

A DYING PROMISE

OR, THE MISSING
WILL

CHAPTER I.

Stillbrooke Mill never looks pleasanter than on a hot summer afternoon, when the paved streets of Cleeve reflect a blinding sun-glare, and the brick house-fronts give out the heat they have been slowly accumulating all the long sunny day. Its position at the end of the town gives it a singular charm; it is like an unexpected gleam of romance in a prosaic, toil-worn life. Turning from the principal street, loud with rattling wheels, the cries of street-hawkers and yelling boys, you pass to stillness beneath the shade of a linden-girdled garden wall, which partially surround a fine Tudor building of gray stone, with tiled gabled roofs and diamond paned casements. This is the old grammar-school, which rises above the flimsy, fleeting ugliness of the modern street, a silent and beautiful witness of a past and prophecy of a future. Thence the road falls steeply to a piece of emerald-green still water, beyond which the translucent golden greens of a grove climbing the opposite hill are even fresher and more liquid than the tints of the polished mill-stream, while the glowing of sun-steeped turf through the tree-trunks, and the soft massing of bright foliage against the pure blue sky, form a most restful contrast to the arid streets whence they can be seen.

A little way back from the road, on the town side of the bridged expanse into which the stream widens at the bottom of the hill, there stood, many years ago, a stone-built mill and house; an undershot wheel turned drowsily to a drowsy music in the stillness, the brown roof-tiles were mellowed, the gray walls whitened, the trees in the garden and those by the roadside slightly powdered by a drifting mist of floating meal.

There was about Stillbrooke Mill a genial publicity which opened one's heart to it. The fact of the high road having been carried straight through its ground and over its broadened stream, in some measure accounted for its openness and absence of walls, but only in part, for there was no reason why, though the stream was open for the convenience of the town water-carts and all the cows in the neighborhood, the wide space in front of the mill, where the fowls walked at their ease and the pigeons fluttered down from the dove-cot above to dispute the grain with them, and the mealy wagons stood for loading and unloading, should have opened unwalling upon the highroad as it did. All must yield to the inexorable logic of facts, but Stillbrooke Mill yielded gracefully, and opposed no further barrier between itself and the public road than a large broad-leaved plane-tree, beneath which was a bench, where many weighty subjects had been discussed by the present miller, Matthew Meade, and his fore-runners. A carved stone let into the wall above the second story bore in antique figures the date 1650, which made it nearly two centuries old on this summer afternoon. It was very hot. The sturdy horses attached to the wagen which was being laden with sacks of flour, winked their eyes, dropped their heads, and slept peacefully; the men attaching the sacks to the crane above had discarded their waistcoats and were thinking of the amber charms of a glass of ale; Matthew Meade pushed his cap far back upon his grizzled head and stood in the most draught-spot he could find, with his sleeves rolled up and his shirt open on his chest, while directing the work; one of the sleek mill cats slept in a tight coil on the low stone parapet between the yard and the water; the housedog had left his kennel and stretched himself with hanging tongue and exhausted mien on the coolest assessable stone; the mill-wheel seemed half-asleep as it turned to its lulling music; the sunshine slept on the garden and house, it stepped the flowers and grass in a trance-like stillness, and dissolved itself in golden languors among the broad leaves of the spreading plane-tree, the depths of the pale blue sky seemed clouded with excess of sleeping light; the delicate drooping boughs of the mighty willow which grew on the further bank of the stream in the meadow, scarcely stirred their pale feathery leaves in the charmed stillness.

At the foot of the great willow, where the sunshine poured full upon him and clothed the grass about him with glory, a sturdy boy of nine lay and basked, his great dark-gray eyes gazing into the infinite blue sky-depths above him, holding a ripe crimson apple into which his sharp pearls of teeth bit lazily. His brown face bore traces of recent fighting, and the brown hand he stretched out to reach another quarrel from the heap on the grass, looked as if it had been used in battle.

Near at hand a little girl of three, in a white frock and sun-bonnet, was playing with flowers and cooing happily to herself, her golden curls shining in the sunlight, as she turned

with pretty baby gestures and rolled on the sunny grass, until her eye was caught by the snowy gleam of a swan sailing majestically toward the grassy bank.

The languid grace of the snow-white swan pleased the children. Slowly the beautiful creature glided over the still, jewel-like water, her proudly arching neck and erected sail-like wings repeated with such brilliant accuracy beneath her that the motion of her black oar-like feet was completely hidden, and she seemed to move like a thought in obedience solely to her will. The boy beckoned and she approached him with wayward dignity, pausing in majestic indecision, and then consenting to be coaxed onward again until she reached the brink and bowed her head coquettishly to the bread in his extended hand, having taken which, she moved dream-like away, and brooding pensively over the water, like some gentle memory on a quiet heart, passed under the stone piers of the bridge, the dark arches of which shadowed and engulfed her.

Philip's eyes followed her thither and then turned to the blue heaven into which the silvery willow leaves pierced, while his thought followed the gliding swan and his senses were charmed by the brooding warmth of the sunshine and the ripe sweetness of the apples. Under the bridge that white swan was floating, past the miller's garden on the opposite side of the highway, past an old farm-house of mellow-red brick, past an orchard and a meadow; perhaps the swan went no farther, but Philip's heart expanded with a sort of passion to think how far she might float, had she but oars and sails in place of wings and feet, beginning upon the sea-ward current of the little familiar Lynn. There he thought of the origin of Lynn, a little pool a few miles hence of diamond-clear water, no broader than the length of his arm, so still that it seemed solid, but with so vivid a sparkle above its white pebbles that it seemed alive. From this clear and liquid sparkle, which lived on, never failing through summer and winter, in some, to him, mysterious manner arose the Lynn, a deep trench, flowing stilly through lush pasture and edged with meadow-sweet and loose-strife, sometimes reflecting the sweet gaze of forget-me-nots, broadening in musical remembrance over the rough pebbles of a highway, where it bathed the passing feet of cattle and horses narrowing again through meadows, turning-mills, prattling through a village, and then flowing through a chain of willowed mill-ponds, singing its tranquil way to Philip and the swan, thence reaching the wharves and the quay where another stream joined it, and the two currents rolled on together bearing vessels upon their united wave to the great gray, mysterious sea. A few miles, he could count them on his fingers, brought the doubled stream to the sea, and once there one might girdle the great globe.

His heart died at this thought; the vast, vast world seemed within his grasp as he lay there in the sunny stillness and longed to be a man. The willows swayed gently above his eager face, their trembling shadows shot across it; the sun was passing westward, but how slowly. Some pigeons sailed above him, he followed their flight with longing eyes; swallows glided by steeped in sunlight, the mill hummed on, the child prattled to herself, the scent of mignonette came wafted from the garden; the floating swan was a stately ship, bearing Philip to the world's end; they seemed to be sailing on and on forever, bound to some, far, unknown Happy Islands; crimson fruits sent their spicy fragrance over the mystic waves, things melted vaguely one into the other; Sinbad, the Roc, the Valley of Diamonds, blended with the swan ship and vanished, Philip was fast asleep, unconscious alike of his actual blessedness and of that he dreamed in the future.

The willow wrapped him wholly in its gentle shade and spread its coolness upon the water, while he slept on with even, long-drawn breath, until at last a piercing sound penetrated the balmy mazes of his dreams and he awoke.

It was the piteous wail of the little girl, accompanied by the splash of her body in the water, that had broken his charmed dream. Seeing Philip feed the swan from his hand, a thing forbidden to her, she wished to do likewise, and seeing her brother's eyes shut, she crept gradually nearer to the edge of the water, looking, like a baby Narcissus, into the clear green water, where her flower-wreathed gold aureoled face was clearly mirrored.

"Pity Jessie! pity girl!" cooed the tiny daughter of Eve, with complacent smiles at her own reflection. But the swan, which in the meantime had turned back and shot the bridge, caught sight of the little figure and steered toward it with a swift, even gliding motion. Jessie looked up, with a cry of joy; the swan swam back and altered the

beautiful curves of its neck, gliding with a broadside motion which showed the stroke of the black leg beneath the beautiful sweep of the wing; Jessie stretched forward over the brink and extended one hand; the swan, after a little majestic dallying, glided up and placed its beak in the dimpled pink palm, where it found nothing, and then drawing back in offended majesty, it shot itself swiftly at the child, caught her frock in its beak, and pulled her into the water.

This incident was very pretty to watch, as it was watched from the road on the other side of the pond by a boy of twelve sitting on a brown cob in the plane-tree shade, where was also a bay horse led by a mounted groom. When the splash came, he lustily echoed the child's cry, sprang from his horse, ran along a wall by the water close to the mill-race, which he leapt, and landed in the meadow just in time to see Philip pull the child out of the water and to beat off the angry swan, which refused to let go of the skirts it had clutched, until the newcomer plied his riding-whip.

"Naughty girl!" cried Philip, setting her down at a safe distance from the edge, and wringing the water from her clothes. "Straight to bed you go, miss, and a good whipping you deserve." "Take her in, you young duffer, and have her stripped and dried. What's the good of jawing a kid like that?" remonstrated the other boy. Taking one of the little girl's hands and bidding the stranger boy take the other, Philip trotted her between them over the grass and through a court-yard to the kitchen door, faster than her little stumbling feet could carry her.

Having delivered her into the hands of a maid servant, Philip made off before he had time to receive the scolding he shrewdly suspected to be due, and having reached the plane-tree, put his hands in his pockets and whistled with a fine affectation of indifference; he was more slowly followed by the stranger, whose services he acknowledged by a brief: "Thank ye."

"I say, you fellow," said the latter on coming up and observing his blackened eyes, "what have you been up to besides letting the baby fall into the pond?"

(To Be Continued.)

PROFITABLE LEISURE.

What Can Be Done With Your Spare Time.

Too much cannot be said of the value of the hours which most men waste. One of the prime qualities of a man of force and ability is his clear understanding of what can be done with the time and tools at his command. Such a man wastes no time in idly dreaming of the things he would do if he could go to college, or travel, or have command of long periods of uninterrupted time. He is not guilty of a feeble evasion of "no possibility" for his career by getting behind adverse conditions. If the conditions are adverse, he gets in front of them, and so gets away from them.

A young man who ceases to dream about the things he would do if he had plenty of time, and plans the things he will do with the time he has, may go slowly, but he will go far.

Such a young man wanted to know German. He bought an elementary grammar and phrase-book, and when a spare quarter or half hour came he studied them. It was not difficult, and became interesting. Presently his progress was rapid, and the pleasure of the occupation steadily increased. In less than a year he had German so well in hand that he began to study Spanish. He became engrossed in the study of languages as an occupation for his leisure hours; he found it very enjoyable, and every language learned was an open door to more employment. In a few years he was reading German, Spanish, French, and Italian. In the meantime his business advancement had been rapid, and he had secured a very important and lucrative position.

DULL SWEDISH SAILORS.

A commission has been formed to investigate the condition of the Swedish sailors and marines who, it is asserted, are afflicted with "a chronic incapacity to understand and quickly execute orders."

KING EDWARD AT CHURCH

Likes His Sermons Short, and Always Observes Sunday.

"I like my dinners and sermons short," King Edward is reported to have once said, and this royal preference is so well known that it is the rarest occurrence for a host of His Majesty to permit a meal to last more than an hour, or for one of his chaplains to carry 'finally' into the 'second-quarter,' says the London 'Tit-Bits.'

This restriction no doubt involves some self-denial on the part, at any rate, of the preacher who is accustomed to spread his eloquence over sixty minutes, and some amusing stories are told of the difficulties King Edward and Queen Victoria (who shared his distaste for long-winded homilies) have had in keeping some of these spiritual ministers within time limits.

As a churchgoer, as in so many other characters, King Edward sets an excellent example to his subjects; for wherever he may be, at Balmoral, Sandringham, Windsor, on his yacht, or on the Continent, he makes the strongest point of attending divine service once every Sunday, and expects his guests to do the same, whatever their private inclinations may be; and another point on which he is equally insistent is the wearing of a tall hat (which he notoriously dislikes) and a frock coat, as the most suitable garb for churchgoing.

Simplicity and a devout earnestness are the leading features of the King's church attendance. He claims the privilege of conducting his devotions as quietly and unobtrusively as any of his subjects, and for this reason his chaplains are expected to preach without the most indirect reference

TO HIS PRESENCE,

and at the same time to make their sermons as simple and as free from politics or doctrinal matter as possible. If they fail in these points they may expect some sign of the royal displeasure.

While His Majesty is intolerant of long sermons, he loves the musical part of the service, and the hymns are largely chosen with reference to his personal preferences. His favorite hymn is probably "Onward Christian Soldiers;" and among others of his choice are "Sun of My Soul, Thou Saviour Dear," "Our Blest Redeemer," and "O Day of Rest and Gladness." At the conclusion of the service the King and his party usually retire before the clergymen and choir leave their seats, thus allowing them an interval to get away before the remaining worshippers, his going, like his coming, being as quiet and free from attention as possible.

When at Balmoral King Edward worships either in the singularly unpretentious chapel in the castle, in which a table takes the place of a pulpit, or in the square and rather unattractive church in Crathie village, which has little of the privacy of the church at Sandringham. When in Scotland tall hat and frock coat are discarded in favor of the national costume, but the same simple conditions mark the service. In Queen Victoria's time the Scottish fashion of standing during prayer and sitting for the psalms was always observed, but King Edward, preferring the practice south of the Tweed, has reversed the process.

Next to the devoutness and earnestness of the King, the thing that most strikes a fellow worshipper is that, although His Majesty always uses the service books, he rarely refers to them, evidently knowing the whole of the service and many of the hymns by heart.

CONVERSATION FLAGGED

The following dialogue recently took place between a King's Counsel and a witness (a former client):
Counsel—"This is not the first action you have had, I think?"
Witness—"No, it's not. I have had one before this."
"I think you lost that, didn't you?"
"No, I didn't."
"Are you quite sure?"
"Quite."
"What! Will you swear that you did not lose that action?"
"I will swear I did not lose it. You lost it for me."

Greed For Gold...

CHAPTER XLVI.

The true hero of this narrative is Dick Causton. He has not been made much of because the history travels close on the road of real life, and in real life it is fashionable to think of heroes—to be content to decorate them with medals and other like absurdities.

From the day he first met Vere, she filled his heart; but he never told his love, he never had an opportunity of doing so. He saw that she loved Reginald, and he himself stood quietly by and suffered the agony of watching her happiness in another's love.

Then came the cloud of Reggie's infatuation for Miss Westcar, Vere's grief, and his own humble sympathy. At first he hoped, but he soon saw the hope was in vain. Vere loved Reggie, and would never love another.

And so, when Reginald, after the quarrel with his uncle, left the Hall, and came to London, burning with a sense of his own shame, Causton advised him. And in doing so, he burnt his own boats; for he advised him to write to Vere and try to heal the breach between them. Reggie did so with a result that has been told.

And now, six months after his release, Reggie was married to Vere, and his best man at the wedding had been the man who loved his bride. It is an easy thing when you are surrounded by an army of your fellows to rush up to a gun and capture it, although death may stare you in the face—because you can't turn back; but it requires a truer heroism to hand over the woman you love to another man, and wish him—them—happiness and joy, whilst your own heart is breaking. So it was with Dick Causton.

He cycles still, but he is a sadder man. To the Hall he never goes; Vere and Reggie he never sees. They are truly happy, as he would heartily wish them to be; but to look on that happiness would be exquisite pain to him. He is busy, he tells them, when they write him to come down—too busy to spare time.

Ashley Grayne had decent burial! Notwithstanding the corner's verdict that he died by his own hand (Deane could have told the jury by reason of what was on the finger of one of them), he was spared the ghastliness of burial at the cross roads with a stake through his body. Englishmen are slow to shake off the traditions of their ignorant past, but we have at least got beyond the stage of obscene burial of our dead now.

Burton and Deane? Oh, they meet still in the Euston Road, and chat over old and new problems in crime.

The gipsy girl, Miriam? Is still on the road. She got over her passion for Dubois; being thrown into the water by the person you love has a cooling effect. She is to be seen still at fairs, and is the owner of the prettiest caravan on the road.

Miss Westcar and the brothers Dubois? Ah! they ought to be punished, of course; that would be literary justice. But the aim in this narrative, as has been said, is to travel on the road of real life. They are together now in la belle France, where the code of morality is not so strict as with us, and where the difficulty of steering clear of the Code Napoleon is the only one criminals have to face.

And it is to be regretted that they are facing it successfully—they, and a band they have gathered round them. Later on it will be the duty of the present narrator to chronicle their doings in Paris and its suburbs, they and their assistants. At present, Evelyn Westcar—known on the Boulevards as La Belle Cerise—is queen of a certain set. At present, they are prospering; but in real life, as in fiction, the hour of retribution must come. Then will the present writer give forth their history of the world—a history which he will label "Dubois Brothers & Company, Unlimited."

(The End.)

UNLUCKY POLICEMAN.

A member of the N. Division of police is probably the most unlucky individual in the whole London, (England) police force. He has now been in the force for five years, and in every one of those years he has either sustained a serious injury or suffered from a serious illness. In the first year of his service he had a very bad attack of pneumonia; in the second year he had his arm broken in trying to stop a run-away horse; in the third year he had a dangerous attack of rheumatic fever; last year he had his nose broken by a refractory prisoner; and this year he was accidentally shot in the neck at the annual police revolver practice.

PARCHMENT GLOVES.

Quite a good price is paid by a French firm for old parchments of all descriptions. They have a process for removing the ink, and eventually the cleaned stuff comes back to us as finest French kid-gloves. The clippings left when the gloves are made are not wasted either. Mixed with clippings of vellum and leather, they are boiled down for size. And the coarse shavings, with odds and ends of seal and other skins, come in handy for filling cheap cricket-balls.



WHAT SHE'D SUGGEST.

Mrs. Youngwed—Mariah, the dust on the furniture in this parlor is awful. What shall I do about it?
Mariah—Pay no attention to it mum.