

versation that night, and details as to Cornwallis' escape were discussed. Since he had helped him Ronald had conquered his aversion to the other man, and found no difficulty in advising him.

"As to money, you can draw on me."

"Thanks awfully," said Cornwallis; "so I will. I will repay you eventually, as I must come into money if I live long enough."

"Don't let that trouble you." But Mr. Cornwallis had no intention of letting it trouble him.

"How did you manage to escape from Dartmoor?" asked Ronald.

"Miss Iredale formed a plan, but it was awfully difficult to accomplish. She'll tell you all about it some day; I'm too tired. By the way perhaps you did not know her real name before."

"Oh yes, I did. What a life you must have had!"

"It wasn't a life; it was an awful nightmare. People seem to imagine that because a man has once written another man's name, or done something he ought not, that he loses all feeling and becomes a brute. I don't say I ever was a model; I wasn't; still I don't think people need go to Princetown on excursions and stare at me, and others such as me, as if we were wild beasts."

"It is perhaps part of the punishment," said Ronald, who could not condone "writing another man's name," so lightly. His kindness of heart, however, caused him to relent as he considered how much Cornwallis must have suffered. "Some of them must be precious ruffians though," he added.

"They are. I never performed outdoor labour; I wasn't strong enough for it."

RONALD remembered for how long a time he had considered the other man a tailor, and again experienced a feeling of repugnance. "You must have been glad enough to get out."

"I thought it would have been heaven, but it wasn't. Miss Iredale had said she had found work for me, but I did not contemplate working in a mill."

"Miss Iredale did for you what not one woman in ten thousand either would or could have done," Ronald said sternly. "An escaped convict's almost insuperable difficulty is to find employment at once."

"Do you suppose I don't know that? Though allow me to add that I am the best judge of Miss Iredale's conduct."

"I suppose you do not forget that you are in the gravest danger still."

"No, I don't forget, but somehow it doesn't seem to trouble me; I can't think why. Well, when I first came to Willowbridge I own I was very discontented, until the idea occurred to me that I would act the part of a workman. When I pictured myself as an actor everything came easy enough; I didn't mind the life at all, in fact I enjoyed it. How they have found me out is more than I know."

"I shall get up at daybreak to-morrow and take the trap back to Willowbridge. I will ascertain what has taken place, and, if possible return here at once. Let me advise you not to go out or to put pen to paper during my absence."

"You must see Miss Iredale and tell her to come too later in the day. I have made up my mind to marry her before I go abroad."

"What!" exclaimed Ronald, startled. "You can do nothing of the kind. The marriage wouldn't be legal. No banns have been published and the whole thing is impossible."

"Oh no, it isn't. She must come; I can't do without her."

"You will have to do without her," said Ronald sharply, shocked at Cornwallis' gross selfishness in wishing any girl to marry a hunted criminal.

"But I have told you that I can't, and I won't. See here," and he took a document out of his pocket. "I thought something of this sort might happen, and I got a special license and I have been keeping it by me. We can be married whenever we like, and I like now."

"Have you no consideration for

her?" asked Ronald angrily.

"I have every consideration. She is awfully fond of me,—women generally are—and will be much happier with me than away from me."

"The best thing I could do on her account would be to communicate with the police and give you up."

"Now don't talk nonsense," said Cornwallis lazily; "you know as well as I do that you won't."

"I know very well that I ought."

"In which case she would never forgive you. You're right enough. I thought when I first went to Willowbridge that you might be a cad, but I found afterwards you were a gentleman. I'll introduce you to my friends later on."

The condescension with which he said this was so ludicrous in the circumstances that Ronald laughed.

"Thank you," he replied; "I am not a man that cares for another man's friends; I make my own or none."

"Oh, they wouldn't mind the mill; they wouldn't really."

THE situation was too absurd, once more Ronald laughed. "You are too good," he replied. "It is growing late; let us go to bed. One question first. Did you not consider it an enormous risk to have your name and Miss Iredale's put in a license? I suppose you gave your real name," he added suspiciously.

"Of course I did. Perhaps it was a risk but I thought the Doctors' Commons people, or whoever they may be, would have too much to think about to connect the names with the real us, and you see I was right. Unless—" he pondered, "unless they put the police on the track. Well, good-night. By the way, I suppose you did not give my real name to the hotel people."

"I did not. Good-night."

Meanwhile events at Willowbridge were not going smoothly. The warder had watched the whole of the work-people leave the factory and had then entered into conversation with the foreman, demanding to see over the factory and giving his reasons.

Simpson's wrath knew no bounds. "Convict? a convict here? It's all lies; it's a tisher of lies."

"Lies or not, I want to see the factory."

Simpson sought Mr. Ronald, but sought in vain. He then went to Mr. Westlake.

"Never heard anything so ridiculous in my life," said that gentleman, at once going to the warder.

"My son, who manages the mill, is away," he said, "but go over it by all means. Look into every hole and corner if you choose. All our men are honest workmen. If they were escaped convicts we should be the first to hand them over to the police."

The warder acted on the permission given him, and searched the factory in vain.

"Sorry to have given you so much trouble, Sir," he said at last. "I suppose we had false information." But he made enquiries in the village and when he found that Henry Jackson had disappeared, he telegraphed for a detective.

CHAPTER XVII.

Flight.

IT was early morning when Ronald drove back to Willowbridge. He gave his horse and trap into a groom's care and then went up the lane towards the farm; he wished to see Mary before the whole village was about.

The air was crisp and fresh, dew hung on the trees and blackberry bushes. He knew that Mary would not be up, but he hoped to call her attention without disturbing the farmer's wife. He knew which was her window, he had asked her long before, and had spent many a half hour in watching it from a distance. He entered the garden and threw a stone softly at the panes. The window was open, the stone fell on the floor.

"Who is that?" asked Mary, who was wide awake. She came forward as she spoke.

"It is I, Westlake. Can you come down to me as soon as possible?"

"Certainly."

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