

# A DYING PROMISE

OR, THE MISSING  
WILL

## CHAPTER XXIV.

"What's the meaning of all this, Abraham?" asked Roger Plummer, "all this" indicating a black eye which adorned the otherwise plain countenance of Abraham Bush, who was sitting on the floor of the barn with his legs spread out in front of him, while he wielded an implement soon destined to vanish from rural life, an implement consisting of two sticks loosely jointed together, one, the hanel held in the hand, and the other jointed to it, the swingle descending with a dull thud upon the wheat-ears before him, a sound that used to make pleasant music the winter long upon barn floors, and an occupation that warmed laborer's bodies in the cold winter days when no other work was to be found.

"I knacked en down," growled Abraham, bringing the flail music to an end.

"Knocked you down?" asked Roger, "and why?"

"Job Ash! A zaid summant about Miss—you knows what a zaid—Iss. I knacked en down. Job he got up and a knacked me down. Then I gets up and I knacks en down agin, and Job he ups and cuts and hruns. I lows he hrunned pretty smart. Aye, that's how't was, I hreckon."

"Thud, thud went the flail, and the chaff fluttered and whirled in the wind raised by the energetic strokes for a minute or two, then Abraham paused again. "Iss," he repeated, "I knacked en down, zure enough."

"You done hright, Abraham," said Roger, who had been standing scowling with his hands in his pockets, whence he withdrew one with half a crown, which he offered to Abraham. "What be ye gwine at with he?" growled Abraham, glaring with mingled vindictiveness and longing at the comfortable-looking coin.

"Take it, Abram."

"You putt that there in yure pocket, Mr. Roger," he replied, growing more and more surly under the witchery of the shining silver and the depressing consciousness that Mr. Roger was a "near one," and might not offer him another half-crown that side of Christmas. "Anybody's think I caint knack nobody down athout being paid for 't."

"Trust you for that. Why, you've known her from a baby." Roger returned, pitching the half-crown neatly between Abraham's outspread legs. "But you've no call to look so sure at a good half-crown. Chuck it away if you don't want it. I shan't hev it. So you knacked en down?"

"Wasn't I mad!" continued Abraham. "Shouldn't a ben sa mad if I hadn't a ben true?"

"You don't think it, Abraham?" growled Roger.

"Zeem 'em in copse together, two or three times, never thought nothen at the time. She's always up Court. Out painten long with Miss Lonsdale, long with t'other one that's lame. But a young maid din't ought to be out long with he."

Roger growled an execration, on the unnam'd.

"Wish I had the Capen under this yer zwingel!" added Abraham, bringing his flail down with both hands.

"Wish you'd a told me first time you saw them," said Roger.

"You tell your vather, Mr. Roger; tell en to pen her up in garret, if she want bide at home nohow else."

"No, Abraham, 't is best to keep a still tongue if you can. I know and you know, and between us we can keep her in sight whenever she goes out. If there's anything more between them I expect he won't have a whole bone left in his body. But she's going to Cleeve to-morrow for a week, so she'll be out of harm's way for a time."

"Let her bide in Cleeve long with school-missus, that's the best place sur she. A young maid is like a heifer, zure to fall in trench, or go droo vence, or zumat, athout you looks pretty sharp after her. One heifer is more tarment than twenty wold cows."

"Thud, thud, thud went the flail, while Abraham's face, the lips and chin of which bristled with a week's spiky growth, was drawn into such grim and vicious lines as would lead one to suppose that he was wreaking vengeance on the corn before him.

Roger took up a wooden shovel and made the winnowed corn into a neat heap ready for a sack to the tune of the flail strokes, then he turned back through a cloud of floating chaff to Abraham, whose face was more viciously set and his strokes, then he turned back through a cloud of floating chaff to Abraham whose face was more viciously set and his strokes fiercer than ever.

"No, no, Abraham," he said, "keep a still tongue; don't even tell your wife."

Abraham paused and wiped his brow. "No call to tell she," he returned, with a sort of surly grin. "Trust Sarow to find out. Darned if that ar ooman caint zee better droo a stone wall and hround a carner then you and me zees what's straight avore our noses. Aye, she's a deep 'un, is Sarow."

Roger went away with a hopeless

air. "Knack em all down, Abram," was his final injunction as he crossed the farm yard. Seeing Jessie coming in from the garden with a basket of fibberts.

"Hullo, Jess," he cried, "so you're off to-morrow. Wish you'd wait till next day, and I could drive you in."

"Thank you, Roger," she returned, "the carrier's cart will really be more convenient with my luggage."

"Look here, Jess," continued Roger, taking off his hat to thrust his hand through his thick tangle of curls, "I suppose you don't want a friend?"

"A friend, Roger?" asked Jessie, smiling and stopping by the low stone wall, on which she set her basket. "Why?"

"Only if you want anybody knocked down or anything," he continued, turning very red, "I'm your man."

Jessie turned red too, and something came up in her throat, half choking her.

"There's nothing I wou,ldn't do for ye," he went on, his blue eyes brilliant with earnestness. "I was always set on ye, but I never said anything—because of poor Phil, what's away. If you hadn't been promised to him. But there, you never have looked at the likes of me, I'm brough and dunch. Shouldn't ha' named it, only I thought, as Phil can't do nothing—if you wanted anything done, no matter what, I'm your man. Oh! I say, Jessie, Jessie!"

She was crying in a way that went to the honest fellow's heart, crying quietly but sadly.

"You were always good to me, Roger," she replied at last, "far better than I deserved. You used to let me pull your hair as a boy. But I wish you wouldn't talk like that."

"It was only if you wanted anything done," he murmured. "I'd never 'a spoke else. If there'd been a chance, I wouldn't have been so mean with poor Phil away."

"Forget me, Roger," she said, drying her eyes, "but I will never forget you and your kindness." She gave him her hand and left him, stabbed by his words and touched by his friendliness, and thinking of the way in which she had undervalued this sterling fellow because of his rough exterior and intolerable ways. And yet to be pitied and extenuated by Roger! Well, it would not be for long.

She had not left Redwoods since her visit to the Inglebys. It was evident to Jessie that Mrs. Plummer had heard nothing of that terrible gossip—which was not surprising, since scandal usually reaches all ears but those most concerned in it.

In the afternoon Mrs. Plummer wanted to send a message to a woman, whose cottage was about a mile and a half distant.

"Do you run over my dear," she said to Jessie, "the day's fine, though dull, and 't will be a nice walk. Why, you haven't been out this three days."

Jessie did not know how to refuse this small request; she suggested sending the young maid-servant, or a letter, and even broached the immense heresy of her cousin's faring forth with her.

"It's not much you'll hev at my death, Jessie," moaned Mrs. Plummer, in response, "so I can't think why you want me to be galled into my grave so quick, I'm sure. Not that 't will be long, anyhow. And I'm the last to want to live on, a burden to my own flesh and blood. Plummer'd find a difference in the housekeeping, not to speak of the dairy, and as for the poultry, I never was one to boast, but I should wish you to pint out finer broods of turkeys than what I've rared this summer. Night and day did I wait on them turkeys, I don't know what more I could a done for them short of sleeping outside their coops and not closing an eye all night, I'm sure. If anybody'd tell me what I could a done more, trapezing through the archard grass wet days, and wearing away to a shadow, I'd a done it and thankful."

Jessie hastened to reassure her cousin, while Mrs. Plummer, whose curls were in their full-dress condition and would not bear rough treatment from damp pocket-handkerchiefs very carefully wiped her round, plump, apple-like cheeks.

"Not that I ever look to you to do anything, Jessie," sighed Cousin Jane, with a mournful sigh from the depths of her broad and wholesome chest; "many a time your poor mother hev said to me, 'I've a ben useful myself, cousin, and I should wish the little un to be arnamental.' I was always against it myself, but there was never anybody forerighter than your mother without 'twas your poor father. The times I warned poor Martha against having him; but hev him she would and cart-ropes wouldn't hold her. You'd a been easier to manage if she'd a married a more persuadabler man, Jessie, though I don't cast it up agen you that your mother would marry Mat Meade. As for asking of you to spile your hands, I wouldn't do it to save anybody's life. And I'm sure I

never shut an eye last night with pig-killing and Roger's shirts on my mind, and you going in to Miss Blushford's to-morrow; not that I wanted you to help pickle walnuts, which do black the hands terrible. But ready to drop as I am, going over to Mrs. Woodford's is no matter; after all, when anybody's worn out a mile or two's nothing. What if it do take me off a week or so sooner? I may as well die and a done with it, I suppose."

So Jessie thought, but she did not say so.

"You mustn't be cross on my last day, cousin," she said, after receiving Mrs. Plummer's final directions on the doorstep at starting, "and please try and think as gently as you can of me, whatever happens."

Her words and something unusual in her manner struck Cousin Jane with an uneasy sensation. "Whatever have come over the child of late?" she wondered. "Dear, dear, how I wish Philip would come home or else have her out! She finds the time long, poor thing, she's lonesome and she frets. It was just like poor Mat Meade to tie her up with Philip, and him going out to the Mutiny. But there, what is anybody to do with a girl that's neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring? She can't be happy with plain folk, that's sure. Poor Mat meant well, I will give him credit for that."

The day had clouded heavily since the morning, the weather was breathless and oppressive, though of late the air had had the strong, sharp bite which tells of coming winter, warms young blood, and inspirits drooping nerves. The heavy languor weighed upon Jessie's overburdened heart and depressed her, body and soul; yet she walked with a quick, alert air and there was a tense, strained look on her face.

Her shortest, most direct way lay straight across the Marwell woods, but she chose to go the long way by the highroad and through the village. There she encountered Miss Ingleby and Ellen Dale, respectively, and it was these ladies who blushed and seemed conscience of neglect, while the infinitesimal bow and utterly neutral expression with which Jessie passed on would have done credit to any woman of the world.

"As bold as brass," murmured Miss Ingleby to herself; "I should like William to have seen my lady sweep by with her princess air. Innocent child, indeed! Artful young minx! Well, I am glad they have given up having her with Ethel Medway!"

It was Jessie who had given up going to Marwell Court, to Ethel's great and freely expressed indignation.

"I really think the ingratitude of that class of people is beyond everything," was Lady Gertrude's comment upon Jessie's written excuse for refusing Ethel's request, "and after the manner in which you took her up, Clara."

"I am not in the least surprised, Aunt Gertrude," her niece replied; "I am too much accustomed to ingratitude to expect anything else in a world like this," she added, with a plaintive sigh which suggested acquaintance with infinitely superior worlds.

"Your pets always round upon you, Clara, don't they?" interposed Claude, with an indifferent air.

"I really don't know what we are coming to," moaned Lady Gertrude; "Pauline had but just learnt a really becoming way of dressing my hair, and she must needs give warning to-day because her mother is paralyzed; as if her mother could not go to a hospital. I suppose there are hospitals in France. The world is really becoming too material for me."

Jessie had done her errand that sultry afternoon, the woman of the house then begged her to sit down and rest after her walk. "It's a good step from Redwoods, miss," she said, looking her over with a curiosity that Jessie felt in every fibre, keenly sensitive to the fact that Mrs. Woodford had never before regarded her with such interest. It's gwine to thunder afore long. Wun't ye bide till the starm's blowed over?"

"Thunder!" echoed Jessie. "Oh, I hope not. I must hurry home then. I'll run quick the short way, Mrs. Woodford; thank you."

She left the cottage, and struck across a piece of common toward the wood, scarcely turning her head when Mrs. Woodford called after her to offer an umbrella. The heavens were now dark with gathering storm, the cottage fire glowed redly from the open door, lighting up the tall oak-cased clock and throwing into strong relief the figure of the cottager in the door-way crying, "You'd better bide, you'd better bide."

Swiftly she sped over the soundless turf. She felt the hot glow from the lurid wall of purple storm advancing against the wind before her, and quivered with the indescribable nervous trouble thunder always caused her. It did not exactly terrify her, it was simply intolerable to her nerves. Lightning and thunder, together with the oppression of air over-charged with electricity, distressed and prostrated her; her only thought now was to get home, where she would throw herself into Sarah's arms and bury her face. As a child she had passed through many storms with her head covered by Philip's jacket and her face pressed against him; her great horror was to be alone in these nervous crises, when the touch of some familiar and loving hand alone soothed her.

She plunged into the woodland, the warning, "You'd better bide, you'd better bide," of the hospitable cottager echoing in her ear. The sky was iron-hued where it was not lurid



## THE FARMER'S LOT.

This is what the farmer sees  
When he sets forth to his toil—  
Laying tribute on the soil—  
These are things his senses please:  
Rosy beams

Athwart the sky  
That with fields  
Of bright bloom vie,  
Diamond dewdrops,  
Verdant hills,  
Grassy meadows,  
Sparkling rills.

This is what the farmer feels  
When he stretches forth his hand  
To wrest riches from his land,  
Wealth that nature, coy, conceals:  
Balmy breath

From spicy grove,  
Kiss of sunshine  
From above;  
Velvet turf  
Beneath his feet,  
All about  
A fragrance sweet.

This is what the farmer knows:  
Nature in her sweetest guise,  
Beauty of the earth and skies,  
Honest toil and calm repose.  
Secrets knows he

Of the soil;  
Knows the sweets  
That come of toil;  
Knows the nod  
Of rip'ning grain;  
Knows the harvest  
And its gain.

## PREPARING LAND FOR MEAT.

Upon my farm I practice mostly a three-year rotation of corn, wheat, and clover, with an occasional field plowed and put in wheat the second time, writes M. C. Thomas. When I plow a field it is done as soon after harvest as possible, using a jointer on the plow to turn all the stubble under, and my rule is to plow as near 6 inches deep as possible. As the ground is plowed it is rolled down, and at intervals of ten days or two weeks I go over it with a spring-tooth harrow. If the weather is inclined to be dry this is followed with the roller.

During the last few years, rains have been very light about seeding time. We must, therefore, prepare for sufficient moisture to bring the wheat up and give it a good start by having a compact seedbed and cover with a blanket of fine earth in which to drill the wheat. In preparing ground for wheat, it is a good plan to give it one extra working after you think it is in the best possible condition. All things considered, I like the plan of seeding corn ground best. With this method one breaking of the ground gives a crop of corn, wheat and clover, which is quite an important point to be considered.

I check my corn and give it level culture both ways, which is all the while preparing a seedbed for the wheat. The corn is cut, the shocks being 12 hills square. Care is taken to have the shock rows straight both ways. This enables me to work the ground both ways without being compelled to trust the shock rows. I work up just as close to a shock row as possible, and then, by going the opposite direction, the small space left between the shocks is worked.

The best tool that I have ever found to prepare corn ground for wheat is the common drag harrow, which levels and fines the surface. Very often two workings with it, once each way, make an ideal seedbed. I drill the same direction as I harrowed the last time, in order to obviate the trouble with the corn stubble clogging the drill. In drilling I twist in around the shocks as closely as possible. In finishing the field, we go once round for each shock row, the opposite direction, and drill the little spots by the shock that could not be covered dur-

with swift-gathering tempest, the brooding expectancy of the gray still afternoon had changed to one of quiet of imminent trouble; the long grasses shuddered, the dry leaves rustled anxiously and complained upon the trees which groaned as if foreboding pain; cows and sheep moved restlessly about the pastures, birds fluttered with anxious cries from the sere foliage, all the woods shivered before the impending terror. The day was like Jessie's life.

She was too late to outrun the storm, she felt herself drawn beneath the dark wings of it, the hot breath of it lifted her hair and came in fitful gusts through the creaking trees, whirling clouds of sere leaves hither and thither. Suddenly, with a crack and a crash and a long booming roar, the awful thing burst right above her head. How frail she was before this iron blast, and how futile her speed against the rapid stride of the tempest!

Some large scattered drops fell on the dry yellow leaves she pressed on, panting and shrinking. She went blindly, closing her eyes to the dazzle of the lightning, and saw nothing till the rustle of a quick step through the dead leaves and the sound of a voice through the storm made her look up with an involuntary cry of joy into Claude Medway's face.

"Claude!" she cried, knowing and remembering nothing but that she was safe and calm and happy after all the tumults and trouble.

(To be Continued.)

ing the main drilling. By this method, all the ground is seeded except that occupied by the corn shocks.

## RAISING PIGS.

To begin with, breeding stock must be selected with considerable care. Pedigreed hogs are considered best, but to be most profitable they must have first-class care, be provided with the best of feed and shelter, and not neglected in any way. This, of course, calls for some experience and ability on the part of the owner, says P. M. Davis.

Next to the thoroughbred, the half-breed is perhaps the best all-around hog. The cross stimulates vitality and endurance in both animals. Do not misunderstand me. I, of course, do not recommend indiscriminate, haphazard breeding. If possible, raise thoroughbreds, but if not, a cross between some of the leading breeds is very desirable, especially for the market.

The sow should have good length, depth, strong bone, but should not be too high on the legs. She should be at least 13 months old before she raises her first litter of pigs, and must always be kept continuously in dry, comfortable quarters, convenient to a grass pasture, and should be given a variety of feed. A week before farrowing, she should receive nothing but bran and mash, but all she will eat.

At farrowing time, give her the very best of attention and see that the young pigs are promptly taken care of. Keep the sow and the pigs in a warm place, particularly if the weather is cool. Feed the sow sparingly for two or three days on bran slop, to which a handful of middlings has been added. Gradually increase this and by the time the pigs are three weeks old they should be given some feed in the way of slop, made of milk and middlings. This may be gradually increased and coarse feed added, as the pigs are able to take care of it. This kind of feed develops strong bone and a thrifty constitution.

Give the pigs as much liberty as possible, so that the muscle will be developed. Wean when about eight weeks old. If they have been properly fed, they will not check their growth in any way, and they will be ready for the market when nine to ten months old.

## POULTRY HOUSES.

If you wish to succeed with your poultry do not let your poultry houses get in an unhealthy condition, but if they should get in this condition, remove the fowls to temporary quarters where they can have plenty of road dust, as this is a necessity at all times of the year. Sifted coal ashes, not wood ashes, will answer the purpose.

Remove all perches, nest boxes and everything else in the house and give them a thorough soaking in kerosene oil, drying them in the sun. Clear all the dirt out of the houses and then you are now ready for disinfecting.

Fill an iron pot with shavings soaked in crude carbolic acid and after stopping all the cracks, set fire to the shavings. In about an hour's time the house can be opened and aired.

Then beautify your poultry houses give your fowls healthy quarters and kill lice all at one time by whitewashing.

A whitewash needs to be well made to do the work, as it too often falls off in flakes after the wood is dry. Slacken your lime in hot water, and make it as thick if possible, as soft soap; then thin with kerosene oil. Now you have a whitewash that will both stick to the houses and kill the lice.

Apply the whitewash while hot and be sure that all cracks and corners get plenty of it. Do your whitewashing in the morning so that by night the house will be dry and comfortable.

## FOR THIRTEEN YEARS.

An Englishman Has Lived the Life of a Hermit.

Embowered in a garden of his own planting and culture, adjoining an Essex wood not far from Dunmow, England, there lives in solitary seclusion a man who has not been seen by anyone except his mother and brother for the past thirteen years. His only communication with the outer world is an occasional visit by night to a neighboring cottage, completely isolated from all other dwellings, where dwell his aged mother and younger brother.

James Mason, the hermit in question, is the elder son of a farmer who died fourteen years ago, and after his father's death he left the farmhouse and made himself a sylvan retreat in a plantation on his own freehold.

This strange abode, which covers about an acre of ground, is fenced in by a high hedge, and is entered by a tall gate covered with barbed wire, always kept chained and locked. A small hut with a corrugated iron roof is known to stand in the centre of the grounds, and in all probability this strange man has his abode there. Rumor has attributed to him a vow, taken thirteen years ago, that he would never look in a woman's face again.

It is easy to pray in Japan. Printed prayers are attached to posts, and small wheels are fastened to them. Anyone passing can give the wheel a turn, and that counts as a prayer.