

A DYING PROMISE

OR, THE MISSING
WILL

CHAPTER XX.

no time after landing in
face homeward, as he
stepped out upon the
Cleeve railway station
of a cold, clear Jan-
was surprised not to
recognized in the fam-
the flyman, on being
to Redwoods, asked

Medway's place, Mar-
s, knows that. "This
ride and the roads

age, farm on the
fast as you can."

He silent with the
white, snowy but not

ue; town snow is a sorry
chill, depressing, sugges-

ve of all the soils and stams
incident to poor humanity. Yet there

was no sludge, no muddy deliquescence
penetrating to the very marrow

with its chill; the sun was shining,
the white topped roofs were outlined

upon a clear pale sky, the icicles
eaves sparkled as the long spikes

melted and froze and melted and
froze again; the snow was trampled

into yellow-brown powder in the
roads, on which the horse's feet

struck now and then with a muffled
thud.

The grammar school alone looked
more venerable and picturesque than

usual, its gray walls tufted with
feathery drifts of unstained snow,

its gabled roof, mullions, and drip
stones traced in white snow-lines,

its leafless lime-trees showing a tracery
of mingled pink and white branches

against the freezing sky. Philip
thought of his early battles in the

play-ground, and of that "big brute
Brown," now a peaceful and subst-

stantial young tradesman, a good
deal hen-pecked by a fierce little

scrap of a wife. Matthew Meade
had pinched to send him there at

first.

It was scarcely two years since the
death of Matthew and Martha; he

almost expected to see the former
leaning over the half-door of the mill

when he passed. The wheel was
still, adorned with jewelry, and lace-

work of icicles sparkling against its
black steps; ice sheets spread from

the banks half over the water, swans
floated in the centre, pigeons wheel-

ed in the sunshine, but a strange face
looked from the open half-door, lean-

ing there as Matthew had leant.
There was no gold-haired child cling-

ing to his hand. The great willow,
under whose leafy boughs he had lain

and longed to be a man, dropped its
yellow branches over the snow-covered

grass.

The town passed, the country
spread pure and stainless beneath

the pale blue sky, into which the
rose of sunset was softly stealing.

This white, soft, soundless robe is
a bridal vesture or a shroud, accord-

ing to the gazer's mood; to
Philip driving too slowly over the

noisless road, it was a wedding
garment. With every hushed fall of

the horse's feet he drew nearer to
Jessie, to the one being who shared

the memories of youth and the affec-

tions of home with him. How
glad she would be! Perhaps, after

all, he ought to have written to an-
nounce his arrival, but there is

something so attractive in the
thought of coming unexpectedly upon

long absent friends, and surprising
the warmth of their hearts. A dream

of Jessie's joyous surprise and warm
welcome had floated before him for

weeks—another and brighter dream,
belonging to the warm country of

mystery and marvel he had left be-
hind, was resolutely banished to a

deep recess of memory. Some day
Jessie must hear of it, but not yet.

Perhaps they would each have some-
thing to forgive, but Jessie's shrift

would be short and easy, he was
sure.

They drove but slowly, for the
snow was deep and drifted in places;

the horses feet balled from time to
time; after he might almost as well

have walked and so warmed his
blood in the pure keen air. What a

charm the dazzling white country
with its blue shadows, its peeping

roofs and trees, had for one fresh
from India! how truly English it

was! He had almost forgotten the
deep ineradicable dearness of Eng-

land to a true Englishman in the
fascination of India, and almost for-

The snowy fields were stained in
pure hues of rose and crimson, or-

ange and amber, as the sun sropped
down in the west; then they paled to

violet and dead white; a ghostly
gleam was reflected upward on the

cold dusk air. There is nothing so
desolate as the white gleam of snow

after sunset, before the stars sparkle
out and the darkness broods over the

corpse-like pallor. Body and mind
alike yield to the gray and lonely

chill of the moment. Philip's heart
sank with an indescribable forebod-

ing, and he was glad to see the red
gleam of cottage windows as they

reached the village and saw the boys
sliding and snow-balling on the green

He jumped down and walked swiftly
on, telling the flyman to follow to

the farm, the chimneys of which were
now visible in the distance. The

woman of the village shop and post-
office looked after the tall-grown,

foreign-looking man and wondered
who he was.

"Somebody for the Court, I re-
ckon," she said, turning away to sell

bullseyes to a ruddy boy, as she had
often served them to Philip, who had

passed many a holiday week at Red-
woods.

Here was the great elm to the top
of which he had once dared Roger to

climb, and from a limb at which
Roger had fallen with an appalling

thud, but quite unharmed, to the
ground. He hastened on, thinking

that this rough, bluff Roger was af-
ter all a strange housemate for so

dainty a creature as Jessie. His
pace quickened to a run, hurrah!

There was the red light of the sit-
ting-room fire, suddenly leaping up

and streaming over the shining snow-
laden evergreens without, like a beacon

light to guide him home; Jessie's
hand perhaps had stirred the fire

to that leaping blaze.

His hand was on the wicket and he
was about to open it, when the red

glow vanished, strangely daunting
him, a hand closed the shutters, he

felt himself shut out in the chill
gray snow-light, and instead of en-

tering by the front door went round
through the farm-yard, where the

cows were pulling hay from racks,
and so in by the kitchen.

"Hullo!" sang out Abraham, who
was stumping heavily in with a

pitchfork in his hand, on feeling Philip's
strong grasp on his shoulder,

"who be you? What be ye up to?"
They were just in the red glow of

the outer kitchen doorway. Sarah
was busy at the hearth, breaking

and piling up faggots of furze to boil
a swinging kettle, the dark smoke-

browned walls were lit up by the
dancing blaze. "Lord a mercy!"

Abraham cried, recognizing Philip on
turning, "here's Master Philip

Whatever be ye to do, Sarrow?"
"Master Philip!" cried Sarah,

dropping the billhook with which she
was chopping her faggots and coming

forward. "Why ever couldn't you
bide out in India? Whatever be ye

come here for?"
"For Jessie, to be sure," he replied

giving her a hearty kiss. "How are
they all? You look as sound as a

bell, Sarah."
"There, sit down by the fire, do,"

she replied, hysterically, at the same
time pushing him into a wooden

chair. "I lows you be pretty nigh
shrammed with the cold. Shet the

door, ye girt zote, do," she added,
falling foul of the unlucky Abraham,

who had remained in the doorway as
if transfixed, with the fork held tri-

dent-wise in one hand and his mouth
and eyes wide open. "And Missus 'll

be that mad," she added.
Just then Roger came in by another

door, and Philip rose to shake
hands with him, scarcely noticing

that Roger's once ruddy face was
pale, and that he walked with a

stick.
"Glad to see you," Roger said,

from habit and courtesy, "but what-
ever's the good of shutting the door

when the steed's stolen!" he added.
Philip scarcely heeded this enigma-

tical speech, but followed Roger to
the sitting-room, where Cousin Jane

was seated by the fire opposite her
husband.

They looked tranquil enough; all
surely was well, and yet an uneasy

foreboding checked the words upon
his lips when, his eyes having swift-

ly and vainly sought the gleam of
Jessie's golden hair in the ruddy

against him, the only creature who
had a welcome for him. Philip
stood very squarely in the midst of
them, his bronzed face growing

bloodless, his heart beating with low
hurried throbs.

"Where," he said, at last, in a
strained, unnatural voice, "where is
Jessie?"

"Jessie!" the three echoed in dif-
fering tones of dismay. "Why, you

don't seem quite right, somehow,"
Philip, cried Mr. Plummer.

"Trouble hev turned his brain,"
added Mrs. Plummer, dismally.

"Can this be a bad dream?" asked
Philip, his eyes dilating. "Where is
my sister?" he repeated.

"Haven't you heard?" asked Roger.
"Why, mother," he added, "Philip

don't know. There wasn't time for
him to get the letter, come to think

of it."
"Sure enough, more there was,"

echoed Mrs. Plummer. "You don't
mean to say, Philip, you've a come

all the way home not knowing? Dear
heart, what trouble, what trouble!"

The walls seemed to be rushing
round him, his lips were so dry and

stiff; he caught at a chair to steady
himself, and stammered: "Is she—is

she—dead?" the last word in a raised
voice.

"Hullo!" cried Roger, stepping for-
ward and catching him while he

pushed a chair under him. "Drink,
mother, give him drink."

Mrs. Plummer bustled quickly to
the cupboard by the fireplace, whence

she brought a spirit decanter and a
tumbler, and pouring out a draught

of raw brandy, gave it to Philip.
Then the dark-red mist cleared

from his eyes, he looked at Mrs.
Plummer's black dress, thence to her

tearful face, and thence to the trou-
bled faces of Nat and Roger.

"She was so young," he said,
"they were so devoted to her."

"She had grown up fine and slim,
poor maid," added Nat Plummer;

"you'd scarcely have known her
again, Philip."

"How was it?" he asked, choking
something down and speaking steady-

ly; "how did it happen? She was
always so healthy, never ailed that

I heard of. Tell me all."
He looked straight before him; they

looked at each other mutely.
"All's a good deal when all's

said," Mrs. Plummer replied at last,
oracularly; "you've come off a jour-

ney and had a shock, hadn't you bet-
ter wait till you've taken some-

thing?"
"No, no," he replied, quickly,

"nothing can matter if she is dead."
"There's worse than death, Philip"

"Mother!" cried Roger, starting
up.

"If you must have the worst, Philip,"
said Mrs. Plummer, "the best

we can hope is she's dead."
"She is dead," muttered Roger

through his clenched teeth.
"There is a doubt? There was an

accident?" asked Philip, trembling
with he knew not what sickening

horror and remembering his vision of
Jessie months back.

"She's gone, poor child, and we
hope she may be dead," continued

Mrs. Plummer, "for there's disgrace
behind."

"No, no," cried Roger, "it is talk,
Philip, vile talk, and it drove her

beside herself. If any man uses that
word of her," he added, excitedly,

"I knock him down. As sure as fate
I knock him down."

"So do I," echoed Philip.
"Lord save us!" exclaimed Mrs.

Plummer. "For pity's sake take
Roger away, Plummer."

"Go on out, Roger, and leave it to
mother and me," said his father, lay-

ing his hand on the young giant's
shoulder and pushing him to the

door, which he closed and locked up
on him.

"Tell me all," Philip said when
he was gone.

"To be sure 'tis a hard hearing for
ye, Philip, and a hard telling for

me," Mrs. Plummer replied, "and
sorry I am for her, heaven knows.

I acted for the best, I'm sure, and I
never had any fault to find with her

and never knew but all was right
the very day she went off—"

"Went off—" echoed Philip, staring
blindly before him

"We thought she was gone to Miss
Blushford's," added Nat. "We

heard nothing of him."
"And all the country talking," con-

tinued Mrs. Plummer, "and even
Abram and Sarah knew it; there

wasn't a creature in the place that
didn't know. I wouldn't speak

against her, and she, poor child,
gone, but I must say there was de-

ception in her; such as never was."
"Yes, she kept it close, poor lass,

poor lass!" added Mr. Plummer, with
agitation; "tis always like that with

girls when led away."
Philip's head sank into his hands;

he thought of Matthew's and
Martha's pride in the child, and the

care he had taken to fence her from
the very knowledge of evil, the

thurs, the written disclaimer of
Claude Medway, which was shown
him, as well as Jessie's own fare-
well to her cousin, lastly the discov-

ery of the handkerchief by the riv-
er-side and Roger's surmises based up-
on it.

He did not interrupt the narrative,
discursive and often irrelevant as it

was; he sat still in a kind of stony
patience, while the story poured upon

his tingling ears like molten metal.
And when the tale was done he sat

on silent in the same posture.
"I am afraid," he said, "I am

afraid she is still alive. And yet—
if she had died—in her despair—"

"Well, there, we can't alter it,
whatever 'tis," said Mr. Plummer.

"We did all we could to find her.
But that box staggers me. What-

ever went with that box?"
"And her paints and things she

was so set on," added his wife.
"Roger he will have it the box was

stolen."
"But why should she pack it?"

asked Philip.
"Roger thinks 'twas for a blind.

Roger would have found her dead or
alive, if anybody could a done it;

he'd pulled the moon out of the
sky before he'd give in. But there

he fell off a wagon loaded with straw
and broke his thigh soon after, and

I often think it was a mercy in dis-
guise, heavy as it came upon me, and

my daughter Eliza confined and her
husband with no more sense than a

addled egg. There we had him on
his back for a couple of months as

helpless as a babe, else he'd a been
all over the country looking for her

and stirring up talk upon talk."
Philip listened as one who hears

nothing, mechanically stroking his
old Crimean comrade, who sat purr-

ing on his knee the while, until he
touched a tender place in her sc-

eed body and made her swear.
"Poor Sebastopol," he said, strok-

ing her with more circumspection,
"poor old puss! Then he burst into

tears.
(To be Continued.)

SIGHT TO THE BLIND.

French-Canadian's Success in His Experiments.

A Paris despatch to the London
Leader says:—

There is an active-brained little
Canadian professor named Charles

Dion, the director of the Institute
Ophthalmique, in the Rue de Rennes,

who is attracting some attention in
Paris as the inventor of an instru-

ment for massaging the eye.
I happen to know he has cured sev-

eral cases of myopia, or short sight,
and in half a dozen cases he has en-

abled patients who were perfectly
blind to see well enough, not to

read, but at least to walk.
The apparatus consists of two

tubes with polished glasses, which
are fixed on the closed eyelids, the

operator regulating the pressure by
a dynamometer. What happens

through thus massaging a myope is
the restoration of circulation in the

eye. That is the simple feature of
the Dion process. I have seen scores

of letters M. Dion has received from
delighted patients.

Before 1850, when a boy of 13, he
had made a tricycle, which his father

kept as a curiosity for 20 years.
He was a collaborator with Edison

in the seventies. In 1867 he had
invented in Montreal the first tele-

phone fire alarm. In a perfected
form that alarm is still used in the

Banque de France. He had a share
in the discovery of the phonograph.

I have seen a document belonging
to M. Dion, dated March 11, 1886.

It is his French patent for "a new
system of wireless telegraphy," and

foreshadows, and in some measure
anticipates, the discovery of Mar-

coni.
For the last ten years he has

devoted himself to perfecting his ap-
pliance for regulating defective sight.

He tells me he is shortly going over
to London, where he hopes to demon-

strate the value of his apparatus in
one of the eye hospitals.

MAKING THE RICH PAY.

Socialistic Town Council Raises Price of Soaps.

The new Town Council at Brest,
France, which is socialistic and re-

volutionary to a man, held a char-
acteristic sitting recently. After de-

termining upon the dismissal of prac-
tically the whole police force for dar-

ing to interfere with the outbreak by
the dockers and laborers on strike,

and passing a resolution calling upon
the commander of the troops either

to withdraw or disarm his men, the
Council proceeded to raise the octroi

duties on all luxuries, including a
special tax of 12f. upon scented

soaps.
"My wife has to put up with plain

yellow soap," said one