

SIR WILLIAM'S WILL

CHAPTER XXIV.

Jack reached London in a condition of mind, to use the well-worn phrase, more easily to be imagined than described. He was still like a man walking in a dream, like a vessel drifting without a chart on an unknown sea; but he refused to make any attempt to solve the problem; he had given his promise to refrain from asking Clytie for her reasons, and he would not ask them of himself.

When one comes to think of his position, his resolution will not appear strange; for most assuredly the man who is dying of thirst in the desert does not criticize the cup in which the water is offered him, and does not, before drinking the precious life-saving fluid, demand to know where and how it was come by. It is sufficient for him that the water is there and that his panting soul is satisfied. Men only half as much in love as Jack was have walked eagerly through darker and more crooked ways to gain the women they love than this Clytie had set for him.

It is scarcely necessary to say that he did not sleep that night, or that he was out the first thing in the morning to obtain particulars of the steps by which he could make Clytie his own at the earliest moment.

When one considers how easy it is to get married, one cannot help feeling surprised that people are given to making so much fuss about it.

Jack found no difficulty in obtaining the special license, and his conscience was quite easy over the extraordinary and somewhat mendacious statements he was compelled to make in the pursuit of his object.

He returned to the hotel to get some food and make some little preparation for the visit to Weybridge, toward which he had been looking eagerly all the day; and he found Choze waiting for him. He had quite forgotten the man and his strange story, and looked as if he had, for Choze stared at him.

"Anything happened, Mr. Jackson?" he said. "You look as if—well, as if you had been on the spree; or as if you had lost a fortune or found one, I don't know which. Look here, I've been dodging in and out here all day in the hope of catching you. I want to speak to you about that proposal of mine; I mean that you should come out with me. So speak plainly, I've set my heart on it. I want you to come."

Jack was eating his food with a haste and absent-mindedness which were certainly not conducive to good digestion; and, at first, he only laughed somewhat strangely; but suddenly he arrested his knife and fork, and looked thoughtfully before him.

"Thinking it over, are you?" said Choze. "Well, that's all right. I'm not going to bother you—though, mind! I think you might do worse than come out, and take a hand with me in this game of mine. Look here, I'll tell you what I'll do; I shall take a berth for you on the White Witch on the chance of your coming with me. No; don't say anything," as Jack opened his lips. "I'm willing to chance it; for something seems to tell me that you will come, right enough. You

go on thinking it over, Mr. Jackson. Ta! ta! I've got an appointment."

"Hi! Hold on a minute, Choze!" called out Jack.

But Mr. Choze shook his head and went out quickly.

Jack did not go after him; all his heart and mind were fixed on that little cottage nestling amid the pine trees, and he started for it presently. Clytie and Mollie were walking in the garden when he came from among the trees; and Mollie, with a whispered, "Here he is!" pressed Clytie's arm encouragingly and sympathetically, and ran indoors. Clytie stood waiting for him, her heart beating fast, a faint color in her face. She had spent the day thinking of him and the momentous step she had taken; and now that the weakness, the strange feeling of faintness which always accompanied the attacks, one of which had assailed her last night, had passed away, she almost regretted what she had done, though she knew that the attack might return at any moment, and was convinced that her heart was affected and that she would die.

It was an extraordinary conviction for a girl of so healthy a mind and body as Clytie's to entertain; but the conviction was there, and it became more fixed after each mysterious attack. In the morbid and absolutely unnatural condition of her mind, she was conscious of only one desire—to restore Wilfred Carton to his own; and her mental action was as strange as her physical condition; she felt as if she stood aloof from the world, as if she had become impersonal, a mere instrument for attaining a certain end. This feeling was not so strong upon her to-night as it had been last night. Then she was so absorbed in her purpose as to be scarcely touched by Jack's words of love, his tender, passionate glances; but to-night she was better, and her heart throbbled with a kind of sad love at his approach.

His greeting was a formal one, for they were within sight of the windows; but they passed through a little gate into the wood, and there he took both her hands, and while she stood before him with downcast eyes, he gazed at her with all a lover's rapture, and yet with a certain anxiety and trouble.

"I have come with good news," he said, and his face, thought it was as grave as his face, had its note of passion. "I have arranged everything; have got the license—he patted his breast as if there were something precious there—"and have even found the church." He tried to laugh, but the moment was too serious. "I came upon it during my wanderings in London yesterday; it is a tiny church, in an out-of-the-way corner in the city. It looks as if it had been asleep for centuries and no one ever went into it to wake it. I interviewed the verger, if that's what they call him, and arranged for—for to-morrow." He saw that she trembled. "You are not afraid, dearest; you will not—draw back?" he said in a moment of terrible anxiety.

"No," she said, in a low voice. "It is not I, but you; you may want to



draw back. It—it is not too late." He laughed. "I! I draw back! Ah, well, I could hardly expect you to realize how much I love you, what the thought of making you my own means to me. When I think of it I can scarcely believe that I am not dreaming; in fact, that's just what I feel like."

"I have told Mollie," she said. He nodded. "That's right. It was best so. And why shouldn't she know? You will not be alone, she will be able to be with you. Was she surprised, disappointed?"

She looked at him with faint wonder; for the moment she had forgotten that he still believed his identity to be undiscovered.

"No," she said, with a smile. "Mollie is very quick; she—she knew all the time. And she likes you," she added, as if that were a matter of course. "And I love her," he said. "She is the brightest, the sweetest, the best little girl in all the world—bar one." He took her hand; but Clytie withdrew it as she had done last night, and turned toward the house. Mollie came toward them, at first with a demure step and face; then suddenly she ran forward and flung her arms round Jack's neck and kissed him. It struck him at the moment that Clytie had not yet kissed him, had shrunk from any kind of endearment on his part.

"I am so glad, Jack!" whispered Mollie, giving him a little final hug. "You see, Clytie has told me all about it. And that the marriage is to be secret. Oh, yes; I know all!" He glanced from her to Clytie quickly; did Mollie know all, or was she partly in ignorance, as he was? "I mean that I know there is some reason for the secrecy. And I think it's delightful. It's like a scene in a novel or a play. But don't you think it's setting me a bad example?"

They turned back into the wood again; and Jack gave them some details of his plans for the morning. Clytie listened in silence, her face averted; but Mollie broke in every now and again with little exclamations of admiration of his cleverness and resource.

"It is all delightfully easy," she said. "Clytie and I go up to Lodno to-morrow, to do a day's shopping—what more natural? We meet you at St. Luke's at twelve o'clock; there will be a nice clergyman, a short but significant service, and then—and then we

come home to the cottage to a wedding-breakfast of—mutton cutlets and mashed potatoes. Oh, it is better than any play I ever saw! Have you had any dinner, Jack? Never mind if you have, I'm going to get you some supper. Don't be long."

She ran in and left them alone; but though they were alone, Jack felt no nearer to Clytie. She seemed lost in thought, and so aloof from him that he could make none of the lover's approaches; but presently, as Mollie called them from the veranda, Clytie raised her eyes to his.

"I want to say how much I feel your goodness to me," she said painfully. "You have kept your promise; you will still keep it. I know how strange, how—how unreasonable what I am doing must seem to you, but you will be patient, will wait—will forgive?" "That is right," he said. "I will be patient, I will wait; and, as I said, there is no question of forgiveness. My feeling in the matter is all summed up in this—I love you; and my only wonder is that you should deign to give yourself to me, to make me so happy."

He determined to throw off the constraint that seemed to hold him in a kind of bondage, and he was bright and light-hearted at the little meal which Mollie had caused to be set for them; and, be sure, Mollie helped him. Her spirits seemed overrunning, and even Clytie could not refuse her tribute of smiles and gentle laughter to Mollie's characteristic sallies of wit. Clytie refused the prayer in his eyes that she would come out to say good night; and he had to say it in the room, with Mollie looking on, for Clytie detained her under some pretence.

After he had gone, the two girls sat up late talking. They slept together; that is Mollie slept until she was awakened by a sudden cry from Clytie. She was sitting up in bed, with her arms outstretched, as if to ward off some threatened peril, and her face was drawn by terror. Mollie soothed her, and at last Clytie fell asleep.

Long before twelve o'clock on the following day, Jack was pacing up and down outside St. Luke's. As he had said, the tiny church stood in a little street, comparatively unfrequented, like an island in the sea of the city. Even at that moment he did not realize that he was going to marry Clytie Bramley; and he was oppressed by a vague dread that at this, the eleventh hour, she would draw back; but even as his face blanched and he asked himself what he should do if his dread proved accurate, a four-wheeled cab drew up at the door, and Clytie and Mollie got out. He hurried to them.

Of the two, Mollie seemed the more excited and nervous; Clytie seemed quite calm; her face was pale, but she met his eyes steadily and did not tremble; and when he murmured, "Dearest, thank God you have come!" her lips relaxed for a moment and she smiled; but there was a sadness in the smile that struck a chill to him. They went into the church, and in a few minutes the clergyman appeared; the verger and the pew-opener were already there, and proceeded to marshal Jack into his proper place at the altar.

A gleam of sunlight filtered through the old stained glass of the window and fell upon the little group; the hum of the busy city streets around them came vaguely through the open door. The church was weirdly old and green and shabby, and the clergyman seemed as old and as remote as his church; his feeble voice rose quaveringly at the beginning of the sentences and died away at the end.

It all seemed to Jack a part and parcel of his dream; and he would not have been surprised if church and parson, the withered verger and pew-opener, Clytie—his bride!—and Mollie had suddenly disappeared, as if in a wreath of vapor. He started as the clergyman gave him Clytie's hand and signed to him to put on the ring; and he repeated the words he was told to speak as if he were an automaton. Even as he turned away from the altar, with Clytie on his arm, he felt like a somnambulist. They went into the vestry, and the old clergyman began to fill in the register and make out the certificates. They signed their names, and as Clytie took the pen and bent over the musty volume, Jack looked at her keenly, expectantly; but she evinced no surprise; uttered no exclamation, and seemed to write her name mechanically.

(To be continued.)

FORESIGHT.
Lady (who had purchased a ready-made dress): "Tiresome, this dress is. The fasteners come undone as quick as you do them up."

Cook (tacting lady's maid): "Yes'm they do. That's why I wouldn't have it myself when I tried it on at the shop the other day."—Punch.

A MOTHER'S TRIALS

Care of Home and Children Often Causes a Breakdown.

The woman at home deep in household duties and the cares of motherhood, needs occasional help to keep her in good health. The demands upon a mother's health are many and severe. Her own health trials and her children's welfare exact heavy tolls, while hurried meals, broken rest and much indoor living tend to weaken her constitution. No wonder that the woman at home if often indisposed through weakness, headaches, back-aches and nervousness. Too many women have grown to accept these visitations as a part of the lot of motherhood. But many and varied as her health troubles are, the cause is simple and the cure at hand. What well, it is the woman's good blood that keeps her health; when ill she must make her blood rich to renew her health. The nursing mother more than any other woman in the world needs rich blood and plenty of it. There is always one unfailing way to get this good blood so necessary to perfect health, and that is the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. These pills, make new blood abundantly, and through their use thousands of weak, ailing wives and mothers have been made bright, cheerful and strong. If you are ailing, easily tired, or depressed, it is a duty you owe yourself and your family to give Dr. Williams' Pink Pills a fair trial. What this medicine has done for others it will surely do for you.

Relic of Long-Past Age.

While cutting peat in the Leithen headwater area, the shepherds unearthed a horn, which may have belonged to Bos primigenus or Bos longifrons, the wild ox that roamed over Britain from the glacial age to near historic times. It was found at a depth of four feet from the surface, and the shepherds also averred that there was a small patch of brown hair attached, which is quite probable, as the peat would act as a preservative. —London Mail.

IDLE PITY GIVING WAY TO PRACTICAL EFFORT ON BEHALF OF CANADA'S SIX THOUSAND BLIND

You have doubtless been interested in what you have read or heard regarding the progress of a national effort on behalf of the blind of Canada. Do you realize just what this effort means?

Here are some of the things that are being done: Industrial training and employment is being provided for the blind in centres established in Halifax, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Useful handicrafts and the reading and writing of embossed characters are taught in the homes of those blind people who for various reasons are unable to take training at one of the regular centres.

Personal contact is established with recently-blinded persons, and with cases which are sometimes so old that they become new in a very real sense. This work is done by an experienced Field Agent. Books, magazines, and music in embossed types are circulated free to the blind of Canada. The monthly average circulation of books, etc., is close to eight hundred. The Institute also arranges for the transcription of music for any of its members at cost-price.

An active publicity propaganda dealing with various dangers to which the eye is subject is carried on, and this is followed up with personal work, looking to the larger co-operation of medical men and nurses, employers of labor, Boards of Education, etc., in the vital matter of preventing blindness.

A residence and training-centre, "Pearson Hall," has been provided where blind soldiers may find congenial conditions while taking vocational instruction. In this connection it may be interesting to know that the Institute has entered into an agreement with the Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment, under which the Institute has established an after care department for Canadian Soldiers blinded in the war.

There are other things, but they may all be summed up by saying that the Institute endeavors in every practical way to advance the interests of the blind and to ameliorate the conditions under which they live.

Will you aid in supplying the most vital need of this work?

Then mail your cheque to the CANADIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND, 36 King St. East, Toronto, Ont.

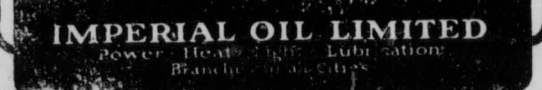


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