

A DYING PROMISE

OR, THE MISSING
WILL

CHAPTER XV.

"We are going to Lucknow, Mr. Randal," Ada said; "where does it lie?"

He did not know; Bealampore was not in the plan she had given him. His guide then told him that she was not sure of the locality herself, but was certain that it was considerably north of Bealampore.

This information was most depressing, especially when a sudden twinge reminded Philip of his recent wound. He looked with dismay at his companion's slender form, conspicuous in the white boy's dress, and tried to calculate the distance from Lucknow by the time it had taken the bearers to convey him in his palanquin to Bealampore. Alas! these bearers besides being swift and practiced runners, knew the way and were not obliged to hide themselves. The adventure was a desperate one.

"We must make the best of the darkness," Ada said, tranquilly at this juncture. "It will be well to lie quiet during the day. You have been very good and given me no trouble with questions and hesitations."

"I am at your service," he replied, simply; "I know that you would not have left your refuge but for good reason."

"Good reason indeed," she said. "You have heard Gossamjee Bhoose speak of the tyrannical moulvie who caused the Hindoo temple to be defiled. This man has sworn that there shall be no more English, and for that reason Gossamjee was so anxious to pass us both off as Hindoos. With me he succeeded fairly well. I was in India until eleven years old. Hindostance is my second language. I know much of native ways, besides, women do not attract much attention, their lives are passed in such seclusion. But you arrived in English uniform, and wounded, and this somehow got wind. Gossamjee suspects that one of the servants turned traitor. These people are always intriguing, and some friendly traitor warned Gossamjee of the moulvie's plan, which was to search his house—probably this very night. He told Ruksbhai also that he would defend us to the death. Poor Ruksbhai herself proposed our flight; she had the locks oiled, and gave me a master key and a suit of Chunia's clothes, and furnished me with food and a little money. Dear Ruksbhai, she is a good actor, and I hope that she will be able to persuade Gossamjee that she knows nothing of our disappearance. She had to take old Toru into her confidence. Toru dare not betray her mistress. Gossamjee would certainly beat her for her part in it. And for such a breach of hospitality he would beat Ruksbhai severely. Dear Gossamjee, I wish I might have bid him good-by and thanked him. He is such a noble-minded man. Even Ruksbhai loves him, though he is her husband. How I shall miss them all. You did not see Rajmahli, of course? But you may have heard a girl's voice singing hymns. It was Rajmahli. She is sixteen, and a widow. I taught her many things, and we studied Sanscrit together. And little Sata, a child of six. Poor baby! It is bad enough to be a woman in any case, but to be a Hindoo woman; there is nothing more terrible, except to be a Mohammedan woman."

"They are used to it," he replied, his mind busy with more personal matters.

"And I am used to being a woman," she returned, with a scornful smile, "but I find the more I am used to it the less I like it."

"You surely would not wish to be a man?" Philip remonstrated. Perhaps salmon, mackerel, and such lucky fish as are not skinned alive, consider that discipline excellent for eels, who, like Mohammedan women, are used to it.

"At all events," she returned, "I must look as much like a boy as I can till this little excursion is at an end. My name is Carendra Lal, you are Bassenjee Lal, my brother, and we are returning from some pilgrimage to Lucknow, where our parents live. An impediment in your speech obliges me to be spokesman on all occasions."

The moon set and clouds arose, gradually blotting out the stars. They travelled along in the darkness, listening to the cries of wild beasts from the jungle they were approaching, and talking but little; Philip regretting that he had left Gossamjee's hospital roof without a word of thanks or farewell, and speculating on the trouble that might befall the honest merchant on their account. It was well that Ada had explained nothing beforehand, as in that case he would have felt himself bound to tell his good host of his intended flight.

"Gossamjee will surely think me ungrateful," he said.

"No," his companion replied; "he will think that we found a favorable opportunity for flight and will be glad that we did it before getting him into trouble. It was agreed between us that I was to seize any chance that offered without telling

him, so that he might be unable to furnish any clue in case of pursuit. There are some very fierce fanatics at Bealampore who think English blood the most dainty offering for their gods. Oh, Mr. Randal, how beautiful it is to be free. Yours is the first English voice I have heard since—for three months," she said, her breath catching at the memory of the last English voice she had heard; "and I have not had so much as an English Bible to read, and have only spoken English when teaching Rajmahli, and sometimes her father and her brother."

"Poor child!" Philip replied, touched at the thought of her desolation, "I wish I were ten men for your sake."

The dawn was breaking now, not the sudden splendor of the tropics, but a much less gradual dawn than we know in these latitudes. The air grew sharp, the darkness seemed deeper, and then the clouds cleared off, the east glimmered grayly and turned to white and gold, the great sun leapt up from the horizon into a sky of deep glowing orange; the warm autumn day was near.

Ada's spirits had been rising with the sense of freedom, and the stimulus of action, the terrible sorrow and suspense of the last few months was succeeded by a natural reaction. She could have sung in the lightness of her heart.

"How beautiful the world is!" she exclaimed, as she watched the glory of the sunrise with tears in her eyes, "and how beautiful it is only just to be alive. I am sure that we shall get through the lines, Mr. Randal. I think that God means to deal more gently now—I have suffered so much, and you have suffered, too. And how shall I ever be able to thank you?"

"If I can help you I shall need no other thanks," he replied; "but it strikes me that if I get into Lucknow alive I shall owe it to you."

They went into a grove of mangoes for concealment rather than shade, to rest awhile, and eat some of the food Ada had brought with her; and a more paradisaic breakfast perhaps had never been taken. The world lying before them in the beauty of the morning was so fresh, so young, and so bright; the experience was so new and so romantic.

Philip scarcely knew Ada in her fresh disguise; the merry Hindoo lad with the sparkling eyes differed as much from the dignified, deep-voiced Indian lady telling him her sad story, as the latter contrasted with the light-hearted girl in the ball-room. His spirits rose with the glory of the fresh morning, and the infection of Ada's, but he could not forget the extreme peril of their position and his own heavy responsibility, and ate the chupatties and fruit he found in his bundle with an undercurrent of serious thought.

"Brother Bassamjee," Ada said hurriedly, after a time, "I wonder in which direction Lucknow lies."

Then it struck Philip that, having walked for so many hours, they ought by this time to be within hearing of the siege guns. He looked over the prospect before him, a rich plain dotted with villages among corn-fields, groves, and paddy fields, with the eternal palm springing here and there; he could see no sign of a large city, or large river. Bealampore was left far behind out of sight. He had no idea where he was.

"We shall soon find the road," he said in a reassuring voice. "Only keep up your heart, Miss Maynard."

Their frugal meal finished, and their feet washed in a stream, the travellers went refreshed upon their way toward a village, where Ada's inquiries procured the disquieting information that they had been diligently walking away from Lucknow all night, and must now retrace their steps, though they were not obliged to pass Bealampore again.

The sun waxed warmer as they walked, and both began to flag, Philip even limping, as the effort told upon his wounded leg.

"It would have been nothing without an adventure," Ada commented joyously; "you didn't suppose we were going to walk across to Lucknow as one walks across the fields to church at home, Mr. Randal?" And he certainly did not.

They had now reached a ravine formed by a cascade dashing from a height; the steep sides were partly clothed with wood, and as it was evident that both were tired out, they rested in this cool and pleasant retreat till the sun's worst force should be expended. Here Philip prepared a couch with leaves and undergrowth, but before he had made much way with it Ada, who had thrown herself at the foot of a tree and began to discuss their plans, suddenly became silent, her head drooping on her breast. She had fallen asleep, dead beat. She scarcely stirred when he lifted her gently from the earth and placed her on the greenwood couch, himself sitting near and fanning the insects off with a green bough. He sat thus for many hours, battling with the drowsiness that threatened to overcome him, and pondering their situation

and plans, a perfect passion of pity and tenderness sweeping over him whenever his eyes rested upon the sleeping girl, and he thought of her courage and patience, her utter desolation and dependence upon him.

They had decided to sleep by turns in the day, and travel again, at night; but Ada, who had taken no exercise for many months, was so exhausted that the day wore on and nearly away while she slept, and Philip could only keep himself awake by pacing to and fro, to the discomfort of his wounded leg. But at last the sleep faded from her face, she sighed, stirred, and woke, springing to her feet when her eyes opened upon Philip's haggard face, and reproaching him for letting her sleep on—for they did not think it safe to sleep without a watch, a temple above the cascade giving evidence of human habitation near.

Then Philip took her place for an hour, and she watched and fanned in turn, her heart in turn melted with pity when she looked upon the bronzed tired face and the strong limbs relaxed in the helplessness of sleep.

If wild beasts cease to harm each other, and unite to face a common danger, how much more binding is the tie of endurance and peril when shared by human beings? And these had for each other the subtle charms of youth and sex, together with diversity of character and beauty; they were alone together in the wide world, surrounded by cruel and treacherous enemies, at the mercy of elemental forces, hot noons, chill nights, beasts of prey and venomous reptiles, malaria, hunger, and the pestilence that slays and wastes at that season in those climates. Each felt something of the tremendous forces drawing them together, but their youth and the exigencies of the moment hindered them from seeing how deep and subtle those forces were.

Another night's walking, they hoped, would bring them to the rebel lines; but it was not so. What with sickness and other mischances, it was days later when two young English-speaking Hindoos were suffered to pass the English outposts in the evening, and brought guarded into the entrenchments.

Foot-sore and weary, thin and haggard, their white clothing stained and torn, they were led before Europeans almost as tattered, soiled and wasted as themselves; when the younger lad, who was half supported by the elder, suddenly uttered a cry and ran toward a tall man clad in a ragged, dirty flannel shirt, shabby trousers and slippers, but accoutred as a private soldier, and wearing an officer's sword.

"Arthur, don't you know me?" sobbed the boy, throwing himself upon the astonished officer.

"She escaped from Jellypore in disguise," the other fugitive explained. "You may be sure of your sister by this token, Captain Maynard," he added, producing a large ruby from his clothing. "Miss Maynard dropped this while dancing with me, Philip Randal, of the 190th, last winter, and I took it in charge for her until now."

Then ensued a scene in which recognition, doubt, fear and hope, sorrow and joy, were tumultuously mingled, one of many similar scenes enacted in Lucknow that year, when the supposed dead suddenly reappeared after long wanderings, and those reputed living were as suddenly discovered to have been long dead; when reunited friends met with terror, framing questions their lips almost refused to utter, and their ears dreaded to hear answered.

"Is father alive? And mother?—Where is your wife? Algernon was killed and Ethel and all the children—None were saved, civilians or soldiers—My children are gone—My wife still lives—Her baby is a month old—There is still food in the garrison—We have lost all we possessed—We left cantonments in the clothes we stood in—You are ill—I am starved—Ah, poor child, and worn out—And Havelock is ill—Sir Colin is coming—A little patience—Thank God how sad—How sweet—" and such like mingled questions and answers amid tears and smiles, and ejaculations of sorrow and wonder, to the crashing of the grim siege-symphony overhead.

The fugitives separated without farewell; Ada was taken to her brother's wife, and Philip, with a keen pang at a parting he felt to be final, at least as far as the close and pleasant companionship in the last days of suffering and danger was concerned, went to the quarters assigned to his regiment, where another equally ghastly but less emotional scene of recognition, inquiry, sad response, and half sorrowful welcome occurred, in the midst of which the diabolical war music rose in a deafening fortissimo; the wall of the temporary mess room crashed in, admitting a heavy exploding body, men fell in various directions like so many ninepins, the sound of smashing crockery and shattering furniture was mingled with groans, and followed by silence and darkness.

Philip, stunned by the noise, and blinded by the thick dust-cloud, wondered that he was still alive, and supposed himself the only survivor of the explosion; when the cloud began to dissipate itself, a light was struck and a voice quietly remarked: "Their practice is improving. The last only ploughed the compound a bit."

"What I hate is their confounded stink-pots," said another voice, and the whole assembly, the officers being then at dinner, was soon on its feet, and making use of such furniture as was not smashed, adapting broken things and continuing the repast, as far as circumstances per-

mitted, which was not very far. The body of a poor native servant, the only victim of the exploding shell, was quietly removed without comment a few minutes later.

Then Philip heard of the terrific loss on September 25th, and during the following week, when amputated limbs lay in heaps in the hospital, of the continued fury of the siege apparently undiminished numbers of the enemy, who had rolled back for a short distance round the original entrenched position as the sea would roll back from cliffs rising out of the water, but who invested the reinforced garrison as closely as ever. Outram had not yet heard of Sir Colin Campbell's approach, and thanks to Lawrence's providence there were still provisions for a month. An English paper, smuggled in by a servant, proclaimed the interest and sympathy of England, and the starting of large bodies of troops overland.

Two or three days in hospital, where a round shot killed a man sitting on his bed, and several of duty of most active description, followed, and Philip saw and heard nothing of the comrade of his late adventures. He contrived to send out a note for Jessie, concealed in a quill, saying that he was alive and well, and then one evening when he had an hour to spare, he made his way to the Maynards' quarters, telling himself that, little as conventionalities could be observed by people whose scanty leisure was spent in dodging round shots and musket balls, it was absolutely incumbent on him to ask how Miss Maynard fared after her adventurous journey.

He found a quiet circle of ladies in shabby clothes, sitting in a veranda to breathe a little air in the comparative lull of the iron tempest, which usually occurred after sunset. Faded, haggard, and languid these ladies were; one wore a bit of crape at her neck, the nearest approach to widow's weeds that she could procure; one was hushing a young fretful baby. This lady received him very cordially, and thanked him for his care of her sister-in-law, while Captain Maynard took the young child and looked at it with a wistful tenderness.

"This little chap began life boldly," he observed, petting the tiniest of arms.

"He ought to grow into a distinguished soldier," Philip replied glancing with a sort of awed pity at the frail creature, who had chosen such a perilous time for his first entrance upon the world's stage, and doubting if he would grow into anything.

Then he heard the low clear voice which had of late become so familiar, though not less thrilling to him, and almost feared to look up to the face he had seen in such varied aspects when Ada came on to the veranda.

"I am so glad to see you," she said. "I was afraid you would not have time to come. You were in hospital; I was so sorry. I hear you have been on duty, I hope not too soon."

The young widow's eyes clouded when she saw Philip rise from the block of wood he was sitting on to shake his former comrade's hand; she had heard the story of their wandering with a sort of tender envy and the expression Ada's appearance brought to Philip's face gave him a momentary resemblance to her own soldier slain during the siege. It happened that Philip was clad in a shabby, stained uniform that she recognized too well; she had refused to sell it, but placed it at the disposal of any officer who might need it.

Ada had now recovered her natural hue, and though unsuitably clad in a rich colored silk gown given her by a lady who lived in the Residency, and therefore had all her wardrobe with her when the flight thither took place, she made a graceful and feminine figure in the dim light. Her dark hair was coiled about her head like that of a Greek statue, her eyes were bright with pleasant welcome; she carried a sleeping child in her arms, a wasted, ailing creature, yet no light burden, being at least three years old.

"Ada," her sister-in-law said, "can't you put Willie to bed now? He has been in your arms the whole long day. He will wear you out."

"The moment I lay him down he cries," she replied, gathering him closer in her arms; "he is so good, he lets me work and wash the china and do all sorts of things!"

Philip wondered what "all sorts of things" might mean; without asking he took the child from her, and quickly hushed the feeble moan it made on being moved; then he learnt that its mother was too weak to tend it, and trusted it entirely to Ada.

Just then a slight sibilant noise, followed by a crack, was heard, and a small object bounded from the chair on which Miss Maynard was sitting and struck her on the side.

"Spent, fortunately," she said, with a slight start, while a small leaden ball rolled harmlessly to the ground, whence Philip took it as a souvenir.

"The chair is none the worse," Captain Maynard said, tranquilly examining it; "it was evidently a chance shot."

Philip, whose low seat was one of those wooden blocks fired from mortars at a high elevation into the garrison, keenly realized the brief and precarious tenure on which they all held their lives; was it worth while to think of the future in the near face of death? Why not snatch a little joy from these fleeting moments of peril? Therefore he looked into Ada's deep eyes, and listened to the music of her voice, while the

young widow watched them with a sorrowful sympathy, and enjoyed a brief hour of Paradise.

When he returned to his post he felt very low, and fell to regretting that he had no tidings of Jessie; he would give the world for a home letter. And tired as he was by the long day's duty, and weakened by poor food and hardships, he did not sleep that night, but lay looking through the darkness at a face which seemed to reproach him, the face that of all faces had looked most kindly upon him all his life, the lined, worn face of Matthew Meade, and remembered that good man's constant and surprising love and kindness, and the perfect trust he had seen in his dying eyes.

In the meantime the guns boomed on; a ball might at any moment crash into his room, ending all responsibility.

His visit was repeated once or twice before the position was evacuated a few weeks later, in November, when Ada was one of the crowd of ladies who took shelter in his regiment's quarters, while a passage was being cleared for their carriages on their way to the Dilkoosha Palace. The child was still in her arms; she begged a little milk for it, and Philip was happy and proud to be able to furnish some.

A few days later, when the sick and wounded and women and children were conveyed to Allahabad, he was one of their escort, and thus saw her frequently during the fortnight's slow and difficult march, which was necessarily one of great hardship. A great crowd of sick and feeble people and their necessary baggage in bullock wagons and palanquins, with camels, elephants, pedestrians, and vehicles all mixed up together in the hot sun and stifling dust, involved much suffering and unspeakable confusion. With scanty and hastily organized commissariat, the Maynards were frequently without food or tents for the night; and, like others, were dependent upon the sometimes lawless proceedings of male friends.

"Brother Bassamjee," Ada said one night, when after long and weary waiting at their encampment he brought them some loaves fetched from a commissariat wagon, "if you were in merry England I strongly suspect you would see more of the inside of a prison than you liked."

"Well, I begged this milk for Willie," he replied, producing some.

"After all," Ada said, when she had thanked him, "it is only a long picnic, but Mrs. Maynard won't see it in that light."

"It would be more amusing," poor Mrs. Maynard observed, "if we could be quite sure the enemy would not attack us."

Philip was more than sorry when this novel picnic came to an end, and the Lucknow people were safely packed in trains to Allahabad. Both Ada and Mrs. Maynard said a tearful farewell, but Ada smiled through her tears.

"What can it matter?" he said to himself in the march back to the Alumbagh. "I shall never see her again whether I go through the campaign or not."

And when he reached the camp and found several home letters, he almost trembled at the prospect of opening them.

The time moved heavily on that winter in spite of the constant peril and excitement culminating in the final capture of Lucknow in March; Jessie's strange discontent and constant desire to leave the neighborhood of Clevee and obtain some employment, expressed in the letters which reached him fitfully, seemed to him, in face of the grim realities of his own life, but as the murmurs of a spoiled child, wanting something and knowing not what.

"Dear little Jessie! I will do all I can to make her happy when the campaign is over," he used to say on reading her letters.

(To be Continued.)

SECRETS OF SUCCESS.

A certain fellow who answered advertisements in papers has had some interesting experience. He learned that by sending a dollar to a Yankee he could get a cure for drunkenness, and he did. It was to "Take the pledge and keep it." Then he sent fifty stamps to find out how to raise turnips successfully. He found out: "Take hold of the top and pull." Being young he wished to marry, and sent thirty stamps to a firm for information as to how to make an impression. When the answer came it read, "Sit down in a pan of dough." It was a little rough, but he was a patient man, and thought he would yet succeed. Next advertisement he answered read: "How to double your money in six months." He was told to convert his money into notes, fold them, and he would see his money doubled. Next he sent for twelve articles, and he got a packet of needles. He was slow to learn, so he sent a dollar to find out "How to get rich." The next post carried, "Work like the deuce and never spend a cent," and that stopped him. But his brother wrote to find out "How to write without pen or ink." He was told to use a lead-pencil. He paid a dollar to learn "How to live without work," and was told on a post-card, "Fish for fools as we do."

Scolding Female (to Husband No. 2).—"Oh, if you only knew the difference between you, wretch, and my first husband!" Husband—"I do know the difference. He is happy now that he has left you, and I was happy before I got you."