

# BEYOND RECALL.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### I FIND MYSELF A MAN OF MEANS.

My innocence had been proved to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State; but it took him three weeks to make up his mind before my discharge was sent down. In that interval I was treated as a first-class criminal, and my hair allowed to grow. On the day I quitted Dartmoor a new suit of clothes was given to me, together with three pounds. A warden conducted me to Horrabridge, took a ticket for me, and waited to put me in the train. Discharged prisoners long separated from the world are like children. Some will hang about the same place for several days, unable to determine what to do with their freedom. That was not my case. For six years I had been meditating what I should do when the time came, and now, impatient to put my scheme in execution, the delay of a few minutes was more intolerable than the lingering months of uncertainty. The warden yawned; I was not an amusing charge. Suddenly struck with an idea which promised entertainment, he said—

"Come in here, old man, and I'll show you what you've not seen for eleven years." He led me into the little waiting room, and confronted me with a looking-glass that stood over the fire-place. My surprise was as great as when six or seven years before I had seen my face in a pan of water; the change was even greater.

I had lost flesh under the constant agitation I had suffered. My face was emaciated to the degree of one who has left the sick bed after a long illness; the bridge of my nose showed white through the skin; the nostrils were pinched and drawn down at the angles; my eyes were deep sunk; they were no longer blue—iris and pupil seemed merged in one—they looked black under the projecting brows, and had the quick, furtive movement of a hunted beast. There was nothing but cruelty in them, and every line of my face was seamed with hard, vindictive passion. What surprised me most was to find that my hair and short black beard were streaked with grey.

"No one would think me but a little over thirty," I muttered with satisfaction.

"Why, no; you look more like as if you were in the fifties; but look how you've been a-going it these six years. I wager people would take you to be more than me, and I'm eight-and-forty."

"Would they? That's good." "Well, you are a rum cove. I've seen old hands look in that glass and burst into tears to find they're old men; but most of 'em had some one hanging on to them as they were hopeful of pleasing again."

"I haven't."

"No, and worse luck for you," he said, shaking his head.

I lingered before the glass, trying to catch my profile, noticing my look when I spoke; infatuated with my own appearance; delighted with the change in every feature. No young fellow going to see his sweetheart could flatter himself more.

"Come along; here's the train you were so anxious about just now. There's your ticket; take care of it. And now I'll say good-bye to you; but I shan't be surprised if I see you again before long."

With this he hurried me into a compartment and shut the door. The train filled up at Exeter. Every one looked at me. No one spoke. That was significant.

A discharged convict is always to be known by the assertive newness of everything he has upon him, and generally by a look of helplessness. On a long journey these peculiarities are sure to be observed, and then charitable or inquisitive people seek to engage him in conversation. I knew that my expression was forbidding, and it lost nothing by the irritable movement of my long limbs and gaunt frame.

I pushed past my fellow-passengers to the door, and was the first on the platform as the train ran in to Waterloo. It was half-past two. I jumped into the first disengaged cab I came to, and gave the driver Mr. Renshaw's address in Westminster.

The clerk in the outer office looked me up and down suspiciously when I asked to see his master.

"What is your business?" he asked.

"Private business."

"What's your name?"

While I hesitated whether to give my real name or another, the door of the inner office opened, and Mr. Renshaw himself appeared. I knew him at the first glance, though he too, had altered since I saw him first.

"I want to speak to you privately, Mr. Renshaw," I said.

"About what?" he asked, looking at his watch, and then at me, with about the same amount of interest.

"About Christopher Wyndham."

"Oh, certainly. Come in here," he said at once, in an altered tone. I followed him into his room, where he turned a chair for me, and seated himself on the opposite side of the table. "I hope you have come to tell me some good news of that poor fellow."

"Do you know me?" I asked.

He looked at me intently, and, shaking his head, said "No," interrogatively.

"You don't remember to have seen me before?"

"Not to my knowledge," he said, after another penetrating look.

"My name is Wyndham," I said. He started in his chair.

"Not Wyndham, the—"

"Yes, Wyndham the convict." He was still incredulous. Knitting his brows, he murmured—

"Impossible. I have a clear recollection of a young man certainly not more than thirty, thick set with a heavy, thoughtful face."

gised for doubting my identity. Yet even his apology was made in a tone that showed the doubt yet lingered in his mind.

"You have received a pardon," he said, with an effort, to change his idea.

"Pardon! I am set at liberty because there is no longer any excuse for keeping me in slavery."

I told him what I had learned from the governor and the warden. A nobleman's house in Scotland had been broken into and his steward shot. One of the burglars was taken. To save his own neck he gave information that led to the apprehension of his accomplice. At the trial he accused him of other crimes—off and on they had worked together for nearly twenty years—and amongst them of having shot a policeman at Ham in 1877, for which I was tried and convicted. His account of the burglary, of his escape by the garden wall, his meeting with me, our going through the fog together up the hills towards the park, and there hearing the shot fired that killed Sanders all so exactly tallied with my statement and the defence made at my trial, that it was no longer possible to consider me guilty.

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Renshaw. "I have seen nothing about it in the papers."

"Do you read the Scotch papers?" I asked.

"Ah, I overlooked that. A Scotch trial would scarcely be noticed in the London papers, and I see none but them. Just now there are horrors enough in our own country and in Ireland to occupy them. The Home Office is not likely to publish such a terrible miscarriage of justice. It seems almost a sarcasm to congratulate you," he added, after regarding me in silence for a minute. "Yet without this accident, Heaven knows how much longer you might have suffered! I wish my dear friend were here to see you at liberty. I may tell you that your chaplain was convinced of your innocence from the very first, and against the advice of the governor petitioned the Home Secretary in your behalf not a month before he was killed. His representations no doubt helped to obtain a speedy recognition of your claim to release and compensation."

In a few savage words I told him I had been kept waiting three weeks for my discharge, and the amount of compensation that had been given me. He was shocked.

"When your case is made known—" he began.

"But it must not be made known," I said interrupting him. "I have made myself known to you because it was necessary; it is just as necessary that I should not be known to any one else. Can I depend on you to say no more about me than if I had let you know nothing?"

"Certainly. Your manner led me to suppose that you sought redress for your injuries otherwise—"

"What do you know of my injuries?"

"Nothing beyond what I have learnt from you."

"You have eyes. Look at me and say if the injuries you see stamped on my face are to be redressed by public sympathy—if I got it by whining. If my wrongs are to be avenged I shall find surer means than that."

"Let me beg you as a friend, to proceed with prudence and moderation," he said, earnestly.

"Moderation! You couldn't ask more if you were my enemy."

He shifted uneasily in his chair.

"Well, Mr. Wyndham," he said, "let me know what I can do for you."

"Tell me if anything is coming to me from my inventions."

"Ah! that is a more cheerful subject to talk about. I am happy to tell you that your engine is a success. It has stood the test of time, and its merits are recognized. A thing of that kind takes time to work. However, we have rounded the corner now; orders are coming in; we are turning them out with increased rapidity; and the supply only just keeps abreast with the demand. The lamp has been a paying concern from the start, and the sales have gone steadily up year after year. If you would like to come with me into the works and see the practical working of your ideas—"

"No, I don't want to see them. I only wish to know what money I am to receive for them."

"I cannot tell you exactly without looking in the books; but, roughly speaking, the amount due to you—by the way, you are aware that I have paid nothing out on your account—failing to receive any instruction from you as to the person whom—"

"I know. I promised to send you the name and address of that person, and I didn't."

"I have written to you several times on the subject, but for some reason my letters were returned. And our friend the chaplain being no more—"

"Never mind about that. Tell me what the amount is roughly."

"I think I may say that there is about six or seven thousand pounds to your credit in the books."

"That's enough!" cried I, rising in exultation. "That's enough!"

"Enough at any rate to keep you in easy circumstances while a still greater sum is accumulating."

"Easy circumstances!" It was not that prospect which excited me. I thought only of the means this sum of money afforded for carrying out my scheme of vengeance.

"When can I have some money?" I asked.

"I can let you have a sum for your present requirements now."

"Do. Give me twenty pounds."

Mr. Renshaw bowed, and taking a cash-box from the safe said—

"We had better make an appointment for an early date—say this day week, if it suits you—to meet here and settle up. At the same time we may come to some arrangement with regard to the future. That will give you time to consult with your friends, and engage a solicitor if you think proper. Shall we say this day week—two o'clock, here?" he asked, handing me the notes.

"Yes," said I; and without a word of thanks or farewell I left him.

He must have thought that misfortune had robbed me of reason as well as youth; perhaps he was not far out from the truth.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### FURTHER EVIDENCE AGAINST MY WIFE.

There was method in my madness though.

My plans were clearly mapped out. In the train I had settled how much might be accomplished in the first day. One object was attained; I had money to supply my needs. The beginning augured well. I had succeeded beyond my expectations. Whoever before heard tell of a man going into prison penniless and coming out a rich man?

The next thing was to see Mr. Northcote. It was important to learn first of all whether the change in my looks would deceive one who knew me well; and, secondly, whether my wife still lived at Sevenoaks.

My feverish impatience made me prefer going to the Great Eastern on foot rather than by a cab; I felt I could do the distance quicker. I turned out of the Westminster Bridge Road down the Lower Marsh. Before I had gone a hundred yards I felt my knees trembling and a qualm in my stomach; that reminded me that I had eaten nothing since five o'clock in the morning. A savory whiff of steam came out from a cookshop. I turned in there, and, seating myself in one of the boxes, waited in dull expectancy wondering at the same time if I should find the old vicar still alive. When a girl put a bill of fare before me and asked what I would eat, I stared at her in stupid wonder. It was the first time for eleven years that my taste had been consulted.

That meal did more than anything else to bring me to a sense of my new position.

"I shall be suspected at once if I don't behave like an ordinary man," thought I.

Impressed with this new necessity, I forced myself to say "thank you" when the girl brought me change, and afterwards recollecting that it was customary to give a gratuity to the attendant, I called her back and gave her some coppers. I should not have felt more abashed in kissing the hand of a princess; but I was very well satisfied with myself.

It was half-past eight when I reached Feltenham; but, despite the hour, I resolved to go to the Vicarage. What else could I do? Sleep was out of the question, and an indescribable dread, like that one might feel on looking on the face of a dead brother last seen in health and happiness, forbade me to revisit my old home and the scenes identified with the sweetest hopes of existence.

A buxom young woman came to the gate when I rang. She told me that Mr. Northcote was at supper.

"Never mind; I'll wait," said I. "He wouldn't like me to go away if he knew what I have come about."

While she was hesitating whether to shut me outside the gate or let me wait inside, an old woman came down from the porch.

"Surely that must be Jane," thought I, recognizing her by some undecipherable signs. She was a hale woman of fifty-two, and looking less, when I last saw her; now, she was a bent toothless old woman of sixty-three, and looked older.

"A man wants to see master, mother," said the girl.

"Mother," said I to myself, with a still greater shock; "why, then, this young woman must be little Lucy whom I used to carry on my back."

"The vicar has just rung the bell to clear away; you can ask if he is disengaged," said the old woman.

She stayed with me by the gate while her daughter ran into the house; disguising the caution with which she guarded the entry by a few civil remarks about the length of the days, the fineness of the weather, and the prospect of a good hay crop.

"Yes," said I, "the days will begin to draw in soon; and then speaking as clearly as I could, and with as much of my old manner as I could assume, I added a distich that I had heard again and again from her in bygone days:

"A lover's vows and a nightingale's song,  
And the days of June are just as long."

"Ay, ay," said she, with a chuckle, and looking hard at me; "that's what they sing in my country. I warrant you come from Somerset."

"Not far away from there," said I, grimly, thinking of the miserable moor in Devonshire.

"Well, spite of the fading light, I thought by your looks you must be a Westcountryman."

I had passed that test satisfactorily. The vicar came down the path from the house; a little whiter, a little stouter, a little less firm on his feet; that was all the change six years had wrought on him.

"Well, my friend, do you wish to speak to me?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; I want to ask you a question in private, if it is not too late. It is a young man you were very kind to at one time—Kit Wyndham."

"Oh, certainly. Come with me. Send the lamp into my study, if you please, Jane."

He led the way across the lawn, and we entered the room by the open French windows.

We sat down face to face in the twilight. There was not a sign of recognition in his manner.

"You know he has a wife," I began.

"Perhaps you have seen her and see some likeness in me."

"No, I have never seen his wife—to my knowledge," he replied.

"The secret has not come out, then," thought I. It must be easy to her to cheat the world after eleven years of duplicity.

"May I ask you are?" said Mr. Northcote, as I did not break the silence.

"Yes, I am her brother. Do you want to know my name?"

"No, no," he replied, hastily. "I would rather not know; the poor fellow wished it to remain a secret. Still, I should be glad to learn that his wife is well; that she wants for nothing." I was silent, fearing to betray myself. I had, as it were, to feel my way along this new path. "Do not hesitate to speak openly on that point," he continued; "if I can render any assistance of a pecuniary kind—"

"Oh, there is no need of that. She is well enough provided for. But she's anxious to know something about her husband, and as she can get no answer to her letters, and is not allowed to see him, she thought you might let us know about his welfare."

"Unfortunately," he said, "I am in exactly the same position. All my efforts to communicate with the unhappy young man have been of no avail. All that I can tell you is that he is still at Dartmoor and in good health. I have made it a rule to apply for information to the authorities every three months."

"When did you apply last?" I asked.

"Only the week before last. I will write again if—"

"No; there is no necessity for that. My sister can write now; it never occurred to us to enquire that way. She has written to

him, and the letters have come back, with a note stating that Kit is under punishment, and not allowed to write or receive letters. So we knew he must be alive, but we couldn't make out why he was always under punishment."

Lucy brought in the lamp, and I rose as if to go. The vicar begged me to sit down, and I purposely took a chair close by the table that the light might fall on my face.

"Now," thought I, "if I am to be known by any one I shall be recognized by this old man, who has known me from a boy, and is prepared for a change by the alteration that astonished him five years ago."

Holding my hat in my hand, I looked steadily at the lamp before me like one absorbed in independent reflections. Suddenly I turned round; the vicar's eyes were upon my face; the only expression on his face was embarrassed pity.

"I wish with all my heart I could be of service to your sister and her poor husband," he said.

"We won't think of him any more, sir. It's no use." Then after dandling my hat a moment in silence, I said, "You know that my sister was in service—in Mr. Thane's house. My sister was much attached to Miss Hebe, but she hasn't dared to go and see her. You can understand that she wouldn't like to be known as the wife of a convict. She told me to ask you if you had heard lately from her 'young lady,' as she calls her."

"Yes, I heard quite lately. I have the letter here in my pocket." While he was turning over a handful of letters to find that from my wife, he continued: "She knows, I suppose that her late mistress is married."

"Married?" I said, feigning astonishment as well as I could.

"Oh, dear, yes. She had been married—why, let me see." He paused, holding his head on one side. "Ah, it must be ten years. And I daresay your poor sister will remember her present husband, Major Cleveden."

"I think I have heard her speak of him," I replied, trying to keep my feelings under restraint; and then, with still deeper hypocrisy, I said, "The couple are well and happy, I hope, sir."

They seem to be perfectly happy, I am pleased to say; but with regard to health, Mrs. Cleveden leaves something for us to desire. They have had to give up a very beautiful home they had in Kent, where I had the pleasure of seeing them once, and spend the winter months in Italy."

"Are they in Italy now?"

"No; they returned the week before last, and are now at—here is the letter." He laid down the letter. The sight of the well-known and once-beloved hand writing seemed to burn my strained eyes. Having put on his spectacles, the old gentleman proceeded to open the letter.

"I may without indiscretion, I believe, give you her address, in case your sister might wish to write to Mrs. Cleveden. Here it is. 'The Hermitage, Hadeleigh, near Torquay, Devonshire.' Would you like me to write it down for you?"

"No, I shall remember it." There was no fear of that!

"I think she mentions your unhappy brother-in-law's name somewhere. In old days when she lived here, she was very fond of seeing his work—now, where is the line?"

I could have told him where to look for it: in a postscript. The letter was written to know if I were still in safe keeping, and her anxiety was masked under the indifferent aspect of an afterthought.

"Ah, here it is," said the vicar. "P. S. Have you heard anything lately of poor Wyndham?" look my friend."

I pushed back the letter as if it were a venomous thing.

"I can't read," I said, hoarsely. "You say she is not well?" I added, gloating over the thought that terror of discovery made her life a torture.

"No, poor lady. I suppose it is the chest. When she is not in Italy, she stops, as you see, somewhere in the south of England. A terrible complaint, and the more distressing when there is a young family growing up about her."

This was a fresh blow. It had never entered my mind that she could have children. It was too monstrous to imagine that she should perpetrate her infamy. The vicar was running his eyes affectionately over the page before him—giving me now and then a scrap from it, about the climate of Italy, or such trifles—or he must have seen the new hate and loathing that convulsed my features. With an effort I conquered my passion, and forced myself to speak calmly.

"She has children?"

"Yes, two; a girl and a boy; one not more than two years old."

As he spoke he closed the letter. "Quite a young woman, too; not more than eight-and-twenty," he said, sadly. Then he closed his eyes as he disengaged his spectacles.

I turned my back on the lamp while he was thus occupied, for I felt the muscles of my face twitching, as if a knife were cutting into my flesh inch by inch. I tried to reason myself into indifference, seeing the danger of betraying what I felt.

Why had it not occurred to me before that my wife might have children, I asked myself, and why should I be so moved in discovering it now? Did she not stand convicted of even greater crime than this? Was there still some lingering folly, some unextinguished spark of that old love in me that this fresh fact about her should cause such a tumult in my breast? What difference could it make to me whether she was childless or a mother? Nay, did it not rather enlarge my scheme of vengeance and facilitate its accomplishment? Let her have as many children as Niobe, and by just as many should her sufferings be multiplied. Supposing that the maternal instinct survived all finer feelings—supposing that she had a common mother's clinging to her brood—might I not strike at her through them? If one by one they are taken from her, those children, until she stands at last desolate and alone, as I stand now!—I meditated.

The vicar called me back to myself by asking if I had anywhere to go for the night.

"Yes, sir," said I, collecting my thoughts. "It's about time I went. I was thinking if I had forgotten anything. She'll be glad to hear all the news. I suppose you answered that letter, and said you had inquired lately about Wyndham?"

He replied that he had.

"That is well," thought I, as I went away; "now there are not likely to be any inquiries made at the prison about me for

three months. Three months! Oh, I shall be revenged before then!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## WHEN WIVES WERE SOLD.

### The Custom in England Recorded up to a Few Years Ago.

In 1877 a wife was sold for £40, and what is more remarkable the articles of sale were drawn up and signed at a solicitor's office, the money paid, and the chattel handed over with all the gravity of law.

In the course of a county court case at Sheffield in May, 1881, a man named Moore stated that he was living with the wife of one of his friends, and that he had purchased her for a quart of beer. This transaction was brought under the notice of the Government by Mr. A. M. Sullivan, who requested the Home Secretary to take measures for preventing such reprehensible transactions. This had no effect evidently, for since that time many sales have been recorded.

During the hearing of a school board case in the course of 1881, at Ripon, a woman informed the bench that she had been bought for 25s., and had assumed the name of the purchaser.

At Alfreton, in 1882, a husband sold his rib for a glass of beer in a public house, and the rib gladly deserted her legal lord. One cannot expect a wife for less than two-pence halfpenny.

Two years after this a bricklayer at Pashoime Green, Yorkshire, sold his wife for 1s. 6d., a "legal" document being drawn up to make the bargain binding on all sides.

In the Globe of May 6, 1887, there appeared an account of a well-to-do weaver, at Burnley, who was charged with having deserted his wife and three children. He admitted the soft impeachment at once, but urged that, inasmuch as he had sold the whole family to another man before the alleged desertion, he be acquitted of all responsibility for their maintenance. It was nothing to him whether their purchaser provided for their wants; the law had better see to that. For himself he had duly received three half-pence, the amount of the purchase money, and there his interest in the affair began and ended.

During 1889 a paragraph went the round of the papers to the effect that a man connected with a religious body in a village in the midland counties had disposed of his wife for the small sum of one shilling.

## Railroading in Judea.

It is now two weeks since the Jaffa and Jerusalem railway was inaugurated amid great rejoicings, and the popular excitement has not yet ceased. Public sentiment is now in favor of the new enterprise, and no one dare make objection to it, although while the road was being constructed there were croakers and head shakers and critical tongues in abundance. This modest fifty-three miles of railway has probably awakened more interest throughout the civilized world than any other half hundred miles of railway that was ever built. Enthusiasts look upon it as a kind of "kingdom come" for Palestine, while the matter-of-fact class say "it is a most comfortable and convenient method of getting to Jaffa and back."

But people in more favored countries cannot appreciate what a railroad means to the people of this land, backward as they are in all that pertains to civilization. Tens of thousands of men, women and children have within a few days past for the first time in their lives seen a railroad, a train of cars and an "iron horse." They do not quite understand the significance of a time table, and come perhaps half an hour after the train has started, expecting to find it waiting at the station; and to my certain knowledge persons who have expected friends from Jaffa by the afternoon train have gone to the station two hours before the time and waited for it, thinking it might arrive at any moment. Still further, they have not yet learned the necessity of getting off the track, and only yesterday a poor camel and his driver lost their lives because the locomotive was too quick for them. But men and beasts of burden and everything else will no doubt soon adjust themselves to the new order of things.

Many persons have made the trip to Jaffa and return "just to see how it seems," and they come back delighted as children at the strange experience of riding in cars which run on iron rails. Others make use of the road because it is such an improvement over the old, clumsy, heavy, lumbering vehicles called "carriages," which until now carried both rich and poor between the seaport and the capital. This journey, always memorable for the bumping and bouncing which the poor traveler received on the imperfectly built road, occupied the best part of a day in good weather and sixteen or more hours in bad weather, while by the new conveyance three and a quarter hours are required, with neither fatigue nor dust. Half an hour longer must be allowed for the return from Jaffa, for there is some rather heavy grading in the mountains of Judea, which at two or more points is as great as one hundred feet to the mile. [Jerusalem Letter, New York Mail.]

## Bringing the English Channel.

The question of constructing a bridge between England and France instead of, or in addition to, a tunnel may for the present, thinks the President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, be dismissed. The possibility, however, of the realization in the more or less distant future of such a structure is probably, he says, not more visionary than would have been that of such a work as the Forth Bridge fifty years ago; and "who knows whether a future generation may not undertake a work which the present generation would regard as too gigantic, both as regards risk and cost?—especially I may emphasize cost, for notwithstanding the strides made in bridge building, the cost of a Channel bridge between England and France would even now probably be at least five times the cost of a submarine tunnel."

## How to Increase the Circulation.

"I wish I could strike some plan by which I could double my circulation," remarked the editor of a small monthly.

"There are several ways by which that can be accomplished," replied a friend.

"Name them."

"Well, get married. Then two hearts will beat as one, and consequently you'll have doubled your circulation."

Sixty thousand people in the Emerald Isle speak Irish only.