DAWN.

CHAPTER XXXVI—Continued.

"Oh, Aleck," she said, aloud to the dog that was sitting by her side with his head upon her knee, for he was now her constant companion, "I wonder where your master is—your master and mine, Aleck. Would to God that he were back here to protect me, for I am growing afraid, I don't know of what, Aleck and there are eleven long silent months to wait."

At this moment the dog raised his head listened and sprung round with an angry "woof." Angela rose up with a flash of hope in her eyes, turned, and faced George Caresfoot.

He was still pale and shriveled from the effects of his illness, but otherwise little changed, except that the light-blue eyes glittered with a fierce determination, and that the features had attained that fixity and strength which sometimes come to those who are bent heart and soul upon an enterprise, be it good or evil.

"So I have found you out at last, Cousin Angela. What, are you not going to shake hands with me?"

Angela touched his fingers with her own.

"My father is not here," she said.

"Thank you, my dear cousin, but I did not come to see your father, of whom I have seen plenty in the course of my life, and shall doubtless see more; I came to see you, of whom I can never see enough."

"I don't understand you," said Angela, defiantly folding her arms across her bosom and looking him full in the face with fearless eyes, for her instinct warned her that she was in danger, and also that, whatever she might feel, she must not show that she was afraid.

"I shall hope to make you do so before long," he replied, with a meaning glance; "but you are not very polite, you do not offer me a seat."

"I beg your pardon, I did not know that you wanted to sit down. I can only offer you a choice of those stones."

"Then call that brute away, and I will sit down."

"The dog is not a brute, as you mean it. But I should not speak of him like that, if I were you. He is sensible as a human being, and might resent it."

Angela knew that George was a coward about dogs; and at that moment, as though to confirm her words Aleck growled slightly.

"Ah, indeed, well, he is certainly a handsome dog;" and he sat down suspiciously. "Won't you come and sit down?"

"Thank you. I prefer to stand."

"Do you know what you look like, standing there with your arms crossed? You look like an angry goddess."

"If you mean that seriously, I don't understand you. If it is a compliment, I don't like compliments."

"You are not very friendly," said George, whose temper was fast getting the better of him.

"I am sorry. I do not wish to be unfriendly."

"So I hear that my ward has been staying here whilst I was ill."

"Yes, he was staying here."

"And I am also told that there was some boy-and-girl love affair between you. I suppose that he indulged in a flirtation to while away the time."

Angela turned upon him, too angry to speak.

"Well, you need not look at me like that. You surely never expect to see him again, do you?"

"If we both live, I shall certainly see him again; indeed, I shall, in any case."

"You will never see him again."

"Why not?"

"Because he was only flirting and playing the fool with you. He is a notorious flirt, and, to my certain knowledge, has been engaged to two women before."

"I do not believe that this is true, or if it is true, it is not all the truth; but true or untrue, I am not going to discuss Mr. Heigham with you, or allow myself to be influenced by stories told behind his back."

"Angela," said George, rising and seizing her hand.

She turned quite pale, and a shudder passed over her frame.

"Leave my hand alone and never dare to touch me again. This is the second time that you have tried to insult me."

"So!" answered George, furious with outraged pride and baffled passion, "you set up your will against mine, do you? Very well, you shall see. I will crush you to powder. Insult you, indeed! How often did that young blackguard insult you? I warrant he did more than take your hand."

"If," answered Angela, "you mean Mr. Heigham, I shall leave you to consider whether that term is not more applicable to the person who does his best to outrage an unprotected woman, and take advantage of the absent, than to the gentleman against whom you have used it;" and darting on him one glance of supreme contempt, she swept away like an angry queen.

Left to his meditations, George shook his fist toward where she had vanished.

"Very well, my fine lady, very well," he said aloud. "You treat me as so much dirt, do you? You shall smart for this, so sure as my name is George Caresfoot. Only wait till you are in my power, and you shall learn that I was never yet defied with impunity. Oh, and you shall learn many other things also."

From that time forward Angela was, for a period of two months or more subjected to an organized persecution as harassing as it was cruel. George waylaid her everywhere, and twice actually succeeded in entering into conversation with her, but on both occasions she managed to escape from him before he could proceed any further. So persistently did he hunt her that at last the wretched girl was driven to hide herself away in odd corners of the house and woods, in order to keep out of his way. Then he took to writing her letters, and sending handsome presents, all of which she returned.

Poor Angela! It was hard both to lose her lover and to suffer daily from the persecutions of her hateful cousin which were now pushed forward so openly and with such pertinacity as to fill her with vague alarm. What made her position worse, was, that she had no one in whom to confide, for Mr. Fraser had not yet returned. Pigott, indeed, knew more or less what was going on, but she could do nothing except bewail Arthur's absence, and tell her "not to mind." There remained her father, but with him she had never been on sufficiently intimate terms for confidences. Indeed, as time went on, the suspicion gathered strength in her mind that he was privy to George's advances, and that those advances had something to do with the harsh terms imposed upon Arthur and herself. But at last matters grew so bad that, having no other refuge, she determined to appeal to him for protection.

"Father," she said, boldly, one day to Philip, as he was sitting writing in his study, "my cousin George is persecuting me every day. I have borne it as long as I can, but I can bear it no longer. I have come to ask you to protect me from him.

"Why Angela I should have thought that you were perfectly capable of protecting yourself. What is he persecuting you about? What does he want?"

"To marry me, I suppose," answered Angela, blushing to her eyes.

"Well, that is a very complimentary wish on his part, and I can tell you what it is, Angela, if only you could get that young Heigham out of your head, you might do a deal worse."

"It is quite useless to talk to me like that," she answered coldly.

"Well, that is your affair; but it is very ridiculous of you to come and ask me to protect you. The woman must indeed, be a fool who cannot protect herself."

And so the interview ended.

Next day Lady Bellamy called again.

"My dear child," she said to Angela, "you are not looking well; this business worries you, no doubt; it is the old struggle between duty and inclination that we have most of us gone through. Well, there is one consolation, nobody who ever did his or her duty, regardless of inclination, ever regretted it in the end."

"What do you mean, Lady Bellamy, when you talk about my duty?"

"I mean the plain duty that lies before you of marrying your cousin George, and of throwing up this young Heigham."

"I recognize no such duty."

"My dear Angela, do look at the matter from a sensible point of view, think what a good thing it would be for your father and remember, too, that it would reunite all the property. If ever a girl had a clear duty to perform, you have."

"Since you insist so much upon my that an honest girl in my position has three duties to consider, and not one, 'duty,' I must say that it seems to me as you say, Lady Bellamy. First there is her duty to the man she loves, for her the greatest duty of any in the world; next her duty to herself, for her happiness and self-respect are involved in her decision; and lastly, her duty to her family. I put the family last, because, after all, it is she who gets married, not her family."

Lady Bellamy smiled a little.

"You argue well; but there is one thing that you overlook, though I am sorry to have to pain you by saying it; young Mr. Heigham is no better than he should be. I have made inquiries about him, and think that I ought to tell you that."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that his life, young as he is has not been so creditable as it might have been. He has been the hero of one or two little affairs. I can tell you about them if you like."

"Lady Bellamy, your stories are either true or untrue. If true, I should take no notice of them, because they must have happened before he loved me; if untrue, they would be a mere waste of breath so I think we may dispense with the stories—they would influence me no more than the hum of next summer's gnats."

Lady Bellamy smiled again.

"You are a curious woman," she said; but supposing that there were to be a repetition of these little stories after he loved you, what would you say then?"

Angela looked troubled, and thought awhile.

"He could never go far from me," she answered.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I hold the strings of his heart in my hands, and I have only to lift them to draw him back to me—so. No other woman, no living force, can keep him from me if I choose to bid him come."

"Supposing that to be so, how about the self-respect you spoke of just now? Could you bear to take your lover back from the hands of another woman?"

"That would entirely depend upon the circumstances, and upon what was just to the other woman."

"You would not, then, throw him up without question?"

"Lady Bellamy, I may be very ignorant and simple, but I am neither mad nor a fool. What do you suppose that my life would be worth to me if I threw Arthur up? If I remained single it would be an aching void, as it is now, and if I married any other man whilst he still lived, it would become a daily and shameful humiliation such as I had rather die than endure."

Lady Bellamy glanced up from under her heavy-lidded eyes; a thought had evidently struck her, but she did not express it.

"Then I am to tell your cousin George that you will have absolutely nothing to do with him?"

"Yes, and beg him to cease persecuting me; it is quite useless; if there were no Arthur and no other man in the world, I would not marry him. I detest him—I cannot tell you how I detest him."

"It is amusing to hear you talk so, and to think that you will certainly be Mrs. George Caresfoot within nine months."

"Never," answered Angela, passionately, stamping her foot upon the floor. "What makes you say such horrible things?

"I reflect," answered Lady Bellamy, with an ominous smile, "that George Caresfoot has made up his mind to marry you, and that I have made up mine to help him to do so, and that your will strong, as it certainly is, is as compared with our united wills, what a straw is to a gale. The straw cannot travel against the wind, it must go with it, and you must marry George Caresfoot. You will as certainly come to the altar rails with him as you will to your death-bed. It is written in your face. Good-bye."

For the first time Angela's courage really gave way as she heard these dreadful words. She remembered how she herself had called Lady Bellamy an embodiment of the "Spirit of Power," and now she felt that the comparison was just. The woman was power incarnate, and her words, which from anybody else she would have laughed at, sent a cold chill through her.

"She is a fine creature both in mind and body," reflected Lady Bellamy, as she stepped into her carriage. "Really, though I try to hate her, I can find it in my heart to be sorry for her. Indeed, I am not sure that I do not like her; certainly I respect her. But she has come in my path and must be crushed—my own safety demands it. At least, she is worth crushing, and the game is fair, for perhaps she will crush me. I should not be surprised; there is a judgment in those gray eyes of hers—Qui vivra verra. Home, William."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Angela's appeal for protection set Philip thinking.

As the reader is aware, his sole motive in consenting to become, as it were a sleeping partner in the shameful plot, of which his innocent daughter was the object, was to obtain possession of his lost inheritance, and it now occurred to him that even should that plot succeed, which he very greatly doubted, nothing had as yet been settled as to the terms upon which it was to be reconveyed to him. The whole affair was excessively repugnant to him; indeed he regarded the prospect of its success with little less than terror, only his greed overmastered his fear.

But on one point he was very clear; it should not succeed except upon the very best of terms for himself, his daughter should not be sacrificed unless the price paid for the victim was positively princely, such guilt was not to be incurred for a bagatelle. If George married Angela the Isleworth estates must pass back into his hands for a very low sum indeed. But would his cousin be willing to accept such a sum? That was the rub, and that, too, was what must be made clear without any further delay. He had no wish to see Angela put to needless suffering, suffering which would not bring an equivalent with it, and which might, on the contrary, entail consequences upon himself that he shuddered to think of.

Curiously enough, however, he had of late been signally free from his superstitious fears; indeed, since the night when he had so astonished Arthur by his outbreak about the shadows on the wall no fit had come to trouble him, and he was beginning to look upon the whole thing as an evil dream, a nightmare that he had at last lived down. But still the nightmare might return, and he was not going to run the risk unless he was very well paid for it. And so he determined to offer a price so low for the property that no man in his senses would accept it, and then wrote a note to George asking him to come over on the following evening after dinner, as he wished to speak to him on a matter of business.

"There," he said to himself, "that will make an end of the affair, and I will get young Heigham back and they can be married. George can never take what I mean to offer; if he should, the Egyption will be spoiled indeed, and the game will be worth the candle. Not that I have any responsibility about it, however; I shall put no pressure on Angela, she must choose for herself." And Philip went to bed, quite feeling as though he had done a virtuous action.

George came punctually enough on the following evening, which was that of the day of Lady Bellamy's conversation with Angela, a conversation which had so upset the latter that she had already gone to her room, not knowing anything of her cousin's proposed visit.

The night was one of those dreadfully oppressive ones that sometimes visit us in the course of an English summer. The day had been hot and sultry, and with the fall of the evening the little breeze that stirred in the thunder-laden air had died away, leaving the temperature at much the same point that is to be expected in a tropical valley, and rendering the heat of the house almost unbearable.

"How do you do, George?" said Philip. "Hot, isn't it?"

"Yes, there will be a tempest soon."

"Not before midnight, I think. Shall we go and walk down by the lake? It will be cooler there, and we shall be quite undisturbed. Walls have ears sometimes, you know."

"Very well; but where is Angela?"

"I met her on the stairs just now, and she said that she was going to bed—got a headache, I believe. Shall we start?"

So soon as they were well away from the house, Philip broke the ice.

"Some months back, I had a conversation with Lady Bellamy on the subject of a proposal that you made to me through her for Angela's hand. It is about that I wish to speak to you now. First, I must ask you if you still wish to go on with the business?"

"Certainly; I wish it more than ever."

"Well, as I intimated to Lady Bellamy, I do not at all approve of your suit. Angela is already, subject to my consent, very suitably engaged to your late ward, a young fellow whom, whatever you may think about him, I like very much; and I can assure you that it will require the very strongest inducements to make me even allow such a thing. In any case, I will have nothing to do with influencing Angela; she is a perfectly free agent."

"Which means, I suppose, that you intend to screw down the price?"

"In wanting to marry Angela," went on Philip, "you must remember that you fly high. She is a very lovely woman, and, what is more, will some day or other be exceedingly well off, whilst you—you must excuse my being candid, but this is a mere matter of business, and I am only talking of you in the light of a possible son-in-law—you are a middle-aged man, not prepossessing in appearance, broken in health, and, however well you may have kept up your reputation in these parts, as you and I well know, without a single shred of character left; altogether not a man to whom a father would marry his daughter of his own free will or one with whom a young girl is likely to find happiness."

"You draw a flattering picture of me I must say."

"Not at all only a true one."

"Well, if I am all you say, how is it that you are prepared to allow your daughter to marry me at all?"

"I will tell you; because the rights of property should take precedence of the interests of a single individual. Because my father and you between you cozened me out of my lawful own, and this is the only way that I see of coming by it again."

"What does it matter? In any case after your death the land will come back to Angela and her children."

"No, George, it will not; if ever the Isleworth estates come into my hands, they shall not pass again to any child of yours."

"What would you do with them then?"

"Marry, and get children of my own."

George whistled.

"Well, I must say that your intentions are amiable, but you have not got the estates yet, my dear cousin."

"No, and never shall have, most likely; but let us come to the point. Although I do not approve of your advances, I am willing to waive my objections and accept you as a son-in-law, if you can win Angela's consent, provided that before the marriage you consent to give me a clear transfer, at a price, of all the Isleworth estates, with the exception of the mansion and the pleasure-grounds."

"Very good; but now about the price. That is the real point."

They had taken a path that ran down through the shrubberies to the side of the lake, and then turned up toward Caresfoot's Staff. Before answering George's remark, Philip proposed that they should sit down, and, suiting the action to the word, placed himself upon the trunk of a fallen tree that lay by the water's edge, just outside the spread of the branches of the great oak, and commanding a view of the area beneath them.

"The moon will come out presently," he said, when George had followed his example. "She has got behind that thunder-cloud. "Ah!" as a bright flash of lightning passed from heaven to earth, "I thought that we should get a storm; it will be here in half an hour."

All this Philip said to gain time; he had not quite made up his mind what price to offer.

"Never mind the lightning. What do you offer for the property, inclusive of timber, and with all improvements—just as it stands in short."

"One hundred thousand pounds cash," said Philip, deliberately.

George sprung from his seat and sat down again before he answered.

"Do you think that I am drunk, or a fool that you come to me with such a ridiculous offer? Why, the probate valuation was two hundred thousand, and that was very low."

"I offer one hundred thousand and am willing to settle thirty thousand absolutely on the girl should she marry you, and twenty thousand more on my death. That is my offer—take it, or leave it."

"Talk sense, man; your terms are preposterous."

"I tell you that, preposterous or not, I will not go beyond them, well and good, leave them alone, and I'll put myself in communication with young Heigham to-morrow, and tell him that he can come and marry the girl as soon as he likes. For my part, I am very glad to have the business settled."

"You ask me to sacrifice half my property," groaned George.

"My property, you mean, that you stole. But I don't ask you to do anything one way or the other. I am to understand that you refuse my offer?"

"Give me a minute to think," and George hid his face in his hand, and Philip, looking at him with hatred gleaming in his dark eyes, muttered between his teeth:

"I believe that my turn has come at last."

When some thirty seconds had passed in silence, the attention of the pair was attracted by the cracking of dead leaves that sounded quite startling in the intense stillness of the night, and next second a tall figure in white glided up to the water's edge, and stood still within half a dozen paces of them.

Involuntarily Philip gripped his cousin's arm, but neither of them moved. The sky had rapidly clouded up, and the faint light that struggled from the moon only served to show that the figure appeared to be lifting its arms. In another second that was gone too, and the place was totally dark.

"Wait till the moon comes out, and we shall see what it is," whispered George, and, as he spoke, there came from the direction of the figure a rustling sound as of falling garments.

"What can it be?" whispered Philip.

They were not left long in doubt, for at that instant a vivid flash from the thunder-cloud turned the darkness into the most brilliant day, and revealed a woman standing up to her knees in the water, with her arms lifted, knotting her long hair. It was Angela. For one moment the fierce light shone upon the stately form that gleamed whiter than ivory—white as snow against the dense background of the brushwood, and, as it passed, they heard her sink into the water softly as a swan, and strike out with steady strokes toward the centre of the lake.

"It is only Angela," said Philip, when the sound of the strokes grew faint. "Phew! what a start she gave me."

"Is she safe?" asked George, in a husky voice. "Hadn't I better get a boat?"

"She needs no help from you, she is quite capable of looking after herself, especially in the water, I can tell you," Philip answered, sharply.

Nothing more was said till they reached the house, when, on entering the lighted study, Philip noticed that his cousin's face was flushed, and his hands shaking like aspen leaves.

"Why, what is the matter with you, man?" he asked.

"Nothing—nothing. I am only rather cold. Give me some brandy."

"Cold on such a night as this! That's curious," said Philip, as he got the spirit from a cupboard.

George drank about a wineglassful neat, and seemed to recover himself.

"I accept your offer for the land, Philip," he said, presently.

His cousin looked at him curiously, and a brilliant idea struck him.

"You agree, then, to take fifty thousand pounds for the Isleworth estates in the event of your marrying my daughter, the sale to be completed before the marriage takes place?"

"Fifty thousand! No, a hundred thousand—you said a hundred thousand just now."

"You must have misunderstood me, or I must have made a mistake; what I meant and mean is fifty thousand, and you to put a thousand down as earnest money—to be forfeited whether the affair comes off or not."

George ground his teeth and clutched at his red hair, proceedings that his cousin watched with a great deal of quiet enjoyment. When at length he spoke, it was in a low, hoarse voice, quite unlike his usual hard tones:

"I am you!" he said, "you have me at your mercy. Take the land for the money, if you like, though it will nearly ruin me. That woman has turned my head; I must marry her, or I shall go mad."

"Very good; that is your affair. Remember that I have no responsibility in the matter, and that I am not going to put any pressure on Angela. If you want to marry her, you must win her within the next eight months. Then that is settled. I suppose that you will pay in the thousand to-morrow. The storm is coming up fast, so I won't keep you. Good-night," and they separated, George to drive home—with fever in his heart, and the thunder-storm of which he heard nothing, rattling round him—and Philip to make his way to bed, with the dream of his life advanced a step nearer realization.

"That was a lucky swim of Angela's to-night" he thought. "Fifty thousand pounds for the estate. He is right; he must be going mad. But will he get her to marry him, I wonder. If he does, I shall cry quits with him indeed."

(To be Continued.)

TO MEND YOUR BICYCLE TIRES.

Sand Put to Novel Use by an Ingenious and Practical Bike Rider.

A simple method of making pneumatic tires self-healing when punctured has been patented by Joseph G. Moomy, of Erie, Pa. The scheme is simple, and the inventor claims that it is effective.

He proposes to put a small quantity of sand inside the tire, where it will be free to move about. He will also put a liquid, preferably water, inside the tire. When a puncture occurs the method of closing will be to turn the tire so that the puncture is at the bottom. The sand and water will thus be brought into direct contact with the puncture. When the tire is inflated, there will be a current of air passing through the puncture. This air will cause particles of sand to enter the hole. Particles that are too small will pass through the hole, but when a particle the right size is found the hole will be filled, and the escape of the air will cease.

Mr. Moomy claims that tires can be supplied with the sand before they are put on the wheel, and that no further trouble will be necessary, as punctures will be quickly and automatically plugged.

WANTED TO BE READY.

Servant—I've come to give notice, ma'am, as I am going to get married.

Mistress—Indeed, Mary! How long have you been engaged?

Servant—I ain't engaged at all, ma'am.

Mistress—Well, who is the happy man?

Servant—You know the big shop down the road. Well, the shop walker looked at me the day before yesterday, and yesterday he smiled, and to-day he said Good morning, and I guess to-morrow he'll propose, and, you see, ma'am, I want to be ready.