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For the Bloomfield Times.

THE MYSTERIOUS FRIEND.

A Story of Old Virginia

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CONTINUED.

POOR Morgiana Chester! She had indeed come back to life, but she had been awakened only to find all reason gone. The soft light of her mild eye, the heavenly purity of her passive countenance, and the gentle dew-drops of her soul's sorrow were gone-all gone! She was mad! The frail throne of her mind that had been toppling for years upon its foundation, had now fallen, and beneath its weight the soul fell crashing to utter chaos!

A moment Chiron gazed tearlessly upon the scene-then he took the young hunter gently by the arm and led him unresistingly from the spot.

A week had passed away since the melancholy development recorded above .-In a quiet, handsomely furnished chamber in the mansion of Sir Oliver Wimple, reposed, upon a bed of downy softness, the form of the poor maniac mother. A raging fever had set in, caused by her exposure in the forest, and, at the earnest request of the baronet, sustained by the permission of an excellent physician, she had been removed to her present quarters. The gentle Ada had nursed her with a fond daughter's care-Elpsey never left her side, while Lady Wimple left nothing undone for her comfort.

Morgiana had raved exceedingly-sometimes for her husband, sometimes for her son, and anon her mind would turn upon the secret of the old oaken chest. Her ravings were wild and incoherent, but they lasted only an hour or so at a time, her physical strength soon giving way beneatl them. She recognized no one, not even her son, for her mind seemed utterly uprooted.

It was towards the close of the day that the physician called in his daily visit, and as he entered his patient's chamber a smile of satisfaction lit upon his features. Morgiana had just sunk into an easy, grateful slumber, and a profuse perspiration was upon her brow and temples. Her skin was moist and soft, and her pulse-that index to the beating heart-was steadier than it had been for a week. Those hard, painful lines that had marked the maniac's fair countenance, had softened to a more pensive look, and the blue veins, which had been so long swollen almost to bursting, know me ?" left now only their azure tracings beneath the transparent skin. The right hand was thrown over her head, and the left arm was outstretched, as if to give more room for the heart.

Orlando stood at the foot of the bed, and by his side leaned Ada. Upon the countenance of the youth there was a broad ray of hope, which seemed a reflection of the physician's own smile, and yet he watched the latter's movements with nervous anxiety. As the doctor turned to leave the room, he beckoned for Orlando to fol-

"Mr. Chester," said the physician, as soon as they had reached the hall, "your morther is past all present danger."

"Great God, I thank you!" ejaculated the youth, as he clasped his bands together. "Let her not be disturbed to-night," continued the physician, "for if I am not greatly mistaken she will sleep quietly till morning. Yet, she must be narrowly watched and properly cared for."

At this moment Chiron entered the ball, and a joyous look overspread his face as he heard the result of the doctor's investiga-

"Doctor," said he, as that individual

"you have not lisped a word of Mrs. Chester's whereabouts, have you?"
"Not a word."

" Nor of her son's ?"

"No, not a syllable, nor does any one in the town seem to mistrust that the youth has returned."

"I am glad of that," returned Chiron, and then turning to Orlando, he said, in an under tone :

"Berkley mistrusts not the retribution I have in store for him."

As the physician departed, the youth gazed long and earnestly into the face of the old hunter, and at length, laying his hand upon his mysterious friend, he said :

"Chiron, I would ask you a question. Since I have known you I have troubled you with but few questions. I once promised you that I would not seek to rend the veil from your secret-have I not kept that promise ?"

" Most faithfully," returned Chiron. "Then I would now be absolved from its further claims."

"I grant you the absolution," Chiron rejoined, with a smile.

" Now, Chiron, tell me who and what you are. You say the crisis is near at hand, and before it comes, I would at least know you for what you really are."

"Then know me for your friend." "No, no-not that, Chiron. That I have long known."

"Orlando," said the strange man, while a peculiar shade of mingled hope and anxiety passed over his features, "if you do not receive what you ask from other lips than mine on the morrow, I will myself open the seal and hold it up to your view. The mission of years is soon to be accomplished. and when the veil is lifted up you shall know wherefore I am your friend. Sleep quietly to-night, and on the morrow your soul shall be moved by things of which you never dared even to dream. Part of the crew of the brig will be here, and Rosewell Berkley is also summoned. The villain knows not yet that we are domiciled here, and at the request of Sir Oliver he will come most unhesitatingly. Let your dreams be happy to-night, and let your hope range to heaven if it can."

CHAPTER XI.

Bright and joyous danced the beams of the morning sun over the forests and streams, and gaily sung the lark as it dipped its light plumage in the golden flood. At an early hour Orlando approached the apartment where lay his mother. His heart beat with a hushed motion as he stood by his parent's beside. Elpsey was drowsing in her chair, and as the youth entered he gave her permission to slip out and take the fresh air.

The negress was gone, and the son was alone with his mother ! He bent low over the bed and kissed the white brow. That simple kiss so sweet, so gentle, so pure, and so loving !

Morgiana opened her eyes and gazed for a moment about her-then she closed them and placed her hands hard upon her brow. Again she opened them and murmured:

"Where am I ?" "Here, here, dear mother," cried Orlando, as he took her hand in his own. "Orlando," uttered she in a tone so

strange that the youth was startled. "Yes, yes, dear mother-your own Orlando-your own loving son. Do you not

Long and steadily did that mother gaze into the face of her boy. Shade after shade, and light after light, passed over her features, but her eyes varied not-their light was deep, intense, and a thousand souls seemed struggling in their lustrous depths. At length her lips parted and she murmur-

"If this is not real, then what a dream has been mine."

"It must be like a dream to you, mother," said the youth, still moved most strangely by the peculiar manner of his parent, "for during the past week you have been low, very low; but you are better

"A week !" uttered Morgiana. " Raise me up, Orlando, and let me look upon you."

Tremblingly the youth obeyed, and as the mother reclined upon the arm of her child, she continued :

"A week! No, no, it must have been years, long, long years ! I remember I had a child-a laughing babe-an infant boyand I called it Orlando! And I remember too, that my boy once had a father; but, alas, that father-"

Big tears gathered in the poor woman's eyes, and for a moment she besitated, but was upon the point of turning to depart, at length she wiped her tears away, and he did so :

while yet a fearful shudder ran through her frame she continued :

"I see it all! My husband went out on that pleasant morning-he kissed me before he went, and his hand trembled as he left me. I was frightened at his looks, but he promised me he would soon return. My husband I never saw again !"

"And he deserted you!" uttered Orlando, in accents of fearful suspense.

Descried me! Who ever told you that?" exclaimed Morgiana, with sudden energy. Orlando hesitated for a moment how to answer, but soon he resolved to speak the truth, and in a kind, soft tone, he said :

"You told me so, mother. Ever since I can remember-and that is sixteen yearsyou have given me to understand that my father deserted you."

"And thus my dream passes before my eyes," murmured she, as she again placed her hand upon her brow. "No, no, my son -for such I know you are-my husband loved me truly, faithfully. He promised me to come back, but he never came. In an hour after he left me some men brought a body into the house. I lifted the pall from the face, and beheld the features of my husband! He was cold and stiff, and his cloak was all bloody! They told me he had fallen in a duel! I fell upon that lifeless clay, and there my soul sunk into a slumber of memory's oblivio n ! No, I feel that I am awakened from my life-dream; yet the dream has some pictures which my memory still clings to. Your image is graven upon my heart, even as the unconscious lake receives the image of the tree that grows upon its margin. My son, my son, what a dream has been mine! How fraught with tears and woe-with smiles and flowers !"

As Morgiana spoke she sunk back upon her pillow and closed her eyes. She was weak, and she needed repose. At that moment Elpsey came back, and without a word the youth slipped from the apartment. In the hall he met Chiron who had just come in from the garden.

"Orlando," said the old hunter, as he grasped the youth by the hand with astonishment, "what is the matter?"

The young man fell upon Chiron's bosom, and bursting into tears, he murmured:

"My mother ! my mother !" "What has happened? Speak ! speak !" uttered Chiron, in breathless anxiety.

"Morgiana is not more ill-she is not "Dead ! Ah, no," returned the youth, while the sun of a refulgent joy beamed softly from his every feature. "Chiron. the sun of reason has risen upon her-the dark clouds of her mental night have roll-

ed away, and, in all its pristine strength and purity, her mind has ace throne! She spoke to me-she called me Orlando-her son! She told me of that fearful, terrible morning, when, upon the cold corpse of my father, she sank into the chaos of her mental world !" A moment that powerful man gazed into the face of the youth, and then, with

his hands clasped above his head, he sunk upon his knees. No sound broke from his lips, but yet the prayer of thanksgiving that went forth from his heart was such a one as angels love to receive upon their celestial tablets and bear to the throne of the Father!

As Chiron arose to his feet the physician entered the hall, and having been informed of what had transpired, he proceeded at once to his patient's chamber. Ada came down from her apartment, and drawing her arm within his own, Orlando led her forth into the garden, there to pour into her ears the joyful intelligence of his mether's return to reason, while Chiron went to his own room to prepare his morning's toilet. and when he returned to the hall he looked almost like another being. The long beard was shaven from his face, so that the kind, benevolent look which had before been confined about his mouth and eyes now spread its beams over his whole face. His rough suit of furs and deer-skins had been replaced by a neat citizen's dress, and when Orlando saw him again it was some momenta before he could realize that in the noble form before him he really beheld his mysterious friend. Ada was delighted with the transformation, and so was Lady

When the doctor returned from his visit to the invalid, his countenance was all flowing heart. smiles and joy, and be assured the assembled household that Morgiana was beyond all danger. Chiron drew him to one side, and conversed earnestly with him for some minutes, after which the transformed hunter took Orlando by the hand, remarking as

"The doctor says I may see her. Come, my boy, let us to Morgiana's chamber."

When Orlando entered his mother's room she was sitting up in her bed, with the pillows so arranged as to give a comfortable support for her back, while her eyes were dwelling upon Ada's flower-garden, which opened its fragrant beds in front of her window. With reason once more sending its beams of intelligence athwart her features she looked more beautiful than ever, and, almost transported, Orlando stood and gazed upon her ere he stepped forward.

"Orlando, my son," uttered Morgiana, as her eyes rested upon the form of her boy, "come to my side and let me look upon you. Kiss me. - There, now tell me of the past. I've dreamed of forests and ruins, of flowery gardens and running brooks. Upon my mind there is pictured a sylvan paradise—a wood-embowered home in the sweet wilderness. I would know-"

She did not speak further, for at that moment her eyes rested upon the powerful form of Chiron. She did not gaze upon him wildly, nor did she start with sudden excitement, but calmly, steadily she gazed, and then placing her hand upon her brow, she murmured: "Orlando,"

"Well, mother," softly returned the

"I fear me I am going back again to my dreamland home. I dwell again in the realms of phantasy," and as the woman spoke, she pressed her hand over her eyes.

"How-what-of whom do you dream?" asked Orlando, placing his hand upon his mother's brow, and bending over her with earnest solicitude.

"Did you not see that form that stood but now by my bedside ?-that airy phantom ?"

"Tis no phantom, mother," urged Orlando. " Look up again. He is still here, and he has been our best friend."

"Here ! here !" murmured Morgiana .-"No, no, my son-that may not be. It

"Morgiana," said Chiron, while he stepped forward and took one of her hands in his own.

Slowly Mergiana gazed up into the powerful man's face. For a full minute she looked, and then, while an expression made all of earnest, hopeful prayer, rested upon her features, she said :

"Speak to me again. Call me Morgiana. Call me-no, no-O, God, that cannot be." "Morgiana, it can be !" said Chiron, and while he spoke, a loving smile shone upon his broad, kind face.

"Then speak to me again. Call me-" "my wife /" cried the old hunter; and as he stooped further forward, Morgiana fell upon his bosom and was clasped within his arms.

"Has kind Heaven played me false in this, or do I see my father?" ejaculated Orlando, in trembling, fearful accents, as he drew nearer to his strange friend.

"My son, my son," murmured Chiron, as he drew one arm about the form of the youth, "you do indeed see in me your father. My wife-my son !"

As the stout man spoke he drew his priceless burdens more closely to his bosom, and then wept like a child. In a few moments, however, he laid Morgiana's head back upon her pillow, and wiping the tears from his cheeks, he gazed upon her

"Let no doubt cloud your joy, my own dear wife," he said, while yet both the mother and son were regarding him with speechless wonder. "I am your own husband-I am the man to whom you pledged your heart's early love-the father of your boy, and the fond worshipper of your goodness and truth. Look up, sweet wife, and be happy, for ere this sun shall sink again to its rest, there shall not be a cloud to darken the horizon of your peace. You now have a husband and a son to live for -you have other hopes to realize, and many scenes yet to come shall be blessed with the sunlight of your smiles. Look up, my wife, and smile."

Morgiana did smile, so happily and so sweetly, that heaven itself seemed reflected upon her countenance. Again she placed her arm about her husband's neck, and murmured her thanksgiving with an over-

"But tell me, my husband," said Morgiana, as soon as she could bring her mind. down to a cool reflection, "how is it that you live? I saw your bloody form, all stiff and cold, and they told me you were dead. Why have we thus been separated ?"

At that moment Orlando cast his eyes

out at the window, and an exclamation of some sudden emotion escaped from his lips as he noticed Roswell Berkley coming up from the river. Chiron's eyes wandered in the same direction, and pulling his son by the sleeve, he bade him seek Sir Oliver and inform him of the arrival, at the same time promising that he soon would follow.

As Orlando passed out he saw Chiron take Morgiana's hand again in his own, and though anxious curiosity ran wild in his bosom, yet he endeavored to curb it by the self-assurance that all would ere long be revealed to him. He had seen his mother in the possession of her long-lost reason, and he had found in the person of his mysterious friend a dear father, but yet there was much more for him to know. The life-lots had not yet all been drawn.

At the same moment that Roswell Berkley entered the hall of Sir Oliver Wimple's dwelling Dick Nolan and three of his shipmates came up from the river, and remained within hailing distance. Berkley was not without some slight shade of suspicion as he entered the baronet's dwelling, for the servants had eyed him with strange glances as he passed them; but, remembering that the old baronet was his friend, he strove to banish all unpleasant suspicions, and in a moment more he greeted Sir Oliver with a bland smile.

"Ah, whom have we here?" uttered Berliley, as the remodelled hunter entered the room.

"Let me introduce you," said the baronet, "Mr. Berkley, my friend, Lord Chiron."

"Chiron! Lord Chiron!" repeated Berkley, starting with a sudden fear, as he recognized the noble form of the old hunter.

"Have you forgotten me?" asked Chiron, as he regarded the dumbfounded man with a bitter smile.

"Sir Oliver, what means this?" cried Berkley, in a tone which seemed to indicate that he still counted upon the baronet's friendship, but at the same time evincing a fear that might not be easily shaken off.

"It simply means that Lord Chiron, and one or two other friends, have business to transact, and your presence was deemed absolutely necessary. Ah, here comes another," continued Sir Oliver, "Mr. Berkley, Orlando Chester."

"Fiends of darkness ?" shricked the villain, as his eyes rested upon him whom he thought either dead, or far away. "Sir Oliver, let me go hence."

"Easy," said Chiron, as he motioned Berkley to a seat. "I have business with you, and when that is done you can be relieved of our presence."

Roswell Berkley gazed first upon one, and then upon another of those present, and, while his gaze seemed wavering between Chiron and Orlando, he sank into a seat. A deep struggle was apparent upon his countence, but at length his native impudence seemed to triumph, and with a forced look of offended dignity, he said :

"Then go on-but be quick about it." "You will find the business quickly enough transacted for your own pleasure," returned Chiron, as he quietly took a seat.

"And who are you that thus assumes to dictate ?" asked Berkley, with considerable distrust. "If you are Lord Chiron, you can be nothing to me." "I am the Lord of Chiron, and I am

something to you; but it is of your brother that I would now speak."

Roswell Berkley started and turned

"I would ask you," continued Chiron, "if you remember of your brother's making his will and leaving the colony for England?" Concluded next week.

137 The following dialogue was overheard the other day in Vicksburg ;

"Say, Jim, I'se noticed somefin' in dis town, is you?"

"I dunno whedder I is or no, Si; what

"It's dis: Is you noticed when a strange darkey comes here dat 'mounts to sumfin', de white folks say, 'who is dat colored man? but de culled people say, 'who is dat nigga?" Jim, a nigga ain't got no sense, no how."

"Dat's so, Si, sho's yer born."

At a social wedding party in Springfield, the bridegroom, Mr. Paddy Burke, arose and announced his ability to lick any man in the room. Mr. Jimmy Burns said that the statement seemed to him devoid of of strict adherence to fact. The fight had not long progressed when the police broke in and took everybody to the station.