

and did, feel a general anxiety, an interest in the decision for Ned's sake. But what was their anxiety or their interest to his?

The jury returned. It was now dark, and candles had been lighted all through the hall, and the sea of persons looked unearthly in the yellow light.

The foreman announced the verdict: GUILTY OF WILFUL MURDER!

The Coroner expected it. He turned to Rusheen:

"Ned Rusheen, it is my duty to commit you to jail to stand your trial at the next Assizes for the wilful murder of Lord Elmsdale. Have you anything to say?"

"Nothing, sir; except that I am innocent—so help me God, and His Holy Mother!"

All the great people went home to dinner. All the poor people went home to such poor fare as served for their daily portion. But there were few who did not regret the verdict.

The jury had been, indeed, on the very point of deciding in his favor, when some sensible person suggested, that as there was the least doubt, it was sufficient to send him to jail. It was not, he said, as if they were giving a verdict at Assizes. He would have another chance. If he were guilty, it would be well to secure him; or he might fly the country; if he were innocent, probably some evidence in his favor would turn up before then.

The rest of the jurors agreed. The idea seemed so excellent—at least it secured a safe and pleasant solution of a very unpleasant difficulty. They never thought of the terrible degradation to an innocent man, to be condemned as guilty. They never thought of the blasting of his character for life, and the probable consequences for his future—worse, far worse, if he were innocent, than if he were guilty.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CRIME.

"I THINK Edward is right, Mary: it would be better for us to leave this. In fact, as you know the place is his, and as he has determined to go abroad, we cannot remain here without his consent—we have hardly a choice."

Lady Elmsdale was much changed since that day of sorrow: still more since that December night when she had welcomed her boys with all a mother's love and all a mother's pride. There were silver threads now in the little braid of her hair which showed under the edge of her cap of widowhood, and you could see the blue veins like a network of enamel in her thin, transparent hands.

It was the first week in February. The day was dark and cold, but the actual severity of winter had passed away, though fires were still a necessity rather than a luxury to the rich, at least.

"I suppose, mamma, if we must, we must," replied Mary Elmsdale, who did not appear to take any very warm interest in the matter.

Elmsdale Castle had never been a home to her. True, she was born there, and had spent her babyhood and childhood there; but she was sent so young to school in England that the hundred associations of tenderness and love, which depend on the veriest trifles and insensible form those links of attachment which bind the young to whatever place they call home, had no existence for her. She had for her mother a quiet ladylike affection, but there was nothing very demonstrative about it. Indeed, any strong demonstration of affection would have been considered unbecoming and ill-regulated in the establishment in which she received her educational training, and such moral instruction as was supposed to befit her future position in life.

The mother did not perceive the want of childlike love in her daughter: she certainly had not cultivated it. Possibly if the girl had manifested it sooner, she would have repressed it unconsciously. The affection of the twins had satisfied her. But now it was all changed. She wanted a daughter's love; and now she wanted it, and craved for it in her dire affliction, she found it did not exist—at least in the degree which could have afforded her any comfort.

Edward went his own way, as he always done; but now more so than ever. Some angry words had passed between him and his mother after the inquest, when he announced his determination to go abroad, perhaps for years. He