

[COPYRIGHT.]

The Dead Line.

By GIDEON LAINE, D. D.

CHAPTER XXXI.

(CONTINUED.)

The physician answered that John was not going to die right away; that he was getting along as well as could be expected, but that the excitement of a visit from his sister, though pleasurable, of course, might prove disastrous just then. However, he would speak with her again after visiting the patient.

But John had heard Kate's voice—had heard her anxious inquiry; and he was so much disturbed on her account that the physician concluded that if she would be discreet, less harm would come from admitting her than from keeping her away. So Kate saw her brother, and she behaved with such prudence, and her presence seemed to have such a soothing effect upon the patient, that she was allowed to remain in the capacity of nurse. Although envious of Kate's good fortune, this arrangement gave Lena the greatest satisfaction; and, having arranged for speedy news in case of any change for the worse, and promising to come again next day, she indicated her willingness to go home with her aunt for the night.

The next day, and the next, she came with Mason and Mrs. Delorme; and at the second visit was permitted to see John again. How ghastly the once strong man now looked! But his soul was vigorous still; and Lena would not have exchanged for all the wealth of earth the joy of that half hour in the visible presence of the man she loved. She was by his side; and in the enjoyment of that happy privilege she forgot all else—forgot even that he might die. When she left at last, cheered by the confidence that she would see her lover often now, she was in a gayer mood than she had known since the afternoon when she was expecting to surprise John at his coming.

But—had she foreseen!

"Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate."

Next morning Major Delorme and Manager Graham appeared at breakfast, and were introduced to Overton and his wife. Good breeding forbade explanation, inquiry, or surprise; and breakfast, usually a sullen meal, passed with the exchange of such commonplace as heavy-eyed people contrive to make their tongues work off mechanically, and which, on such occasions, pass for conversation. An hour later, chancing to enter the library for some purpose, Lena found her father there, scowling, and walking nervously back and forth across the room. She would have retired, but he turned toward her with the command:

"Come in, and close that door!" Then sneeringly asked: "Is your blacksmith dead yet, *Miss Chipperwell*?"

"To whom do you refer?" asked Lena. "I presume the individual has a name of some kind."

"Umph! Quite stiff this morning!" Lena said nothing, but took up a book.

"Oh, damn it! You know well enough who I mean—that fellow Cotterell."

"I do not know that fellow Cotterell. Who is he?"

Graham bit his lips.

"I suppose if I should say *Mr. Cotterell* your obtuse intellect would get a move on it!"

"Why, yes. I know *Mr. Cotterell*. He still lives, thank you, and is likely to continue to live, I trust."

"The devil he is! Well, I want you to stay away from him. You understand? If you go there again, disgracing yourself and the rest of us, I shall have you locked up in a lunatic asylum until you return to your senses. You know I am not given to making idle threats. Do you understand me?"

"Understand you? Yes. But 'there is no terror in your threats.' Now, I want you to understand me. I am of

legal age, and have the right to shape my own life without your dictation. My father's advice will always be listened to respectfully; but my father's commands have lost their authority. I know how to render impotent all compulsion on the part of my doting father. Are you not afraid you will spoil me, anyhow, by your too great indulgence? How affectionately kind! You first try to murder the man I love, and then propose to pet me still more by giving me a nice little lunatic asylum to play with. Really, you are too kind. I shall deem it my duty to prevent your extravagant gift of a home in an asylum."

"Prevent me? What do you mean? You do not know my power over you, my girl, notwithstanding your boasted legal independence. A simple nod from me, and you are locked up as insane. Do you hear?"

"Oh, yes. I understand your diabolical power well enough. Its latest exhibition is still fresh in my memory. But—you seem to forget that your boasted power stops at the grave. I suppose you have never read Epictetus? Well, he speaks of 'the open door' through which we can easily escape the most invincible tyranny. In either of several ways, not all of which you can close against me, I can at any time I choose leave this world, and defy your mighty power."

"Do you mean you would kill yourself?" asked he in horror, for the idea had not previously occurred to him.

"Yes. Make my life unendurable, and, pray, why should I live?"

"Lena, you are all I have left," said he, with much feeling; "and I seek nothing but your happiness. All the wealth in the world is nothing to me but for your sake."

"So far as my happiness is concerned, you are at this moment deliberately seeking to make me wretched; for what happiness can ever come to a woman torn from the only man she loves? Why are you so opposed to Mr. Cotterell? Is he not manly? Is he not noble? Is he not kind and good? You have not even deigned to inquire. Think of the man you have wished me to marry. Would you even tolerate his presence—endure his puerile society—were he poor? What is there lovable about him but his money? You would have me tie myself for life to an imbecile; yet you seek nothing but my happiness! Were Mr. Cotterell worth a hundred thousand dollars, you would urge me to marry him, although you knew nothing whatever of his character. If you are gathering wealth for me, rest from your labors. I do not desire wealth if it has to be retained by cruelty and murder, and if it is to make me shun the noble and the lovable because they are poor. Marriage is too sacred a union for a woman to enter unloving, much less to enter by purchase. There is something else in this world—money is not everything. There is character. In the past it has triumphed over wealth; and, I hope, it will again defy wealth and overcome it, even if it be by building barricades. Look history through. Who have been the world's great men? Who was Grant, whom you rich men so adore? Was Lincoln reared in luxury? There were rich men in Luther's time—name me one of them. Who were the millionaires of Greece in Plato's time? Who were the rich men who hated the penniless Christ? Men lowly born, or men who, born to wealth, have scorned their class and championed the cause of the people—these have been the great of earth whose names shine in history more and more. Twenty years hence, who will know who was general manager of your railroad in 1892? Who will know in a hundred years whether you were rich or poor in your day and generation? But even you are interested in every trivial anecdote of the pauper Goldsmith, who died poor and in debt more than a century ago. Posterity is not partial; it shows us what

we ought now to admire. It does not judge men by what they had, but by what they were, or by what they did. Born on such a day, died on such a day, embraces the entire biography of most of your rich and fashionable people; and posterity will not burden its memory with even these particulars. Between the preface and the conclusion there is nothing in the history of your lives worth reading. Between the cradle and the grave—a total blank! What a life to live! What justification you have for your pride that scorns a blacksmith who is a real man—who can think, and feel, and dare, and do!"

Such impetuous volubility was so strange in Lena, for Graham had never seen her aroused before, that her father was astonished, and could not rally to interrupt her. She ceased at last.

"Are you through now?" petulantly asked Graham, who was very red in the face, and furious inside.

"Not quite, but I pause for a reply," answered Lena.

"Well, then, hear my reply. You have been associating with these low people—these anarchists, who don't know what a bath is—till you are full of their outlandish notions. These people are influencing you. If you were away from them awhile the spell would be broken, and you would be yourself again. These confounded Rubles and Cotterells and the rest of them think you will have money, and they are after it. That's their scheme. But they'll get left. If you do not break with these folks and return to sanity, and stay away from the devilish, scheming crew, you are no daughter of mine. Never again. I shall leave my wealth to others who can appreciate it. And, hearken you! Unless you stay away from these infernal plotters, I shall not give you another dollar, even while I live; though you starve, and go in rags. You have the last cent you shall have from me, during life or after it."

"Well, now, that sounds strange," said Lena. "My happiness is your only study. You care nothing at all for wealth except for my sake. Yet you would see me starving and in rags and not give me a dollar. Really, your consistency is admirable!"

"Lena, do not be insolent!"

"Insolent?" I hope I am not insolent. I have my mother's disposition. Fortunately, I have not inherited my father's arrogance."

"Yes, and if your mother were alive, what would she say to your determination to throw yourself away on a blacksmith?"

"My mother is *alive*!" She has come to me in dreams, and she approves my course."

"Are you going to be a spiritualist crank, too?"

"Why, yes. Why be a crank at all, unless you can be a universal crank?"

"Lena, cease mocking me. I shall not endure it."

"Mocking you? Is it mocking you to say that my mother lives? Does it console you to suppose that she was mere clay; that so good and noble a soul was extinguished when the poor, racked body ceased to live? No; I love my mother. People tell me I am like her. There was—there *is*—sympathy between us, and her spirit speaks to mine. Yes, mother came to me in a dream last night, and she spoke to me of you; said she had just visited your pillow, and that she had urged you to do something for Mr. Cotterell, and to cease opposing me."

Graham was dumbfounded. He had dreamed of his dead wife the night before. However, he affected to treat the matter lightly.

"I guess she must have come when I was sound asleep. What did she say she wished me to do for your blacksmith?" he asked sneeringly. But he was troubled.

"She said she was trying to influence you to tender your private car to convey Mr. Cotterell to Cobden, so that he might go home and get well; and that she hoped you would do so yet."

"The devil I will! That ought to show you how ridiculous all this dreaming of yours is. The idea of my tendering my private car to a blacksmith discharged from the shops and late leader of a strike against my company. Preposterous! Quite a part I am to play in this farce of yours!" And he laughed a derisive, but not altogether a comfortable laugh.

"Will you, on your honor, deny you had just such a dream?"

Graham bit his lips, frowned, walked up and down the room hastily, and finally stopped and said:

"Lena, you will become insane by encouraging this Theosophy nonsense. Stop it, for God's sake, before it ruins you. It will wreck your mind."

"Then you will not need to put me into an asylum for nothing. But, will you here, in my mother's presence, deny you had such a dream?"

"In her presence!" What do you mean, Lena, you are already insane." But he turned pale, looked uneasily about him, and was extremely nervous.

"I mean that mother is there at your side. Her hand is on your shoulder now, and she is looking—oh, so sadly! at you, while she smiles on me."

Graham had been twisting about uneasily, glancing at his shoulder, and looking around with much anxiety.

"This is unendurable. You are making a fool of me. Stop such nonsense. You—yes, I did have such a dream. But what of it? What do dreams amount to? (He glanced nervously at his right shoulder upon which Lena's gaze seemed fixed.) Of course—oh, damn it! Well, I have an engagement and must go." And he bolted.

Early that afternoon Lena started for Ruble's, saying she wished to have a good visit with Kate, but when Mason and Mrs. Delorme drove out in the evening, they learned with dismay that she had not been there. Kate explained to John that the doctor did not wish Lena to see him till next day. Lena did not return to Mrs. Delorme's that night, and Graham was greatly excited. He went down town to set the police to searching, although he could just as well have telephoned the chief to come to the house. He drove out to Ruble's at a late hour to make anxious inquiries, and, generally, made such a stir that the morning paper was full of Lena Graham's "Mysterious Disappearance."

Besides Major Delorme, not a human being but the participants knew ought of that interview in the library, nor of the general manager's threat. But, next morning, Overton and his wife and Mason left the house and went to the hotel. Why, no one knew but Mrs. Delorme, who made such explanation as she could.

As the days passed and Lena came no more, John knew something was wrong, that something other than her own will was keeping her away. Finally, the doctor invented the fiction that she was ill—not dangerously ill, but so as to make it imprudent for her to leave the house. They had refrained from telling him till now, but he had better know the truth, and so on. John felt that this was a falsehood, and his skeptical look convinced the physician that his patient was "calling him a liar internally." But, so far from retarding his recovery, John's firm suspicion that "Graham's thugs" were responsible for Lena's disappearance, and his conviction that she needed his assistance, nerved him for a determined conflict with death; and his rapid improvement from that hour astonished his physician, who declared that, although he had said nothing about it before, it was marvelous that a man should recover from such a wound; that but one such recovery was recorded in all the previous annals of surgery.

John was soon able to be taken home, and he speedily got well, although, as Dr. Carlington kindly informed him, his days as a blacksmith were over.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY.

I count myself in nothing else so happy,
As in a soul remem'ring my good friends;
And, as my fortune ripens with thy love,
It shall be still thy true love's recompense.

—SHAKESPEARE.

Overton purchased a large farm not far from Sam Cotterell's, and having made some improvements, and having somewhat enlarged and modernized the house and furnished it, in July he went there with his wife and son to live. The crops planted by the former owner had to be looked after, and Mason became a sun-browned farm hand and reveled in his new life. A part of the house had been reserved for him, embracing a study and some other rooms—more than a single man could possibly need. He had decided to take to literature and lecturing, and he had found that his mind was in wonder-