DAWN

CHAPTER XVIII.—Continued.

These were very much the feelings of Arthur and Angela. He hesitated before her, confused, and she kept her head down over the dog. But presently Aleck, getting bored, moved on and, as it would have been inane to continue to stare at the floor, she had to raise herself as slowly as she might. Soon their eyes arrived in the same plane, and whether a mutual glance of intelligence was exchanged, or whether her power of attraction overcame his power of resistance, it is not easy to determine, but certain it is that following a primary natural law. Arthur gravitated toward her, and kissed her on the face.

"My!" exclaimed Pigott, and the milk-jug rolled unheeded on the floor.

"Hum! I suppose I had better explain," began he.

"I think you have spilled the milk," added she.

"That we have become engaged and are——"

"All to pieces, I declare, broke in Angela, with her head somewhere near the carpet.

And then they both laughed.

"Well I never, no not in all my born days! Sir and Miss Angela, all I have got to say about this extraordinary proceeding"—they glanced at each other in alarm—'is that I am very glad to hear on it, and I hope and pray how as you may be happy, and, if you treat my Angela right, you'll be just the happiest and luckiest man in the three kingdoms, including Ireland and the royal family, and, if you treat her wrong, worse will come to you; and her poor mother's last words, as I heard with my own ears, will come true to you, and serve you right—and there's all the milk upon the floor. And God bless you both, my dears, is the prayer of an old woman."

And here the worthy soul broke down, and began to cry, nor were Angela's eyes free from tears.

After this little episode, breakfast proceeded in something like the usual way. Church was 10.30, and before the hour Arthur and Angela strolled down to the spot that had already become a holy ground to them, and looked into each other's eyes, and said again the same sweet words. Then they went on, and mingling with the little congregation—that did not number more than thirty souls—they passed into the cool quiet of the church.

"Lawks!" said a woman, as they went by, "ain't she just a beauty. What a pretty wedding they'd make!"

Arthur overhead it and noted the woman, and afterward found a pretext to give her five shillings because he said it was a lucky omen.

On the communion-table of the pretty little church there was spread the "fair white cloth" of the rubric. It was the day for the monthly celebration of the Sacrament, that met the religious requirements of the village.

"Will you stay for the Sacrament with me?" whispered Angela to her lover, in the interval between their seating themselves and the entry of the clergyman, Mr. Fraser's locum tenens.

Arthur nodded assent.

And so, when the time came, those two went up together to the altar-rails, and, kneeling side by side, eat of the bread and drank of the cup, and, rising, departed thence with a new link between them. For, be sure part of the prayers which they offered up at that high moment were in humble petition to the Almighty to set His solemn seal and blessing on their love. Indeed, so far as Angela was concerned there were few acts of her simple life that she did not consecrate by prayer, how much more then, was she bent upon bringing this, the greatest of all her acts, before her Maker's throne.

Strange, indeed, and full of holy promise, is the yearning with which we turn to heaven to seek sanctification of our deeds, feeling our weakness, and craving strength from the source of strength; a yearning of which the Church with that subtle knowledge of human nature which is one of the mainsprings of its power, has not been slow to avail itself. And this need is more especially felt in the matters connected with the noblest of the passions, perhaps, because all true love and all true religion come from a common home.

Thus pledged to one another with a new and awful pledge, and knitted together in the bonds of a universal love, embracing their poor affections as the wide skies embrace the earth, they rose and went their ways, purer to worship, and stronger to endure.

That afternoon Arthur had a conversation with his betrothed that, partaking of business nature in the beginning, ended rather oddly.

"I must speak to your father when he comes back to-morrow, dear," he began.

"My father! Oh yes, I had forgotten a little about that;" and she looked a little anxious.

"Fortunately, I am fairly well off, so I see no cause why he should object."

"Well, I think that he will be rather glad to get rid of Pigott and myself. You know that he is not very fond of me."

"That is strange want of taste on his part."

"Oh, I don't know. Everybody does not see me with your eyes, Arthur."

"Because they have not the chance. All the world would love you, if it knew you; but, seriously, I think that he can hardly object, or he would not have allowed us to be thrown so much together; for, in nine cases out of ten that sort of thing has only one result.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that to import a young fellow into the house, and throw him solely into a daughter's company, is very apt to bring about—well, what has been brought about."

"Then you mean that you think that I should have fallen in love with any gentleman who had come here?"

Arthur, not seeing the slight flush of indignation in her eyes replied:

"Well, you know there is always a risk; but I should imagine that it would very much depend upon the gentleman."

"Arthur"—with a little stamp—"I am ashamed of you. How can you think such things of me? You must have a very poor opinion of me."

'My dear, why should I suppose myself superior to anybody else, that you should only fall in love with me? You set too high a value on me."

"And you set too low a value upon me; you do not understand me. You are my fate, my other self; how would it have been possible for me to love any one but you? I feel as though I had been traveling to meet you since the beginning of the world, to stand by your side till it crumbles away, yes, for eternity itself. Oh, Arthur, do not laugh at what I say. I am, indeed, only a simple girl, but, as I told you last night, there is something stirring in me now, my real life, my eternal part, something that you have awakened, and with which you have to deal, something apart from the me you see before you. As I speak I feel and know that when we are dead and gone I shall love you still; when more ages have passed than there are leaves upon that tree, I shall love you still. Arthur, I am yours forever, for the time that is, and is to be."

She spoke with the grand freedom of one inspired, nay, he felt that she was inspired, and the same feeling of awe that had come upon him when he first saw her face, again took possession of him. Taking her hand he kissed it.

"Dearest," he said, "dearest Angela, who am I that you should love me so? What have I done that such a treasure should be given to me? I hope that it may be as you say!"

"It will be as I say," she answered, as she bent to kiss him. And they went on in silence.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Philip arrived home about one o'clock on the Monday, and, after their nursery dinner, Arthur made his way to the study, and soon found himself in the dread presence—for what presence is more dread, most people would rather face a chief justice with the gout—of the man whose daughter he was about to ask in marriage.

Philip, whom he found seated by a tray, the contents of which he seemed in no humor to touch received him with his customary politeness saying with a smile that he hoped he had not come to tell him that he was sick of the place and its inhabitants, and was going away.

"Far from it Mr. Caresfoot, I come to speak to you on a very different subject."

Philip glanced up with a quick look of expectant curiosity, but said nothing.

"In short" said Arthur, desperately, "I come to ask you to sanction my engagement to Angela."

A pause—a very awkward pause—ensued.

"You are then engaged to my daughter?"

"Subject to your consent I am."

Then came another pause.

"You will understand me, Heigham when I say that you take me rather by surprise in this business. Your acquaintance with her has been short."

"That is very true, but I have seen a great deal of her."

"Perhaps; but she knows absolutely nothing of the world, and her preference for you—for as you say you are engaged to her, I presume she has shown a preference—may be a mistake, merely a young girl's romantic idea."

Arthur thought of his conversation of the previous day with Angela, and could not help smiling as he answered.

"I think if you ask her that she will tell you that is not the case."

"Heigham, I will be frank with you. I like you, and you have, I believe, sufficient means. Of course you know that my daughter will have nothing—at any rate, till I am dead," he added quickly.

"I never thought about the matter, but I shall be only too glad to marry her with nothing but herself."

"Very good. I was going to say, that, notwithstanding this, marriage is an important matter; and I must have time to think over it before I give you a decided answer, say a week. I shall not, however, expect you to leave here unless you wish to do so, nor shall I seek to place any restrictions on your intercourse with Angela, since it would appear that the mischief is already done. I am flattered by your proposal; but I must have time, and you must understand that in this instance hesitation does not necessarily mean consent."

In affairs of this nature a man is satisfied with small mercies and willing to put up with inconveniences that appear trifling in comparison with the disasters that might have overtaken him. Arthur was no exception to the general rule. Indeed, he was profuse in his thanks, and, buoyed up with all the confidence of youth, felt sure in his heart that he would soon find a way to extinguish any objections that might still linger in Philip's mind.

His would-be father-in-law contented himself with acknowledging his remarks with courtesy, and the interview came to an end.

Arthur gone, however, his host lost all of his calmness of demeanor and, rising from his untasted meal, paced up and down the room in thought. Everything had, he reflected, fallen out as he wished. Young Heigham wanted to marry his daughter, and he could not wish her a better husband. Save for the fatality which had sent that woman to him on her fiend's errand he would have given his consent at once, and been glad to give it. Not that he meant to refuse it—he had no such idea. And then he began to think what, supposing that Lady Bellamy's embassy had been of a nature that he could entertain, which was not, it would mean to him. It would mean the realization of the work and aspirations of twenty years; it would mean his re-entry into the property and position from which he had according to his own view, been unjustly ousted; it would mean, last but not least, triumph over George. And now chance, mighty chance, as fools call Providence, had at last thrown into his hands a lever with which it would be easy to topple over every stumbling-block that lay in his path to triumph; more, he might even be able to spoil that Egyptian George, giving him less than his due.

Oh, how he hungered for the broad acres of his birthright! longing for them as a lover longs for his lost bride. The opportunity would never come again; why should he throw it away? To do so would be to turn his cousin into an open and inplacable foe. Why should he allow this girl, whose birth had bereft him of the only creature he had ever loved, whose sex had alienated the family estates, and for whose company he cared nothing, to come as a destruction on his plans? She would be well off; the man loved her. As for her being engaged to this young Heigham, women soon got over those things. After all, now that he came to think of the matter calmly, what valid cause was there why the thing should not be?

And as he paced to and fro, and thought thus, an answer came into his mind. For there rose up before him a vision of his dying wife, and there sounded in his ear the murmur of her half-forgotten voice that for all its broken softness had with its last accents, called down God's winged vengeance and His everlasting doom on him who would harm her unprotected child. And, feeling that if he did this thing on him would be the vengeance and the doom, he thought of the shadows of the night, and grew afraid.

When Arthur and his host met according to their custom, that evening, no allusion was made on either side to their conversation of the afternoon, nor did her father even speak a word to Angela on the subject. Life to all appearance, went on in the old house precisely as though nothing had happened. Philip did not attempt to put the smallest restraint on Arthur and his daughter, and studiously shut his eyes to the pretty obvious signs of their mutual affection. For them, the long June days were golden, but all too short. Every morning found their mutual love more perfect, but when the flakes of crimson light faded from the skies and night dropped her veil over the tall trees and peaceful lake, by some miracle it had grown deeper and more perfect still. Day by day, Arthur discovered new charms in Angela; here some hidden knowledge, there an unsuspected grace and everywhere an all-embracing charity and love. Day by day he gazed deeper into the depths of her mind, and still there were more to plumb. For it was a store-house of noble thoughts and high ambitions—ambitions, many of which could only find fulfillment in another world than this. And, the more he saw of her the prouder he was to think that such a perfect creature should so dearly love himself; and with the greater joy did he look forward to that supreme and happy hour when he should call her his. And so day added itself to day, and found them happy.

Indeed, the aspect of their fortunes seemed as smooth and smiling as the summer surface of the lake. About Philip's final consent to their engagement they did not trouble themselves, judging not unnaturally, that his conduct was in itself a guarantee of approval. If he meant to raise any serious objections he would surely have done so before. Arthur would urge, and Angela would quite agree with him, and wonder what parent could find it in his heart to object to her bonny-eyed lover.

What a merciful provision of Providence it is that throws a veil over the future, only to be pierced by the keenest-eyed of Scotchmen! Where should we find a flavor in those infrequent cups that the shyest of the gods Joy, holds to our yearning lips, could we know of the bitter that lurks in the tinseled bowl? Surely we have much to be thankful for, but for nothing should we be so grateful as for this blessed impotence of foresight!

But, as it is often on the bluest days that the mercury begins to sink beneath the breath of far-off hurricane so there is a warning spirit implanted in sensitive minds that makes them mistrustful of too great happiness. We feel that, for most of us, the wheel of our fortunes revolves too quickly to allow of a long continuance of unbroken joy.

"Arthur," said Angela, one morning, when eight days had passed since her father's return from town, "we are too happy. We should throw something into the lake."

"I have not got a ring, except the one you gave me," he answered; for his signet was on her finger. "So, unless we sacrifice Aleck or the ravens, I don't know what it is to be."

"Don't joke, Arthur. I tell you we are too happy."

Could Arthur have seen through an acre or so of undergrowth as Angela uttered these words, he would have perceived a very smart page-boy with the Bellamy crest on his buttons delivering a letter to Philip. It is true that there was nothing particularly alarming about that, but its contents might have given a point to Angela's forebodings. It ran thus:

"Rewtham House, Monday.

"My dear Mr. Caresfoot,—With reference to our conversation last week about your daughter and G., can you come over and have a quiet chat with me this afternoon?

"Sincerely yours,

"Anne Bellamy."

Philip read this note and then reread it, knowing in his heart that now was his opportunity to act up to his convictions, and put an end to the whole transaction in a few decisive words. But a man who has for so many years given place to the demon of avarice, even though it be avarice with a legitimate object, cannot shake himself free from his clutches in a moment; even when, as in Philip's case, honor and right, to say nothing of a still more powerful factor, superstition, speak so loudly in his ears. Surely, he thought there would be no harm in hearing what she had to say. He could explain his reasons for having nothing to do with the matter so much better in person. Such mental struggles have only one end. Presently, the smart page-boy bore back this note:

"Dear Lady Bellamy,—I will be with you at half-past, three.

P. C.

It was with very curious sensations that Philip was that day shown into a richly-furnished boudoir in Rewtham House. He had not been in that room since he had talked to Maria Lee, sitting on that very sofa, now occupied by Lady Bellamy's still beautiful form and he could not but feel that it was a place of evil omen for him.

Lady Bellamy rose to greet him with her most fascinating smile.

"This is very kind," she said, as she motioned him to a seat, which Philip afterward discovered, had been carefully arranged so as to put his features in the full light, whilst, sitting on the sofa, her own were concealed. "Well, Mr. Caresfoot," she began, after a little pause, "I suppose I had better come to the point at once. First of all, I presume that, as you anticipated would be the case, there exists some sort of understanding between Mr. Heigham and your daughter."

Philip nodded.

"Well, your cousin is as determined as ever about the matter. Indeed, he is simply infatuated or bewitched, I really don't know which."

"I am sorry for it, Lady Bellamy, as I cannot——"

"One moment, Mr. Caresfoot; first let me tell you his offer, then we can talk it over. He offers, conditionally on his marriage with your daughter, to sell you the Isleworth estates at a fair valuation hereafter to be agreed upon, and to make a large settlement."

"And what part does he wish me to play in the matter?"

"This. First, you must get rid of young Heigham, and prevent him from holding any communication, either with Angela herself, or with any other person connected with this place, for one year from the date of his departure. Secondly, you must throw no obstacle in George's path. Thirdly, if required, you must dismiss her old nurse, Piggott."

"It cannot be, Lady Bellamy, I came here to tell you so. I dare not force my daughter into such a marriage, for all the estates in England."

Lady Bellamy laughed.

"It is amusing," she said, "to see a father afraid of his own daughter; but you are over hasty, Mr. Caresfoot. Who asked you to force her? All you are asked to do is not to interfere, and leave the rest to myself and George You will have nothing to do with it one way or the other, nor will any responsibility rest with you. Besides, it is very probable that your cousin will live down his fancy or some other obstacle will arise to put an end to the thing, in which case Mr. Heigham will come back at the end of his year's probation, and events will take their natural course. It is only wise and right that you should, try the constancy of these young lovers, instead of letting them marry out of hand. If, on the other hand, Angela should in the course of the year declare a preference for her cousin, surely that will be no affair of yours."

"I don't understand what your interest is in this matter, Lady Bellamy."

"My dear Mr. Caresfoot, what does my interest matter to you? Perhaps I have one; perhaps I have not; all women love match-making, you know; what really is important is your decision," and she shot a glance at him from the heavy-lidded eyes, only to recognize that he was not convinced by her arguments or, if convinced, obstinate. "By the way," she went on, slowly, "George asked me to make a payment to you on his account, money that has, he says, been long owing, but which it has not hitherto been convenient to repay."

"What is the sum?" asked Philip, abstractedly.

"A large one, a thousand pounds."

It did not require the peculiar intonation she threw into her voice to make the matter clear to him. He was well aware that no such sum was owing.

"Here is the check," she went on; and, taking from her purse a signed and crossed check upon a London banker, she unfolded it and threw it upon the table, watching him the while.

Philip gazed at the money with the eyes of a hungry wolf. A thousand pounds! That might be his for the asking, nay, for the taking. It would bind him to nothing. The miser's greed took possession of him as he looked.

Slowly he raised his hand, twitching with excitement, and stretched it out toward the check, but, before his fingers touched it, Lady Bellamy, as though by accident, dropped her white palm upon the precious paper.

"I suppose that Mr. Heigham will leave to-morrow on the understanding we mentioned?" she said, carelessly, but in a significant tone.

Philip nodded.

The hand was withdrawn as carelessly as it had come, leaving the check, blushing in all its native beauty upon the table. Philip took it as deliberately as he could, and put it in his pocket. Then, rising, he said good-bye, adding, as he passed through the door:

"Remember, I have no responsibility in the matter. I wash my hands of it, and wish to hear nothing about it."

"The thousand pounds has done it," reflected Lady Bellamy. "I told George that he would rise greedily at money. I have not watched him for twenty years for nothing. Fancy selling an only daughter's happiness in life for a thousand pounds, and such a daughter, too! I wonder how much he would take to murder her, if he were certain that he would not be found out! Upon my word, my work grows quite interesting. That cur, Philip, is as good as a play," and she laughed her own peculiar laugh.

To Be Continued.

THE RIVER SEINE.

At Least One-Twentieth of the Paris Population Is Always Fishing.

The Seine is the most versatile of rivers. Most people seem to think that it is only to cross over, because of the frequent bridges; or, if they read the papers, that it is mostly used by persons of a theatrical turn to commit suicide in. But it has many uses. It is a sewer, it is a highway for floating omnibuses or fly-boats, which carry more people between different parts of the city than any ten tramways; it is a navigable stream for deep water craft—from England principally—and affords a dozen ports in the city of Paris alone; it is a canal, upon which there float more canal boats than any regular canal in France; it is a bath tub, not only for people—in many floating baths which line its banks,—but also for horses, cows and dogs, which have each a designated bathing place; it is a swimming pond for many ducks and geese; it is a reservoir, from which water is pumped for the cleansing of the city streets; it is a laundry tub, in which more than nine-tenths of the clothes of the citizens of Paris are washed—washing never being done at home, even by the poorest people. Last and most important, it is the angling ground for the world's most patient fishermen. Perhaps fish have been caught in the Seine, because often men have protested that they have caught them, but no one—if the same men be excepted—ever saw one caught. This fact, notwithstanding the passion for fishing, and fishing in the Seine particularly, a French statesman has called the evil co-equal with the drinking of absinthe, that is undermining the nation. Spring, summer, autumn, winter, morning, noon and evening, rain or shine, the Parisian world stands on the quais with a hook in the water waiting for a bite. Men, women, and children, are in the crowds, and some look poor and some look rich. But nobody ever looks other than expectant. The waiters of the small cafes and restaurants in the Champs Elysees take advantage of the dull hours, and, bareheaded, aproned, and with napkins covering their immaculate shirt bosoms, seek a place in the ranks; calmen, too, and errand boys and tramps—everybody. If a census were taken some fine day it would indubitably show that at least one-twentieth of the population of Paris was always fishing.

THE SLANGY GIRL.

The pretty girl who uses slang
To conversation gives a tang,
Too strong for me.
How could I ever take to wife
A girl who says, "You bet your life!"
For guarantee?

The maiden who remarks; "Well, say!"
Is quite devoid of fascination in my eyes.
And when you hear one say, "That's right!"
I take my hat and say good-night,
With shocked surprise.

However charming she might be
No slangy girl could be for me
A proper wife
Do you suppose that I would wed
A girl who'd say, "Oh, go fall dead!"
Not on your life!

A DEALER IN WORDS

The late Hon Henry Erskine, meeting his acquaintance, Jemmy Balfour, a barrister, who dealt greatly in hard words and circumlocutious sentences, and perceiving that his ankle was tied up with a silk handkerchief, asked the cause. "Why, my dear sir," answered the wordy lawyer, "I was taking a rural, romantic ramble, in my brother's grounds, when coming to a gate, I had to climb over it, by which I came in contact with the first bar, and have grazed the epidermis on my skin, attended with a slight extravasation of blood." "You may thank your lucky stars," replied Mr Erskine, "that your brother's gate was not as lofty as your style, or you must have broken your neck."

QUEER CHINESE PASSPORT.

In China a traveler wishing for a passport is compelled to have the pain passport is compelled to have the palm of his hand brushed over with fine oil paint. He then presses his hand on thin, damp paper, which retains an impression of the lines. This is used to prevent transference of the passport, as the lines of no two hands are alike.

JUST LIKE A MAN.

John is such a goose; he gave dear mamma half a dozen silver nut-picks and a nut-cracker."

Well, isn't that all right?

Poor mamma, she has dyspepsia, and hasn't eaten a nut for twenty years.