

**TENTH SCENE - Green Anchor Lane.**

An hour later than the time at which he had been expected, Richard Turlington appeared at his office in the city.

He met beforehand all the inquiries which the marked change in him must otherwise have provoked, by announcing that he was ill. Before he proceeded to business, he asked if anybody was waiting to see him. One of the servants from Muswell Hill was waiting with another parcel for Miss Lavinia, ordered by telegram from the country that morning. Turlington (after ascertaining the servant's name) received the man in his private room. He there heard, for the first time, that Launcelot Linzie had been lurking in the grounds (exactly as he had supposed) on the day when the lawyer took his instructions for the Settlement and the Will.

In two hours more Turlington's work was completed. On leaving the office--as soon as he was out of sight of the door--he turned eastward, instead of taking the way that led to his own house in town. Pursuing his course, he entered the labyrinth of streets which led, in that quarter of East London, to the unsavory neighborhood of the river-side.

By this time his mind was made up. The forecast shadow of meditated crime traveled before him already, as he threaded his way among his fellow-men.

He had been to the vestry of St. Columb Major, and had satisfied himself that he was misled by no false report. There was the entry in the Marriage Register. The one unexplained mystery was the mystery of Launce's conduct in permitting his wife to return to her father's house. Utterly unable to account for this proceeding, Turlington could only accept facts as they were, and determine to make the most of his time, while the woman who had deceived him was still under his roof. A hideous expression crossed his face as he realized the idea that he had got her (unprotected by her husband) in his house. "When Launcelot Linzie does come to claim her," he said to himself, "he shall find I have been even with him." He looked at his watch. Was it possible to save the last train and get back that night? No--the last train had gone. Would she take advantage of his absence to escape? He had little fear of it. She would never have allowed her aunt to send him to Lord Winwood's house, if she had felt the slightest suspicion of his discovering the truth in that quarter. Returning by the first train the next morning, he might feel sure of getting back in time. Meanwhile he had the hours of the night before him. He could give his mind to the serious question that must

be settled before he left London--the question of repaying the forty thousand pounds. There was but one way of getting the money now. Sir Joseph had executed his Will; Sir Joseph's death would leave his sole executor and trustee (the lawyer had said it!) master of his fortune. Turlington determined to be master of it in four-and-twenty hours--striking the blow, without risk to himself, by means of another hand. In the face of the probabilities, in the face of the facts, he had now firmly persuaded himself that Sir Joseph was privy to the fraud that had been practiced on him. The Marriage-Settlement, the Will, the presence of the family at his country house--all these he believed to be so many stratagems invented to keep him deceived until the last moment. The truth was in those words which he had overheard between Sir Joseph and Launce--and in Launce's presence (privately encouraged, no doubt) at Muswell Hill. "Her father shall pay me for it doubly: with his purse and with his life." With that thought in his heart, Richard Turlington wound his way through the streets by the river-side, and stopped at a blind alley called Green Anchor Lane, infamous to this day as the chosen resort of the most abandoned wretches whom London can produce.

The policeman at the corner cautioned him as he turned into the alley. "They won't hurt me!" he answered, and walked on to a public-house at the bottom of the lane.

The landlord at the door silently recognized him, and led the way in. They crossed a room filled with sailors of all nations drinking; ascended a staircase at the back of the house, and stopped at the door of the room on the second floor. There the landlord spoke for the first time. "He has outrun his allowance, sir, as usual. You will find him with hardly a rag on his back. I doubt if he will last much longer. He had another fit of the horrors last night, and the doctor thinks badly of him." With that introduction he opened the door, and Turlington entered the room.

On the miserable bed lay a gray-headed old man of gigantic stature, with nothing on him but a ragged shirt and a pair of patched, filthy trousers. At the side of the bed, with a bottle of gin on the rickety table between them, sat two hideous leering, painted monsters, wearing the dress of women. The smell of opium was in the room, as well as the smell of spirits. At Turlington's appearance, the old man rose on the bed and welcomed him with greedy eyes and outstretched hand.

"Money, master!" he called out hoarsely. "A crown piece in advance, for the sake of old times!"

Turlington turned to the women without answering, purse in hand.

"His clothes are at the pawnbroker's, of course. How much?"

"Thirty shillings."

"Bring them here, and be quick about it. You will find it worth your while when you come back."

The women took the pawnbroker's tickets from the pockets of the man's trousers and hurried out.

Turlington closed the door, and seated himself by the bedside. He laid his hand familiarly on the giant's mighty shoulder, looked him full in the face, and said, in a whisper,

"Thomas Wildfang!"

The man started, and drew his huge hairy hand across his eyes, as if in doubt whether he was waking or sleeping. "It's better than ten years, master, since you called me by my name. If I am Thomas Wildfang, what are you?"

"Your captain, once more."

Thomas Wildfang sat up on the side of the bed, and spoke his next words cautiously in Turlington's ear.

"Another man in the way?"

"Yes."

The giant shook his bald, bestial head dolefully. "Too late. I'm past the job. Look here."

He held up his hand, and showed it trembling incessantly. "I'm an old man," he said, and let his hand drop heavily again on the bed beside him.

Turlington looked at the door, and whispered back,

"The man is as old as you are. And the money is worth having."

"How much?"

"A hundred pounds."

The eyes of Thomas Wildfang fastened greedily on Turlington's face. "Let's hear," he said. "Softly, captain. Let's hear."

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When the women came back with the clothes, Turlington had left the room. Their promised reward lay waiting for them on the table, and Thomas Wildfang was eager to dress himself and be gone. They could get but one answer from him to every question they put. He had business in hand, which was not to be delayed. They would see him again in a day or two, with money in his purse. With that assurance he took his cudgel from the corner of the room, and stalked out swiftly by the back door of the house into the night.