

CHAPTER XXX.

Into Philip's guilty thoughts, as he wended his homeward way, we will not inquire, and indeed, for all the warm glow that the thousand-pound check in his pocket diffused through his system, they were not to be envied. Perhaps no scoundrel presents at heart such a miserable object to himself and all who know him, as the scoundrel who attempts to deceive himself, and whilst reaping its profits, tries to shoulder the responsibility of his iniquity on to the back of others!

Unfortunately, in this prosaic world of bargains, one cannot receive checks for one thousand pounds without, in some shape or form, giving a quid pro quo. Now Philip's quid was to rid his house and the neighborhood of Arthur Heigham, his guest and his daughter's lover. It was not a task he liked, but the unearned check in his breeches-pocket continually reminded him of the obligation it entailed.

When Arthur came to smoke his pipe with his host that evening, the latter looked so gloomy and depressed, that he wondered to himself if he was going to be treated to a repetition of the shadow scene, little guessing that there was something much more personally unpleasant before him.

"Heigham," Philip said, suddenly, and looking studiously in the other direction, "I want to speak to you. I have been thinking over our conversation of about a week ago on the subject of your engagement to Angela, and have now come to a final determination. I may say at once that I approve of you in every way," here his hearer's heart bounded with delight, "but, under all the circumstances, I don't think that I should be right in sanctioning an immediate engagement. You are not sufficiently sure of each other for that. I may seem old-fashioned, but I am a great believer in the virtue of constancy, and I'm anxious, in your own interest, to put yours and Angela's to the test. The terms that I can offer you are these. You must leave here to-morrow, and must give me your word of honor as a gentleman—which, I know, will be the most effectual guarantee that I can take from you—that you will not, for the space of a year, either attempt to see Angela again, or to hold any written communication with her, or anybody in any way connected with her. The year ended, you can return, and should you both still be of the same mind, you can then marry her as soon as you like. If you decline to accede to these terms—which I believe to be to your mutual ultimate advantage—I must refuse my consent to the engagement altogether."

A silence followed this speech. The match that Arthur had lit before Philip began burned itself out between his fingers without his appearing to suffer any particular inconvenience, and now his pipe fell with a crash into the grate, and broke into fragments—a fit symbol of the blow dealt to his hopes. For some moments he was so completely overwhelmed at the idea of losing Angela for a whole long year, losing her as completely as though she were dead, that he could not answer. At length he found his voice, and said, hoarsely:

"Yours are hard terms."

"I cannot argue the point with you, Heigham; such as they are, they are my terms, founded on what I consider I owe to my daughter. Do you accept them?"

"I cannot answer you off-hand. My happiness and Angela's are too vitally concerned to allow me to do so. I must consult her first."

of cabbages. Not that Arthur was fond of old Jakes; on the contrary, ever since the coffin-stool conversation, which betrayed, he considered, a malevolent mind, he detested him personally; but still he set a fancy value on him because he was connected with the daily life of his betrothed.

And then at last out came Angela, having spied him from behind the curtains of her window, clothed in the same white gown in which he had first beheld her, and which he consequently considered the prettiest of frocks. Never did she look more lovely than when she came walking toward him that morning, with her light, proud step, which was so full of grace and womanly dignity. Never had he thought her more sweet and heart-compelling, than when having first made sure that Jakes had retreated to feed his pigs, she shyly lifted her bright face to be greeted with his kiss. But she was quick of sympathy, and had learned to read him like an open page, and before his lips had fairly fallen on her own she knew that things had gone amiss.

"Oh, what is it, Arthur?" she said, with a little pant of fear.

"Be brave, dear, and I will tell you." And, in somewhat choky tones, he recounted word for word what had passed between her father and himself.

She listened in perfect silence, and bore the blow as a brave woman should. When he had finished, she said, with a little tremor in her voice:

"You will not forget me in a year, will you, Arthur?"

He kissed her by way of answer, and then they agreed to go together to Philip, and try to turn him from his purpose.

Breakfast was not a cheerful meal that day, and Pigott, noticing the prevailing depression, remarked, with sarcasm, that they might, for all appearance to the contrary, have been married for twenty years; but even this spirited sally did not provoke a laugh. Ten o'clock, the hour that was to decide their fate, came all too soon, and it was with very anxious hearts that they took their way to the study. Philip, who was seated in readiness, appeared to view Angela's arrival with some uneasiness.

"Of course, Angela," he said, "I am always glad to see you, but I hardly expected—"

"I beg your pardon for intruding, father," she answered; "but, as this is very important to me, I thought that I had better come too, and hear what is settled."

As it was evident that she meant to stay, Philip did not attempt to gain-say her.

"Oh, very well, very well—I suppose you have heard the terms upon which I am prepared to consent to your engagement."

"Yes, Arthur has told me; and it is to improve you to modify them that we have come. Father, they are cruel terms—to be dead to each other for a whole long year."

like, and care to bring a license and a proper settlement—say, of half your income—with you," answered Philip, with a half-smile.

"I take you at your word," said Arthur, eagerly; "that is, if Angela agrees." Angela made no signs of disagreement. "Then, on these terms, I give you my promise."

"Very good. Then that is settled, and I will send for a dog-cart to take you to the four o'clock train. I fear you will hardly be ready for the 12.25. I shall, however, hope," he added, "to have the pleasure of presenting this young lady to you for good and all on this day next year. Good-bye for the present. I shall see you before you go."

It is painful to have to record that when Arthur got outside the door, and out of Angela's hearing, he cursed Philip, in his grief and anger, for the space of some minutes.

To linger over those last hours could only be distressing to the sympathetic reader of this history, more especially if he, or she, has ever had the misfortune to pass through such a time in their own proper persons. The day of any one's departure is always wretched, but much more is it wretched, when the person departing is a lover, whose face will not be seen and of whom no postman will bear tidings for a whole long year.

Some comfort, however, these two took in looking forward to that joyous day when the year of probation should have been gathered to its predecessors, and in making the most minute arrangements for their wedding; how Angela was to warn Mr. Fraser that his services would be required; where they should go to for their honeymoon, and even of what flowers the wedding bouquet, which Arthur was to bring down from town with him, should be composed.

And thus the hours passed away, all too quickly, and each of them strove to be merry, in order to keep up the spirits of the other. But it is not in human nature to feel cheerful with a lump of ice upon the heart! Dinner was even more dismal than breakfast, and Pigott, who had been informed of the pending misfortune, and who was distrustful of Philip's motives, though she did not like to add to the general gloom by saying so, made, after the manner of half-educated people, a painful and infectious exhibition of her grief.

"Poor Aleck," said Angela, when the time drew near, bending down over the dog to hide a tear, as she had once before bent down to hide a blush; "poor Aleck, I shall miss you almost as much as your master."

"You will not miss him, Angela, because I am going to make you a present of him if you will keep him."

"That is very good of you, dear. I shall be glad to have him for your sake."

"Well, keep him, love, he is a good dog; he will quite have transferred his allegiance by the time I come back. I hope you won't have done the same, Angela."

"Oh, Arthur, why will you so often make me angry by saying such things? The sun will forget to shine before I forget you."

CHAPTER XXXI.

When Angela was still quite a child, the permanent inhabitants of Sherborne Lane, King William Street, in the city of London, used to note a very pretty girl, of small stature and modest ways, passing out—every evening after the city gentlemen had locked up their offices and gone home—from the quiet of the lane into the roar and rush of the city. This young girl was Mildred James, the only daughter of a struggling, a very struggling, city doctor, and her daily mission was to go to the cheap markets, and buy the provisions that were to last the Sherborne Lane household, for her father lived in the same rooms that he practiced in, for the ensuing twenty-four hours. The world was a hard place for poor Mildred in those days of provision hunting, when so little money had to pay for so many necessities, and to provide also for the luxuries that were necessary to her invalid mother. Some years later, when she was a sweet maiden of eighteen, her mother died but medical competition was keen in Sherborne Lane, and her removal did not greatly alleviate the pressure of poverty. At last one evening, when she was about twenty years of age, a certain Mr. Carr, an old gentleman with whom her father had some acquaintance, sent up a card with a penciled message on it to the effect that he would be glad to see Dr. James.

"Run, Mildred," said her father, "and tell Mr. Carr that I will be with him in a minute. It will never do to see a new patient in this coat."

Mildred departed, and, gliding into the gloomy consulting-room like a sun-beam, delivered her message to the old gentleman, who appeared to be in some pain, and prepared to return.

"Don't go away," almost shouted the aged patient; "I have crushed my finger in a door, and it hurts most dreadfully. You are something to look at in this hole, and distract my attention."

Mildred thought to herself that this was an odd way of paying a compliment, if it was meant for one; but then, old gentlemen with crushed fingers are not given to weighing their words.

"Are you Dr. James' daughter?" he asked presently.

"Yes, sir."

"Ugh, I have lived most of my life in Sherborne Lane, and never saw anything half so pretty in it before. Confound this finger!"

At this moment the doctor himself arrived, and wanted to dismiss Mildred, but Mr. Carr, who was a headstrong old gentleman, vowed that no one else should hold his injured hand whilst it was dressed, and so she stayed just long enough for him to fall as completely in love with her shell-like face as though he had been twenty instead of nearly seventy.

Now, Mr. Carr was not remarkable for good looks, and in addition to having seen out so many summers had also buried two wives. It will, therefore, be clear that he was scarcely the suitor that a lovely girl conscious of capacities for deep affection, would have selected of her own free will; but on the other hand, he was honest and kind-hearted, and what was more to the point, perhaps the wealthiest wine-merchant in the city. Mildred resisted as long as she could, but want is a hard master, and a father's arguments are difficult to answer, and in the end she married him, and, what is more, made him a good and faithful wife.

She never had any cause to regret it, for he was kindness itself toward her, and when he died, some five years afterward, he left her sole legatee of all his enormous fortune, bound up by no restrictions as to remarriage. About this time also her father died, and she was left as much alone in the world, as it is possible for a young and pretty woman, possessing in her own right between twenty and thirty thousand a year, to be.

Needless to say, Mrs. Carr was thenceforth one of the catches of her generation; but nobody could catch her, though she alone knew how many had tried. Once she made a list of all the people who had proposed to her; it included amongst others a bishop, two peers, three members of Parliament, no less than five army officers, an American and a dissenting clergyman.

"It is perfectly marvelous, my dear," she said to her companion, Agatha Terry, "how fond people are of twenty thousand a year, and yet they all said that they loved me for myself, that is, all except the dissenters, who wanted me to help to 'feed his flock,' and I liked him the best of the lot, because he was the honestest."

To Be Continued.

MARKED DOWN

It is astonishing what a wonderful fascination there is in those two words, "Marked Down," for the average woman.

The dealers in every kind of merchandise have long been aware of the magic in those two words, and are slow to govern themselves accordingly. The staring handbills with which the country dealer floods his town and the surrounding boroughs, and the advertisements which the city merchant displays in the daily papers, are forcible examples of what can be done by a judicious use of printer's ink.

It is marvelous, the ladies tell each other, how it is that Brown & Jenkins can afford to offer such bargains to the public! Bankrupt stock of somebody, and bought at an immense sacrifice, and going for whatever it will bring!

Petticoats for seventy-five cents, marked down from four dollars! Corsets for thirty-seven cents, worth a dollar and a half! Dress goods which were two dollars a yard, now to be disposed of at twenty-five cents! Hosiery at a tremendous reduction! Awful slaughter of gentlemen's neckties and ladies' shirt-waists.

The word "slaughter" seems to be a favorite one with sensation dealers, and it has been run so long in their interests that it would seem they might ring some changes upon it. Why not say, "Awful murder of gentlemen's linen collars and ladies' handkerchiefs! Terrible annihilation of children's school shoes!" "Distressing homicide of small wares!" "Goods positively sold for the jakes of doing it!"

The woman who reads these advertisements is on nettles to go and secure some of these tremendous bargains before some other woman gets them. It is the chance of a lifetime! She feels that she must not let such an opportunity pass her by! "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

She must go to Brown & Jenkins' great sale. She must go early. She owes it to herself that she secures one of those four-dollar petticoats for seventy-five cents, whether she really needs the garment or not. That does not matter. It is so cheap that it is a sin to let it go.

She hurries to the train, or the car, and never thinks of lunch. She eats at any time, but it is not always that she can secure such wonderful bargains as are now awaiting her coming.

The store is crammed with other women who have just such ideas as she has. The half-distracted clerks are rushing hither and thither, trying vainly to wait on everybody at once, and the eagle-eyed floor-walker is everywhere, lest some kleptomaniac may pocket a cake of five-cent soap, marked down from a quarter of a dollar.

All the ladies crowd each other, without regard to the laws of common courtesy. They pull the exhibited goods this way and that way, and compare them with samples they have brought, and wonder if they will wash, and if there is any cotton in them, and if they are new goods, or something left over from last season.

And the clerks swear, upon their sacred honor, that everything was new especially for this sale, and that Brown & Jenkins are positively ruining themselves by offering things at such a ridiculously low price!

And they say that never again can there, by any possibility, be such a chance to secure bargains given to the public. No, never! It is absolutely the last chance you will have in this life to buy four-dollar petticoats for seventy-five cents!

By four o'clock in the afternoon, the interior of that store is a pandemonium. The crush is something appalling. Dresses are stepped on and torn from the bindings, braid is ripped from skirts, passementerie trimmings are scattered in every direction, and beads fall like hail stones. Bonnets are knocked awry, purses are lost, wraps are dragged off from fair shoulders, and trodden under foot, fat women perspire, and lean women get flattened out still leaner, children cry, pug dogs snap and growl, cash girls become insolent, tempers are lost, necessities of the women have headaches, and the remaining tenth are about dead with standing round, and trying to get hold of something round, and trying to get hold of something round, and trying to get hold of something round.

And as daylight fails, these women will go home, tired and footsore, but jubilant over the bargains they have secured, and it will take them each, individually, two or three days to tell their neighbors about the large amount of money they have saved by attending that Marked Down Sale of Brown & Jenkins.

And the next week any one of those neighbors can go quietly and sit on a stool comfortably in that store of Brown & Jenkins, and be waited upon at her leisure, and she can buy those four-dollar petticoats at seventy-five cents, and those dollar and a half corsets at thirty-seven cents, just the same as though she had been crushed and mauled through that bargain sale.

For every sensible person knows that for a really good article you must pay a fair price, and that whenever you get an article at a so-called bargain, the dealer is as glad to get rid of it as you are to secure it.

READY FOR IT. He—I have money to burn. She—Let's strike a match.