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RECOLLECTIONS OF A CONVICT.*

BY "Y.-L.E."

CHAP. IV.—THE DEPARTURE.—THE CONVICT.—THE
COXWAIN.

THE agony of my trial over, I had sufficient time to reflect on the degraded position my short but unfortunate career had placed me in, within the gloomy walls of a convict's cell. I saw the light from the sun come and go day after day, and as that light slowly and stealthily entered and departed, and no sound reached my ears but the grating of the lock as the turnkey came on his daily examination, my heart sunk within me at the recollection of the liberty I had hitherto enjoyed. What pained me most, however, was the grief of my poor, heart-broken mother. From motives of delicacy, I have refrained from describing the scene which followed my incarceration, at first, but now that I was torn from her, on account of my own guilt, a feeling of despair laid fast hold on her mind, so that when she came to pay me a last adieu, she was to every eye who had formerly seen her, but the shadow and remembrance of what she had been. Oh God! how my heart bled for her. As for myself, life and all its joys were gone, and I could have laid me down happily and died.

At length the day of our departure arrived, and, however much I expected to suffer as a convict, I hailed the dawn of that morning with pleasure. I wished to be far away from the scene of my ignominy, vainly imagining that remembrance would become obliterated as distance intervened. All things being ready for our removal, the prisoners were led out handcuffed to a coach which stood at the entrance to the prison. As the great door opened, and the refreshing breeze of the morning fell unbidden on my burning cheeks, I raised my eyes to look upon the surrounding objects for the last time. But from whence comes that hum of human voices? They are not shouts of joy, nor peals of laughter. They sound like the whispers of persons in eager conversation, mingled with stifled groans, and heavy sobs. Half a dozen paces forward, and all is explained. On each side of

the passage leading from the jail to the coach, are congregated crowds of eager gazers,—some brought there from curiosity—others deeply interested in the fate of some one of the prisoners. Could my poor mother be amongst the number! This thought made me tremble. I determined not to look round, for fear I might encounter her mournful gaze; but the more I felt inclined to do this, the stronger became the desire to satisfy myself, whether she might be present. Not being able to control this feeling, I cast a quick and anxious look, first on the one side, and then on the other, and had all but come to the conclusion, that none was among the crowd who felt uneasy on my account. I was about to withdraw my eyes, when a move was made amongst the assembly near to the place where the coach was placed. I had no power to withdraw my eyes from looking in that direction, and on the crowd opening to admit of some one who was eagerly pressing forward, I was nearly struck powerless on beholding the very person who had been the chief instrument in causing my downfall,—it was my unlucky companion, John. His eyes were red, and the tears on his cheeks told that he had been crying. In an instant my mother stood at his side,—to please her, he had forced a passage that she might be permitted for the last time to look upon her lost, but dearly-beloved son. I have stated before, that she was sadly changed, and when I recollected that all her suffering had been on my account, I could not help inwardly cursing my folly. Tears came as a relief, and while I lifted both hands to wipe my eyes, the sight of the handcuffs excited her so much, that she had only power to repeat my name, when she fell back into the arms of John. I rushed forward to support her, but was soon reminded by one of the officers in attendance, that this could not be allowed. I cast one glance at the unconscious form of her who had watched over my childhood, and who had so often prayed to God that I might be kept from evil. From her I turned my eyes on John. He seemed to read my thoughts, for, as I entered the coach, he called aloud, "Forgive me, James,—I will be a son in your stead."

How can I forget that morning—big as it is with so many things to be remembered. On that morning I was forced to bid a long farewell to the land of my fathers and the land of my birth. True, my acts had disgraced me, but I was not hardened in guilt. Had I

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