

"Two Sinners."

There was a man, it was said one time,
Who went astray in his youthful prime.
Can the brain keep cool and the heart keep quiet
When the blood is a river that's running riot?
And the boy will be boys, the old folks say,
And a man's the better who's had his day.
The sinner reformed, and the preacher told
Of the prodigal son who came back to the fold.
And the Christian people threw open the door
With a warmer welcome than ever before.
Wealth and honour were his to command
And a spotless woman gave him her hand.
And the world strewed their pathway with flowers
A bloom,
Crying, "God bless lady and God bless groom!"
There was a maiden went astray,
In the rosy dawn of life's young day.
She had more passion and heart than head,
And she followed blindly where fond love led:
And love unchecked is a dangerous guide,
To wander at will by a fair girl's side.
The woman repented and turned from sin,
But no door opened to let her in.
The preacher prayed she might be forgiven,
But bade her look for mercy in heaven.
For this is the law of the earth, we know,
That the woman is scorned, while the man may go.
A brave man wedded her, after all,
But the world still frowned, "We shall not call!"
ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

DAWN.

A NOVEL

BY

H. RIDER HAGGARD,

AUTHOR OF "KING SOLOMON'S MINES," "HIS,"
"JESS," "THE WITCH'S HEAD," ETC.

(Continued.)

"Then came a dreadful hush, and the shadow of death came down upon the house and brooded over it. The men-servants moved to and fro with muffled feet, and the women wept, for in a way they had all loved the imperious old man, and the last change had come very suddenly. Philip's brain burned; he was consumed by the desire of action. Suddenly he bethought him of his wife upstairs: after what he had just passed through, no scene with her could disturb him—it would, he even felt, be welcome. He went up to his room where she was, and entered. It was evident that she had been told of what had happened, as both she and Pigott who was undressing her, for she was weary out, were weeping. She did not appear surprised at his appearance; the shock of the old man's death extinguished all surprise. It was he who broke the silence.

"He is dead," he said.

"Yes, I have heard."

"If you are at liberty for a few minutes, I wish to talk to you," he said, savagely. "I, too," she answered, "have something to say, but I am too weary and upset to say it now. I will see you to-morrow."

He turned and went without answering, and Pigott noticed that his kiss of word of endearment passed between them, and that the tone of their words was cold.

Soon after Philip got down stairs, the doctor came. Philip met him in the hall and accompanied him into the study where the body was. He made a rapid examination more as a matter of form than anything else, for his first glance had told him that life was extinct.

"Quite dead," he said, sorrowfully, "my old friend gone at last. One of a fine sort too; a just man for all his temper. They called him 'devil,' and he was fierce when he was younger, but, if I never meet a worse devil than he was, I shall do well. He was very kind to me once, very. How did he go; in pain, I fear?"

"We were talking together, when suddenly he was seized with that kind of fit the medicine as quick as I could and tried to get it down his throat, but he could not swallow, and, in the hurry, the glass was knocked by a jerk of his head, right out of my hands. Next second he was dead."

"Very quick, quicker than I should have expected. Did he say anything?"

"No."

Now, just as Philip delivered himself of this last lie, a curious incident happened, or rather an incident that is apt to seem curious to a person who had just told a lie. The corpse distinctly moved its right hand—the same that had been clasped over the old man's head as he denounced his son.

"Good God!" said Philip, turning pale as death, "what's that?" and even the doctor started a little, and cast a keen look at the dead face.

"Nothing," he said. "I have seen that happen before when there has been considerable tension of the muscles before death; it is only their final slackening, that is all. Come, will you ring the bell, they had better come and take it upstairs."

This sad task had just been performed, and Mr. Caley was about to take his leave, when Pigott came down and whispered something into his ear that evidently caused him the most lively astonishment. Drawing Philip aside, he said:

"The housekeeper asks me to come up and see Mrs. Caresfoot, whom she thinks is going to be confined. Does she mean your wife?"

"Yes," answered Philip, sullenly, "she does. It is a long story, and I am too upset to tell you now. It will soon be all over the country I suppose."

The old doctor whistled, but judged it advisable not to put any more questions, when suddenly an idea seemed to strike him.

"You said you were talking to your father when the fit took him, was it about your marriage?"

"Yes."

"When did he first know of it?"

"To-day, I believe."

"Ah, thank you," and he followed Pigott upstairs.
That night, exactly at twelve o'clock, another little lamp floated out on the waters of life: Angela was born.

CHAPTER XII.

When the doctor had gone upstairs, Philip went into the dining-room to eat something, only to find that food was repugnant to him—he could scarcely swallow a mouthful. To some extent, however, he supplied its place by wine, of which he drank several glasses. Then, drawn by a strange fascination, he went back into the little study, and, remembering the will, bethought himself that it might be as well to secure it. In taking it off the table, however, a folded and much erased sheet of manuscript was disclosed. Recognizing Bellamy's writing, he took it up and commenced to read the draft, for it was nothing else. Its substance was as follows:

The document began by stating that the testator's former will was declared null and void on account of the "treacherous and dishonorable conduct of his son Philip." It then, in brief but sweeping terms, bequeathed and devised to trustees, of whom Philip was not one, the unentailed property and personality to be held by them; firstly, for the benefit of any son that might be born to the said disinherited Philip by his wife, Hilda; the question of daughters being probably by accident, passed over in silence—and failing such issue then to the testator's nephew George Caresfoot absolutely, subject, however, to the following curious condition. Should the said George Caresfoot, either by deed of gift or will, attempt to reconvey the estate to his cousin Philip or to descendants of the said Philip, then the gift over to the said George was to be of none effect, and the whole was to pass to the endowment of an hospital to be built in the neighboring town of Roxham and devoted to the treatment of persons suffering from complaints of the heart. Then followed several legacies and one charge on the estate to the extent of £1,000 a year payable to the separate use of the aforesaid Hilda Caresfoot for life, and reverting at death to the estates.

In plain English, Philip was, under this draft, totally disinherited first in favor of his own male issue, by his wife Hilda, all mention of daughters being omitted, and failing issue in favor of his hated cousin George, who, as though to add insult to injury, was prohibited from willing the property back either to himself or his descendants, by which the testator had probably understood the children of a second marriage.

Philip read the document over twice carefully.

"Phew!" he said, "that was touch and go; thank Heavens he had no time to carry out his kind intentions."

But presently a terrible thought struck him. He rang the bell hastily. It was answered by the footman who, since he had an hour before helped to carry his poor master upstairs, had become quite demoralized. It was some time before Philip could get an answer to his question as to whether or no any one had been with his father that day while he was out. At last he succeeded in extracting a reply from the man that nobody had been except the young lady, "leastways he begged pardon, Mrs. Caresfoot as he was told she was."

"Never mind her," said Philip, feeling as though a load had been taken from his breast, "your are sure nobody else has been?"
"No, sir, nobody, leastways he begged pardon, nobody except lawyer Bellamy and his clerk, who had been there all the afternoon writing, with a black bag, and had sent for Simmons to be witnessed."

"You can go," said Philip, in a quiet voice. He saw it all now, he had let the old man die after he had executed the fresh will disinheriting him. He had let him die; he had effectually and beyond redemption cut his own throat. Doubtless, too, Bellamy had taken the new will with him; there was no chance of his being able to destroy it.

By degrees, however, his fit of brooding gave way to one of sullen fury against his wife, himself, but most of all against his dead father. Drunk with excitement, rage, and baffled gurgle, he seized a candle and staggered up to the room where the corpse had been laid, launching imprecations as he went at his dead father's head. But when he came face to face with that dead Presence his passion died, and a cold sense of the awful quiet and omnipotence of death came upon him and chilled him into fear. In some indistinct way he realized how impotent is the calling of the waters of Mortality against the iron-bound coasts of Death. To what purpose did he rail against that solemn quiet thing, that husk and mask of life which lay in unmoved mockery of his reviling?

His father was dead, and he, even he, had killed his father. He was his father's murderer. And then a terror of the reckoning that must one day be struck between that dead man's spirit and his own took possession of him, and a foreknowledge of the awful shadow under which he must henceforth live crept into his mind and froze the very marrow in his bones. He looked again at the face,

and, to his excited imagination, it appeared to have assumed a sardonic smile. The curse of Cain fell upon him as he looked, and weighed him down; his hair rose, and the cold sweat poured from his forehead. At length he could bear it no longer, but, turning fled out of the room and out of the house, far into the night.

When, haggard with mental and bodily exhaustion, he at length returned, it was after midnight. He found Dr. Caley waiting for him; he had just come from the sick-room, and wore an anxious look upon his face.

"Your wife has been delivered of a fine girl," he said; "but I am bound to tell you that her condition is far from satisfactory. The case is a most complicated and dangerous one."

"A girl!" groaned Philip, mindful of the will. "Are you sure that it is a girl?"

"Of course I am sure," answered the doctor, testily.
"And Hilda ill—I don't understand."
"Look here, my good fellow, you are upset; take a glass of brandy and go to bed. Your wife does not wish to see you now, but, if necessary, I will send for you. Now, do as I tell you, or you will be down next. Your nerves are seriously shaken."

Philip did as he was bid, and, as soon as he had seen him off to his room, the doctor returned upstairs.

In the early morning he sent for two of his brother-practitioners, and they held a consultation, the upshot of which was that they had come to the conclusion nothing short of a miracle could save Hilda's life—a conclusion that she herself had arrived at some hours before.

"Doctor," she said, "I trust to you to let me know when the end is near. I wish my husband to be present when I die, but not before."

"Hush, my child—never talk of dying yet. Please God, you have many years of life before you."
She shook her golden head a little sadly.

"No, doctor, my sand has run out, and perhaps it is as well. Give me the child—why do you keep the child away from me?"

It is the messenger sent to call me to a happier world. Yes, she is an angel messenger. When I am gone, see that you call her 'Angela,' so that I may know by what name to greet her when the time comes."

During the course of the morning, she expressed a strong desire to see Maria Lee, who was accordingly sent for. It will be remembered that old Mr. Caresfoot had on the previous day, immediately after Hilda had left him, sat down and written to Maria Lee. In this note he told her the whole shameful truth, ending it with a few words of bitter humiliation and self-reproach that such thing should have befallen her at the hands of one bearing his name. Over the agony of shame and grief thus let loose upon this unfortunate girl we will draw a veil. It is fortunate for the endurance of human reason that life does not hold many such hours as that through which she passed after the receipt of this letter. As was but natural, notwithstanding old Mr. Caresfoot's brief vindictive of Hilda's conduct in his letter, Maria was filled with indignation at what to herself she called her treachery and deceit.

While she was yet full of these thoughts, a messenger came galloping over from Bratham Abbey, bringing a note from Dr. Caley that told her of her old friend's sudden death, and of Hilda's dangerous condition, and her desire to see her. The receipt of this news plunged her into a fresh access of grief, for she had grown fond of the old man; nor had the warm affection for Hilda that had found a place in her gentle heart been altogether wrenched away; and now that she heard that her rival was to face with that King of Terrors before whom all earthly love, hate, hope, and ambition must fall down and cease their troubling, it revived in all his force; nor did any thought of her own wrong come to chill it.

Within half an hour she was at the door of the Abbey House, where the doctor met her, and, in answer to her eager question, told her that, humanly speaking, it was impossible her friend could live through another twenty-four hours, adding an injunction that she must not stay with her long.

She entered the sick-room with a heavy heart, and there from Hilda's dying lips she heard the story of her marriage and of Philip's perfidy. Their reconciliation was as complete as her friend's failing voice and strength would allow. At length she tore herself away, and, turning at the door, took her last look at Hilda, who had raised herself upon her elbow, and was gazing at her retreating form with an earnestness that was very touching. The eyes, Maria felt, were taking a fill of what they looked upon for the last time in this world. Catching her tearful gaze, the dying woman smiled, and, lifting her hand, pointed upward. Thus they parted.

But Maria could control herself no longer; her own blasted prospects, the loss of the man she loved, and the affecting scene through which she had just passed, all helped to break her down. Running downstairs into the dining-room, she threw herself on a sofa, and gave full passage to her grief. Presently she became aware that she was not alone. Philip stood before her, or, rather, the wreck of whom she knew as Philip. Indeed, it was hard to recognize in this scared man, with disheveled hair, white and trembling lips, and eyes ringed

round with black, the bold, handsome youth whom she had loved. The sight of him stayed her sorrow, and a sense of her bitter injuries rushed in upon her.

"What do you want with me?" she asked.
"Want! I want forgiveness. I am crushed, Maria, crushed—quite crushed," and he put his hands to his face and sobbed.

She answered him with the quiet dignity that good women can command in moments of emergency—dignity of a very different stamp from Hilda's haughty pride, but perhaps as impressive in its way.

"You ask forgiveness of me, and say that your crushed. Has it occurred to you that without fault of my own, except the fault of trusting you as entirely as I loved you, I too am crushed? Do you know that you have wanted, or to gain selfish ends, broken my heart, blighted my name, and driven me from my home, for I can live here no more? Do you understand that you have done me one of the greatest injuries one person can do to another? I say, do you know all this, Philip Caresfoot, and, knowing it, do you still ask me to forgive you? Do you think it possible that I can forgive?"

He had never heard her speak like this before, and did not remember that intense feeling is the mother of eloquence. He gazed at her for a moment in astonishment; then he dropped his face into his hands again and groaned, making no other answer. After waiting awhile, she went on:

"I am an insignificant creature, I know, and perhaps the mite of my happiness or misery makes little difference in the scale of things; but to me the gift of all my love was everything. I gave it to you, Philip—gave it without a doubt or murmur, gave it with both hands; I can never have it back to give again! How you have treated it you best know!"

Here she broke down a little, and then continued, "It may seem curious, but though my love has been so mistakenly given, though you to whom it was given have dealt so ill with it, yet I am anxious that on my side there should be no bitter memory, that, in looking back at all this in after-years, you should never be able to dwell upon any harsh or unkind word of mine. It is on that account, and also because I feel that it is not for me to judge you, and that you have already much to bear, that I do as you ask me, and say, 'Philip, from my heart I forgive you, as I trust that the Almighty may forgive me.'"

He flung himself upon his knees before her, and tried to take her hand. "You do not know how you have humbled me," he groaned.

She gazed at him with pity.
"I am sorry," she said; "I did not wish to humble you. I have one more word to say, and then I must go. I have just bid my last earthly farewell to—your wife. My farewell to you must be as complete as that, as complete as the thought the grave had already swallowed one of us. We have done with each other forever. I do not think that I shall come back here; in my waking moments your name shall never willingly pass my lips again. I will say it for the last time now. Philip, Philip, Philip, whom I chose to love out of all the world, I pray God that He will take me, or deaden the edge of what I suffer, and that He may never let my feet cross your path or my eyes fall upon your face again."

In another second she had passed out of the room, and out of his life.

That night, or rather just before dawn on the following morning, Hilda, knowing that her end was very near, sent for her husband.

"Go quickly, doctor," she said. "I shall die at dawn."

The doctor found him seated in the same spot where Maria Lee had left him. "What, more misery!" he said, when he had told his errand. "I can not bear it; there is a curse upon you—death and wickedness, misery and death!"

"You must come if you wish to see your wife alive."
"I will come," and he rose and followed him.

A sad sight awaited him. The moment of the gray dawn was drawing near, and, by his wife's request, a window had been unshuttered, that her dimmed eyes might once more look upon the light. On the great bed in the center of the room lay Hilda, whose life was now quickly drawing from her, and by her side was placed the sleeping infant. She was raised and supported on either side by pillows, and her unbound golden hair fell around her shoulders, inclosing her face as in a frame. Her pallid countenance seemed touched with an awful beauty that had not belonged to it in life, while in her eyes was that dread and prescient gaze which sometimes comes to those who are about to solve death's mystery.

By the side of the bed knelt Mr. Fraser, the clergyman of the parish, repeating in an earnest tone the prayers for the dying, while the sad-faced attendants moved with muffled tread backward and forward from the ring of light around the bed into the dark shadows that lay beyond.

When Philip came, the clergyman ceased praying, and drew back into the further part of the room, as did Pigott and the nurse, the former taking the baby with her.

Hilda motioned to him to come close to her. He came, and bent over and kissed her, and she, with an effort, threw

one ivory arm around his neck, and smiled sweetly. After about a minute, during which she was apparently collecting her thoughts, she spoke in a low voice, and in her native tongue.

"I have not sent for you before, Philip, for two reasons—first, because I wished to spare you pain, and next, in order that I might have time to rid my mind of angry thoughts against you. They are all gone now—gone with every other earthly interest; but I was angry with you, Philip. And now listen to me—for I have not much time—and do not forget my words in future years, when the story of my life will seem but as a shadow that once fell upon your path. Change your ways, Philip, dear, abandon deceit, atone for the past; if you can, make your peace with Maria Lee and marry her—ah! it is a pity that you did not do that at first, and leave me to go my ways—and, above all, humble your heart before the Power that I am about to face. I love you, dear, and, notwithstanding all, I am thankful to have been your wife. Please God—we shall meet again."

She paused awhile, and then spoke in English. To the astonishment of all in the room, her voice was strong and clear, and she uttered her words with an energy that, under the circumstances, seemed almost awful.

"Tell her to bring the child."
There was no need for Philip to repeat what she said, for Pigott heard her, and at once came forward with the baby, which she laid beside her.

The dying woman placed her hand upon its tiny head, and, turning her eyes upward with the rapt expression of one who sees a vision, said:

"May the power of God be about you to protect you, my motherless babe, may angels guard you, and make you as they are; and may the heavy curse and everlasting doom of the Almighty fall upon those who would bring evil upon you."

She paused, and then addressed her husband.

"Philip, you have heard my words; in your charge I leave the child, see that you never betray my trust."

Then, turning to Pigott, she said, in a fainter voice:

"Thank you for your kindness to me. You have a good face; if you can, stop with my child, and give her your love and care. And now, may God have mercy on my soul!"

Then came a minute's silence, broken only by the stifled sobs of those who stood around, till a ray of light from the rising sun struggled through the gray mist of the morning, and, touching the heads of mother and child, illumined them as with a glory. It passed as quickly as it came, drawing away with it the mother's life. Suddenly, as it faded, she spread out her arms, sighed, and smiled. When the doctor reached the bed, her story was told: she had fallen asleep.

Death had been very gentle with her.

CHAPTER XIII.

Go, my reader, if the day is dull, and you feel inclined to moralize—for, whatever may be said to the contrary, there are less useful occupations—and look at your village churchyard. What do you see before you? A plot of inclosed ground backed by a gray old church, a number of tombstones more or less decrepit, and a great quantity of little oblong mounds covered with rank grass. If you have any imagination, any power of thought, you will see more than that. First, with the instinctive selfishness of human nature, you will recognize your own future habitation; perhaps your eye will mark the man, and here the birth-place of the angel or the demon. It is his sure inheritance, one that he never solicits and never squanders; and, last, it is the only certain resting-place of sleepless, tired mortality.

Here it was that they brought Hilda and the old squire, and laid them side by side against the coffin of yeoman Caresfoot, whose fancy it had been to be buried in stone, and then, piling primroses and blackthorn blooms upon their graves, left them to their chilly sleep. Farewell to them, they have passed to where as yet we may not follow. Violent old man and proud and lovely woman, rest in peace, if peace be the portion of you both!

To return to the living. The news of the sudden decease of old Mr. Caresfoot, of the discovery of Philip's secret marriage, and the death of his wife, of the terms of the old man's will, under which Hilda being dead, and having only left a daughter behind her, George inherited all the unentailed portion of the property, with the curious provision that he was never to leave it back to Philip or his children; of the sudden departure of Miss

Lee, and of many other things that were some of them true and some of them false, following as they did upon the heels of the great dinner-party, and the announcement made thereat, threw the country-side into a state of indescribable ferment. When this settled down, it left a strong and permanent residuum of public indignation and contempt directed against Philip, the more cordially, perhaps, because he was no longer a rich man. People very rarely express contempt or indignation against a rich man who happens to be their neighbor in the country, whatever he may have done. They keep their virtue for those who are impoverished, or for their unfortunate relations. But for Philip it was felt that there was no excuse and no forgiveness; he had lost both his character and his money, and must therefore be cut, and from that day forward he was cut accordingly.

As for Philip himself, he was fortunately, as yet, ignorant of the kind intentions of his friends and neighbors, who had been so fond of him a week ago. He had enough upon his shoulders without that—for he had spoken no lie when he told Maria Lee that he was crushed by the dreadful and repeated blows that had fallen upon him, blows that had robbed him of everything that made life worth living, and given him in return nothing but an infant who could not inherit, and who was therefore only an encumbrance.

Who is it that says, "After all, let a bad man take what pains he may to push it down, a human soul is an awful, ghostly, unique possession for a bad man to have?" During the time that had elapsed between the death and burial of his father and wife, Philip had become thoroughly acquainted with the truth of this remark.

Do what he would, he could never for a single hour shake himself free from the recollection of his father's death; whenever he shut his eyes, his uneasy mind continually conjured up the whole scene with uncanny distinctness; the gloomy room, the contorted face of the dying man, the red flicker of the firelight on the wall, all these things were burnt deep into the tablets of his memory. More and more did he recognize the fact that, even should he live long enough to bury the events of that hour beneath the debris of many years, the lapse of time would be insufficient to bring forgiveness, and the recognition brought with it moral helplessness. He had, too, sufficient religious feeling to make him uneasy as to his future fate, and possessed a certain amount of imagination which was at this time all directed toward that awful day when he and his dead father must settle their final accounts. Already, in the quiet nights, he would wake with a start, thinking that the inevitable time had come. Superstitious fears also would seize him with their clammy fingers, and he would shake and tremble at the fancied step of ghostly feet, and his mind would curdle in his veins as his mind hearkened to voices that were for ever still.

(To be continued.)

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