

A DYING PROMISE

OR, THE MISSING
WILL

CHAPTER VI.

The bright late-winter sunshine continued, but its softness wore away, there was a cold fierce unrelenting brilliance in the blank breadth of light pouring from the cloudless sky, it was that treacherous radiance through which the east wind stings with unsuspected sharpness; icicles made fine filigree work round the mill-pound and depended from the bridge arches and the mill-wheel, the roads were like iron, the great willow on the bank shuddered in the keen wind, and complained audibly as if against some conscious cruelty; all the little eager buds, which had been pushing too hastily forward in the genial air, stopped in their sheltering cases, rebuked and silent, and many little birds whose courtship had already made considerable progress, were obliged sorrowfully to postpone the wedding day, and drooped, disappointed and songless bunches of feathers, upon the dry, crackling boughs.

This keen cruel wind raved exultingly over the open and exposed cemetery; it lifted the pall from Mrs. Meade's coffin and tossed the clergyman's surplice irreverently about him and fluttered the leaves of his book; it played with Philip Randal's thick curly hair, and whistled decisively through the gray thin locks on Mr. Meade's uncovered head. But neither Philip nor his father heeded the cold wind in the bitter blast of bereavement that beat upon them, as they stood by the yawning grave, which swallowed up Philip's childhood and buried Matthew Meade's youth and early manhood, the struggles of life's noon and the soft sunbeams of declining years, making a dead silence of more than half his memories. He shivered while they drove slowly home, and scarcely took any notice when Jessie led him to an arm-chair by the blazing fire she had made and gave him some hot spiced drink. He continued to shiver, and refused food; it was too evident that the bitter wind had struck home. Cousin Jane, in whose hands he was now the gentlest of lambs, had him put into a warm bed at dusk and dosed him with various homely remedies of her own.

"Dear heart," she said after her last visit to him that night, "I never thought to feel that loving to Matt Meade; many a spar we've had together, to be sure. But to see him lying there, poor lamb, and taken whatever you give en, as meek as a babe, 'tis enough to melt the heart of a stone. And I'm sure I freely forgive him all—not that I didn't give him as good as he sent. Dear, dear, I do think I never done your poor father justice, Jessie. It isn't every man would take on like that for a wife, and it's not a many I seem took so bad with a chill all of a sudden," here Mrs. Plummer paused to cry with a cheerful sense of the value of her physic and nursing, and of Mr. Meade's double virtue both in falling ill and in appreciating it.

"I never yet could be called a croaker," she added, "but I've seen that in Matthew Meade's face to-day is only seen once."

"Mrs. Plummer," cried Philip, "don't talk nonsense. Is this a proper way to speak before Jessie?" "It shan't be said that I didn't prepare his family before hand," continued Mrs. Plummer, dolorously. "I shall go for Maul at once," said Philip, freeing Jessie's sight and drooping form from the clasp in which he had taken it when he saw her stagger under her cousin's words. "My poor Kitten, Father is upset, but there is nothing to fear."

Philip's words were too true, there was nothing either to fear or hope for Mr. Meade; the cold had struck to his vitals, and broken down as he was by the shock of his sudden sorrow he had not strength to throw it off, but succumbed at once.

Four days after Mrs. Meade's funeral, Philip and Jessie were watching by his bed in silence, as the evening was closing in.

Mr. Meade had passed from delirium to stupor, and had lain unconscious for many hours; but now it seemed to Philip, as the firelight played on the sick man's features, that a light of intelligence was also playing fitfully upon them, and that the eyes gazed wistfully with a gleam of recognition and showed a mental struggle passing within.

"Do you know me father?" he asked, bending down and speaking softly.

"Philip," he replied, with a faint smile; the effort of speaking overcame him and for a moment or two he relapsed into his stupor. Philip's heart throbbed; he made a sign to Jessie, but she did not heed it. She was reclining in an arm-chair on the side of the hearth, her head drooped on her shoulder and her eyes closed. He could not bear to break her slumber, even with words of hope. So the silence throbbed on fitfully, marked by the light, thin crackling of flames, the faint fall of little cinders, and the tapping of a rose-spray on the window-pane.

Philip had laid his strong pink hand on the brown purple-veined one lying on the coverlet, and felt his father's ebbing life-beats more strongly beneath the welcome touch, while the death-bazed eyes continued to gaze with dumb appeal into his.

"Dear father, do you want anything?" he asked. "Jessie is here, asleep in the chair."

"Money," the sick man murmured faintly. "All for you. Speculations—losses—sell the mill."

"I understand," Philip replied, in a soothing voice; "but you will be well again soon and set the mill going. Listen; it is going now." But even as Philip spoke the familiar throb, throb of the mill ceased, the wheel stood still and the men went home for their Sunday rest.

In the meantime the Miller spoke brokenly of mortgages, of his will, of which Philip was joint executor with Mr. Cheeseman, of Jessie, who was to be under their guardianship and that of Mrs. Plummer; he seemed to gather strength as he spoke, and, having taken some restorative and asked Philip to raise him to a sitting posture, recovered his faculties in a brief flare-up of his flickering life.

The precious moments flew; but Philip could not bring himself to rouse Jessie from the sleep so long denied her. He had so much to hear in that gleam of consciousness for Jessie's sake and must still keep back the burning long-repressed desire to learn the secret of his birth which would otherwise die with Matthew Meade. He wished that on his return from the Crimea his father had not persuaded him to wait a little and consider whether it was worth while to know a secret his young mother had taken such precautions to keep and which a curious chance alone revealed to his adopted father.

In the stirring days of the war the question of his birth had troubled him little, but the long months of garrison life at home had brought it strongly before him and he had lately decided that he must know it at the first opportunity. And now the last opportunity was slipping away with every beat of the ebbing pulse in his hand.

"Poor little Jessie!" her father sighed. "It's hard leaving her. And no mother. But you'll be good to her. It troubles me that I was not the husband I might have been. I didn't consider how she was set on having things clean and straight, poor soul. I was rough at times—yes; I was rough." His eyes closed and Philip feared that the golden sands were run out. But the faint pulse beat on and suddenly quickened when Matthew Meade opened his eyes with a wide appealing gaze. "She set her heart on it, poor soul," he continued, "though she never thought you was to be left alone and not relations enough to live together. Many a time we talked of it. Philip you must marry Jessie," he concluded, in tones so strong and urgent as almost to exhaust his ebbing breath, which came gaspingly and then seemed to stop. At the word "marry," which opened an entirely new world of thought and feeling to him, Philip started so violently and suddenly that he almost dropped the hand clinging to his, shook a table by the bedside so that the bottles upon it rattled and a glass fell against them with a faint crash that recalled the intelligence to the dying eyes fixed on Philip's face. The crystalline tinkle broke through Jessie's light slumber, she started up and came forward just as Philip, with a half-dazed look, replied in the affirmative.

"My maid," said Mr. Meade, taking her tremulous hand as she touched his in bending to kiss him with some broken words of joy that he was himself again. "I am going fast. But Philip will care for you. Look to him now—Jessie—you must marry Philip."

She could not speak, but she suffered her hand to be placed in Philip's, which closed warmly upon it. Her father held the joined hands in his tremulous clasp with silent content awhile, then he whispered "Promise."

They promised; the old man's fingers tightened on the two young hands; his eyes grew hazy; they saw nothing earthly in their blank gaze.

"Father!" cried Philip, "who am I? Tell me before you go."

The haze of death once more cleared away, the eyes once more brightened with intelligence and rested lovingly on the young man's face. "Philip," Mr. Meade replied with an effort. "Philip!"

The voice failed, the eyes clouded and remained fixed, the hand closed convulsively over those of the two young people. Just then the door opened softly and Mrs. Plummer stole noiselessly in, followed by Dr. Maule. They stood still arrested by the sight. Mrs. Plummer with uplifted hands and startled gaze, the doctor hastily taking a pinch of snuff. The fire blazed up with sudden

lustre—on Matthew Meade's unconscious features, Jessie's tumbled gold hair and tearful face, Philip's look of agony, and the two young living hands clasped in the stiffening fingers. Then it sank and left the group by the bed in shadow.
(To be Continued.)

PERSONAL POINTERS.

Notes of Interest About Some Prominent People.

Robert Casper, of Neu-Ruppin, Germany, who is totally blind, makes a living as a newspaper reporter. His memory is such that he can remember the exact words of any speech. His accuracy is marvellous.

It has long been known that the Czar possessed a very pretty musical gift, and His Majesty has recently essayed his power as a composer of music to his own verses. In these verses the predominant note is one of religion. They extol the glories of the Orthodox Church and its saints and exalt the virtue of Christian self-sacrifice and renunciation of worldly goods and prosperity.

Mr. Briton Riviere, R.A., is deservedly proud of the remarkable feat of having had a picture hung at the British Gallery while still a Cheltenham schoolboy. At seventeen two of his paintings were accepted by the Royal Academy. And yet, in spite of his early success, he was for some years compelled to maintain himself by illustrating magazines and books before he could resume the "luxury" of his beloved brush.

That wonderful woman, the Dowager Empress of China (who, by-the-by, is not of the low origin she is popularly credited with), has the great distinction of being able to read and write, which makes her unique among Chinese women of her generation. She looks extraordinarily young for her age, her hair is still dark and luxuriant, her skin firm and unwrinkled, though she rouges to a considerable extent. Her chief recreation is card-playing with the ladies of her Court, and large sums of money are often staked, for at heart she is a gambler.

Apropos of the birthday of the Bishop of Lincoln (Dr. King), who was seventy-four the other day, is told the following pretty story: A couple of years ago the Bishop attended a confirmation at Boston, England. There he heard of a poor crippled girl who had been prepared for confirmation, but could not be brought to the service. Without more ado, despite his three-score and twelve years and a driving rain, and blustering wind, he set out and walked the two miles that separated the cottage of the girl from the church. The service in her bedroom lost nothing of its beauty or solemnity because of its mean surroundings.

The Crown Princess of Sweden, who is very pretty and popular, goes by the name of "The Colonel's Wife." The Crown Prince, unlike his poet father, is a military enthusiast, and is honorary colonel of several regiments. When he was first married he took his young bride into the headquarters of the regiment of which he was then acting colonel, and said: "Gentlemen, the colonel in command of the regiment desires to introduce his wife to the regiment." The charming young wife was received with rounds of applause, and the name has stuck to her ever since. The Crown Princess is a notable cook, and this gift, which she has taken great care to perfect, made her a prime favorite with the old Emperor William of Germany.

Many good stories are told of Sir Walter Parratt, the Master of the King's Music. Here is one illustrative of his extraordinary memory. Some eight or ten men were assembled one evening in one of the lodgings attached to St. Michael's College, Tenbury. Sir Walter Parratt and Herr von Holst played in turn upon the piano such music as was asked for. This went on for some time, until at last the chess-board was brought out. Sir Walter then proposed to play two men at chess in consultation, still remaining at the piano and playing from memory what was demanded, either from Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, or Mendelssohn. Without even a glance at the chess-board he won the game in an hour.

The Marquis Ito, the Prime Minister of Japan, had a narrow escape in the adventurous days of his youth. He and his friend Inouye incurred obloquy by their advocacy of the Europeanizing of Japan, and their political opponents resolved upon their assassination. It was traced to the house of a lady to whom he was attached, but the lady hid him so securely that he could not be found, saying that he had left her some hours before, and that she would be glad if the strangers would leave her also. They departed, and Ito managed to get on board a vessel bound for England, concealed in a bale of silk. He remained in that bail for thirty-six hours without either food or drink. Then he introduced himself to the skipper, and was allowed to work his passage to Liverpool as a steward.

PECULIARITY OF THE SEX.

Jayson—"It is strange, isn't it?"
Jimpson—"Er—what is strange?"
Jayson—"Why; that the oldest inhabitant is always a man—never a woman."

WHERE SLAVERY REIGNS

SCENE AT A MOROCCAN SLAVE MARKET.

Proceedings Begun With Prayer—Showing Off the Slaves.

A crowd of penniless idlers, to whom admittance is denied, clamor outside the heavy door, while the city "rats" fight for the privilege of holding the mules of wealthy citizens who are arriving in large numbers in response to the report that the house hold of a great wazeer, recently disgraced, will be offered for sale. Portly Moors from the city, country Moors, who boast less costly garments, but ride mules of easy pace and heavy price; one or two high officials—all classes of the wealthy, to be brief, are arriving rapidly, for the market will open in a quarter of an hour, and bidding will be brisk.

We pass the portals unchallenged, and the market stands revealed—an open place of bare, dry ground, hemmed around with tapia walls, dust-colored, crumbling, ruinous. Something like an arcade stretches across the centre of the ground from one side to the other of the market, roofless now and broken down, just as the outer wall itself, or the sheds, like cattle-pens that are built all around it.

HUMAN CATTLE-PENS.

On the ground by the side of the human cattle-pens the wealthy patrons of the market seat themselves at their ease, arrange themselves in leisurely fashion, and start to chat as though the place were a smoking-room of a club. Water-carriers (lean half-naked men from the Sus) sprinkle the thirsty ground, that the tramp of slaves and auctioneers may not raise too much dust. As they go about their work with the apathy and indifference born of long experience, I have a curious reminder of the Spanish bullring, to which the slave market bears some remote resemblance; the gathering of spectators, the watering of the ground, the sense of excitement, all strengthen the impression.

Within the sheds the slaves are shrinking, huddled together. They will not face the light until the market opens. The crowd at the entrance parts to the right and left to admit grave men wearing white turbans and jellabias. They are the delals or auctioneers, and the sale is about to begin.

Slowly and impressively the delals advance in a line to the centre of the slave market almost up to the arcade where the wealthy buyers all sit expectant. Then the head auctioneer lifts up his voice and—oh hideous mockery of it all—he prays. With downcast eyes and outspread hands he prays fervently. He recites the glory of Allah the One, who made the Heaven above and the earth beneath, and the sea and all that is therein; his brethren, and the buyers say amen.

Prayers are over, the last amen is said, the delals separate, each one going to the pens he presides over and calling upon their tenants to come forth. Obedient to the summons the slaves face the light; the sheds are emptied, and there are a few noisy moments bewildering to the novice, in which the auctioneers place their goods in line, rearrange dresses, give children to the charge of adults, sort out men and women according to their age and value, and prepare for the promenade. The slaves will march round and round the circle of buyers, led by the auctioneers, who will proclaim the latest bid offered, and hand over any one of his charges to an intending purchaser, that he may make his examinations before raising the price.

SHOWING THEIR POINTS.

In the procession now gathering for the first parade, five if not six of the seven ages are represented. There are old men and women who cannot walk upright, however the delal may urge, others of middle age, with years of active service before them; young men full of vigor and youth, fit for the fields; young women—moving for once unveiled, yet unbeked, before the faces of men—and children of every age—from babies, who will be sold with their mothers, to girls and boys on the threshold of manhood and womanhood. All are dressed in bright colors, and displayed to the best advantage, that the hearts of bidders may be moved and their purses opened widely.

"It will be a fine sale," says my neighbor, a handsome, dignified Moor, from one of the Atlas villages, who had chosen his place before I had reached the market. "There must be well-nigh forty slaves."

Now each delal has his people sorted out, and the procession begins. Followed by his bargains, he marches round and round the market. Some of the slaves are absolutely free from emotion of any sort. Others feel their position.

I learn that the delal's commission is 2½ per cent on the purchase price, and there is a government tax of 5 per cent. Slaves are sold under a warranty, and are returned if they have not been properly described by the auctioneer. Bids must not be advanced by less than a Moorish dollar—that is about three shillings—at a time, and when a sale is concluded a deposit is paid at once, and the balance on or after the following day.

The attractive women and strong men have been sold, and have realized good prices; the old people are

in little or no demand; but the auctioneers will persist.

Outside the market-place one country Moor of the middle class is in charge of four young boy slaves, and is telling a friend what he paid for them. I learned that their price averaged eleven pounds apiece in English currency—two hundred and eighty dollars in Moorish money—that they were all bred in Marrakesh, by a dealer who keeps a large establishment of slaves as one in England might keep a stud-farm, and sells the children as they grow up—"Harper's."

OIL FUEL FOR WARSHIPS.

Some New British Vessels Will Have Such Provision.

The Davenport representative of the London Express learns that the new battleship Hibernia, just laid down in the dockyard, is to be specially fitted for the storage of oil fuel in very large quantities, and that her sister ships, the Britannia and Africa, will undoubtedly be adapted in the same fashion.

In the course of a chat with one of the principal officials of the Navy Construction Department at Devonport Dockyard, the Express representative gathered some interesting expert opinions upon the question of oil fuel for warships.

The Hibernia is to have the whole of her false bottom space fitted with storage tanks, and suggestion has been raised as to whether coal firing will not be altogether abolished in the latest additions to the King Edward VII. class.

A navy construction official gave it as his opinion that oil fuel would long remain merely supplementary to coal firing in warships. He admitted that the method of employing it would very soon be developed to a stage at which it would prove quite as effective a means of generating motive power as coal.

This, notwithstanding, the coal bunker was not likely to become a thing of the past in warships for a long time to come.

One point which, in the expert view, seriously militates against the general adoption of the oil fuel for warship purposes is its dangerously inflammable quality. An example of this was cited by the Construction Department official. Some little while ago, when the German battleship Kaiser Wilhelm II. was carrying out steaming trials, she touched a rock with sufficient force to perforate her bilge plating amidships.

An inrush of water followed, and the oil stored in the fuel tanks came floating to the surface. Had this reached the level of the furnace doors, both boiler and engine rooms would have flashed with a blue sheer of unquenchable flame. Luckily the pumps were set to work in time, and proved equal to keeping the leak under.

While this danger might be minimized by distributing the oil in as many hermetically sealed tanks as possible, it could never be quite eliminated, and a bursting shell would doubtless cause havoc.

MOUNTAIN MUSIC.

Strange Formation of Musical Rocks in Nevada.

From the shores of Pyramid Lake, near the Truckee River, Nevada, rise the rock-covered slopes of a musical mountain. It is little known to man of the present age, for it has no mines, and the country about its base is barren and unfit for cultivation, while the absence of a railway or coaching convenience puts it out of the beaten track of the tourists.

In 1863 it was first discovered by a party of white settlers, who had come prospecting from Comstock, and who pitched their camp alongside a waterhole at the foot of the mountain.

When the sun had gone down, and the myriads of insects had ceased their humming, and the animals had sought their lairs, a low sweet sound of music seemed to emanate from the mountain side, beginning like the tinkling of millions of baby bells, gradually swelling into a roll of harmony, and then stopping almost abruptly.

In a short time the operation was repeated, and the sweetest sounds that ever fell on human ear rose in the calm evening air. Theories, wild and improbable were propounded by the prospectors, but no satisfactory reason was forthcoming, and the sounds continued at intervals, throughout the night, becoming inaudible at sunrise.

After a time it was discovered by those men who developed a greater interest in the musical phenomenon than in prospecting that the whole of the mountain side was covered with thin flakes of crystalline rock, lying in large beds, which were ever moving slowly, like an avalanche, towards the foot. Basing their theories on this discovery, they arrived at the conclusion that the strains of music arose from the friction of these plates one against the other; and that the sounds of the world drowned the music by day which accounted for its only being audible at night.

Some lawyers consider it a crime to confess a crime.

Some candidates feel very large before an election—and very small afterward.

If some girls who think they can sing would not try to prove it all might be forgiven.