

BEYOND RECALL.

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CHAPTER XXV.

I SEE MY WIFE.

When I left the parsonage the moon was rising over the coppice of birch before me; a spray crossed it, and a few delicate leaves hung motionless against the bright disk in the still air. A few steps further on I became conscious of the sharp, honeyed scent of sweet briar. Then from the lilac bush at the bottom of the Vicarage garden a nightingale purled out the first sad, long-drawn notes of his song. My heart sank aching within me at this appeal to my senses. All fierce visions of a pitiless revenge died away, giving place to an ineffable feeling of loss and regret. I stopped, wondering what it was that bested me. Then I recollected that it was at this very spot, by the stile on which my hand lay trembling with the return of a long-lost emotion, that Hebe and I had stood on the first night she stole from the house to meet me—when the moon shone, and the nightingale sang, and the sweet-briar gave out its perfume exactly the same as now.

Why did I suffer this memory to shake me thus? Was this the mood in which to carry out my vengeance? At this rate my heart would melt and my resolution go before one supplicating look from her faithless, treacherous eyes. The sound of a sob, the sight of her tears, would turn me from my purpose. I must think only of her falsehood. She was lying when she whispered "I love you." It was a piece of acting when she clung to me as if it were impossible to part. It was love of herself, not of me, that lay at the bottom of that false heart. She was wearied to death of the monotonous life in the Vicarage, irritated by its restrictions. She looked, with the foolish old parson, that a great future was before me, that I should obtain fame and fortune in London by my genius. She desired a place in that greater world in which I was going—saw in my future freedom for herself, and the gratification of her caprices. She feared to lose me—feared that I should forget her, and give another the place she desired.

That was why she consented to a clandestine marriage, and fell in with all the artifice to accomplish it that was suggested to me. Could I, without her ready acquiescence, have proposed a thing that then seemed presumptuous to me? That it was for her own material advantage, and not from disinterested love, she had taken that step, there was proof enough. With what readiness had she accepted her father's proposal to live with him and her sister in London; how quickly had she thrown off her simple habits and modest dress to play the role of a woman in society, and adopt her extravagance! From the very first she was a hypocrite and a liar. If I had not been a greenhorn—a simple fool—I should have known that she was deceiving me by the consummate art with which she deceived her guardian.

With these reflections I hardened my heart again, so that the nightingale's song made no more impression on it than the crunching of the gravel under my heel. I was ashamed of my feebleness, and recollecting the nameless dread with which I had avoided passing by the places that were once dear to me, I now turned my steps that way, visiting one after the other all the spots with which my memories of the past were associated—stopping at every one to recollect what had happened there between Hebe and me, and finding in each fresh evidence of her heartless selfishness and double dealing.

"Now I am a man again!" I said to myself as I turned without a pang from the window through which I had looked into my old workshop, marking the very spot where I stood when she first came to see my work. I might have said, "Now I am a fiend!" for surely no fiend ever harbored a more infernal hatred than burnt in my breast.

I walked along the London Road until I could go no further, and then I threw myself down under the lee of a hayrick and slept like a log.

At the roadside inn where I stopped the next morning to eat, an old road map of England hung against the wall of the parlor. "For Key" was marked upon it, and to the west of the road running from Exeter to Dartmouth Haven lay a blank space, across which was written, "Here is ye forest of Dartmoor." The position of Tavistock and Chefford showed me whereabouts Princetown lay—not more than twenty miles from Torquay as the crow flies, I reckoned. This suggested a new scheme to my mind that presented advantages above any I had yet formed for the punishment of my wife. The originality of the idea flattered my inventive spirit; the severity of the retribution gratified the craving of my vindictive passion. At the very first I should strike terror into the heart of the woman; the suffering to be inflicted afterwards could be prolonged to the very limit of human endurance, and finally she could be cast off with a burden of shame that she must bear to the end of her life.

"That will do," thought I, cheerfully. "It can't fail if I go about it cautiously, and do the thing thoroughly. To begin with, I must go to Torquay and examine the ground." And with that resolution I started off with long strides for the nearest railway station.

It was late in the afternoon when I reached Torquay. There was a crowd of well-dressed people on the platform. I saw nothing distinctly but the women's faces—expecting in each to recognise my wife's features. My furtive glances and wild look attracted attention. I felt that every one observed me; and hurrying out of the station I took refuge in the first eating-house I came to. I was not afraid that my wife would know me, but I had reasons for wishing not to be seen by her yet awhile.

"Do you know a place called the Hermitage?" I asked, when I was paying the woman for my tea.

She shook her head as she counted the coppers, and then turning round to an old man, who sat at a table on the other side of the shop, she said—

"Do you know where the Hermitage is, Mr. Brown?"

"The Hermitage—why that's Captain Stukely's place up at Hadeligh. There's another military gent got it now. Him that drives that little 'Victoria' with the two brown cobs: the old gentleman with the white moustache, and generally got two

ladies with him—you know; one's his wife."

"What, her with the pretty hair and that dear little boy?"

The old man nodded and finished his tea; then putting down his cup he told me that I had only to go straight up the hill till I came to a house standing in a garden overlooking the bay—a house all corners and red brick—and that was the Hermitage.

"Hermitage!" added he, with a recollective smile. "They do find some rum names for these new houses, to be sure; what with their Belvideres and their Mounpelières, and one thing and another! Precious queer hermitage where there's always three or four servants kept, and visitors coming and going every day."

"What is a hermitage?" asked the woman, leaning against the wall, and slowly counting the coppers from one hand into the other and back again.

"A hermitage," replied the man, clearly flattered by this appeal to his knowledge—"a hermitage is a kind of a hole where a man lives all alone by himself."

"What, like that Mr. Meaders, the artist, up there on the moor?"

"Just that; only hermits are generally pious; and I don't think Mr. Meaders was that, the way I heard him go on one day when the wind blew his umbrella up in the air one way and carried off his picture another. But a hermit lives like what he did: all alone by himself, where no one ever goes, doing his cooking and house-keeping, and all without any female."

"And a pretty mess he made of it, I'll be bound. Why, what can a man do without a woman?"

"Well, he ain't much woff than what a woman is without a man. Look at Mrs. Bates; you can't say but what she's gone and made a pretty mess of it along of this very Meaders."

"I don't see what that's got to do with it," retorted the woman, sharply, resenting the sarcastic tone in which her own words were used against herself.

The man pushed his cup away impatiently.

"She wouldn't have got into no mess if she hadn't been a widder," said he. "Why, look here," he continued, addressing me, "I'll put it to you, as a man, whether she'd have made a fool of herself if she'd had a husband to think about and look after her. I know all about it, for she's my wife's sister-in-law, though we don't speak. Mrs. Bates lives up here in Cross Street, and keeps a little milk shop. She's got a nice house of furniture, and lets apartments. Well, three years next September this Meaders comes and takes her first floor as a single gent and an artist; and a pretty artist he was—no offence to you I hope."

"Why should I be offended?" I asked.

"I didn't know but what you might be in the same line yourself; you've got a singler look like what most artists has. However, there's some good and some bad, same as with other trades, so you won't take my remarks personal. Well, this Meaders he stayed there six months, taking his draughts of the sea and smoking his pipe as comfortable as could be. Then people began to talk, thinking as he certainly meant stopping on there for good with Mrs. Bates. Whether he heard this, or whether he found Mrs. Bates was getting a little too warm for him, I can't say; but this I do know, that in the spring he made out as he'd draughted all there was to draught about Torquay, and he must go away where he could draught something fresh. Well, what does this foolish woman do then, thinking she was going to lose him for ever, but she takes and builds him a little cot house in the middle of the moor, where he reckoned to make a fortune draughting the tors and the streams. There he lived, smoking his pipe and painting his pictures, more comfortable than ever, where no Mrs. Bates nor any one else was likely to bother him from one year's end to the next. He kept a pony and I'm hanged if he didn't actually ride over to Newton for his baccy and whisky instead of coming here for it! Mrs. Bates she stood it and stood it as long as she could, and when, what with one rub and another, she couldn't stand it any longer, she took out a summons against him for two years' rent and extras. He didn't take any notice of that. So she had to go to more expense and get another summons; and he didn't take any notice of that. At last she got an execution warrant; but, bless you, when they went to execute him, all they could find of him or his property was the rag he'd used to wipe up his mess of paints. And now there's that poor woman left with a cot house on her hands which no one in the world is likely to see, let alone rent, and a bill as no one in the world is likely to pay, and all through her not having a husband to keep her from making a fool of herself."

Leaving the shop, I turned in the direction the man had indicated by a jerk of his thumb, and found Cross Street, and a dairy with the name of Bates over the door. The widow was knitting behind the counter, "I am told that you have a house to let on the moor," I said.

"Ay, that I have," she replied, laying down her knitting. "And a nice little cottage it is: neatly finished, with linen and every thing necessary for a party who might like a nice quiet place out of the noise of the town. I could let it by the month or the season, if you wanted it for the shooting, now."

I told her I was an artist. She took up her knitting with a regretful shake of the head.

"I'm afraid it wouldn't suit you," she said. "I couldn't let it without references."

"If it suited me I should want to buy it—cash down."

"Bless you, sir, I wouldn't have said a word about references if I'd known you were an artist of that sort. As for the cottage, it's sure to please you. My last tenant was an artist, and he lived there best part of three years, and wouldn't have gone then if circumstances hadn't obliged him."

"When can I see the place?"

"To-morrow if you like, sir. Are you staying here?"

"No at Newton."

"Why, then I could meet you there. A train goes in about half-past ten, and I have a friend who would lend me his cart to drive over the moor, and his little boy to show the way; for though I've been there more

than once, I wouldn't undertake to find my way to it."

I promised to be on the platform at Newton the next day when the train came in, and left her.

And now I set out for the Hermitage to find my wife, the palms of my hands wet and cold, my teeth chattering with the agitation of my mind, just as the feverish expectation of meeting her had affected me in the old days when we were lovers.

The light was fading. There were but few people in the road. After passing the last row of villas no one was in sight. Coming to the top of the hill, I caught sight of the Hermitage below, a house of modern-antique kind, all angles and red brick, as the man had described it. It looked pretty enough in the twilight, with the trees about it, the sloping meadow beyond, and the patch of blue sea seen through the cleft of the valley; but how was it to be approached? It looked difficult at that distance, standing back a couple of hundred yards from the road; yet, I did not doubt even then that I should be enabled to see my wife. Accidents had favored me already, and revived the belief in predestination which had exercised such powerful influence over me before. With a sort of blind confidence I descended the hill, and passed a gate with an avenue beyond, which clearly led to the house. A little further on I stopped instinctively before a gate. There was just light enough to read on the top bar, "Private road to the beach." That was the way I had to take.

Noiselessly I opened the gate and slipped through into the road. On the left was a row of fir trees; on the right a shrubbery marking the Hermitage grounds; the road lay in deep shadow. I walked along with my eyes on the shrubbery, believing that somewhere there must be a way for the inhabitants of the house to go down to the sea. Presently I found a gate with an opening through the shrubbery, as I expected. The gate was locked. I climbed over, and followed the path in still deeper shade, until I came to a lawn, and saw the house right before me.

There was now just light enough to distinguish the form of the house and its position. The fall of the ground, the narrow space between the shrubbery and the building showed me that I faced the side of the house. There was no light in any of the windows; no sign of living creature there. But as I stood looking about me, like one who fails to find something that has been promised, I heard a muffled sound of voices, and the sharper clink of glass. Creeping down by the edge of the shrubbery I reached a point that lined with the front of the house. Light came from the rooms there. I saw it reflected on a table with glass and a couple of garden chairs stood beside it on the turf terrace. The night was hot and close. "They are at supper in there," I argued; "the windows must open to the ground for the light to strike the grass like that." The sounds of the supper table were more distinct. I started suddenly as if I had been struck in the face, hearing a light laugh that I knew was Hebe's.

The lawn followed the natural sweep of the hill, but a terrace had been raised to form a level walk round the house. Its outer edge stood breast high above the lawn. Bending down I passed quickly across the open strip of lawn, and then skirting the terrace I came round to the front of the house. A flower bed ran along the foot of the terrace; creeping plants were trained over the wall and up the open iron work above. I knew when I was opposite the window by the light on the foliage.

With my hat drawn down over my brows I slowly raised myself from a crouching posture, until my eyes were above the level of the terrace. My wife was there, seated at the head of the table, in the room not more than eight or nine yards from me. Not for an instant did I doubt her identity. At that distance, in the soft light that fell upon her, I could see no change in her face. She was as I left her. "She can have neither heat nor conscience," I said to myself.

There were others at the table. I heard their voices, but I did not see them. My eyes were riveted on her.

She sat with a listening attitude. I fancied there was a smile on her face. She spoke, but in too low a tone for me to catch the words; yet the sound of her voice was as familiar to my ear as though the years that had separated us were no more than hours. Presently I heard a man's voice say "Here's the boy come to say 'good-night.'" Then my wife's face lit up as she raised her head and looked across the room.

A maid came to her side carrying a child in her arms. Pushing back her chair, my wife held out her hands and took the child on her lap. He knelt there and clasped her about the neck, laying his cheek beside hers. She held him in her arms pressed to her bosom, rocking from side to side playfully for a minute, and then gave him up to the nurse.

"Say 'good-night, mamma!'" said the maid, in a clear high voice that reached my ear distinctly.

The child was silent, looking round the table, and then hiding his face on the maid's shoulder. She spoke to him again, using the same words. The child replied without lifting his head. The words were inaudible, but they drew a peal of laughter from those who heard it. Clear above the sound of mingled merriment my wife's light laugh rang out. It was to me like the last maddening blow of the knout.

"Laugh well! laugh well!" I muttered, grinding my heel into the plants under my feet. "You will not laugh long!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

PREPARATIONS.

"There, that's the little cottage, sir," said Mrs. Bates, as we jolted slowly over the rugged moor.

Looking round I saw nothing but the undulating moor, the scrubby growth interspersed with blocks of granite, with here and there pools of water connected by a thin stream.

"Down there by the water against that fine pile of stones," she added.

Thus directed I made out the hut. Built of granite and roofed with grey slates it was hardly distinguishable from the rocks that sheltered it. I nodded.

"For an artist who is fond of Nature," she pursued, "there's a plenty here to satisfy him."

I looked about me again, with another nod. It was desolate and wild enough to suit even my requirements. We seemed to be at the bottom of an immense basin edged with tors that touched the sky. There was not a tree to break the monotonous sweep of

moorland. For best part of three hours we had been jolting painfully along a rugged track, that the woman might well have doubted her ability to follow, without seeing a sign of human being.

"This is the garden," said Mrs. Bates, as the cart drew up before a ragged patch of ground overgrown with weeds and surrounded with a rough stone wall. "The last tenant was not partial to gardening, and he let it go a bit wild."

I liked the look of that neglected patch. It was in harmony with its surroundings, and abandonment that characterized the house. But I said nothing. I had not opened my lips from the time we got upon the moor. My thoughts were elsewhere, misery had long ago dulled my sense of humor, or I might have found matter for amusement in studying my companion.

The poor woman had started with at least an appearance of hope. She had done her best to draw me out of my sombre mood by cheerful comments on the weather and the few objects of interest that presented themselves by the wayside. Little by little her courage flagged under the discouraging influence of my silence, until at last she sank into a state of dejection from which she could only arouse herself at intervals by effort. The failure of this last attempt to propitiate me in favor of her property seemed to exhaust her resources, and with a heavy sigh she got slowly down from the cart. In silence she unlocked and pushed open the door.

"Shall I take down the window shutters?" she asked in a tone of despondency.

"No," I answered. "There is light enough to see all I want."

"Well, you said you wanted solitude," she remonstrated.

"What does that step ladder lead to?"

"The bedroom; it's just the same size as this. Do you want to go up?"

"No."

"I didn't say it was a villa residence, did I?"

"Round at the back. There's an oven as well. You don't want to see them, I suppose?"

"No."

"Well, it's my loss as well as yours coming here; only I've got to pay the cart extra, not to mention my return ticket from Torquay."

"How much do you want for the place?"

She looked at me to see if I were joking, and finding me as gloomy as ever she replied, in a tone of desperation—

"Well, to be rid of it—there, if I wouldn't take a hundred pounds—furniture, linen, every blessed thing!"

"Will you take ten pounds now and the rest in a week's time?" I asked, producing one of the notes I had received from Mr. Renshaw.

"That I will," cried she, eagerly.

"Why, if I didn't think the moor had frightened you off at the very first. But there! There's no knowing how to judge you gentlemen artists."

She rambled on for some time, and then proposed that we should go back to Newton, where she would write out a receipt for my money.

"You can send a receipt next week when you get the rest of the money. Now I am here I shall stay. I want to begin work at once."

Strange work it was I was so eager to begin!

When the cart with Mrs. Bates and the baker who had brought us were gone, I made a closer examination of my property. There was a shed and a stable at the back of the house. In the shed were a meat safe a filter, some deal planks, a bench, and a box of tools. A ladder in the stable led up into a loft, where I found hay, straw, and half a sack of oats.

I went into the house. There was one room below and another above. The room below had one long window facing the north, closed with outside shutters like a shop front, and hung inside with a green curtain; the walls were lime washed, daubed here and there with smudges of paint where the artist had cleaned his palette knife. On one side was a kitchen, with cooking utensils hung against a board above; on the other was a sink, with a rack of plates above it, and a dresser and shelves filled with crockery and kitchen things. A cupboard in a corner contained other domestic requisites. These things, with a table and four chairs, comprised the furniture of what had evidently served the purpose of a studio, a kitchen, a dining and a living room.

The room above had also served as a studio. The north slope of the roof was glazed to admit the light. There was no other window.

Beside the smears of the palette knife were numerous sketches roughly done in charcoal on the wall. There were a chest of drawers, two filled with linen, and the usual furniture of a bedroom. In one corner stood a broken easel and a big shrimping net. What use could the net be to him on the moor twenty miles from the sea, I wondered? But the mystery was explained when I caught sight of a rough sketch of a fisherman and his wife coming over a bleak stretch of moorland with a glimpse of sea beyond. "If he had the net here for his model, he must have had the costumes," thought I, looking around the room. There was a corner cupboard similar to that below. I opened it, and amongst old baskets and a lot of rubbish I found one of those non-descript suits of oilcloth and rags which shrimpers wear, a frayed skirt and jacket, and a tarpanlin suit that possibly had served the artist's own use for painting out of doors in rough weather. I stood looking at these things with half shut eyes—as the artist himself might have looked at them in planning how they should be employed to realize a preconceived idea.

Then I turned about to examine the opening in the floor through which one descended by the step ladder to the room below. It closed with a trap that opened upwards, and rested against a hand rail; there was a bolt on the top to secure it when in its place. The top of the step ladder was screwed to a joist.

"If the bolt were set underneath the trap and the screws taken out of the ladder to make it removable, this room would be perfect," said I. "No one could get out except by breaking through the skylight and dropping from the roof. I'll set about that at once."

I fetched the tool box from the shed, and taking off my coat set to work. My hands were clumsy at first, not having touched a tool for eleven years; but my heart was in

the job, and in a quarter of an hour the alterations were made.

"There; that's something done!" said I, as I drew away the step ladder and looked up at the close-bolted trap-door.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

New Atlantic Passenger Steamer.

The question of transatlantic passenger traffic is assuming greater importance from year to year, with the rapidly-increasing travel from America to England. Although the great steamship companies have tried to meet the demand by putting on larger and faster steamers, the rates are not reduced, and many are prevented from taking the trip by the comparatively high cost of travel. A new design for an Atlantic passenger steamer would, if carried out, enable many to cross the ocean who have been waiting for the establishment of cheap fares. The proposition is to construct a system of nine hulls of special model, connected in three trains of three hulls each, the central train being the principal parts of the craft, and extending 225 feet forward and 200 feet abaft of the other two trains, the whole forming an outline similar to that of an ordinary ship. The total length would be 1440 feet, breadth over three trains 142 feet, to outside of floats, 180 feet. The displacement of the centre train would be 15,000 tons; of the outer trains, each, 5250 tons; total displacement, about 26,000 tons. The propelling power would consist of seven engines—three in the centre train, 10,000 horse-power each; two in the forward sections of outer trains, 4000 each, and two in stern sections, 6000 each. This would give a total of 50,000 horse-power, driving seven pairs of paddle-wheels of 52 and 56 feet diameter, 6 and 8 feet wide, and having a dip of 8 feet. The steamer would carry no cargo, and would require no ballast, so that the entire tonnage capacity would be available for engines and fuel. The ship would be intended for only first and second-class passengers, and would have accommodation for 2000 of each. It is estimated that 5000 tons of steel would be used in the construction of the connectors and in the strengthening of the parts of the sections where the greatest strain would occur. The hulls would be entirely of steel. It is thought that a steamer of this design could be built sufficiently strong to withstand a much greater strain than she would encounter in the waves of the Atlantic. One of the most important advantages that her special construction would give would be immunity from the horrors of seasickness. There would be scarcely any rolling motion, and the vertical motion would be confined chiefly to the forward ends of the forward sections and would diminish toward the stern, where it would be hardly perceptible in the roughest sea. The proposed steamer would not only carry 4000 passengers, but would give a greater amount of cubic space for each passenger than the present steamers, and, as it would carry no freight, it would remain a shorter time in port. It is estimated that such a ship could carry first-class passengers at \$5 a day and second class passengers at a corresponding reduction on the usual rates. The scheme looks very imposing on paper, but it is a question whether such a system will be carried out in the nineteenth century.

CAMPING IN THE FOREST.

What the Traveler in Guiana Hears in the Still Night.

The bats are settling themselves in the hollow trees or under dense masses of creepers, making mouse-like chirpings as they hang themselves up in their places. Here and there a lumbering moth, looking out for a safe retreat until evening, is fluttering lazily along before retiring to rest. The owl and goat-sucker shrink before the light, and also hurry off to their hiding places, making room for the brilliant families of day birds which are calling and chirping from the treetops. The weird voice of the howling monkey now horrifies the stranger, filling him with wonder and recalling stories of banshees and ghosts retiring at cock-crow. Then a flock of parrots or macaws is heard screaming far overhead, their glorious plumage flashing in the morning rays in metallic tints of golden yellow, green, and crimson.

The din would be almost unbearable were the birds near at hand; but, as they rarely fly or perch low, their voices are mellowed by distance. Congregating on the boughs of the highest trees—far beyond the reach of the Indian's gun or blow-pipe—they take their morning meal of fruits and nuts, chattering away like a lot of rooks in a clump of old elms.

Here and there a toucan makes his presence known by yelping like a puppy. Looking up you see the rich colors on his breast, and wonder why his beak is so large and apparently ungainly. From the recesses of the forest comes the ring of the campanner, sharp and clear as a bell struck at moderately long intervals. Other birds utter their characteristic notes, most of these being quaint and curious rather than musical. The birds of the tropics are brilliant in their plumage, but are almost wanting in melody, there being nothing at all resembling the chorus which makes the English woods so delightful on a summer's morning.

The Couch in a Cozy Room.

A room without a couch of some sort is only half furnished. Life is full of ups and downs, and all that saves the sanity of the mentally jaded and physically exhausted fortune fighter is the periodical good cry and the momentary loss of consciousness on the upstairs lounge, or the old sofa in the sitting room. There are times when so many of the things that distract us could be straightened out, and the way made clear if one only had a long, comfortable couch on whose soft bosom he could throw himself, boots and brains, stretch his weary frame, unmindful of tidies and tapestry, close his tired eyes, relax the tension of his muscles, and give his harassed mind a chance. Ten minutes of this soothing narcotic, when the head throbs, the soul yearns for endless, dreamless rest, would make the vision clear, the nerves steady, the heart light, and the star of hope shine again.

There is not a doubt that the longing to die is mistaken for the need of a nap. Instead of the immortality of the soul business men and working women want regular and systematic doses of dozing—and after a money bank in the shade of an old oak that succeeding seasons have converted into a tenement of song birds, there is nothing that can approach a big sofa, or a low long couch placed in the corner where tired nature can turn her face to the wall and sleep and doze away the gloom.