

## THE BEGINNING OF THE END;

AN ENGLISH TALE.

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## CHAPTER X.

"Now, Mrs. Hanson," said Mr. Mink, "please don't smile so pleasantly, or you will turn my head, I'm afraid. Look me in the face, if you please. Where do you reside?"

"In Mr. Brownly's house since I was sold out of my own."

"Is not Mr. Brownly an old sweetheart of yours? Come, don't blush."

"I think he was, sir."

"Don't think! Did he not want to marry you?"

"I object, your lordship," said Mr. Goodman. "As a witness, this woman is not obliged to criminate herself."

"But I want to show your lordship what kind of a woman she is. In our answer we say, 'She is not fit to be entrusted with the care and guardianship of the child.'"

"I am willing, my Lord, to answer any questions he may see fit to ask me," said Rose, proudly.

"I ask you," said Mr. Mink, "did not Mr. Brownly want to marry you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you refused him for a richer man, did you not?"

"Mr. Hanson was richer than Mr. Brownly, but—"

"Stop! That will do. Of course it was for love. We know that," said Mr. Mink. "You live in Mr. Brownly's house at present, I think you said?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is Mr. Brownly a married man?"

"No, sir."

"Then you live in the same house with your old sweetheart, and he a single man, do you?"

"His mother and grandma—"

"Stop! Not a word, madam! Answer my question—yes or no!"

"Yes, sir."

"You are a nice woman to apply for a divorce on the plea of the adultery of your husband! Did you see your husband after the birth of your child?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you ask him to look at the baby?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, did he do it?"

"No, sir."

"What did he say to you about the baby?"

"He said it was no relation of his. But he told me afterwards it was his child."

"Well, it was very good in him to let you think that you could pull the wool over his eyes. That will do, madam. Out of your own mouth I have convicted you. That will do."

"Call Mr. Brownly," said Mr. Goodman.

"Mr. Brownly, are you acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Hanson?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does Mrs. Hanson reside in your house?"

"Yes, sir. I offered her shelter when her household was broken up."

"Were you in London some seven years ago?"

"I was."

"Did you see Mr. Hanson at that time?"

"I did, sir."

"State where you saw him."

"In the Strand."

"State what he was doing."

"He was seated in an open carriage, with a fair-haired lady on his knee."

"In the public thoroughfare?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know who this lady was?"

"She was a fast woman."

"Did you ever see him again?"

"A few months ago in the village. I also saw him a few weeks ago in your office. At present, he is sitting beside Mr. Mink."

"Mr. Brownly, I am about to ask you another question. You are not obliged to answer it unless you see fit. Have your relations with Mrs. Hanson been of an improper nature?"

"No, sir. She is as pure a woman as ever breathed. I have known her from childhood."

"That will do. Take the witness."

"Now, Mr. Brownly, what was your occupation about seven years ago?" asked Mr. Mink.

"I was a drifter in the coal mines."

"You worked underground, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"How, then, did you happen to be in London at the time you stated in your direct examination?"

"I was sent for to give evidence before the shareholders."

"You stated that you saw Mr. Hanson with a lady in a carriage. How dare you say she was a fast woman? Who are you, to take away a lady's character, sir? Don't you know it is infamous to breathe even a stain upon a lady's reputation?"

"I was told so, sir, at the time."

"So you get up here and swear a woman's character away because some low villain 'told you so! Some one may tell me that about your sister or your mother, and I might swear their characters away."

"Will you suddenly to his feet."

"Take care, sir! Mind what you say! Take care, sir!"

"Order in the Court," said the Judge. "Don't let me have to caution you again."

"That will do," said the lawyer, taking his seat.

"Call Thomas Thorn," said Mr. Goodman.

"You are acquainted with the parties in this case, I believe, Mr. Thorn?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where do you reside?"

"I travel a great deal, but I live in London when in England."

"Did you ever see Mr. Hanson in London?"

"Yes, sir; about seven years ago. About the time, I think, that he was discharged from the overseership of the mines for misappropriating some eight or ten thousand pounds of his employers' money."

"What was he doing?"

"He was hugging and kissing a woman—a fast woman."

"That will do," said Mr. Goodman. "Take the witness."

"Now, Mr. Thorn—queer name, that—where did you see this hugging and kissing going on?" asked Mr. Mink.

"In a box in a theater."

"How do you know the woman was fast?"

"Oh, you be hanged!" said Tom.

"Come, sir," said the lawyer; "hang whatever else you choose, but don't hang my question. Answer."

"Oh, I'll answer; don't be afraid. I'll swear she is a fast woman. I know her and her three companions. Have held her on my knee lots of times. That's how I know; and I can bring twenty witnesses who saw me, if necessary."

"You are a nice witness to confess your misdemeanors in open court."

"Well," said Tom, "I'm not a married man, like your client."

"Are you and Mr. Hanson good friends?"

"No, sir; we are not."

"Do you not feel glad to see him in this position?"

"No, sir; I do not. I feel too sorry for his wife to be glad."

"Oh, how kind! Poor woman! Mr. Thorn, the libertine, and I don't know what else, is her friend! That will do, Mr. Thorn."

Turning to Phil, the lawyer said:

"It's going hard against you. We must lose if they bring this home any closer, if we have not lost already."

"Never mind the divorce," said Phil. "Get me the young one, and I'm satisfied. I'll pay you the money. Give her thunder in your plea."

Mr. Jackson was called.

"Mr. Jackson, do you know that man?" asked Mr. Goodman, pointing to Phil.

"Yes, sir; quite well. I have a ring on my finger that he gave me. I have not seen him for some years, but I know him. It's Mr. Hanson."

"What was your occupation between seven and eight years ago?"

"Waiter in the St. George at Richmond."

"Did you ever see this man there about that time?"

"Yes, sir. He came there with three other gentlemen and four women—fast women—and took rooms."

Further questions and answers, which are omitted here, brought the charge home to Phil Hanson.

"We rest," said Mr. Goodman.

Mr. Mink then called Mr. Stanley.

"What is your occupation or profession?"

"I am a minister of the Gospel, sir."

"Do you know this gentleman?" pointing to Phil.

"I am proud to say I do, sir."

"How long have you known him?"

"But a short time, sir."

"What is his reputation?"

"It is very good. I consider him a good man. He is a member of my church, and a good Christian."

"Do you know his wife, Mrs. Hanson?"

"I know her slightly."

"State how you came to get acquainted with her."

"I called to see her once to ask after the state of her soul, but did not stay long."

"Please state why you did not stay long."

"Her conversation shocked me, so I left."

"How—shocked you? State fully."

"I am sorry if I do the lady any injury, but I am bound to tell the truth, according to my oath. Her conversation shocked me because she told me she did not believe in God or hell or eternal torments."

"You are sure she told you this?"

"Yes, sir; quite sure."

"Judging from what she told you, do you consider her an infidel?"

"I do indeed, sir; and an Atheist."

"Take the witness."

"Mr. Stanley," said Mr. Goodman, "who requested you to see Mrs. Hanson?"

"Her husband. Mrs. Hanson, after he was converted, wished me to try and save his wife."

"Did he tell you that she was an infidel?"

"Yes, sir. And I am sorry to say it proved to be true."

"When was Mr. Hanson converted?"

"At one of my meetings. He has joined the church and is foremost in every good work."

"Did you not know he was a gambler?"

"Ah, sir, while the lamp holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return."

The lawyer sat down, filled with dismay.

"That will do," he said.

"One moment, Mr. Stanley," said Lawyer Mink.

"If you were called upon to state, upon your own

personal knowledge under oath, to the best of your knowledge and belief, which you considered Mrs. Hanson to be—a Christian or an infidel—what would be your answer?"

"That she is an infidel and an Atheist."

"That will do. Thank you."

In vain Mr. Goodman recalled his witnesses. It was proven that Mrs. Hanson was a good woman, kind, benevolent and chaste. But not one of the witnesses could say she was a religious woman, as she belonged to no church or religious organization. Rose herself was recalled, and told her story in a quiet manner—told of her struggle, of the state of her mind at the time of Mr. Stanley's visit, and sat down. Taking her child in her arms, she folded her to heart in an agony of fear.

"Now, your lordship, in my opening I shall not occupy much time," said Mr. Goodman. "The case is proven. The statute reads as follows: 'I claim we have proven what we set out to prove. Not one of our witnesses has been impeached, and your lordship is in duty bound to believe them and give a verdict for the plaintiff.'"

"My Lud," said Mr. Mink, "I don't think this charge has been proven. If it is true, why not have brought suit before this? Why allow this matter to rest for seven or eight long years, and then bring it before the Court? I will tell your lordship why. Her husband was on the continent, sick and feeble, trying to save his life for the sake of that woman more than anything else. She remained in the village with her friends, and near to her old sweetheart, and all went merry as a marriage bell. Suddenly her husband came home unannounced, and in the twinkling of an eye discovered how things had been going. In fact, kind friends had written him to look after his honor. In his just indignation, he ordered everything sold, and requested her to leave the place altogether and come with him. Yes, this client, knowing she was unfaithful to him, offered her a new home. Out of his great love for her, he overlooked everything, and was willing to take her to his heart again. But no; this did not suit my lady. She wished to stay there, to live with her old sweetheart, Mr. Will Brownly—her paramour, your lordship. This poor, unfortunate husband was in the way. She goes to my learned brother there, and no doubt with money—if not her husband's—furnished by her paramour, she secures this eminent counsel's services. The old, forgotten—long forgotten—acts of folly are revived—acts condoned long ago—that she might live a life of shame with Will Brownly. Her atheism, her unbelief in a punishment hereafter, makes her reckless. What cares she what acts she commits? There is no hereafter for her to fear, for she does not believe in one. There is no just, avenging God for her to fear, for she does not believe in God. And now she wants—mark her words, my Lud—the sole charge and custody of the child! That she may no doubt bring up that child to disbelieve in everything that tends to elevate the soul; to disbelieve in the principles that were laid down by our Lord and Master! To make that child an unbeliever—an Atheist! My Lud, it would be a disgrace to the land we live in to give that young child up to these influences. As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined. What have you proven against Mr. Hanson, my Lud? Suppose all these witnesses against him have been unprejudiced and have told only the truth. It relates only to what happened seven or eight years ago. If the law demands for an act of folly committed under the influence of drink that the woman shall be free to go her own way and bring shame upon her head, as she undoubtedly will, are you going to allow her to drag her child down with her? Every instinct in the human breast rises up in horror against it. As I said in my opening, we abide by the law. If this man is guilty, set the woman free. But do not give away the child from a Christian father into the hands of an Atheistic mother. I plead, your lordship, not for my client, but for the sake of that little one who will be contaminated—is contaminated now—by the kisses and embraces of that woman. Give it to the father, who has made arrangements with the Rev. Mr. Stanley, a Christian minister, to take it into his family and educate and raise it to become a Christian woman, if God spares its life; fit, in spite of the degradation of the mother, to become the loved and honored wife of a Christian man."

Mr. Goodman arose, quivering with emotion.

"My Lud," he cried, "give me your ear, and, as Shakespeare said, I will a tale unfold that will harrow up thy soul. A young girl was born in a village, her father was burned to death in a coal-pit, her mother died with a broken heart at his loss, and the child, adopted by an aged couple, fought want and poverty until within the last few years. That child is my client, my Lud. This man saw her and wooed and won her. Here is the picture taken but a short time before that event took place. Look at it, your lordship, and then at the poor scared face of the woman that sits there looking at you, the arbiter of her fate, of her all; looking at you with such a world of agony in her remaining eye that it unmans me to look at her. May the God I believe in—we believe in, my client and myself; for she does believe in God—give me power and words to plead her cause before you! How came this face disgraced?—The hand of that man sitting there professing to be a Christian did it. His hand descended upon that upturned face while she was pleading with him not to be left alone the night the child was born. That hand crushed out that

eye; and what was the business that was so urgent? He went, my Lud, with his boon companions to the St. George, at Richmond, as one witness testified—for this was the time as we have proven—and for days he left her alone. Then he came home and denied his own flesh and blood. She has not condoned this crime. She has not lived with him since. For what does he want the child, that he says is not his? He wants it to break that woman's heart; my Lud; to make her crawl at his feet and beg for a sight of the little one that she has suffered for. Then he would taunt her as only a fiend could taunt, and laugh her to scorn. What, give the child to that man, who has twice turned it out of doors! who has robbed the mother of all her hard-earned savings! who caused the death of his own father! who was only saved from a felon's cell by the poor old man paying back the money he had stolen from the company he was overseer for? A Christian gentleman, forsooth! A canting, lying hypocrite, my Lud! That man came to me to bribe me with two thousand pounds to prove this woman unchaste by perjured witnesses. Need I say what my answer was? Then, like a sneak, he professed religion to get that reverend gentleman to testify in his behalf at this trial. My God, is there no justice or mercy for this woman? Can a man by law rob his wife of her good name? rob her of her earnings? rob her of her child? Can he do this with impunity, only because she is married to him? What right has my learned brother to cast the mantle of shame upon her? What right has he to suppose she is unfaithful to that man? Oh, I know him, my Lud! A man that believes a woman is a something for the abuse of a man is a monster. I don't plead for the child. I plead for my client, who has toiled and suffered all through these years. To rob her of her child would be fiendish cruelty. Don't, your lordship, let it be said that a woman cannot get any justice in 'Merry England.' In yonder land across the water, millions of slaves have had their iron shackles taken off, and the only stain upon the Stars and Stripes has been washed out in blood. But I would rather live there with the stain still upon the flag; I would rather live there and hear the cries and groans of the enslaved as the heavy lash was laid on their naked backs, than stand here to-day and see that face and hear the cry of anguish that will well up from her mother heart if her child is taken from her. Rob her of her child, and when men ask me about my country, I'll hang my head and whisper its name with shame! But I will never give it up. I will use my earnest endeavors, so help me God! to free my country from slavery—to free the millions of wives and mothers who are slaves in this so-called land of the free, where the highest sovereign is a woman and the lowliest wife a chattel. You take from her everything she can earn—even the gifts of her friends—by law; and now, when a villain takes the cloak of religion and wraps it around him, you allow it to cover all his crimes; to have some pretext to still further crush a wretched woman, who said, in a moment of excitement, of anguish, that she did almost deny the existence of the Deity. My Lud, rob her of her child, and I am almost inclined to do the same myself. When I see a brute like that man plot against a woman to abuse and rob her, and the arm of the Almighty does not strike him dead, it almost time to doubt Him.

"This child is contaminated by its mother's kiss," says my learned brother. Oh, laugh if you please, Mr. Mink! It is a disgrace to manhood to make such an assertion. A mother do ought to contaminate her child! That mother contaminate her child that she has worked to support until the blood—the warm life-blood—has flowed from her finger ends, while that man was away acting the part of a blackleg, a gambler, not caring whether it lived or died! But as soon as he found she had used the energy and brain God had given her, and had acquired a little wealth, he came, armed with this monster unrighteousness, the Law, and took it all from her. And now, not yet content, he would take from her the child she alone has supported, whose face he has never looked upon except as a stranger, whose lips he has never pressed, whom he has never loved or cared for, just to wring her heart with anguish and have his unprovoked revenge.

"My Lud, I am nearly done. But let me plead a little longer for this poor mother. Remember your own childhood, your mother's love, her tears and prayers; and as you pass sentence, may her face rise even from the grave before you, and frown condemnation upon you if you would decide against her, or smile approval upon you if this poor mother's prayer is granted."

Tears choked the lawyer's utterance, and the Judge was much moved. There was silence for a short time, broken only by the sobs of the women. Then his lordship began to pass judgment.

[To be continued.]

AN ODD INSTITUTION.—A boarding-house at Floyd, Ind., is kept wholly for the accommodation of persons temporarily residing there for the purpose of obtaining divorces. It now has twenty-nine inmates. In several instances marriages have grown out of companionship in this house. A wedding was lately held an hour after the couple concerned had received the decrees legally separating them from their formal marital partners.

Belle Harris was eloping at Virginia, Ill. Her father overtook the couple, and the swim was about to give up his sweetheart without a struggle, when she coolly drew a pistol and told her parent she would shoot him if he interfered. The elopement proceeded.