

A DYING PROMISE

OR, THE MISSING
WILL

CHAPTER II.

All the next day Mr. Meade pondered silently upon Sir Arthur Medway's interview with him, until evening came again, and the children were gone to bed.

"The boy," he said to his wife, "is nine years old; he takes a thrashing like a man, ay, and has the grace to be thankful for't. He knows already more book-learning than ever I know all my life. He'll tell you the Latin for a cow or a cat smother than you'll print off your pats of butter, Martha. 'Tis but right he should know how he was come by and what he've got to look to. Let en choose for hisself."

Mrs. Meade demurred at throwing such a responsibility on a child of nine years.

"It's like this," Meade replied, "there's no lawyer living, not the Lord Chancellor hisself, can make me believe I haven't a right to a boy I've took and bred up from his cradle and been a father to. But Sir Arthur, he've got a right over the child, too, and 'tis plain as plums we can't both hev him, and only the Lord hisself can judge between us. I've tried opening the Bible hap-hazard, but can't light upon what'll serve the turn. Only I come to 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings' twice, and it was borne in upon me that Philip must settle for hisself."

The argument was unanswerable, and in much grief and trepidation, Mrs. Meade accepted the office of acquainting Philip with the choice that lay before him.

"Lither tongues," Mr. Meade continued, "was never meant for men folk Martha. I never was good at putting words to what's going on inside of me. Think I can, as well as any man. But darned if I can tell what I'm thinking of. You may mind the time it took me to come to the point when courting."

"To be sure, Meade," she replied, with feeling, "I did think you was never going to say 'mum,' and folk knew I was ready to say 'budget,' and there was a laugh against me in all the country-side. 'If you can't bring him on, Patty, you'd better throw him off,' Cousin Jane heve said many a time; 'if he had any nose, he'd a known it was time to speak up long ago.' Whatever we should ha' done if it hadn't been for grandmother's great gander, I don't know; kept wiverin' on till now, I reckon."

"Right," replied Meade, gravely; "you're right, Martha, but even the gander would ha' ben nothing without your tongue. I beat the gander off of ye, and you cried and clung on to me, and there I stood like a girl zote and couldn't tell for the life of me what to say next. It did seem that simple to blurt out, 'Marry me, Martha,' all of a sudden right in the middle of the common with the wild gander and all the geese staring and hissing at us. I'd given ye a kiss but I had to keep my eye on that gander all the time. Then you said, 'Please don't leave me, Mr. Meade; I'm that frightened!' And that put it into my head to say, 'I'll never leave ye, my dear, if you'll promise to go to church with me, afore two months are gone.' And so 't was done, but it drove the sweat out of me, and you was all of a tremble in a pink Sunday gown, and the church bells ringen. And the old gander kept on hissing and running, so I was forced to keep my arm round ye all the way across common. I never hear a goose hiss but I think on 't," he added, pensively.

"'T wasn't the first lead I gave ye, either," laughed Mrs. Meade, brightening at these tender recollections; "but there, courten is like a cool hand at pastry; its born with some, and there are those can't do it to save their lives. 'Mat Meade's that nog-headed,' Cousin Jane used to say, 'I'd rather die an old maid than put up with such a duch chap.' But I thought to myself, 'Matt Meade has a good headpiece enough, if he is wanting in tongue. I've enough for both. And courten is only wanted ove a lifetime.'"

"I don't doubt things are ordered right," Mr. Meade commented; "but it seems a pity the courten isn't done by the women. I'd sooner unload ten wagons of flour than feel how I felt for months and months before your grandmother's great gander ran after ye. Any woman would ha' done it that easy, you'd scarcely know you'd ben through anything; their tongues twist and turn about like a well-broke, tender-mouthed filly."

"Ah, well, 't was soon done and over, after all," observed Mrs. Meade regretfully; "follish times they were, I'm sure."

"It's what all must come to," moralized Mr. Meade; "bound to be fullish once in a lifetime is all mankind. You was a pretty maid, Martha; not that I was one to be took by a pretty face," he added, severely, knowing that female vanity dies hard. "No, my dear, I some-

how seemed set on ye, I didn't know why. Whether 'twas the dairy, or the cooking, or the goodness of heart drew me on, I can't rightly say. But I was that dull and drug the days I didn't get a sight of ye. Bless me, how follish we went on!" he exclaimed, suddenly checking this flood of tender reminiscence; for he was a man of sober thought and staid demeanor, and knew what was due to conjugal propriety and their advancing years. "What was I a-saying? Words is what I never could handle easy. I can left anything you like to name with any man of forty; but when it comes to words, I'm bound to make a mess on 't. Words come natural to the women-folk. So you tell the boy, Martha."

Thus it came to pass that Mrs. Meade ascended the steep creaking stair and went into the dim little attic in the ghostly twilight, her footsteps on the uncarpeted boards rousing the sleeping boy.

"Mother," he cried, starting up, "I didn't take the plums, indeed I didn't."

"Dear heart alive," said Mrs. Meade, "who's thinking of plums? I know who had them, my dear, and it wasn't you. You're never stinted in anything that's good for children, so you wouldn't take plums, and you've never told me a lie, yet, Philip."

Philip lay back on the pillow and wondered if the fowls had got into the garden when he left the gate open.

"Boys," said Mrs. Meade, giving him a kiss and carefully tucking in the bed-clothes he had dashed aside, "are made that lither and sprack they can't bide quiet long together, they're bound to be in some mischief tearing and siling clothes, upsetting and breaking things, and stabbling all over the house. I cried terrible when mine were took, but I do think to meself at times there was mercy in it. For however I could keep the house decent with four stabbling about, the Lord only knows."

"I did mean to shut the gate," said Philip, "but I forgot."

"Never mind the gate, my dear, but mind to shut him next time," she continued, smoothing the sheet under his chin. "For a boy you've been a good boy, and me and your father has never repented taking you—here Mrs. Meade's voice failed her and she took out her handkerchief to Philip's dismay. "Taking me?" he asked, after a pause; "where from?"

"From the workhouse," she replied. "Nobody knew so much as your surname when your poor mother died and left ye, and there was nothing for it but the workhouse, if Matthew hadn't come along and thought of them we'd lost and had it borne in upon him he was to take and breed you up in their place."

Philip had seen the workhouse boys in their thin and poor uniform at some holiday gathering in which they were included, he had marked their pinched and often vicious faces, had heard them use foul words, once he had been taken to see some one at the workhouse, once a man in Cleve had been tried for ill-treating a young workhouse apprentice and he had stolen into the court to hear the case. He wound his stout little arm into that of the kind soul who had been a mother to him, and she kissed him and stroked the thick hair off his forehead. Then she told him how Matthew had brought him home one night, that he was of gentle blood and of an origin known to Sir Arthur, who wished to educate him with his own sons.

All this, in spite of her husband's tribute to her eloquence and Philip's eager interest and frequent questioning she effected not without difficult and much digression and repetition.

"But mother, what is my name?" he asked for at least the ninth time for he was tired out with eight evasive answers to this important question.

"My dear," she replied, on being thus brought to bay, "it's little chance you have of keeping the Fifth Commandment with your poor mother in her grave this seven years. It's only her dying wishes you can obey, which is, you was to be called Philip Randal and ask no questions."

Philip sighed; he had long since discovered that the whole duty of youth consisted in not asking questions, and the whole interest and joy of youth in doing so. He gave Mrs. Meade's ample form a tight squeeze and asked if he was to be sent to Marwell Court to live.

"Not if you don't want to go, my dear," she replied, tenderly stroking his hair on which the bright silver of the moon now shimmered. "Me and your father wants to keep you had enough, but we can't bring ourselves to stand in your light, Phil. Sir Arthur would make a gentleman and a made man of ye."

Mrs. Meade went on to speak of college education and of expenses, reaching far into manhood, of launching a youth in any profession. "Then, my dear," she continued, "your father and me are plain people, though comfortable,

and we know manners as well as most; and I will say that for Meade, never a bad word comes out of his mouth, and always takes his hat off to his betters; and aggravating as Cousin Jane may be, while under his roof he's never nothen but civil to her. The worst he ever said was one Christmas time when Cousin Jane was onluckier than ever I know, and said things ma me wish the vittles might choke her. 'I could wish, ma'am, say Meade, as smooth as cream, 'your tongue had a been made no longer than your temper. You'd ha' been a happier woman.' She looked pretty straight at him, but it done her good. Your father's a good man, my dear. You never see him sit down to meals without washing his hands. But he and me haven't got the manners of Sir Arthur and her ladyship. They're high folk with manners to match. There's manners and manners, same as there's plain sewing and fine needlework, and there's nothen, no, not whooping-cough or scarlatina, catchinger than manners. So you must think hard about it, and perhaps you might put it in your prayers, my dear, to have a right judgment."

With these words and a final kiss and tucking-up, Mrs. Meade stole out of the moonlit attic, leaving Philip in a fever of confused and agitating thoughts and bewildering feelings.

He thought he should never go to sleep; he heard the tall clock on the stairs strike ten just as his mother left the room, but before her footsteps had ceased to echo along the boarded passages, with his arms still flung wide, the sudden sweet sleep of childhood descended upon his tired eyes and remained there till morning.

A few days later Philip, in his Sunday suit and clean collar, with hair freshly cut and an odor of soapsuds pervading him, started for Marwell Court in a high dog-cart, driven by a young groom, who was inclined to smile at the tender farewell which took place at the door. Philip looked back as long as he could see them with a sad, half-reproachful feeling; he seemed to be deserting. But this lowness of spirits was completely forgotten when he reached Marwell Court, which he had seen many a time from a distance but only once entered. On that occasion he was staying with Cousin Jane, the wife of a farmer in the neighborhood, and accompanied her on a visit to the house-keeper, who patted him on the head, which he did not like, and gave him plum-cake and currant wine, which he did.

That he might ever be master of that fine building did not enter among the many thoughts jostling in his small brain as he swept up the avenue, past one wing and reined in before a wide porticoed entrance. Like a dreamer, he got down from the dog-cart and went up the steps and through doors magically flying open of themselves to admit him. Here were tall splendidly dressed gentlemen in colored velvets, silk, and gold, their heads more floury than those of the men at the mill at home; kind and polite in spite of their bewitching splendor. No longer Phil Randal, the miller's boy, but a fairy prince penetrating to the heart of some dark enchantment, he passed through a spacious and beautiful hall, with a shining marble floor, with pictures on the walls and white figures poised on pedestals like wingless angels ready for flight, with rich hangings half-shrouding doors and windows, and was almost startled when the handsome lad who had played with him in the garden at home came bounding down the wide soundless staircase to receive him.

"Hullo, Randal, here you are at last," cried Claude, bringing the fairy prince from regions of dim enchantment to the solid earth with a bounce. "How are you? Come to my mother's room."

Philip answered him in a dazed way and followed him upstairs and along thick-carpeted corridors to a room full of strange flower-scents and pale blue satin.

"Lady Gertrude's room," Claude said before he opened the door, in a low tone that implied something like awe.

"This is Philip Randal, mother," he said, presenting him to the beautiful, plainly-dressed lady reclining by the open window.

"So you are Philip," she said, looking thoughtfully at him.

"Yes, if you please, ma'am," he replied, respectfully; "and I have a mother, too," he added, standing in front of her and resting his elbow on the arm; "she sent her duty to you."

"So you are not afraid of us?" she asked, smiling as Philip supposed that angels smile, and caressing his reverent, upturned face with her dainty hand, white as a lily and soft as a rose-leaf.

"No, ma'am. And I like your house, though it's the biggest I ever was in."

"Do you like small houses best, Philip?"

"Well, you see, I've been used to small houses all my life," he explained, "and just at first a big one feels strange. Besides, I didn't know that people lived in such fine places."

"I hope you will be happy in our house," she said, graciously; "Claude will show you everything. Run away now, boys, and don't get into more mischief than you can help."

Philip kissed the hand that was under his chin with a natural unconscious grace that gave pleasure, and the boys left the room, Claude with an air of relief.

"By Jove, Philip," he said when

they were outside the door, "you've made a conquest of her ladyship. She can't bear boys." And, taking him to the library to Sir Arthur, he forthwith, to Philip's surprise, described the interview with Lady Gertrude, at the recital of which Sir Arthur smiled and pinched Philip's ear. "A born courtier," he said, enigmatically. Then sending Claude away, he spoke to Philip of his origin and his intentions concerning him, as Mrs. Meade had already done.

"Your foster-father," he said, in conclusion, "wishes you to do exactly what you like best. He is quite ready to give up all claims upon you, if you like to live with us and share my son's education and other advantages. There is a pony for you already. You will go to school with Hugh till you are both ready for Eton. Run away with Claude now."

Dismissing him with a wave of the hand, Sir Arthur dismissed the subject as well, considering the event of Philip's preferring Stillbrooke to Marwell as too improbable to be taken into account.

The few days spent at Marwell seemed months to Philip, everything being so new and strange. Claude and Hugh were capital companions, for a boy without brothers the younger children and the little girls, too, were companionable. There was so much to enjoy, such variety of games and pastimes, so many books, so many objects of interest, such space for play. Claude even had a gun, besides fishing-rods, cricket-bats, carpenter's tools, and a boat.

Their rides in the park were delightful; the pretty shayed deer starting away from them, the pale gray mass of masonry everywhere showing itself in some new and imposing light, the large gardens, the home farm, the harriers, all either pleased him or impressed his fancy. He liked to go with the other children after dinner into the long drawing-room, opening into a long vista of drawing-rooms, and glorified when he first saw it, by a blaze of sunset falling through the tall western windows; he wandered at the ladies' gleaming arms and shoulders, their jewels and silken clothes, and liked their gentle manners and refined accent.

"Well, Philip," said Lady Gertrude, when he stole up to a position behind her sofa just after dinner, "do you still think this a beautiful house? And what do you think the most beautiful thing in it?"

"You, ma'am," he replied, without hesitation to the great amusement of some ladies staying in the house, who were near.

It was a new wonder after this glimpse of enchantment, to see the familiar hedge-rows and fields floating past him in the summer sunset when he was driven home again.

He arrived just as dusk was falling; the lamps shone sparse and dim in the gray streets and were reflected from the bridge in the still mill-stream and there, under the plane-tree, sat Mrs. Meade in her homely familiar dress, with Jessie half-asleep on her knee, and there, issuing from the green shadows, was Matthew himself.

How glad they were to see him again, how Jessie clung to him, and how pleasant and cosy the homelike parlor seemed with the candle lighted, the supper spread, and Sarah coming in with smiles of welcome.

"Take your time, Phil, take your time," his father said after supper, when questioning him about his visit; "mind, it's for life, so don't decide in a hurry. Philip looked in his face and then in his mother's, and said nothing, but in his heart he decided once for all, "I'll never leave them," he thought.

(To be Continued.)

FOOD IS IMPROVING.

How it Has Been Adulterated in Various Ways

Striking testimony to the decrease in the adulteration in food which has taken place in recent years is borne by A. W. Stokes, public analyst for Paddington, England, in his quarterly report.

"In the course of twenty-five years," he says, "the percentage of impure food samples has diminished from 62 per cent. to 54 per cent." During the past quarter only seven out of 125 samples were found to have been adulterated.

In the early days, says Mr. Stokes water was largely used in milk, butter and lard, tea was mixed with iron-sand and exhausted leaves, coffee contained as much as 90 per cent of chicory—and even now contains in some instances 50 per cent. Sage and sugar were formerly used in the manufacture of cocoa to such an extent that it was more fitted for making poultices than for drinking purposes.

The once prevalent sale of jam made from decayed fruit is now, he declares, totally unknown, and the poisonous ingredients used for coloring sweets have also disappeared. Bread was at one time made very indigestible by the introduction of alum. This form of adulteration has been completely stamped out.

BEAUTY THAT IS DEEPER.

Don't think it enough to be a beauty; in order to approach perfection a woman should try to improve herself morally and intellectually, as well as physically.

COLORS OF UNIFORMS.

Red uniforms present the best marks for the enemy's shot; rifle green comes next, brown third, while Austrian bluish grey is found to be the least fatal.

About the ...House

WELL MADE COFFEE.

In no branch of cookery is knowledge of the right way more essential than in that which has to do with making the family beverages. Without this knowledge, the cup that cheers becomes in its wake indigestion and attendant ills.

To make sure of a really good cup of coffee, one must have some intelligent notion of the bean itself. In commerce, the following varieties are commonly handled and particularly distinguished from each other: Mocha coffee, which comes from Arabia and is known by its small gray beans, inclining to a greenish tinge; Java or East Indian coffee, having large, yellow beans; Jamaica coffee, with beans somewhat smaller and greenish; Bourbon coffee, with yellow and almost whitish beans, and Surinam coffee, which has the largest beans. Epicurean taste prefers Mocha and Java, usually a mixture of the two in the proportion of one-third of the former to two-thirds of the latter, after having roasted each kind separately.

The great demand for coffee has led to the employment of various cheap articles as substitutes, notably chicory. But all lack the most important constituent of the coffee bean, which is caffeine. 'Tis the presence of this substance, together with a volatile oil, developed by roasting, and astringent acids, called caffeic acids, that coffee owes its exhilarating and refreshing properties, and its power to allay hunger and diminish the wear and waste of the body.

SECRET IN ROASTING.

As much of the flavor and aroma of the coffee bean is developed by roasting, it follows that this process is one of import. Unfortunately home roasted coffee is almost a thing of the past, and in this may be found the secret of many a cup of indifferent coffee, for to be prime the bean must be freshly roasted, a virtue the ready-roasted brands rarely possess, but which is well worth the little extra labor it involves. To roast coffee properly, the beans must be first picked over, then washed in clear water and thoroughly dried in a slow oven. The heat must then be increased and the roasting accomplished rapidly. Stir frequently with a wooden spatula. When of a light brown color and the bean becomes brittle, take at once from the oven.

When the roasting is continued beyond this stage there is always more or less charring, which destroys the flavor of the drink. Some cooks stir a lump of sweet butter into the coffee at the moment it comes from the oven. Others recommend stirring in a beaten egg when the coffee is sufficiently cooled, thus removing the necessity for further clarifying. Keep roasted coffee in an airtight vessel of tin or earthenware.

Even after one has obtained beans of the desired aroma and properly roasted the same, it yet remains to acquire the art of making a wholesome and savory infusion. A skilled cook can make a fairly good cup of coffee from a cheap grade; the ignorant cook will convert the choicest bean into an insipid and dreggy liquid which can be dignified by no name, though to them it

STANDS FOR COFFEE.

All sorts of apparatus have been devised for making an infusion of coffee, some simple, others very complex. The French biggin is well known and furnishes the easiest and most satisfactory method of filtering coffee. By this and similar processes the aroma, which is the life of the drink is preserved—a thing not possible when the ordinary method of boiling is practiced. A stronger drink is thereby obtained, its true, but at the sacrifice of other and more desirable properties. Not strange to say, nine cooks in ten persist in boiling coffee, and when we pause to consider the nature of the drink which in too many homes masquerades as coffee, we no longer wonder that these people denounce it without modification.

A very simple contrivance on the principle of the biggin can be made by any housewife. It consists of a sack of thin but firm flannel as long as the coffee pot is deep, having a casing at the top, through which is run a tape. After putting the required amount of coffee ground very fine (1 tablespoon for each cup and 1 for the pot is the proper allowance) into the bag, lower it into the pot, turn down the edge over the rim of the pot and tie securely. Pour the boiling water over the grounds, cover closely and simmer on the back of the range 15 minutes.

IN DENMARK AND NORWAY.

In Denmark and in Norway the posts of shorthand writers at the respective parliaments of those countries are chiefly occupied by women, it having been found that they, as a rule, succeeded far better than men in this form of reporting.

SAKE DISTILLERIES.

Sake, the favorite alcoholic beverage of the Japanese, is distilled from rice and resembles whiskey in taste. There are about 33,000 sake distilleries in Japan, and these produce between them nearly 150,000,000 gallons annually.