

A DYING PROMISE

OR, THE MISSING
WILL

CHAPTER XII.

In a moment Claude was kneeling by her side, half-surrounding her with his arm, scarcely knowing what he did, for he was one of those men who are wax to a woman's tears. "Jessie, Jessie! Are you hurt? Heavens! Did the beast bite you?" He added, taking and examining her ungloved hands, and remembering that they had grasped the viper's head.

"Your face!" she sobbed. "It almost—"

"But it didn't, thanks to you! How you tremble. Look up, dear Jessie, look up—I am all right."

Jessie continued to tremble, though she recovered herself sufficiently to withdraw her hands from the kisses pressed upon them—kisses she was too agitated to heed—kisses more dangerous than adders' bites. Afterwards she was vaguely conscious that her hands had been kissed, but she never remembered what actually passed.

"Come, Jessie, look up, what is there to cry about?" he said, releasing her hands, "the beast is stone dead."

"It was so—slippery," she said, childishly, "I—I was so frightened."

She possessed the rare art of crying gracefully, her flushed face only looked sweeter through tears, her features kept their dainty curves, her eyes were all the brighter, like for-get-me-nots in the dew, her eyelids did not redden, the quiver of her lips went straight to people's hearts. Some of her golden hair had fallen about her neck and glittered in the sunshine; he could not help touching it lightly, caressingly, unscen.

"Did you think it would kill me?" he asked with quiet gravity, as they each recovered from their dissimilar agitation. "Then it might have killed you? and you don't like slippery things," he added with a tender smile.

"I don't like snakes. They make me ill. A snake," she added, now calm and ashamed of her agitation, "is the symbol of sin. Even to be near a sin is like touching a cold snake."

He turned away, a heavy frown disguising the beauty of his face.

Jessie now began to express some wonder at Miss Lonsdale's delay, and looking at her watch, found to her intense surprise that the morning was gone, it was time to go home to dinner.

"By the way, I quite forgot the note," Captain Medway said, forgetting also that he had been surprised to meet Jessie, and handing her a little cocked-hat of Clara's indicating, which briefly told her that she was not able to keep her tryst that morning. Jessie did not wonder at the lady's choice of a messenger, her simplicity was too absolute; and he did not think it necessary to explain that he had intercepted the note on its way to her by the hands of a servant. She wished him good-morning, and taking her easel and painting things, vanished in the depths of the wood. He remained leaning against a tree with folded arms, gazing at the spot left vacant by her!

"She is too good!" he reflected. "This is no mere milk and water innocence, half ignorance, half want of temptation, no light, slight village beauty. It is sterling. A new type of woman. And I am not to be shut of her heaven! But she is a woman, after all—and women are—women—My cousin Clara—hm! I have her authority. My Mother—well! my mother ought to know, but she does not think highly of the sex. Everybody, man or woman, especially woman, has his price, according to Lady Gertrude. That Balaclava business! by Jove? who wouldn't have bragged?—The viper!—sweet child! She could face death, but cried at the slippiness! Engaged, and to Philip?—is Philip mad, or what?—" He unfolded his arms and took a turn beneath the dappled shadows. "I wish I had never seen her!" he sighed, "I wish to Heaven I had never seen her!" he repeated.

Luncheon was in full progress when he reached the Court, cheerful and good-tempered as usual.

"Been sketching this morning, Clara?" he asked his cousin. "No? Is the picture finished, then?" Clara did not reply; she was angry with him for not making himself acquainted with her movements earlier, in which case he could have driven to Cleve with her. Being Sir Arthur's ward, and having from early childhood passed half the year with him, Clara had fallen into fraternal relations with her cousin. This was all very well in one's teens, but a woman of four-and-twenty, possessing large property, expects more deference. So Miss Lonsdale told her cousin later, when explaining the cause of her anger to him. But Claude knew the true cause far too well.

"If you have nothing to do this afternoon, Claude," Sir Arthur said, "do try to amuse poor little Ethel; she is frightfully low to-day."

only what anybody's used to, but I did think better of Wood blood, that I did."

"I beg your pardon, cousin," Jessie said, meekly.

"And you may be thankful if you don't live to beg your bread, miss, brought up as you was. I suppose, Plummer, if I was to ask you to sharpen the knives on my bended knees, you wouldn't do it," she added, mournfully.

"Well, there, my dear, I don't know but I might sharpen them better on your tongue," he replied, goaded for once to a retort.

"Some things it fine to jeer at married wives," said Mrs. Plummer, but her words were drowned in the brisk obligato Mr. Plummer executed with knife and steel.

"Ho, ho, ho, her nose doth show, How oft to the cupboard doth Margery go,"

he sang with reckless joviality, to the accompaniment of the steel on the knives, casting a half desperate, half deprecating wink toward Jessie at the same time. Cousin Jane sank in a chair and put her hands to her ears. "There's no knowing when I may drop," she said, when the steel music died away, "our family always goes off sudden."

"You can't drop fur in that chair, mother," retorted Mr. Plummer, dryly.

"Not but what I'd as soon be took off as not," she continued, not heeding this interruption, which alarmed Jessie, accustomed as she was to a masterly passivity in domestic broils on the part of Mr. Plummer; "I never was one to run up a doctor's bill if I could help it. And as for a funeral, I shouldn't wish to put people out; walking would do for me. It wouldn't be hardly worth while to hev mourning coaches just for Plummer and Toger. They could walk. I dare say their feelings would be equal to it. There's isn't anybody else to follow, without it's Eliza's husband. And I shouldn't like to put him to the expense and trouble with the hay season coming on and Eliza going upstairs. I suppose you can eat cold pie, Jessie?" she added, taking the head of the now covered table with melancholy resignation, "taffy as you've been bred; for what we're going to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful. 'Twould have been hotted up if I'd had a husband a respectable woman might look to, her with money of her own and a family looked up to."

"Thank ye, Jane, I don't care if I do have a cut of that ham," said Mr. Plummer, as if in response to an invitation after handing Jessie her plate of pie.

"You mayn't have the chance long," she sighed, beginning to carve; "for I will say this, there ain't a many can match my hams. Not that I was ever one to boast. The many hams I've cured and no thanks. It's in Wood blood."

"There ain't a many can match your tongue," added Mr. Plummer hastily, bending his jovial face over his foam-topped mug of ale, and receiving a hearty kick under the table from Roger, who had just pounded into the room, all blowed and ruddy from the thorough scrubbing that always preceded his dinner.

"You was always good at tongue," he added, evidently reckless of consequences and altogether demoralized and defiant.

"But what," continued Cousin Jane, fortunately missing the innuendo and mollified by the compliment, "is the best-cured tongue in a world like this?"

Another contraction of Mr. Plummer's features here nearly produced another titter from Jessie, whom these amenities sometimes made hysterical; but Cousin Jane went on with placid plainiveness, "Roger, my dear, do try some more pie. Keep yourself up, for you may need it; there's no knowing when trouble may come. We may all be gone by this time to-morrow."

Roger manfully responded to this appeal by finishing the beefsteak pie in his most heroic fashion, entreating his mother between whiles to "pick a bit" herself, which she steadily declined to do.

"Only last night I dreamt of bride cake," she sighed, "and the feelings I have in my inside nobody knows. But I ain't one to complain."

"Jessie," said Mr. Plummer, when Cousin Jane had left the room wafted by her own sighs, "don't you ever give Philip the tongue-pie for dinner, my dear; and she crimsoned with inexplicable pain at this indirect allusion to her engagement.

"The Lord only knows," he continued, "how I came to forget to say I'd asked four or five to drop into tea and supper to-night till this morning; entirely forget."

"Well, Cousin Plummer, you deserved a scolding," Jessie replied, laughing. "I don't know what I shouldn't do to you if I were Cousin Jane."

"She'll be all right," he averred, cheerfully, "now she's giv' you may all be gone by this time to-morrow." Then Jessie went to offer her services in the complicated preparations that she knew must be made for the reception of guests, services that after many gibes at her fine breeding and general incompetence, were finally grumblingly accepted.

She was glad to escape her own thoughts in this household bustle and put on an apron and tucked up her sleeves, and found her shaken nerves and feverish heart-beats calmed and quieted, especially when she went into the clean, cool, fresh dairy to skim the milk. Dairy-work



SOIL MANAGEMENT.

The problem of soil management is a complicated one for a variety of reasons, among which may be mentioned: 1. We possess little fundamental knowledge concerning the soil. There has not been a time in 50 years when we knew so little as at present. 2. The character of our soils varies greatly, and soil types have not been sufficiently correlated to make it possible to predict that results obtained in one place will apply to another. When the soils have been surveyed, mapped and classified into say ten main types, it will then be possible to carry on field experiments on each of the ten types and state with some degree of definiteness the conditions best suited to each, writes Thos. F. Hunt.

Soil is only a means to an end. The farmer does not want to produce soil. He wishes to produce plants and animals. Soil is only one of the means or essential conditions to the successful production of plants. Speaking broadly, successful plant production depends upon the plant itself, that is, its inherited qualities, and upon its environment. Its environment is the soil, its prepara-

always went to Jessie's heart, it recalled her mother, whose butter and cheese making she had so often watched and admired. She liked the absolute cleanliness and dainty scrupulosity necessary to dairy work. Why had she not been brought up to these things? She sighed, as the thick yellow cream wrinkled up in rich leathery folds over her skimmer; and her mother really destined her for Philip and for that reason wished her to live differently? Philip had always been considered a born gentleman, she did not know why; she had heard of his proposed adoption by the Medways. Was he connected with that family? If so, why was the connection ignored? How could she ever marry Philip, the brother Ippie of childhood? No wonder Captain Medway was startled at hearing it. Then she paused, having emptied the skimmer daintily into the wooden bowl she held in her left hand, and fell into a train of reverie, her cheeks flushing and her heart throbbing, as the morning's history repeated itself and she thought of looks and tones that could never be forgotten. Oh! that Miss Lonsdale had never known her! that she had never seen anyone at Marwell Court! And yet— and yet! She turned to the milk-pans again, drawing her fore-finger daintily round the inside of the pan she had just skimmed so as to remove the ring of cream adhering to it, remembering her mother's instructions on the subject. Thriftless dairy-maids left the ring on the pan, careless ones forgot to wash and cool the forefinger, untidy ones used the whole hand and so messed the cream over the handle of the skimmer; a whole code of ethics seemed to be involved in skimming milk. And she had no mother to teach her the ethics of more important things. "Oh! mother, come back, come back, to your child! For one little hour!"

The skimmer and bowl had to be set down more than once because of the tears, but all the pans were skimmed at last, the milk poured from them, and fresh, well-scrubbed ones set in their places ready for the afternoon's milk, that Abraham brought in in foaming pails suspended from a yoke on his shoulders.

"It do seem natural to see Miss in dairy!" he said, when he clattered in over the wet flags, and Jessie's mind and heart were in a much calmer and healthier condition when all was done, the waiting and watching Sebastopol regaled with a saucer of milk, and she went out to the orchard with a plate of curds and new cheese-parings to give the young chickens, cheeping and fluttering there about their imprisoned anxious mothers, each in her coop with her head thrust between the bars. If Mrs. Plummer would but let her do these things regularly!

"To be sure Jessie's aramental if she ain't useful when there's company," Mrs. Plummer confided that evening to one of her guests. "Goodness knows her father hev spent money enough on learning her music and she's a fairish singer."

Jessie was at the piano singing in a fresh and artless voice,

"Sweet is true love though given in vain, in vain,
And sweet is death that puts an end to pain."

"So it's to be a match," she heard one lady say, when her song was over and the accompaniment was lingering itself out beneath her fingers!

"Well! to be sure they've been off and on again this two years past; the captain he likes his pleasure, as is natural to a young man, but he'll hev to settle down and marry someone, and Miss Lonsdale isn't so young as she was. Their property joins too, the Suffolk property that is. And so they say they're engaged at last."

The color rushed into Jessie's face and she heard a hoarse murmur like the sea in her ears. All the evening a voice seemed to be saying over and over again, "Engaged! engaged!"

(To be Continued.)

tion, rainfall, temperature, the time and method of seeding or planting, insect or other injuries, and plant diseases.

TOO LITTLE ATTENTION

is paid generally to the inherited qualities of the plant, that is, to improved seed, and too little to adapting the plant to the soil or the soil to the plant, and to giving it those methods of culture best adapted to its fullest development.

These facts admitted, what practical methods are open to the farmer and others, not merely for the improvement of his soil, since that is a means to an end, but for the economic production of larger crops? Speaking generally and recognizing many individual exceptions due to special conditions, the basis for improvement lies along two lines, a more systematic and shorter rotation of crops where the land is capable of tillage, and the keeping of more live stock. It can easily be proven statistically that the farmer is not living up to his opportunity in either of these directions. This does not necessarily mean that more land should be plowed annually than at present.

Probably a good deal of land that is now plowed occasionally would be better off if not plowed at all, but kept in permanent pasture, or allowed to grow up to timber. It means that those lands that are adapted to cultivation and are part of the regular tillage operations should be plowed and changed from one crop to another sufficiently often to give the crops

THE BEST ENVIRONMENT.

The purpose of this rotation of crops is (1) to give opportunity for modifying the physical texture of the soil by tillage, by which its water-holding capacity is changed, the circulation of air hastened and the ease with which the roots penetrate increased; (2) to add organic matter to the soil, by which plant food is added and the physical properties of the soil are again modified as just indicated; (3) to eradicate noxious weeds, insect enemies and plant diseases; (4) to get a new start.

The basis of all soil culture is first to select the plants or seeds of plants having the characteristics most desired, and then furnish them, the most congenial home possible by removing all possible obstructions to their fullest development. A judicious rotation of crops is generally the most economic way of furnishing the environment. One of the important purposes of a rotation is to get a new start. This is an important consideration to the farmer, who has a large portion of his arable land in meadows. The rule is two to four good crops are produced and then the yields begin to fade away. The reasons for this are many, but one important factor is that the timothy plant is not strictly perennial, its length of life depending somewhat upon the favorableness of its surroundings.

It has been pointed out that when it was customary to cut timothy that had seed in it, the meadows lasted longer than at present. Doubtless by the continued

APPLICATION OF SEED

to meadows, especially if accompanied with the application of stable manure, meadows may be successfully maintained for many years, but it will generally be found better practice to plow and take off one or more cultivated crops, and thus get a fresh start. If I were to suggest a general form of rotation, it would be as follows: An intercultural crop, viz., corn, potatoes or beans, one year; a broadcast crop, wheat, rye, oats or barley, one year; meadow not to exceed four years.

Confining our remarks strictly to the production of general farm crops one may often wisely stimulate the growth of crops by the use of commercial fertilizers. It is eminently desirable, however, to feed at least a portion of this increased product to live stock and return the manure to the soil. By this means, the crop producing power of the soil may be maintained, or if already reduced, may be increased. If, on the other hand, commercial fertilizers alone are used, and the increased product sold from the farm, just the opposite may result. The farmer cannot afford to neglect any agency for increasing the productivity of his soil, and his most potent agency is a well preserved manure pile.

FROM STABLE TO PASTURE.

In the spring many turn out their cows on the pastures before they can get a full bite of grass. The cows relish the tender grass, but practice proves it is not good for them.

They partially lose their appetite for dry forage and the watery grass that takes it does not contain the nourishment that was supplied by the hay. The consequence is that they fall off in their milk and they hardly regain it again all that season. The pasture is injured, yielding less feed for the season, while the ground is soft and they poach it up and cut the sod.

When the cows are kept in the yard and fed their usual amount of forage and grain they will give a steady flow of milk. The grass will grow without interruption, and when ready to turn the cows on it will give a full bite that will keep up through the season.

Those who have had to feed their cattle in the yards until the grass has got a good start are well satisfied with their methods.