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CHAPTER LXIV.
BACK FROM THE CAPE.

He was an endless source of interest and conjecture to his simple guardians. They sat and watched him under their eyebrows, and at odd moments puzzling their brains in endeavors to guess his thoughts, or weaving romances out of what little they knew of his history.

There was a romance, they were certain—a mystery and a romance—or why should the young gentleman maintain such secrecy, and why should this strong, good-natured hero have murmured strange names in his delirious sleep and called for Cecil?

They watched him about the docks, noted his great strength and the liberality with which he used it for any one's behalf. They admired, with respectful admiration, the graceful, power-denoting swing of his walk, and the careful, dignified pose of his attitude when at rest.

They remarked between themselves that no little child was without a word of greeting or a gentle kiss, and they saw that the most timid of little children would run to him, crowing with delight if he yielded out his long, lithe hands.

He was a mystery to them, but they dared not question him.

Once Mr. Wiley had ventured to hint that a recital of Mr. Laurence's adventures might prove interesting, but the quick glance of the clear eyes and the slight frown that darkened the noble forehead warned him that he was on dangerous ground.

"You want to know something of my life?" asked Laurence, in his grave, musical voice. "What good would it do you if I told you, my friend? You are too old to take a warning from it, and too young to point its moral. Let my

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life alone, friend, and allow me to forget."

"No offense, sir," stammered Mr. Wiley.

"None was meant, I am sure," said Laurence, with his rare smile. "Forgive me if I answered too sharply. I have suffered much—more than most men, I sometimes think—and I should not relish a recital of the various toils and troubles I have pulled through. The last on the list your kindness overcame. I shall not forget it, and if Providence give me the power, will remember it to some purpose."

Mr. Wiley nodded and murmured something, and his guest, speaking in a musing tone, with his eyes fixed upon the dying fire, went on:

"Philosophers tell us that each man's fate is marked out for him before he enters the world, and drags him by the hair or leads him gently by the hand. My fate has been an adverse one, and in very truth she has dragged me, not by the hair, but by the heart, through this unsatisfactory existence. I never loved a horse, dog, house, or man, but an ill wind came and hurled me apart from them."

"You don't say anything about the women, sir," said old Mrs. Tovey, gently.

He turned with the smiling face that he always wore when he addressed her.

"Women!" he repeated, rising with a short laugh that had more bitterness than mirth in it. "Therein, in that one instance, fate has been kind to me. No woman has had the misfortune to win my heart. But what am I talking of? Friends, the fire has made me mopeish and your question, Mrs. Tovey, sentimental. Good-night."

That was all they could get from him, and it certainly was not much. And now, as the days passed, Mr. Wiley grew anxious, so also did Laurence; but he did not show it.

The first was concerning himself mightily on account of further twenty-pound notes; the latter was expecting anxiously some sort of answer to the letter he had written to him whose eyes were long since blind to things of this world.

He was anxious, trying to persuade himself that he should not hope for a reply, yet hoping, nevertheless, and waiting hourly.

He grew more thoughtful and reserved to all but the little children.

Mr. Wiley grew fidgety and haunted the dock gates.

At last the balm came. A small, dapper groom, resplendent in bottle-green livery and a shining hat, strolled up to the dock gate and requested to be informed if Mr. Wiley was to be seen.

Joe, who was not a half-mile off, hurried up immediately and, casting an anxious glance round to see if his valuable charge were anywhere near, received a letter from the groom's hand and got into a corner to read it.

It was short and pithy.

"I relieve you of your charge. Give him the note inclosed and tell him to follow its behests without loss of a moment. Should he ask any questions, beg of him, if he values his life, to postpone them for a future occasion, and start on his journey. The other inclosure is the reward I promised you."

There was no signature, but Mr. Wiley felt reassured, for the second inclosure was a neat, crisp, twenty-pound note.

Away he rushed to the cottage, almost shouting for joy.

He found Laurence seated, or, rather, lying on a bale beside the door, his face shaded by his hand, and his eyes fixed moodily upon the ground.

"Hello, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Wiley. "It's a lucky thing I found you. I was all in a tremble to think as you might be out of the way, perhaps."

"What is the matter?" quietly asked the giant; but he sprang up with an air of interest as Mr. Wiley extended the small note. "A letter!" he said, and broke the seal.

Then Mr. Wiley witnessed a transformation.

The grand, still face changed as if an angel of Paradise had swooped down and kissed it. It glowed with a bright flush of joy, its lips trembled with a thrill of delighted surprise, and its eyes filled—ay, filled with tears!

This was the note:

"Laurence:—If you have not forgotten, if you still cherish one kind remembrance of your friend Cecil, follow these instructions without losing a single second. A moment now is priceless. Go with the bearer of this, who will provide you with a strong and swift horse. Mount and ride for your life toward Dale. At each stage a fresh steed will await you. Wait for nothing, linger not a moment, spare neither yourself nor your horses, but come, come where Cecil waits you at the Dale. Ever yours **CECIL**."

"P.S.—Be prepared for changes, sad and mysterious."

No sooner had he read the letter than he swung round to Wiley.

"I give me a moment, man, for Heaven's sake—read this letter! No; stop! I must go—I see by your face that you have received news of some sort."

Joe nodded eagerly.

"I can not wait a moment," said Laurence, already striding to the door, "not even to ask you if my conjectures be true. Good-by. I will come back, believe me."

Wiley ran beside him—nothing less could have kept up with the long, swinging stride.

"Don't stop, sir, for Heaven's sake! It's all right; the money's all paid—it was all arranged."

"I see—I see!" exclaimed Laurence, upon whom flashed a sudden revelation. "I see, I think. Good-by. Now, lad, where's the horse? Quick!"

The small boy touched his hat and ran down the yard. Hugh followed and found two horses, one blown and foam-specked, the other wiped down and comparatively fresh. Without a word he sprang into the saddle of the fresher and, with flashing eyes, clattered away in the direction of the Dale.

Though the post-chaise dashed along the dusty road, scattering the fowls and geese before it like an avenging wind, and calling the country folks to their doors to stare and wonder; though it tore up hill and down dale, through turn-pike gates with the velocity of a locomotive, rocking from side to side like a storm-tossed ship, it seemed slow, drearily slow, to its impatient occupant.

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Time was worth a guinea a moment to him now. Nay, he almost bought it at that price, for at every posting-house the postilions had been cribbed with gold, and promises of more still, to urge their horses to the utmost.

His mind was in a ferment of vacillation. One moment he bit his nether lip and cursed himself for coming, the next he endeavored to gain his wonted calm by whispering to his unquiet heart that he had done best in obeying the lawyer's peremptory summons—nay, that he could do nothing else, for who could say what had transpired in the quiet village at the grand palace he had built, requiring his presence and master mind?

The discovery which had really been made he never for a moment suspected.

With a firm belief in his cunning and wisdom he looked upon the detection of his double crime as impossible.

No; he fancied that some other of his many plots had miscarried and gone wrong, and he cursed the old lawyer a thousand and one times for not telling him which.

But he was on the road, and the best that he could do was to reach the Dale and get back to London and his appointment with his dupe and victim, Lucille, without loss of time.

So on the horses' few, one batch of breathless, exhausted cattle being replaced by fresh, and at last, as evening fell upon the new palace, the post-chaise dashed with a final jolt up to the Hall steps.

All was quiet.

Evidently he was not expected. No servants rushed forward anxious to be trodden on or cursed at.

He looked round, himself startled by the unusual desertion.

An old man, the porter's father, opened the door, and at last, as the master strode up the steps, white and weary, his eyes all ablaze with passion and annoyance, one footman came forward and received him.

Reginald Dartmouth turned to him with a dark frown.

"Did you not know that I was expected, sirrah?" he asked.

The man stammered something, trembled and led the way to the library, the door of which he opened, and stuttering out something that sounded like "Mr. Reeves," hastily retreated before the flashing eyes.

The upright figure of the old lawyer came to meet him.

Something in his face stopped the question upon Reginald Dartmouth's lips, and Mr. Reeves spoke first.

"You have come," he said, "and I am thankful. Allow me to close the door."

And he passed behind him and locked it.

Reginald Dartmouth sank into a chair beside the table and tossed his hat to the floor.

"Now, sir," he said, "have the goodness, without circumlocution, to tell me why you sent for me?"

"I will," said Mr. Reeves, standing before him with his hands resting upon the table, his face set with an unnatural calm, his eyes, sternly piercing, fixed upon the pale, hard face opposite him—"I will, Reginald Dartmouth, in three words—all is discovered!"

There was the slightest start in the world, the merest quiver of his thin lip, and that was all.

"All—discovered? Pray, sir, explain," he said, with a deep sneer.

"Is that necessary?" asked Mr. Reeves, sternly. "Do you wish me to go over the story of your villainy; to give your crime its true name?"

(To be continued.)

Fashion Plates.

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Pattern 3306 is portrayed in this model. It is cut in 7 Sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44 and 46 inches bust measure. A 38 inch size will require 6 yards of 36 inch material. The width of the skirt at the lower edge is 2 yards with plaits extended.

Black taffeta, braided or embroidered, also linen, serge, gabardine, tricotee or duvetyn could be used for this model.

A pattern of this illustration mailed to any address in receipt of 15 cents in silver or stamps.

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