DAWN.

CHAPTER XXI.—Continued.

"'Do you know how old I am to-day? Nineteen and I have been married a year and a half. Ah! what a happy lass I was before I married; how they worshiped me in my old home! "Queen Anne" they always called me. Well, they are dead now, and pray God they sleep so sound that they can neither hear nor see. Yes, a year and a half—a year of happiness, half a year of hell; happiness whilst I did not know you, hell since I saw your face. What secret spring of wickedness did you touch in my heart? I never had a thought of wrong before you came. But when I first set eyes upon your face, I felt some strange change come over me; I recognized my evil destiny. How you discovered my fascinations, how you led me on to evil, you best know. I am no coward, I do not wish to excuse myself, but, sometimes I think that you have much to answer for, George. Hark, I hear my baby crying, my beautiful boy with his father's eyes. Do you know I believe that the child has grown afraid of me; it beats at me with its tiny hands. I think that my very dog dislikes me now. They know me as I am; Nature tells them; everybody knows me except him. He will come in presently from visiting his sick and poor, and kiss me and call me his sweet wife, and I shall act the living lie. Oh! God, I cannot bear it much longer—'"

"There is more of the same sort," remarked George, coolly. "It affords a most interesting study of mental anatomy, but I have no time to read more of it. We will pass on to another."

Lady Bellamy did not move, she sat trembling a little, her face buried in her hands.

He took up a second letter, and began to read a marked passage.

"'The die is cast, I will come; I can no longer resist your influence; it grows stronger every day and now it makes me a murderess, for the shock will kill him. And yet I am tired of the sameness and smallness of my life; my mind is too big to be cramped in such narrow fetters.'

"That extract is really very funny," said George, critically. "But don't look depressed Anne; I am only going to trouble you with one more dated a year or so later. Listen:

"'I have several times seen the man you sent me; he is a fool and contemptible in appearance, and, worst of all shows signs of falling in love with me; but, if you wish it, I will go through the marriage ceremony with him, poor little dupe! You will not marry me yourself, and I would do more than that to keep near you; indeed, I have no choice, I must keep near you. I went to the Zoological Gardens the other day and saw a rattlesnake fed upon a live rabbit; the poor thing had ample room to run away in, but could not, it was fascinated and sat still and screamed. At last the snake struck it, and I thought that its eyes looked like yours. I am as helpless as that poor animal, and you are much more cruel than the snake. And yet my mind is infinitely stronger than your own in every way. I cannot understand it. What is the source of your power over me? But I am quite reckless now, so what does it matter? I will do anything that does not put me within reach of the law, you know that my husband is dead. I knew that he would die; he expired with my name upon his lips. The child, too, I hear, died in a fit of croup; the nurse had gone out, and there was no one to look after it. Upon my word, I may well be reckless, for there is no forgiveness for such as you and I. As for little B——, as I think I told you I will lead him on and marry him; at any rate, I will make his fortune for him; I must devote myself to something and ambition is more absorbing than anything else—at least, I shall rise to something great. Good-night; I don't know which aches the most, my head or my heart.'

"Now, that extract would be interesting reading to Bellamy, would it not?"

Here she suddenly sprung forward and snatched at the letter. But George was too quick for her; he flung it into the safe by his side, and swung the heavy lid to.

"No, no, my dear Anne, that property is too valuable to be parted with except for a consideration."

Her attempt frustrated, she dropped back into her chair.

"What are you torturing me for?" she asked hoarsely, "Have you any object in dragging up the ghost of that dead past, or is it merely for amusement?"

"Did I not tell you that I had a favor to ask of you, and wished to get you into a proper frame of mind first?"

"A favor. You mean that you have some wickedness in hand that you are too great a coward to execute yourself. Out with it; I know you too well to be shocked."

"Oh, very well. You saw Angela Caresfoot, Philip's daughter, here yesterday?"

"Yes, I saw her."

"Very good. I mean to marry her, and you must manage it for me."

Lady Bellamy sat quite still, and made no answer.

"You will now," continued George, relieved to find that he had not provoked the outburst he had expected, "understand why I read you those extracts. I am thoroughly determined upon marrying that girl at whatever cost, and I see very clearly that I shall not be able to do so without your help. With your help the matter will be easy; for no obstacle, except the death of the girl herself, can prevail against your iron determination and unbounded fertility of resource."

"And if I refuse?"

"I must have read those extracts to very little purpose for you to talk about refusing. If you refuse the pangs of conscience will overcome me, and I shall feel obliged to place these letters and more especially those referring to himself in the hands of your husband. Of course, it will, for my own sake, be unpleasant to me to have to do so, but I can easily travel for a year or two till the talk has blown over. For you it will be different. Bellamy has no cuse to love you now; judge what he will feel when he knows all the truth. He will scarcely keep the story to himself, and, even were he to do so, it could easily be set about in other ways, and, in either case, you will be a ruined woman, and all that you have toiled and schemed for for twenty years will be snatched from you in an instant. If, on the other hand, you do not refuse, and I cannot believe that you will, I will on my wedding-day burn these uncomfortable records before your eyes, or, if you prefer it, you shall burn them yourself."

"You have only seen this girl once; is it possible that you are in earnest in wishing to marry her?"

"Do you think that I should go through this scene by way of a joke? I never was so much in earnest in my life before, I am in love with her, I tell you; as much in love as though I had known her for years. What happened to you with reference to me has happened to me with reference to her, or something very like it, and marry her I must and will."

Lady Bellamy, as she heard these words, rose from her chair and flung herself on the ground before him clasping his knees with her hands.

"Oh, George, George!" she cried, in a broken voice, "have some little pity; do not force me to do this unnatural thing. Is your heart a stone, or are you altogether a devil, that by such cruel threats you can drive me into becoming the instrument of my own shame? I know what I am, none better; but for whose sake did I become so? Surely George, I have some claim on your compassion, if I have none on your love. Think again, George; and, if you will not give her up, choose some other means to compass this poor girl's ruin."

"Get up, Anne, and don't talk sentimental rubbish. Not but that," he added, with a sneer, "it is rather amusing to hear you pitying your successful rival."

She sprung to her feet, all the softness and entreaty gone from her face, which was instead now spread with her darkest and most vindictive look.

"I pity her!" she said. "I hate her. Look you, if I have to do this, my only consolation will be in knowing that what I do will drag my successor down below my own level. I suffer; she shall suffer more; I know you're a fiend; she shall find a whole hell with you; she is purer and better than I have ever been; soon you shall make her worse than I have dreamed of being. Her purity shall be dishonored, her love betrayed, her life reduced to such chaos that she shall cease to believe even in her God, and in return for these things I will give her—you. Your new plaything shall pass through my mill, George Caresfoot, before ever she comes to yours; and on her I will repay with interest all that I have suffered at your hands;" and, exhausted with the fierceness of her own invective and the violence of conflicting passions, she sunk back into her chair.

"Bravo, Anne! quite in your old style. I dare say that the young lady will require a little molding, and she could not be in better hands; but mind no tricks—I am not going to be cheated out of my bride."

"You need not fear, George; I shall not murder her. I do not believe in violence; it is the last resource of fools. If I did, you would not be alive now."

George laughed a little uneasily.

"Well, we are good friends again, so there is no need to talk of such things," he said. "The campaign will not be by any means an easy one—there are many obstacles in the way, and I don't think that my intended has taken a particular fancy to me. You will have to work for your letters, Anne; but first of all take a day or two to think it over, and make a plan of the campaign. And now goodbye; I have got a bad headache, and am going to lie down."

She rose and went without another word; but all necessity for setting about her shameful task was soon postponed by news that reached her the next morning, to the effect that George Caresfoot was seriously ill.

CHAPTER XXII.

The dog cart that Arthur had hired to take him aawy belonged to an old-fashioned inn in the parish of Rewtham situated about a mile from Rewtham House, which had just passed into the hands of the Bellamys, and two from Bratham Abbey, and thither Arthur had himself driven. His Jehu, known through all the country round as "Old Sam," was an ancient hostler who had been in the service of the Rewtham King's Head, man and boy, for over sixty years, and from him Arthur collected a good deal of inaccurate information about the Caresfoot family, including a garbled version of the death of Angela's mother, and Philip's disinheritance.

After all, there are few more comfortable places than an inn; not a huge London hotel, where you are known as No. 48, and have to lock the door of your cell when you come out of it, and deliver up your key to the warder in the hall; but an old-fashioned country establishment where they cook your beefsteak exactly as you like it, and give you sound ale and a four-poster. At least, so thought Arthur, as he sat in the private parlor smoking, his pipe and reflecting on the curious vicissitudes of existence. Now, here he was, with all the hopes and interests of his life utterly changed in a single space of six-and-twenty hours. Why, six-and-twenty hours ago, he had never met his respected guardian, nor Sir John and Lady Bellamy, nor Philip and his daughter. He could hardly believe that it was only that morning that he had first seen Angela. It seemed weeks ago, and, if time could have been measured on a new principle, by events and not by minutes, it would have have been weeks. The wheel of life, he thought revolves with a strange irregularity. For months and years it turns slowly and steadily under the even pressure of monotonous events. But, on some unexpected day, a tide comes rushing down the stream of being, and spins it round at speed; and then tears onward to the ocean called the Past, leaving its plaything to creak and turn to turn and creak, or wrecked perhaps and useless.

Thinking thus, Arthur made his way to bed. The excitement of the day had wearied him, and for a while he slept soundly, but, as the fatigue of the body wore off, the activity of his mind asserted itself, and he began to dream vague, happy dreams of Angela, that by degrees took shape and form, till they stood out clear before the vision of his mind. He dreamed that he and Angela were journeying, two such happy travelers, through the green fields in summer, till by and by they came to the dark entrance of a wood, into which they plunged, fearing nothing. Thicker grew the overshadowing branches, and darker grew the path, and now they journeyed loverwise, with their arms around each other. But, as they passed along they came to a place where the path forked, and here he stooped to kiss her. Already he could feel the thrill of her embrace, when she was swept from him by an unseen force and carried down the path before them, leaving him rooted where he was. But still he could trace her progress as she went, wringing her hands in sorrow; and presently he saw the form of Lady Bellamy, robed as an Egyptian sorceress, and holding a letter in her hand, which she offered to Angela, whispering in her ear. She took it, and then in a second the letter turned to a great snake, with George's head, and threw its coils around her and struck at her with its fangs. Next the darkness, of night rushed down upon the scene, and out of the darkness came wild cries and mocking laughter and the choking sounds of death. And his senses left him.

When sight and sense came back, he dreamed that he was still walking down a wooded lane, but the foliage of the overhanging trees was of a richer green. The air was sweet with the scent of unknown flowers, beautiful birds flitted around him, and from far off came the murmur of the sea. And as he traveled, broken-hearted, a fair woman with a gentle voice stood by his side, and kissed and comforted him, till at length he grew weary of her kisses and she left him, weeping, and he went on his way alone, seeking his lost Angela. And then at length the path took a sudden turn, and he stood on the shore of an illimitable ocean, over which brooded a strange light, as where "The quiet end of evening smiles . . . Miles on miles."

And there, with the soft light lingering on her hair, and tears of gladness in her eyes, stood Angela, more lovely than before, her arms outstretched to greet him. And then the night closed in, and he awoke.

His eyes opened upon the solemn and beautiful hour of the first quickening of the dawn, and the thrill and softness that come from contact with the things we meet in sleep was still upon him. He got up and flung open his lattice window. From the garden beneath rose the sweet scent of May flowers, very different from that of his dream which yet lingered in his nostrils, whilst from a neighboring lilac-bush streamed the rich melody of the nightingale. Presently it ceased before the broadening daylight, but in its stead, pure and clear and cold arose the notes of the mavis, giving tuneful thanks and glory to its Maker. And, as he listened, a great calm stole upon his spirit, and kneeling down there by the open window, with the breath of spring upon his brow, and the voice of the happy birds within his ears, he prayed to the Almighty with all his heart that it might please Him in His wise mercy to verify his dream, inasmuch as he would be well content to suffer, if by suffering he might at last attain to such an unutterable joy. And rising from his knee, feeling better and stronger, he knew in some dim way that that undertaking must be blessed which in such a solemn hour of the heart, he did not fear to pray God to guide, to guard, and to consummate.

And on many an every-day, and in many another place, the book of his life would reopen at this well-conned page, and he would see the dim light in the faint, flushed sky, and hear the song of the thrush swelling upward strong and sweet, and remember his prayer and the peace that fell upon his soul.

By ten o'clock that morning, Arthur his dog, and his portmanteau, had all arrived together in front of the Abbey House. Before his feet had touched the moss-grown gravel, the hall-door was flung open, and Angela appeared to welcome him, looking, as old Sam the hostler forcibly put it afterward to his helper, "just like a hangel with the wings off." Jakes, too, emerged from the recesses of the garden, and asked Angela, in a tone of aggrieved sarcasm, as he edged his way suspiciously past Aleck, why the gentleman had not brought the "rampingest lion from the Zoologic Gardens" with him at once? Having thus expressed his feelings on the subject of bull-dogs, he shouldered the portmanteau, and made his way with it up-stairs. Arthur followed him up the wide oak stairs, every one of which was squared out of a single log, stopping for a while on the landing, where the staircase turned to gaze at the stern-faced picture that hung so that it looked through the large window facing it, right across the park and over the whole stretch of the Abbey lands and to wonder at the deep-graved inscription of "Devil Caresfoot," set so conspicuously beneath.

His room was the largest upon the first landing, and the same in which Angela's mother had died. It had never been used from that hour to this, and, indeed, in a little recess or open space between a cupboard and the wall there still stood two trestles, draped with rotten black cloths that had originally been brought there to rest her coffin on, and which Angela had overlooked in getting the room ready.

This spacious but somewhat gloomy apartment was hung round with portraits of the Caresfoots of past ages, many of which bore a marked resemblance to Philip, but amongst whom he looked in vain for one in the slightest degree like Angela, whose handiwork he recognized in two large bowls of flowers placed upon the dark oak dressing-table.

Just as Jakes had finished unbuckling his portmanteau, a task that he had undertaken with some groaning, and was departing in haste, lest he should be asked to do something else, Arthur caught sight of the trestles.

"What are those?" he asked cheerfully.

"Coffin-stools," was the abrupt reply.

"Coffin-stools!" ejaculated Arthur, feeling that it was unpleasant to have little details connected with one's latter end brought thus abruptly into notice. "What the deuce are they doing here?"

"Brought to put the last as slept in that 'ere bed on, and stood ever since."

"Don't you think," insinuated Arthur, gently, "that you had better take them away?"

"Can't do so; they be part of the furniture, they be—stand here all handy for the next one too, may be you;" and he vanished with a sardonic grin.

Jakes did not submit to the indignities of unbuckling portmanteaus and having his legs sniffed at by bull-dogs for nothing. Not by any means pleased by suggestions so unpleasant, Arthur took his way down-stairs determined to renew the coffin-stool question with his host. He found Angela waiting for him in the hall, and making friends with Aleck.

"Will you come in and see my father for a moment before we go out?"

Arthur assented and she led the way into the study where Philip always sat, the same room in which his father had died. He was sitting at a writing-table as usual, at work on farm accounts. Rising he greeted Arthur civilly, taking, however, no notice of his daughter, although he had not seen her since the previous day.

"Well, Heigham, so you have made up your mind to brave these barbarous wilds, have you? I am delighted to see you; but I must warn you that, beyond a pipe and a glass of grog in the evening, I have not much time to put at your disposal. We are rather a curious household. I don't know whether Angela has told you, but for one thing we do not take our meals together, so you will have to make your choice between the dining-room and the nursery, for my daughter is not out of the nursery yet," and he gave a little laugh. "On the whole, perhaps you had better be relegated to the nursery; it will, at any rate, be more amusing to you than the society of a morose old fellow like myself. And, besides, I am very irregular in my habits. Angela, you are staring at me again; I shoul be so very much obliged if you would look the other way. I only hope Heigham, that old Pigott won't talk your head off; she has got a dreadful tongue. Well, don't let me keep you any longer; it is a lovely day for the time of the year. Try to amuse yourself somehow, and I hope for your sake that Angela will not occupy herself with you as she does with me, by staring as though she wished to examine your brains and backbone. Good-bye for the present."

"What does he mean?" asked Arthur, as soon as they were fairly outside the door, "about your staring at him?"

"Mean!" answered poor Angela, who looked as though she were going to cry. "I wish I could tell you; all I know is that he cannot bear me to look at him—he is always complaining of it. That is why we do not take our meals together—at least, I believe it is. He detests my being near him. I am sure I don't know why; it makes me very unhappy. I cannot see anything different in my eyes from anybody else's, can you?" and she turned them, swimming as they were with tears of mortification, full upon Arthur.

He scrutinized their depths very closely; so closely indeed, that presently she turned them away again with a blush.

"Well," she said, "I am sure you have looked long enough. Are they different?"

"Very different," replied the oracle, with enthusiasm.

"How?"

"Well, they—they are larger."

"Is that all?"

"And they are deeper."

"Deeper—that is nothing. I want to know if they produce any unpleasant effect upon you—different from other people's eyes, I mean?"

"Well, if you ask me, I am afraid that your eyes do produce a strange effect upon me, but I cannot say that it is an unpleasant one. But you do not look long enough for me to form a really sound opinion. Let us try again."

"No, I will not; and I do believe that you are laughing at me. I think that is very unkind;" and she marched on in silence.

"Don't be angry with me, or I shall be miserable. I really was not laughing at you; only, if you knew what wonderful eyes you have got, you would not ask such ridiculous questions about them. Your father must be a strange man to get such ideas. I am sure I should be delighted if you would look at me all day long. But tell me something more about your father; he interests me very much."

Angela felt the tell-tale blood rise to her face as he praised her eyes, and bit her lips with vexation, it seemed to her that she had suddenly caught an epidemic of blushing.

"I cannot tell you very much about my father, because I do not know much; his life is, to a great extent, a sealed book to me. But they say that once he was a very different man, when he was quite young I mean. But all of a sudden his father—my grandfather, you know—whose picture is on the stairs, died, and within a day or two my mother died, too, that was when I was born. After that he broke down, and became what he is now. For twenty years he has lived as he does now, pouring all day over books of accounts, and very rarely seeing anybody, for he does all his business by letter, or nearly all of it, and he has no friends. There was some story about his being engaged to a lady who lived at Rewtham when he married my mother, which I dare say you have heard; but I don't know much about it. But Mr. Heigham"—and here she dropped her voice—"there is one thing that I must warn you of; my father has strange fancies at times. He is dreadfully superstitious, and thinks that he has communications with beings from another world. I believe that it is all nonsense, but I tell you so that you may not be surprised at anything he says or does. He is not a happy man, Mr. Heigham."

"Apparently not. I cannot imagine any one being happy who is superstitious; it is the most dreadful bondage in the world."

"Where are your ravens to-day?" asked Arthur presently.

"I don't know; I have not seen very much of them for the last week or two. They have made a nest in one of the big trees at the back of the house, and I dare say that they are there, or perhaps they are hunting for their food—they always feed themselves. But I will soon tell you," and she whistled in a soft, but penetrating note.

Next minute there was a swoop of wings, and the largest raven, after hovering over her for a minute, lit upon her shoulder, and rubbed his black head against her face.

"This is Jack, you see; I expect that Jill is busy sitting on her eggs. Fly away Jack and look after your wife." She clapped her hands, and the great bird, giving a reproachful croak, spread his wings and was gone.

"You have a strange power over animals to make those birds so fond of you."

"Do you think so? It is only because I have, living as I do quite alone, had time to study all their ways, and make friends of them. Do you see that thrush there? I know him well; I fed him during the frost last winter. If you will stand back with the dog, you shall see."

Arthur hid himself behind a thick bush and watched. Angela whistled again, but in another note, with a curious result. Not only the thrush in question, but quite a dozen other birds of different sorts and sizes, came flying round her, some settling at her feet, and one, a little robin, actually perching itself upon her hat. Presently she dismissed them as she had done the raven, by clapping her hands, and came back to Arthur.

"In the winter-time," she said, "I could show you more curious things than that."

"I think that you are a witch," said Arthur, who was astounded at the sight.

She laughed as she answered;

"The only witchery that I use is kindness."

(To Be Continued.)

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

It Amazes Even the People of This Extravagant Age.

A noted statistician and investigator who has lots of time for such work has been doing some figuring on the cost of the Temple of Solomon, and says few people even in these days of palmy extravagance and millionaire display have an adequate impression of the enormous cost of the great temple. According to Villalpandus, the "talents" of gold, silver and brass were equal to the enormous sum of £6,879,822,000. The worth of the jewels is placed at a figure equally as high. The vessels of gold according to Josephus, were valued at 140,000 talents, which, reduced to English money, was equal to £575,296,203. The vessels of silver, according to the same authority, were still more valuable, being set down as worth £616,344,000. Priests' vestments and the robes of singers, £2,010,000, and the trumpets, £200,000. To this add the expense of the building material, labor, etc., and some wonderful figures result. Ten thousand men hewing cedars, 60,000 bearers of burdens, 80,000 hewers of stone overseers, all of whom were employed for seven years, and upon whom besides their wages, Solomon bestowed £6,733,970. If their daily food was worth 50 cents each, the sum total for all was £63 877,088, during the time of building. The materials in the rough are estimated as having been worth £2,545 337,000. This gives a total, just for this much of the expense, which by no means expresses the whole cost, of £10,719,760,261 or about $52,117,034,867.46.

SHE STOOD CORRECTED.

Short-Sighted Aunt—Keep out o' that puddle, Freddy, or you'll mess your boots.

Small Boy—No. I shan't.

Aunt—Don't contradict—it's rude. How can you help getting your boots dirty if you play in the mud?

Small Boy, haughtily—I happen to be wearing shoes.

RACING WITHOUT JOCKEYS.

Horse racing without jockeys is indulged in at Rome during the summer. The horses are started by a gun which is discharged behind them. They carry little spiked balls on cords which swing round their bodies, and these act as