A DYING PROMISE

OR, THE MISSING WILL

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was plainly lost labor to seek information of a man in an opium-trance, and as Philip drove back to his own quarters near Hyde Park, another plan occurred to him, he changed his destination and had himself set down at Claude Medway's house.

Finding him at home, he sent in his card with the word "urgent," penciled on it, and was at once admitted, late as it was.

He was shown into a library, lighted faintly with shaded lamps, and soon joined by Claude Medway.

"I hope, Randal," the latter said, "that you have thought better of this intended lawsuit."

"I have thought that it will not be necessary," he replied. "You were with a man named Ashwin, this evening," he added. Claude moved away from the lamp he had turned up on entering.

"Is Mr. Ashwin a friend of yours?" he asked.

"I have no doubt he would become one for a consideration. I heard my name this evening in the park by accident. I heard that I was to be told all unless a good, round sum was forthcoming on the instant. I followed your agreeable friend and obtained his name, address, and occupation. He was not in a state for examination when I left him. He will keep. In the meantime, you may as well tell me all yourself."

"What do you suppose Ashwin threatened to tell you?" Claude asked.

"What you have done with my sister."

"You are mistaken. This man has never so much as heard her name," he replied.

"He may know her by another name."

"In that case, how would he know your name in connection with her? Randal, I swear to you on my honor that I no more know where Jessie Meade is at this moment than you do. And I warn you against this man, Ashwin. If you make yourself known to him, you will repent it all your life."

"That is my concern. I can look after myself and those who depend upon me. It is very plain that you don't wish me to know him, since you bought his silence a few hours since and told him that he would repent finding me out to the last day of his life. I have had enough of this, Medway, I am sick of playing the spy. You have just been to Cleeve, where your movements have been watched and will be reported to me. I overheard your interview with this man on your return. What have you done with her? It may as well come out now as in court."

"I have just sworn to you upon my honot——"

"Your honor," said Philip, savagely.

Claude sprung toward him and then suddenly drew back. "Fool!" he cried, "let it be on your own head! Ashwin is your father!"

"That—that—drunken beast—my—father——" stammered Philip.

Claude forgot his anger in amazement. "Good Heavens, Philip!" he cried, "is it possible that you don't know who you are?"

"I know nothing of my father," Philip said, "except that he made my mother wretched. But—— It is no affair of yours; I am here only on her business," he returned, recovering himself.

"It is my affair; we are cousins. If you had your birthright, you would probably be in my place, the heir of the baronetcy and property. I must tell you all in common justice now, having sprung this on you."

So Philip had to hear from the man who had wronged him the story of his own shame. He was the son of Algernon Medway, the Mr. Algernon of the last generation, a name too notorious to be forgotten in this. Many a tale of this bad man had Philip heard at Marwell as a boy, not dreaming that he was hearing of his own father's misdeeds.

"Mr. Algernon" was never mentioned at the Court, his name was an offence to his family and only whispered about with caution Philip had vaguely supposed him to be dead and yet he had some dim remembrance of sentence passed upon him in a criminal court.

Now he learned why Sir Arthur chancing to see him a boy at the grammar school on a prize-giving day, and struck by his likeness to the Medways, and by the coincidence of his age with that of his brother's son, concealed by his mother, wished, after identifying him by the help of Matthew Meade, till then ignorant himself of his origin, to adopt him. Further, why Sir Arthur had always manifested some interest in his welfare, and kept himself informed of his progress at school, and afterward still further that he was the giver of the mysterious little fortune which came to him after the Crimea. Matthew's pathetic desire to be all in all to Philip and "make a gentleman of him" had been respected by Sir Arthur, who was ever ready to give material aid toward that end in case Matthew should fail. But some of this, together with his uncle's intention of buying him a commission after a little wholesome discipline in the ranks he heard later—there was not time to listen to all that night.

Arthur and Algernon Medway were twins whose identity had been confused by careless nurses in their infancy. The children were then weighed and the heaviest henceforth distinguished as Arthur, the heir, but their father, Sir Claude, was always troubled by the fear that Algernon might have been wronged by the decision, and made up for the possible injustice by thoroughly spoiling Algernon, whom he made heir of the unentailed Marwell property. Both twins had commissions in the army, but Algernon's was in the Guards, his allowance was larger than Arthur's, he was always in debt, his extravagances drained the family purse and encumbered the estates, yet whatever he did was right in his father's eyes; the steady Arthur, in his less expensive and fashionable regiment, being considered as lacking in spirit and dash. But at last the fast and fashionable guardsman committed a serious error; he secretly married pretty Mary Ashwin, an infantry officer's daughter, a penniless orphan whom he had known as governess of a friend's children.

When this came to light, Sir Claude was very angry, there was a period of storm and indignation, and stopping of supplies, highly inconvenient to a gentleman in Mr Algernon Medway's position. The offence was at last condoned, and Mrs. Algernon Medway and her baby son were received by Lady Medway and young Lady Gertrude, Arthur's wife, with such cordiality as those ladies could muster for the occasion, which perhaps was not sufficient to make it very pleasant for poor Mary Medway to live among them, a dowerless intruder with nothing but her beauty and goodness to recommend her.

Soon after this, the baby son being about a year old, Algernon was tried and convicted o a crime that inspired his young wife with especial horror, for which he was transported for a long period.

Sir Claude, whose doting fondness quickly turned to extravagant hatred then left all his property, with the exception of daughters' portions and such necessary provisions, to Arthur; he continued, however, to give a small allowance, dependent on his pleasure, to Algernon's unfortunate young wife.

For some years after this scandal, Arthur Medway lived with his wife and young children chiefly on the continent, while Sir Claude shut himself up in Marwell Court, saw no one, and gradually declined in health till he died, when Philip must have been about five years old, and Mary Medway two years in her unknown grave. As no one was permitted to mention Algernon, his wife or child, in the old baronet's presence, it was not until after his death, in winding up his affairs, that Sir Arthur discovered that Mrs. Algernon had ceased for some years to claim her allowance. The lawyers through whom the pittance was paid had had instructions from Sir Claude to make no inquiries for her if she chose to slip out of sight, as she did. Thus the new head of the family had no clew of her whereabouts, and searched in vain for some traces of her, until he chanced, four years after Sir Claude's death, to find Philip at his very gates. Then, being attracted by the boy's likeness to the Medways, and by some rumor of his unknown origin, he made inquiries of Matthew Meade, which, being followed up by both, left no reasonable doubt in the minds of either that Philip was the son of Algernon Medway. Mary Medway's handwriting alone, without the testimony of the entries in her diary, would have revealed her to Sir Arthur.

"We thought that you were told of your name and origin on coming of age," Claude said in conclusion. "Of course the thing made a great talk at the time. It is forgotten now, but a little would soon stir the old scandal. Men of our generation know nothing, but our fathers' contemporaries would remember."

The trial of Algernon Medway had brought to light many base circumstances in his life; the crime of which he was convicted, appropriation of regimental moneys, was, no doubt, but the repetition of a previous theft, for which the officer responsible for the money had been broken, though not prosecuted; he had vanished with his despair. This last theft had been accompanied by a well-planned attempt to fasten the robbery on Algernon's wife's brother, obnoxious to him from being a private, and who shot himself in consequence of what he endured while under suspicion.

"You need fear nothing from me," Philip replied, with some scorn, and then, after a pause, he asked of what crime his father had been convicted. Claude replied in a word that made his ears tingle. He was looking straight before him with a strained gaze that saw nothing visible, but pictured Ada Maynard's face as when he saw her last beneath the moonlight sprinkled orange-trees, and saw a deep, black gulf yawning between them. He had kept loyal to the farewell then spoken, and never allowed his fancy to stray back to those renounced hopes, and yet he had never felt the parting in its full pain till now. A thousand other thoughts surged into his mind, his eyes darkened, his face grew sharp with pain, and he grasped the back of a chair, as if by mechanical action he could control the tumult within. Claude looked with a grave compunction at the silent agony dimly shadowed in the face before him.

"Better forgotten. Better you had never known," he said, at last. "He has had the grace to take another name."

"I ought to have known from the first," Philip replied at last. "And he wanted me."

"Yes," replied Claude, "that he might squeeze every penny out of you and then fling you aside, ruined. His allowance is more than your whole income. He spends his time between opium-dreaming and gambling. That man would rob a child. He has no heart; he is scarcely human. Don't fall into his clutches; he will never leave you till he has ruined you. Don't be misled by any weak sentiment in that direction."

"My affairs," replied Philip, "are my own."

Then upon further inquiry he learned that Algernon Medway's term of transportation had expired some years since. Land had been assigned him, of which he had made nothing. His brother sent him sums of money until his patience was exhausted, then he gave him a settled allowance, with the intimation that no more lump sums would be forthcoming.

Thereupon, the black sheep appeared one day, an unrecognizable wreck, at Marwell Court. He had seen Philip's name in newspapers and the Army List, and learnt all that was known of his origin from Cleeve people, drawing his own conclusions as to the identity of this Philip Randal with the son he had named. Then, finding that the Medways were anxious to keep him apart from Philip, he demanded and received blackmail, especially from Claude, whose guilty conscience made him tender of Philip's welfare.

Such was the story Philip heard, to his own most bitter chagrin, such was the father he found in searching for his lost sister. But he did not leave the house without pressing on his inquiries for Jessie, insisting upon knowing the object of Claude's visit to the ark of that day.

"I went," Claude replied, "to see if Sally Samson's story was true. I believe that it is true. You see, Randal, I should not go to this old woman if I where to find Jessie."

"Heaven knows."

"You still refuse to believe me That is not the way to find her. If we get together with this clue we may find Jessie. If you go to law, you will only smirch her name."

Philip looked at him searchingly, and yet with some hesitation "You did not tell the truth about your relations with her," he said, at last.

"I did not tell the whole truth. While I thought her dead—I thought it better—can't you understand?"

Philip thought he could understand, and his heart sank.

"You did not love Jessie and she did not love you. I loved her. I lost her. I would give my life to find her. When she is found she must be my wife."

"Do you solemnly swear that?" Philip asked.

"I do most solemnly swear it."

"You should have sworn that befor—before all this misery of your making—before it was too late."

"I think," he said, slowly, "that you should know all that ever passed between your sister and myself."

So Philip thought, and he listened with a sort of savage forbearance to the story of this long courtship and its climax in the storm, when Jessie vanished. Restraining his indignation, he thought it all over and considered the possiblity of her going to London without money.

"She had sold some pictures," Claude explained.

"Sold pictures!" echoed Philip; "but what would a few shillings be?"

"That," said Claude, pointing to a framed water-color of Marwell Court in the wall, "fetched ten guineas."

He examined it in silent wonder and his eyes grew moist. "Poor Jessie," he murmured, turning away, "poor child!" And something of the truth began to dawn upon him. Jessie alone in cruel, wicked London; young, beautiful, and friendless as she was, for three weary winter months hoping to live by selling drawings. What could the upshot of this be?

The next day Philip burst into the house in great excitement.

"She did go to London," he cried, "and whatever harm comes to her is on your head."

"You have seen her?" faltered Claude, with white lips.

"I have two letters; they have been to India and followed me home. One before her flight and one dated October, with no address, bearing the mark of the General Post-office. She speaks of flying from a temptation that she does not name. Of having been compromised by scandalous talk. Of hiding her from friends in consequence."

"She hides from you?" Claude asked, much agitated by the sight of Jessie's delicate hand-writing on the travel-stained envelope. "I quite understand that she would hide from that coarse-tongued shrew of a cousin, but why from you?"

"Heaven knows," Randal returned, sadly; "she is much a child at heart, so ignorant of life. She thinks herself disgraced—by mere talk."

"What have I done?" cried Claude. "Oh! Jessie, poor Jessie, what have I done?"

Philip had no comfort for him; he read out such portions of Jessie's last letter as he thought it well for Claude to hear, with merciless emphasis on words that made him wince. In the meantime he racked his brain, as he had been doing all that night, in the effort to recall Jessie's spring and summer letters, thinking how much misery might have been spared if he had given more earnest heed to them at the time and considered her more in the light of a reasonable and reasoning being. For the Jessie painted by Claude Medway, Mr. Ingleby, and Sir Arthur, and shadowed forth by her last letter, was a revelation to him.

He had but just received the letter Jessie last wrote before her disappearance. It had missed a mail and gone to an old Indian address, whence it had travelled by a circuitous route to Myserabad, and thence back to England in company with her London letter. In this she told him that it must be clear to him as it was to her that they did not love each other in a way to make marriage desirable; that her father, could he know all the circumstances, would be the last person to urge their marriage; that he had not perhaps well considered it. until suddenly called upon to leave her alone in the world. Experience had taught her, as it would one day teach him, how different love was from the fraternal feeling that had bound them together, and would bind them, she knew, all their lives.

The London letter assured him of her well being, and bid him set his heart at rest concerning her. She would write from time to time and hear of him in the papers. She had acted foolishly; not knowing what construction would be put upon her actions. She had acted wrongly in keeping things, which they ought to have known, from her guardians, and now God had punished her by taking away her good name. "Dear Philip," she said, "do not think harshly of your little Jessie. I tried to do right, but it was so hard. My head was confused, wrong sometimes seemed right, and right wrong And no one told me it was wrong to see friends alone out of doors. Some day, perhaps, you will be able to forget that I was foolish once and made people talk cruelly when young and quite alone. You said so little about the young lady who escaped to Lucknow with you, that I think you must care for her. Now you are free. I should always have been a dead weight on you——"

"We will go to Scotland Yard. You must get Cheeseman to act with you," Claude said, at last; "we may trace her by her drawings. She was acquainted with one well-known artist. She will have been to him."

He still had some hope of finding her but his heart sank when he thought of her helpless inexperience.

(To be Continued.)

THE LARGEST FLOWER.

The Rafflesia is a strange plant It grows in Sumatra and derives its name from Sir Stamford Raffles, Governor of Sumatra at one time, and his friend Dr. Arnold, a naturalist. They were the first white men to discover the wonderful plant. It is said to be the largest and most magnificent flower in the world. It is composed of five roundish petals, each a foot across and of a brick red color, covered with numerous irregular yellowish white swellings. The petals surround a cup nearly a foot wide the margin of which bears the stamens.

This cup is filled with a fleshy disk, the upper surface of which is everywhere covered with projections like miniature cow's horns. The cup when free from its contents would hold about twelve pints of water. The flower weighs fifteen pounds. It is very thick, the petals being three-quarters of an inch in thickness. With its beauty one is led to expect sweetness, but its odor is that of tainted beef, and Dr. Arnold supposed that even the flies were deceived by the smell and were depositing their eggs in the thick disk, taking it for a piece of carrion.

WHERE PEACE REIGNS.

The long-haired young reformers were holding an infarmal debate, and when they had agreed that the world was just about as corrupt and bad a place as it well could be a grim-faced man rose.

"What you seem to want, friends," he said, "is a place where everyone has to be good by law."

"That's it!" chorused the reformers.

"Where smoking isn't allowed, and such a thing as drink is unknown. Where no one need worry about food and raiment, and where money does not exist."

"We do!"

"Where everyone has to go to church on Sundays, and everyone keeps regular hours!"

"That is just what we do want."

"Well, I've just come from such a place——"

"You have! Oh, tell us, tell us, man of wonderful experience, where it is, that we may also go."

"It's a place called prison," said the grim man.

FARM·FIELD AND GARDEN

HOW EDAM CHEESE IS MADE.

In North Holland, on the west shore of the Zuyder Zee, is the city of Edam. The men wear wide flowing trousers, wooden shoes and coats of the Tuxedo pattern. The streets are paved with brick and the canals with water. Every fifteen minutes the reveries of the inhabitants are broken by the pealing of beautiful chimes in the church steeples.

Such is the town, says J. W. Decker, that has given its name to the little round cannon ball cheese known as Edam. The cheese, however, is not made exclusively in the town. It is made all through Holland. Most of the cheese is made in farm dairies, there being but few factories.

The cows are milked in the fields and the milk is loaded into carts, upon which it is hauled to the dairy. There it is put onto large wooden tubs, and the process of cheesemaking is gone through with. The cheese may be cured on shelves erected in the stable or the loft of the house.

There are a few factories. One of these is at Hoogskarspel and receives about 9,000 lbs. of milk daily, from which about 850 lbs. of cheese is made. The regulation size of cheese is six inches in diameter; it weighs four pounds. In this Hoogskarspel factory five hands are employed. The cheese is pressed in molds, made sometimes of metal, but usually of wood.

The mold is cup-shaped with round bottom. The top fits into the cup and is carved on top so that the resulting cheese is spherical. They are placed in a similar "salting cup" for a few days and salted by rubbing on the outside.

In the curing room they are placed on shelves with holes in them to prevent the cheese rolling off. They are turned and rubbed each day. They may mold some and at the end of a month some are washed, dried and rubbed with flaxseed oil so that they shine.

The cheese are loaded into carts which are usually drawn by dogs to the market towns. One of these towns is Hoorn. A street twelve miles long runs from Edam to Hoorn and the Hoogskarspel factory is on this street.

Arriving at market the cheese is piled on the cobblestone pavement in pyramids like so many cannon balls. Cloths are thrown over the different piles for protection from the sun. The buyers go the rounds and one or two cheese are taken from a pile and a plug drawn by means of a cheese trier. If of the right quality an offer is made. If accepted the buyer and seller strike hands to close the bargain.

Next the official weigh masters come with skids onto which the cheese is loaded. About 150 of the cheese balls are held on a skid load which therefore weighs about 600 pounds. By means of a harness two of the officials hitch onto such a load and waddle along to the official balances, which are huge affairs hung from the roof of the market building. The load is deposited in one pan and the weight in the other. The officials are dressed in white suits and straw hats.

The buyer then takes charge of his purchase. It may eventually be found on the shelf of our grocery store colored red and wrapped in tinfoil, price $1.

CLEAN CULTURE THE BEST.

At Woburn, England, is an experiment fruit farm on which, for a number of years, the effects of sward upon fruit bearing trees has been tested and studied. We note that the effect of the grass in absorbing moisture is not considered as of much importance, and this is probably true in a country where moisture is as abundant as in England; but in a country like our own, where the rainfall is much less, and frequent drouths are one of the troubles of the fruit-grower, we think the loss of moisture taken up by the grass might have a very different effect. From a report of the experiments carried on at Woburn we take the following:

"Experiments have been made with both dwarf and standard trees. The details of the experiments reported by the authors clearly indicate that the injurious action of grass is not due to its harmful effects in absorbing or evaporating the moisture of the soil about the trees, nor of removing the plant food from the soil, nor of interfering with the air supply in the soil. On the other hand, it is thought probable that it may be attributed to the action of some product, direct or indirect, of grass growth which exercises an actively poisonous effect on the roots of the trees.

"Data are given which show that the temperature of the soil on bright days in summer, six inches below the surface, in land covered with grass, is quite uniformly about three degrees lower than in cultivated soils. This, however, is not considered an item of importance, since the average soil temperature of the summer often differs by more than this from that of another without producing any of the injurious effects caused by grass on trees.