

AFTER THE STORY.

EXTRACTS FROM BERNARD WINTERFIELD'S DIARY.

I - WINTERFIELD DEFENDS HIMSELF.

Beaupark House, June 17th, 18--.

You and I, Cousin Beeminster, seldom meet. But I occasionally hear of you, from friends acquainted with both of us.

I have heard of you last at Sir Philip's rent-day dinner a week since. My name happened to be mentioned by one of the gentlemen present, a guest like yourself. You took up the subject of your own free will, and spoke of me in these terms:

"I am sorry to say it of the existing head of the family--but Bernard is really unfit for the position which he holds. He has, to say the least of it, compromised himself and his relatives on more than one occasion. He began as a young man by marrying a circus-rider. He got into some other scrape, after that, which he has contrived to keep a secret from us. We only know how disgraceful it must have been by the results--he was a voluntary exile from England for more than a year. And now, to complete the list, he has mixed himself up in that miserable and revolting business of Lewis Romaine and his wife."

If any other person had spoken of me in this manner, I should have set him down as a mischievous idiot--to be kicked perhaps, but not to be noticed in any other way.

With you, the case is different. If I die without male offspring, the Beaupark estate goes to you, as next heir.

I don't choose to let a man in this position slander me, and those dear to me, without promptly contradicting him. The name I bear is precious to me, in memory of my father. Your unanswered allusion to my relations with "Lewis Romaine and his wife," coming from a member of the family, will be received as truth. Rather than let this be, I reveal to you, without reserve, some of the saddest passages of my life. I have nothing to be ashamed of--and, if I have hitherto kept certain events in the dark, it has been for the sake of others, not for my own sake. I know better now. A woman's reputation--if she is a good woman--is not easily compromised by telling the truth. The person of whom I am thinking, when I write this, knows what I am going to do--and approves of it.

You will receive, with these lines, the most perfectly candid statement that I can furnish, being extracts cut out of my own private Diary. They are accompanied (where plain necessity seems to call for it) by the written evidence of other persons.

There has never been much sympathy between us. But you have been brought up like a gentleman--and, when you have read my narrative, I expect that you will do justice to me, and to others--even though you think we acted indiscreetly under trying and critical circumstances.

B. W.