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The Legacy of Cain

By

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To

MRS. HENRY POWELL BARTLEY:

Permit me to add your name to my name, in publishing this novel. The pen which has written my books cannot be more agreeably employed than in acknowledging what I owe to the pen which has skillfully and patiently helped me, by copying my manuscripts for the printer.

WILKIE COLLINS.

Wimpole Street, 6th December, 1888.

THE LEGACY OF CAIN.

First Period: 1858-1859. EVENTS IN THE PRISON, RELATED BY THE GOVERNOR.

CHAPTER I. THE GOVERNOR EXPLAINS.

At the request of a person who has claims on me that I must not disown, I consent to look back through a long interval of years and to describe events which took place within the walls of an English prison during the earlier period of my appointment as Governor.

Viewing my task by the light which later experience casts on it, I think I shall act wisely by exercising some control over the freedom of my pen.

I propose to pass over in silence the name of the town in which is situated the prison once confided to my care. I shall observe a similar discretion in alluding to individuals--some dead, some living, at the present time.

Being obliged to write of a woman who deservedly suffered the extreme penalty of the law, I think she will be sufficiently identified if I call her The Prisoner. Of the four persons present on the evening before her execution three may be distinguished one from the other by allusion to their vocations in life. I here introduce them as The Chaplain, The Minister, and The Doctor. The fourth was a young woman. She has no claim on my consideration; and, when she is mentioned, her name may appear. If these reserves excite suspicion, I declare beforehand that they influence in no way the sense of responsibility which commands an honest man to speak the truth.