

# A DYING PROMISE

OR, THE MISSING  
WILL

## CHAPTER XLVI.

It was not long before Philip found some relief in an outburst of grief, but Claude remained calm. He knew in that moment of exceeding anguish that he had long known hope to be dead, sudden and unexpected though the end was. The seeds of death, he well knew, as Jessie did, though neither of them dared confess it, and though the doctors only hinted at danger, had been sown in that winter of privation and mental pain, fostered by those final days and nights of wandering in London. He knew it and accepted the inevitable doom, with the awful, acquiescent grief which is "a solemn scorn of ills."

"I am glad that you came," he said, gently, even tenderly, as he led Philip from the chamber that had suddenly become a sanctuary; she was so fond of you. She will hunger no more," he added, gliding unconsciously into Biblical phrase, "neither will she suffer any more pain."

He came with a bleeding heart to look upon the woman he had slain, when she was arrayed for the last chill, solemn bridal. He thought of what he had done to blast the sweet flower before him, and of what might have been for one so young, so lovely, and so highly gifted, if he had never crossed her path. Strange, very strange and terrible, even incredible, it was that those beautiful lips did not part, as sometimes he felt they must, to answer the agonizing thoughts of his heart; that the fringed eyelids did not open when he was so near and so sorely needing the deep love-light darkened forever in the veiled blue eyes. That she should be wrapped in that shroud of chill, unbreathing silence was so awful, so intolerable—yes, and so just; for it was his own work.

When he entered the darkened salon, the room which but yesterday was bright with her living presence, and in which she now lay pale in her white draperies among white roses and orange blossoms, he placed a palm-leaf in the clasped white hands not touching them. When he looked upon the soft repose of the sweet face, he could not believe that she was really dead; a slight droop of her golden head gave her such a life-like air; she seemed to smile as if welcoming him; he was moved to kiss her. It was not so much that the lips gave no response to the passionate pressure, as it was the icy, soul-penetrating chill that startled him to a short, sharp cry and made him shudder away from the quiet, unheeding form. That indeed was the sharpness of death, the intolerable sting of it, that icy impenetrable indifference, that awful impenetrable calm in lips so lately warm with a young wife's passion and eloquent with pure deep feeling and noble thought. If she could but speak one word, one last word of forgiveness! He could not remember the very last word she had spoken, he could only recall the gentle tenor of her conversation in those golden hours, and the occasional low, sweet, happy laughter, the delight in the beauty that "almost makes one afraid," as she said of the sunset. The still and solemn beauty of the once mobile features awed him; the pity of it smote to his heart; such high majesty was so unnatural in a face so young, a face made to be bright with love and laughter, radiant with health and joy. He thought he saw some trace of her mortal anguish beneath the serene peace she wore, a faint memory fraught with such pathos as belongs to instruments of martyrdom in pictures of beatified saints. Jessie had indeed won the palm lying green upon her breast.

She had fully forgiven, though she could never more tell him so. God had forgiven too. But that could not restore life and health to her, no penitence would bring the light back to her darkened eyes, no regrets could blot out the suffering of those lonely months in London. "If I could atone!" he groaned; "Jessie, Jessie! you know that I would have died for you!" But he could not; nor could he atone for the waste of this sweet young life or that of another he never forgot; all his life would be penance, the penance of blank desolation; nothing could undo the past.

It is true that a sweet and awful sense of some divinely, eternally purposed atonement, bringing light out of all earth's darkness, brooded dove-like on the stormy waters of his conscience, but even that could not restore the beautiful hours of golden youth, the achievements of rare talent life held in store for her, till he came and shattered the crustal vase of promise which held them. "Jessie," he cried, "it was I who killed you." The orange-blossom was beginning to droop, some white leaves fell as if moved by his anguish from the roses in her white hands; but the breast on which they fluttered was not grieved, the soft rise and fall of it was at an end. Hard, hard it was that

she should suffer for him; his heart rose against the injustice, he did not feel that being one they must share both ill and good. Everywhere he saw the innocent suffering for the guilty; he saw Fanny in her death agony—when did he not see Fanny? he saw the martyred innocents entrapped to vice in great cities; he saw Philip an outcast in his babyhood, rescued from beggary by a poor man's charity, branded with a life-long stigma, and abhorring his own gentle name; and a faint vision of the oneness of the human race began to gleam upon him, with some feeling of the horrible fruitfulness of evil, and the ineffaceable nature of human conduct. Yet Jessie did not suffer; one glance at the deep and awed repose in the sweet face rebuked such a thought.

"The wonder was not yet quite gone from that still look of hers."

Her soul was taking draughts of vital joy from the still waters of Paradise. She had been guarded that she should not take too much hurt from him; mercy had been about her path. Yes, and about his path too. Those last few months, every moment of them more precious than water to the dying in the desert, had been permitted him; he could never forget their most beautiful and intimate converse, their walking in the house of God together; to have known her was alone a regeneration, much less to have loved her. And what had he been before he saw her? He was no more the selfish, good-natured, low-thoughted man of the world who saw Jessie in her unshadowed youth and beauty beneath the oaken boughs on that bright April day not two years gone. She had given him a soul, restored him to his real, that is, his best self. What ought he to do to live a higher life? What would she wish him to do?

We have but one youth, one chance of keeping unspotted from the world, and thus making head against the powers of darkness banded against us; we can never regain a spotless past, or undo the countless evil influences we spread about us in an ill-spent youth; never unsay the cynicisms of other days, or uproot the seed that has sprung up and borne fruit in a thousand unknown fields. The mass of men can only fight negatively in the ranks of the children of light, by ruling their lives well; Savonarolas, St. Francis, Isaiahs, are very rare; on the whole, the most valuable deeds of mankind are negative.

But his after-life was noble, though flowing in obscure channels, was silent beneficence, and health-diffusing purity. And who may measure the leavening power of one life attuned to high ideals?

"I can never be happy any more, dear," he said, addressing her, as if her pale and silent presence were still vital; "but I shall bless the day on which I first saw you, as long as I live."

A white rose-bud moved from her hair, borne down by its own weight; things she had said seemed to repeat themselves in the still air which had been so lately vibrant with the tones of her voice and the low music of her laughter. "Claude, Claude," he almost heard her say as she so often did on waking from fitful sleep, "are you really there? is it no dream?"

"Ma mie," he replied once, but his voice sounded hollow and strange, charged as it was with tender passion, and echoed dingly through the silent room; where oh! where was that which had once thrilled in response to his lightest whisper? Can my love never reach you there? It seemed impossible that the adored voice had no power to break the lofty calm of her stillness; "will they shut me out for ever from the holy place, ma mie, ma mie?"

Outside the house, the sunshine, which was to have healed her, lay with caressing warmth on the dark rich sea, the purple-shadowed mountains, the orange and lemon groves, the olives and aloes, the garden she had loved and made lovelier by her presence. The brief hours rolled by and the sun reached the zenith. Then Philip came and took him away for the final rites, surprised to find him calm and reasonable, and able to speak of her as if she were still with them.

"She was gifted, such an artist, Philip," he said that evening, when the earth had closed over her; "and no one could look in her face without being the better for it."

Then he showed him a paper in her handwriting, a list of small gifts of toys and souvenirs of the places she had seen in this first foreign tour, for each of her friends, including a porcelain pipe for Abraham, with a message to each friend, dated a week back, and showing that she knew how near her end was. There was also a sealed separate packet for Philip and one for her husband, to be opened a week after her death, as if she had pictured the increasing

ache of bereavement that would come to each of them after the first shock had gone by, and thus tried to comfort them.

Then a very noble and tender friendship, which had already taken root, grew up and blossomed between Claude and Philip in this common bereavement, which drew them together all the more because they shared the loss with no one in any great degree. Each could speak of Jessie to the other and to no one else, each had been loved by her and knew her as no one else had done, each had in a different degree wronged her and been forgiven. She was a life-long bond between them, cementing a friendship that never faltered in all the years to come.

When the death tidings reached Marwell Court they excited mixed feelings in different breasts: Lady Gertrude was sufficiently shocked by the suddenness, and touched by the pity of Jessie's early death, to be able to cry with the utmost propriety, though firmly convinced that nothing better could possibly have occurred. Sir Arthur in his secret heart felt that it was well, but Jessie's young pathetic beauty and singular charm had from the first cast a spell upon him; he could not forget her parting kiss or the clinging of her arms around his neck.

Even Jim Medway hurriedly left the room on hearing the telegram read, and when he appeared again, he said that it would make a great change in Hugh's prospects. "Claude will be awfully cut up, but won't say much," he added, "only you'll see that he'll never marry again," which was true.

"I never did hold with these here telegrams," Mr. Plummer said. "There's trouble enough with bad harvests and war taxes and low prices without making ill news fly faster than natural; which the Lord knows is too fast by long odds."

"I always did say that Matthew Meade would live to repent bringing her up as he did," Cousin Jane complained to her pocket handkerchief. "Nobody can't say I didn't warn him," she added with a sob.

"But he didn't live, you foolish woman!" growled her husband, grieved to the extent of contradicting.

"How ever anybody could expect him to live, with information in his chest and mustard poultices, and me sitting up all night with him?" she retorted.

"Ah to be sure, I reckon that was enough to kill any man without any information in his chest," her husband returned, grimly. "Well there! the best goes first!"

"Who'd ever thought Nat would take on like that?" Cousin Jane thought to herself when he went out of the room, angrily banging the door, "and he without a drop of Wood blood in him. But Plummer always had a feeling heart; I've always said that for him, for all he's that aggravating to live with. And her ways was taking and men never thinks a pretty face can go wrong—without they marry one, and then they find out fast enough. Well! there! I was fullish over the child myself, and cried for her when she run away, as though she a been a sister's child at least. To be sure, it was providential I thought the plum-colored silk would fly and bought the black instead, and some say bugles are worn. She died a baronet's daughter-in-law, when all's said and done, and nobody can say I don't know what's right to wear for cousins. What are we but worms? The merino'll wear for work adays; it's a pity I can't give the crape another wear, but Sir Arthur might think it a liberty. The deaths I've seen! Plummer's of a full habit and hot-tempered, he may go off any day. There's a poor fellow besides to wear crape for, dear, and Jessie not nineteen! We mustn't run out again the ways of Providence. I'm sure there's mercies enough with me spared from day to day, that might go off any minute."

Roger said nothing; he went on into the empty cow stable, and leant against the loft ladder with his hands in his pockets and his eyes fixed on the straw-litter, which was touched by a bar of frosty sunshine, for an hour. Once or twice he drew the back of his hand across his eyes, but no one ever knew what his thoughts were.

Sarah sat down in the midst of her work by the kitchen fire with her apron over her head. After a while, she removed the apron and went into the dairy and scrubbed her pans and pails, pausing occasionally to dash the tears which bedewed her labors. A cat lapped cream before her eyes, and on being discovered was quietly removed and turned out of doors without rebuke. Sarah would never more take such pride in the whiteness of her wooden pails and the lustre of their steel bands. There would be less pleasure in giving Plummer full change for her verbal coin, or detecting "the girl" in innumerable delinquencies; and when the pleasant spring days came again there would be less music in the singing of birds and a loss of sweetness in the flowers.

"Poor missie's gone, Abram," she sighed, when her husband came clattering heavily in over the flags, a pail of freezing water in each hand.

He set down the pails with a clash, "Gone dead?" he asked, after a time.

"Gone dead. 'Twas a hrapid decline."

He took up his pails again after another long and silent pause and set them in their place. Then he removed the yoke from his shoulders and stumped heavily out of the dairy without a word to his wife.

"Wold master and missus was terrible zet on she," he muttered to himself.

He went into the barn, took up his flail and began to thresh. But he grasped the handsel in a half-hearted way and brought down the zwingel without his usual dash, thinking, in a dim sort of way, that sunshine would never again have the old pleasant warmth or a cup of mild ale the old savor and cheer.

"Terrible set on she," he repeated, after half-an-hour's steady thud, thud of the flail.

So it was all over. And a few days after the funeral, Philip turned away from the new grave in the English cemetery and walked slowly out into the sunny road with a full heart and dim eyes. He leant on a low stone-wall, in the crannies of which sweet violets were blooming and near which bees hummed contentedly about a bush of white heather, and gazed out over the orange and olive groves and oriental aloes and carobs, upon the sunlit sea.

He was almost sorry and yet he was glad that Jessie had not known what he lost by coming home to her. She could never know now what now he had not fully known till now, himself, how very dear she had been and what a terrible blank she had left in his life. And how should he answer to Matthew Meade for that fresh, unfurled grave? He had been loyal to the letter of that dying charge, but not to its spirit. He ought to have given more heed to her letters and seen the true meaning of her discontent; it was partly stupidity, but more prejudice of those cut and dried arbitrary conventions that men have invented concerning women. He had never thought of Jessie as a reasoning being with passions and spiritual needs, and a distinct mould of character of her own, but as a tender, unreasoning, clinging thing to be moulded to his own form at will.

"And now my house was left unto him desolate," he thought, looking over the sea with a deep intent gaze, as one who is questioning the hidden future.

He would be alone all his life; even if he could forget Ada, he would ask no woman to share the stigma of his birth, Ada, of course, would marry; and in the years to come he might know her and become her friend. Her children might even cling about him; she would teach them to respect him as a man who stood or fell by his own strength, and scorned to climb by any ignoble way.

His heart was full of Ada, as indeed it always was; his thoughts fluttered away from sad retrospection, as they were wont to rest in the unforgetten charm of her presence. If a peasant girl stepped gracefully down the hillside with her basket of olive-roots poised lightly upon her head, something in the proud carriage of the head, some lustre in the girl's dark eyes, a stray sunbeam on the rippling darkness of her hair, any touch of beauty was an echo or reflection from Ada. He pictured her on the sea-ward slope beneath the solemn olives below, delighting in the soft sunny beauty of the Italian winter and loving the clear brilliance of the blue sea, till it would have been no surprise to hear her speak, a breathing reality and no dream.

The sun was sinking toward the vast breadth of soft blueness, rose-hued cloudlets were fluttering like winged angels in the glowing orange sky; he turned, the better to see the splendor, and there, coming out of the sunset glory toward him, was Ada herself.

(To be Continued.)

## HOW THE RUSSIANS FAIL.

### Bad Generalship Accounts for Their Lack of Success.

An Englishman lately returned from Manchuria states that the Russians had some 220,000 men and the Japanese 180,000 at the battle of Liao Yang. The Russians also had over a hundred guns more than the Japanese.

The credit of the Japanese for turning the Russians out of the powerful semi-permanent works at Liao Yang is therefore very great, and no surprise need be felt at General Kuroki's failure to turn General Kouropatkin's flank successfully.

The repeated defeats sustained by the Russians are entirely due, at any rate latterly, to bad generalship. The men are dogged and fight well. The regimental officers are fair, but the generals and their staffs are quite incompetent.

The railway is working magnificently. Men and stores are being passed along smoothly to the front. A minimum of twelve trains on all sections either way is run daily. On some sections this number is exceeded. This is a very good performance for a single line.

Locally in Manchuria the Russians can get ample supplies of food for practically any number of men they may wish to keep there.

But a large army without competent generals is useless, and so far the Russian plan of campaign has consisted in sending bodies of troops in all directions without any co-ordination of purpose, with the result that they were defeated in detail.

Mrs. Newlywed—"Have you any nice slumps this morning?" Butcher—"Slumps? What are they?" Mrs. Newlywed—"Indeed, I don't know; but my husband talking about a slump in the market, and I thought I would like to try some."



## STUDY AND OBSERVE.

Aim to keep hogs for profit; that is what everybody keeps them for. Some are doing it, and some are not. The only way to successfully raise hogs, or to succeed in any other occupation, is to study and observe the work. In these days of strenuous competition, it requires close management to make anything out of it, yet there is always room for more of the best. No matter how many hogs you have, strive continually to learn more about the industry.

## CARE OF DAIRY CALVES.

In rearing a dairy calf, it must be borne in mind that while size and constitution are wanted, fat is to be avoided writes Oscar R. Widmer. If the calf is started with a too liberal feeding of whole milk or other fattening foods, in nine cases out of ten, the matured animal will put its food on its back instead of giving it at the pail. If a male, it will usually transmit these qualities to its offspring. As soon as a calf is dropped, it is removed from its dam to a clean bed of straw. I prefer that it shall not know a mother. Unless the cow is suffering from an excessively full udder, I wait an hour or two before milking, or until the calf has begun to exercise and get an appetite. I consider it necessary that it be fed the mother's first milk. A young calf should never be fed milk from a cow long in lactation unless some mild laxative is added, and, if possible, should have the milk from its dam until old and strong enough to thrive on skim-milk.

The amount of milk fed depends on the size of the calf, varying from two or three quarts morning and night. The pails from which calves are fed should be kept clean. If the milk becomes chilled, place it in warm water until it reaches nearly blood heat, never giving the calf all it will take, but removing the pail while it still wants more. If a calf does not begin to nibble at hay when it is three or four days old, a few bright spears should be placed in its mouth.

## AT FEEDING TIME.

In this way it soon learns to expect hay as well as milk. I have had calves eating hay regularly at a week, old, and at two weeks old would look for their noonday feeding of brain. When a calf begins to eat hay and grain well, skim-milk is substituted for a part of the whole milk, increasing the amount gradually until the ration is all skim-milk. If the milk has become cool in separating, it should be warmed to about 10 degrees. There can be no set rule as to the amount to be allowed, as some calves take nearly twice as much as others with no bad effects. The feeder must watch his animals, and if too great a looseness of the bowels is observed, give less, first making sure that scouring is not caused by sour pails, cold milk or wet, unclean quarters.

As soon as the milk pail is taken away, some clean, fine hay is placed before them, and they are taught to eat, instead of sucking on some convenient object. After they commence eating hay, a daily allowance of grain, consisting of wheat, bran and middlings, is given at noon, beginning with less than a pint daily, and increasing the hay and grain ration as the calf grows, seldom permitting the skim-milk to exceed three or 3½ quarts twice a day. As the amount of milk fed is not sufficient to quench thirst, at six or eight weeks old the calf will begin to take a little water which should be warmed slightly in cold weather. Although I do not let young calves run on pasture, an occasional feeding of grass is given in summer. In winter, turnips are sliced daily and fed to them. A little salt is added to the grain ration every other day, or oftener if needed. Fed in this way, with no corn meal in its rations, the calf that lays on too much flesh is liable to turn out a light milker, and will probably have to go to the block.

## THE CALF'S QUARTERS.

should be warm, light and dry. During the extreme cold of last winter, I had some difficulty, though no loss, with some calves kept in a rather cold pen. We were overstocked with calves, but wanted to raise still more. We put them in pens, and at first they did not do well, but after the weather moderated they thrived right along. Our calf pens are cleaned as regularly as our cow stables. This takes less bedding, besides being more wholesome than throwing fresh material on top of a wet bed. One year I lost 12 calves inside of a week, and it was more than two years before I discovered that the loss was due to overfeeding and the accumulation of manure. Their bed was dry and clean on top, but underneath disease and death were awaiting the proper time to get in their work.

During the last three or four years I have had but little trouble with scours. Sometimes in changing to skim-milk a calf will scour. The remedy is a very small feeding of whole milk for a day or two, or until the calf begins to grow again, when the change of skim-milk should be gradual. Plenty of hay, grain and water tends to develop the appearance liked in a dairy cow. Our calves are usually weaned when about six months old, but occasionally a strong one at four months.