, threw off the heart-pierced look in her face. None could tell of her suffering save by the pallor of her face and the slight rings beneath her beautiful eyes. A voice startled her from her kind of trance, crying—"Ah! Miss Carrington, here and alone? All through the rooms have I been wandering in search of you. Have you forgotten that this is our Lancers?"

"Oh, pardon me, Mr. Derby, I had not intended to neglect you; a momentary pain caused me to seek refuge here; but come, or we miss the dance."

Little did Donald Derby guess the cause of her "momentary pain," or perhaps he never would have tried to tell Marian how he loved her. But at the end of the hall there were at least two bleeding hearts, as wretched as there were two hearts happy. Sleep did not visit Marian's eyes, and when Grace came into her sister's room the next morning sorrow spread over her face at the sight of Marion. Deathly pale was she, with heavy black rings around the full but now dulled eyes; her mouth had lost its sweetness and the ring of blue bespoke of intense suffering.

"My sister, my darling Marian, what is it?—sick, and not send for me. Tell me, what is it?"

"Nothing," said Marian, and she shuddered at the sight of Grace. "Leave me; I know of your happiness, but go away and think of him, for it must make you happy to do so," and she almost roughly shook off Grace's hand.

"Poor sister," said the blushing girl, "let me stay, and I will be so quiet. May I?"

"No. I said to leave me," harshly said Marian, and madly

Grace left the room, little thinking of the cause of the pain depicted on her sister's face.

As the door softly closed, Marian jumped from her couch, and clenching her hands till the nails cut deep into the soft flesh, cried out in her agony: "Oh, I hate her, I hate her. Anything that comes between me and the one I love, I hate, and could crush as I crush these under my feet!" and she madly trod on a jeweled necklace that had fallen to the floor.

"She shall not marry him! I love him; not with the weak and babyish love of Grace, but the haughty, fierce love of Marian Carrington! Never will she marry him; I'll kill her first!" and having spent part of her passion, she sank down, weeping passionately.

The sun was setting slowly, throwing a golden tinge over the waters of the lake, wherein lily-pads floated and pebbles gleamed through the clear waters. Near a marble Sappho stood a drooping figure, idly picking a red, velvety rose to pieces, throwing the petals upon the water watching them listlessly float, wherever the gentle breeze wafted them. "Alone, *ma chere*?" said a voice, and turning around Marian beheld her idol, the object of her vain love.

"Yes; alone, alone," she bitterly said.

"How sad you are, Marian—I may call you so? Allow me some brotherly privileges, can't you? Congratulate me; all have done so but you, and this is what I have been seeking you for."

"Congratulate you," she slowly answered, "yes, I congratulate you upon the misery you have caused—don't speak, listen! You have won my sister's love, but never shall she wed you. Oh, Marshall, you asked her love, you got it—you asked out mine, but you have it; not her weak, childish affection; but the strong, idolatrous love that but such as I can give. Love me!"

"Hush, Marian, you must, I say! I am betrothed to Grace. I love you as a sister, but otherwise it is folly—madness. I implore you, forget this mere fancy."

"Oh, hush, Marshall Leighton, or you will drive me mad—you must love me. Tell me you will give her up."

"Marian, Marian, you are mad, Give Grace up?—it is impossible, I love her, and I shall marry her."

"Never," hissed Marian with a terrible hate in her eyes. "I say you never shall; so beware!" and she turned and left him as the last ray of the sun vanished behind the hill.

"I must see her father and urge the wedding, then forever leave this terrible place," and he immediately sought Lord Carrington in his library, and told him as delicately as possible the unhappy news. With a startled look upon his face, Lord Francis heard the story, and with sorrow thought of useless remedies. "It shall be as you wish, my boy. Marry her at once and leave England, until she out-grows this infatuation."

"Thanks, my lord, and please say nothing of this to either, as 'twould but cause pain."

"Right, my boy; I am deeply pained. She has her mother's temper, and if aroused would become like one of the lions found in her native place. Those East Indian women are demons in their love or hate."

At that moment a loud shriek sounded through the corridors, and rushing to the door, Lord Francis and Marshall Leighton beheld a group of awe-stricken faces. Another shriek sounded, and with a lightning-like step Leighton dashed up the stair-case followed by Carrington.

[Concluded on 8th page.]