

The Convict's Daughter.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

At the same moment, Randal seized his first opportunity of speaking. He addressed himself gently to his sister-in-law. She refused to hear him. The indignation which Mrs. Presty had roused in her made no allowances, and was blind to all sense of right.

"Don't trouble yourself to account for your silence," she said, most unjustly. "You were listening to my mother without a word of remonstrance when I came into the room. You are concerned in this vile slander, too."

She dropped in a chair. If there was any one thought in her mind at that moment, it was the thought of her husband. She was eager to see him; she longed to say to him: "My love, I don't believe a word of it!" He was not in the garden when she had returned for the parcel; and Sydney was not in the garden. Wondering what had become of her father and her governess, Kitty had asked the nurse maid to look for them. Mrs. Linley sent for the nurse maid. She felt the strongest reluctance, when the girl appeared, to approach the very inquiries which she was interested in making.

"Have you found Mr. Linley?" she said—with an effort.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Where did you find him?"

"In the shrubbery."

"Did your master say anything?"

"I slipped away, ma'am, before he saw me."

"Why?"

"Miss Westerfield was in the shrubbery with my master. I might have been mistaken—"

"The girl paused and looked confused."

Mrs. Linley tried to tell her to go on. The words were in her mind; but the capacity for giving expression to them failed her. She impatiently made a sign. The sign was understood. The servant withdrew.

Mrs. Linley snatched up a newspaper, and fixed her eyes on it in the hope of fixing her mind on it. Obstinate, desperately, she read without knowing what she was reading. The lines of print were beginning to mingle and grow dim when she was startled by the sudden opening of the door. She looked round.

Her husband entered the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

Linley advanced a few steps—and stopped. His wife, hurrying eagerly to meet him, checked herself. It might have been distrust, or it might have been unreasoning fear—she hesitated on the point of approaching him.

"I have something to say, Catherine, which I am afraid will distress you."

His voice faltered, his eyes rested on her—then looked away again. He said no more.

A fit of trembling seized her. Linley stepped forward, in the fear that she might fall. She instantly controlled herself and signed to him to keep back.

"Don't touch me!" she said. "You come from Miss Westerfield!"

That reproach roused him.

"I own that I come from Miss Westerfield," he answered. "She addresses a request to you, through me."

"I refuse to grant it."

"No!"

"Hear it first—"

"Hear it—in your own interest. Will you permit her to leave the house, never to return again? While she is still innocent—"

His wife eyed him with a look of unutterable contempt. He submitted to it, but not in silence.

"A man doesn't lie, Catherine, who makes such a confession as I am making now. Miss Westerfield offers the one atonement in her power, while she is still innocent of having wronged you—except in thought."

"Is that all?" Mrs. Linley asked.

"It rests with you," he replied, "to say if there is any other sacrifice of herself which will be more acceptable to you."

"Let me understand first what the sacrifice means. Does she make any conditions?"

"She has positively forbidden me to make conditions."

"And goes out into the world, helpless and friendless?"

"Yes."

Even under the terrible trial that wrung her, the nobility of the woman's nature spoke in the next words.

"Give me time to think of what you have said," she pleaded. "I have led a happy life; I am not used to suffer as I am suffering now." In the minute that followed, her changing color revealed a struggle with herself.

"Miss Westerfield is innocent of having wronged me, except in thought," Mrs. Linley resumed. "She might have deceived me—she has not deceived me. I owe it to her to remember that. She shall go, but not helpless, and not friendless. Oh, my husband, has she taken your love from me?"

"Judge for yourself, Catherine, if there is no proof of my love for you in what I have resisted, and no remembrance of all that I owe to you in what I have confessed."

She ventured a little nearer to him.

"Can I believe you?"

"Put me to the test."

She instantly took him at his word.

"When Miss Westerfield has left us, promise not to see her again."

"I promise."

"And not even to write to her."

"I promise."

She went back to the writing table. "My heart is easier," she said, simply. "I can be merciful to her now."

After writing a few lines, she rose, and handed the paper to him. He looked up from it in surprise. "Addressed to Mrs. MacEdwin!" he said.

"Addressed," she answered, "to the only person I know who feels a true interest in her. Have you not heard of it?"

"I remember," he said—and read the lines that followed:

"I recommend Miss Westerfield as a teacher of young children, having had ample proof of her capacity, industry and good temper, while she has been governess to my child. She leaves her situation in

my service, under circumstances which testify to her sense of duty and her sense of gratitude."

The last, worst trial remained to be undergone; she faced it resolutely. "Tell Miss Westerfield that I wish to see her."

On the point of leaving the room, Herbert was called back. "If you happen to meet with my mother," his wife added, "will you ask her to come to me?"

Mrs. Presty knew her daughter's nature; Mrs. Presty had been waiting near at hand, in expectation of the message which she now received.

Tenderly and respectfully, Mrs. Linley addressed herself to her mother. "When we last met, I thought you spoke rashly and cruelly. I know now that there was truth—some truth, let me say—in what you said to me at the time. If you felt strongly, it was for my sake. I wish to beg your pardon; I was hasty, I was wrong."

The words had barely fallen from her lips, before Herbert returned. He was followed by Sydney Westerfield.

The governess stopped in the middle of the room. Her head sank on her breast; her quick, convulsive breathing was audible in the silence. Mrs. Linley advanced to the place in which Sydney stood. There was something divine in her beauty as she looked compassionately at the shrinking girl, and held out her hand.

Sydney fell on her knees. In silence, Mrs. Linley raised her—looked the writing which testified to her character from the table—and presented it. Linley looked at his wife, looked at the governess. He waited—and still neither the one nor the other uttered a word. It was more than he could endure. He addressed himself to Sydney first.

"Try to thank Mrs. Linley," he said.

She answered faintly: "I can't speak!"

He appealed to his wife next. "Say a last kind word to her," he pleaded.

She made an effort—a vain effort to obey him. A gesture of despair answered for her as Sydney had answered: "I can't speak."

True, nobly true, to the Christian virtue that forgives, those three persons stood together on the brink of separation, and forced their frail humanity to suffer and submit.

In mercy to the women Linley summoned the courage to part them. He turned to his wife first:

"I may say, Catherine, that she has your good wishes for happier days to come?"

Mrs. Linley pressed his hand. At that last moment the child ran into the room, in search of her mother. There was a low murmur of horror at the sight of her. That innocent heart, they had all hoped, might have been spared the misery of the parting scene!

She saw that Sydney had her hat and cloak on. "You're dressed to go out," she said. Sydney turned away to hide her face. It was too late; Kitty had seen the tears. "Oh, my darling, you're not going away!" She looked at her father and mother. "Is she going away?" They were afraid to answer her. With all her little strength, she clasped her beloved friend and play-fellow round the waist.

"My own dear, you're not going to leave me!" The dumb misery in Sydney's face struck Linley with horror. He placed Kitty in her mother's arms. The child's piteous cry, "Oh, don't let her go! don't let her go!" followed the governess as she suffered her martyrdom, and went out. Linley's heart ached; he watched her until she was lost to view. "Gone!" he murmured to himself—"gone forever!"

Mrs. Presty heard him, and answered him: "She'll come back again!"

CHAPTER XIV.

As the year advanced the servants at Mount Morven remarked that the weeks seemed to follow each other more slowly than usual. If the question had been asked in past days: Who is the brightest and happiest member of the family? everybody would have said, Kitty. If the question had been asked at the present time, differences of opinion might have suggested different answers, but the whole household would have refrained without hesitation from mentioning the child's name. Since Sydney Westerfield's departure Kitty had never held up her head.

Then typhoid fever set in. The doctor spoke privately to Mr. Linley. The child's debilitated condition—that lowered state of the vital power which he had observed when Kitty's case was first submitted to him—placed a terrible obstacle in the way of successful resistance to the advances of the disease.

"Say nothing to Mrs. Linley just yet. There is no absolute danger so far, unless delirium sets in."

On the next evening but one the fatal symptom showed itself. There was nothing violent in the delirium. Unconscious of past events in the family life, the poor child supposed that her governess was lying in the house as usual. She piteously wondered why Sydney remained down stairs in the school room. "Oh, don't keep her away from me! I want Syd! I want Syd!" That was her one cry. When exhaustion silenced her, they hoped that the sad delusion was at an end. No! As the slow fire of the fever flared again, the same words were on the child's lips, the same fond hope was in her sinking heart.

The doctor led Mrs. Linley out of the room. "Is this the governess?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Is she within easy reach?"

"She is employed in the family of a friend of ours, living nine miles away from us."

"Send for her instantly!"

Mrs. Linley looked at him with a wildly mingled expression of hope and fear. She was not thinking of herself—she was not even thinking, for that one moment, of the child. What would her husband say, if she, who had extorted his promise never to see the governess again, brought Sydney Westerfield back to the house?

Two hours later, pale, worn, haggard with anxiety, Sydney Westerfield entered the room and looked once more on the faces which she had resigned herself

never to see again. She appeared to be hardly conscious of the kind reception which did its best to set her at her ease.

"Am I in time?" were the first words that escaped her on entering the room. Reassured by the answer, she turned back to the door, eager to hurry upstairs to Kitty's bedside.

Mrs. Linley's gentle hand detained her. The doctor had left certain instructions warning the mother to guard against any accident that might remind Kitty of the day on which Sydney had left her. At the time of that bitter parting, the child had seen her governess in the same walking dress which she wore now. Mrs. Linley removed the hat and cloak, and laid them on a chair.

"There is one other precaution which we must observe," she said; "I must ask you to wait in my room until I find that you may show yourself safely. Now come with me."

Mrs. Presty followed them and begged earnestly for leave to wait the result of the momentous experiment at the door of Kitty's bedroom. Randal opened the door for them as the three went out together. He was in a state of maddening anxiety about his poor little niece. Then he shut shut himself into the drawing room, but had barely succeeded in composing himself when a servant appeared with something to say to him.

"I don't know whether I have done right, sir," Malcolm began. "There's a stranger down stairs, among the tourists who are looking at the rooms and the pictures. He said he knew you. And he asked if you were not related to the gentleman who allowed travelers to see his interesting old house."

"Well, sir, I said yes. And then he wanted to know if you happened to be here at the present time."

Randal cut the man's story short. "And you said yes again, and he gave you his card. Let me look at it."

Malcolm produced the card, and instantly received instructions to show the gentleman up. The name recalled a gentleman he had met while in London at a dinner at the London Club—Captain Benydeck.

Randal's first words of welcome relieved the captain of certain modest doubts of his reception, which appeared to trouble him when he entered the room. "I am glad to find you remember me as kindly as I remember you." Those were his first words when he and Randal shook hands.

That put the captain at his ease, and the two men were soon chatting pleasantly together. In the course of his remarks Captain Benydeck said:

"I have been in search of a poor girl who has lost both her parents; she has, I fear, been left helpless at the mercy of the world. Her father was an old friend of mine—once an officer in the navy, like myself. My last letters suggest a hope of tracing her. There is reason to believe that she is, or has been, employed as a pupil teacher at a school in the suburbs of London; and I am going back to try if I can follow the clue myself. Good-by, my friend—let us hope to meet again. When you are in London, you will always hear of me at the club."

Heartily reciprocating his good wishes, Randal attended Captain Benydeck to the door. On the way back to the drawing room he found his mind dwelling, rather to his surprise, on the captain's contemplated search for the lost girl.

Was the good man likely to find her? It seemed useless enough to inquire—and yet Randal asked himself the question. Her father had been described as an officer in the navy. Well, and what did that matter? Inclined to laugh at his own idle curiosity, he was suddenly struck by a new idea. What had his brother told him of Miss Westerfield? She was the daughter of an officer in the navy; she had been pupil teacher at a school. Was it really possible that Sydney Westerfield could be the person whom Captain Benydeck was attempting to trace? Randal threw up the window which overlooked the drive in front of the house. Too late! The carriage which had brought the captain to Mount Morven was no longer in sight.

The other course that he could take was to mention Captain Benydeck's name to Sydney, and be guided by the result.

The drawing room had not been empty more than a few minutes when the door on the right was suddenly opened. Herbert Linley entered, with hurried, uncertain steps.

He had ridden from the farm at head-long speed, terrified by the unexplained delay in the arrival of a messenger from home. Unable any longer to suffer the torment of unrelieved suspense, he had returned to make inquiry at the house. As he interpreted the otherwise inexplicable neglect of his instructions, the last chance of saving the child's life had failed, and his wife had been afraid to tell him the dreadful truth.

How long he stood there, alone and irresolute, he never remembered when he thought of it in after days. All he knew was that there came a time when a sound in the drawing room attracted his attention. It was nothing more important than the opening of a door.

Some person had entered the room. He parted the curtains over the library entrance and looked through. The person was a woman. She stood with her back turned toward the library, lifting a cloak off a chair. As she shook the cloak out before putting it on, she changed her position. He saw the face, never to be forgotten by him to the last day of his life. He saw Sydney Westerfield.

(To be continued.)

Glad, Any-h-w.

"I beg your pardon, I thought this was Mr. Chucksley."

"I am Mr. Chucksley."

"Then I am glad to find that when I thought I was mistaken I was mistaken in thinking I was mistaken."

"Hey?"

"I say when I thought I was mistaken I was mistaken in thinking I was mistaken, and being mistaken in thinking I was mistaken when I wasn't mistaken, I was glad to find I was mistaken when I thought I was mistaken, because I wasn't mistaken—or, rather, I was mistaken when I thought I was mistaken, and so I couldn't have been mistaken—well, at any rate, I'm glad. Looks as if we were going to have some, doesn't it?"—Chicago Tribune.

The theorist is all right until it is time to make a practical demonstration.

Always look at your joys with a microscope, and at your sorrows with the wrong end of an opera glass.

TRUMPET CALLS.

Ram's Horn Sounds a Warning Note to the Unredeemed.

ROSE need no Polish is not purity. It is sometimes hard work to have faith. The loss by grinding is the gain of the axe. His sacrifice is the seed of our salvation.

There are no passports to heaven. He who slanders another smuts himself.

God's providence is proof of His presence.

The pigment of life is made in the heart.

A little assistance is worth a lot of advice.

To abide in God's love is to live in heaven.

The best praise of the sermon is its practice.

Gratitude doubles the gift and halves the debt.

Trials may be God's testimony to our strength.

He that aims at a reputed wolf may kill a lamb.

Bolling anger scalds nobody's fingers but our own.

The best graces of life come from the grace of God!

A man does not possess what he has but what he is.

Life's commonplaces fit us for its uncommon places.

Love is the only lever long enough to reach the heart.

The saddest thing in the world is sin without sorrow.

You cannot keep the Sabbath till you love and prize it.

He who persecutes the Christian pains the Christ.

There are no fruitless deeds; all bear either good or ill.

The spoils of avarice build the tomb of all the virtues.

It may take all time to determine the value of one seed.

Earthy church-going may end in heavenly church-being.

Much of the sting of life comes from our smart sayings.

The grave closes the gate of grief and opens that of glory.

It is not the truth so much as the Teacher who saves.

Goodness may win gold but gold will never win goodness.

You cannot build a house without spoiling a brickyard.

Most of us would rather watch others than work ourselves.

His glory surpasses the sun because He stooped to sinners.

God's songsters sing in the bare trees as well as in the green.

An interrogation point makes a fine hook for the devil's line.

A slippery character will not insure you against friction in life.

All agree that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive advice.

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