

What's in a Name?

What I Suffered by Changing Mine

A change of name is sometimes made the condition on which a man may obtain rank and fortune; and a change of name was of greater consequence still to me,—it was the means of throwing me into prison, and of making me assume the character of a malefactor.

I was born and “raised” in a beautiful little town in the south of England, and at the age of twenty-three I came to America. The cause of my coming is not material to the story I have to tell, and therefore I need say little regarding it. Suffice it that a scene with my father about my expenses at college—for I was a student of medicine, and not at all careful about money matters—led to a coolness between us which eventuated in my leaving his house. I determined to make my own way in the world, although I had not quite finished the study of my profession; and, thinking that the United States presented a good field for me, I made my preparations for coming here. My father gave me £100, with a sharp intimation that I need not hope for any further from him.

On my arrival in Liverpool I found that one of the Inman steamers was to sail next day. Partly for the sake of economy—for I wished to save as much of my money as possible,—and partly because I thought that, as I might have to rough it in America, I might just as well commence at once, I took a passage in steerage, giving my name as James Wilson, it being in reality Henry Markham. What induced me to do this I cannot say. Possibly a feeling of false shame, lest any of my acquaintance should know that I was a steerage passenger. At any rate, from this small action came the train of events which constitute my story.

A friend, which whom I spent the night, accompanied me to the wharf in the morning, and with him I lingered to the last minute, after I had got my baggage on board the tender. At last we parted.

Amid the excitement consequent upon our examination by the doctor,—which certainly was a formal enough matter,—and the other preparations for sailing, time passed quickly away; but, as we went down the river and Liverpool was being lost to view, I felt for my watch to ascertain the hour of sailing. It was gone. Instinctively I examined my pocket for my purse, and, after a vain search, found that it had also been taken. I was horrified, and not much wonder. In America I did not know a single individual, and all the money I had was a couple of sovereigns which I had carelessly put into a pocket of my pantaloons along with a few shillings of silver.

I now remembered that while talking with my friend on the wharf we had repeatedly been jostled by the crowd, which was composed partly of emigrants about to leave, and partly, doubtless, of sharpers who had come down to get a chance of booty amid the confusion and bustle consequent on leave-taking and departure. In all probability I had been robbed then. At any rate, my money and watch were gone, and that without hope of recovery.

What I should do on my arrival in New York? was a question which terrified me. My purpose had been to start at once for some of the Western States, and, buying land, devote myself to

farming, and at the same time do something in the way of doctoring. This was now rendered impossible by this terrible misfortune, and not only so, but if I should not get any occupation, I might actually starve before I could hear from my friends in England.

I was so stunned by the affair that, to get quietness, I went to bed, where, to crown my unhappiness, I became so sea-sick that we were two days past Queenstown before I could rise. Had I been well, I might have left a letter there, which would not only have induced some of my friends to remit funds for me, but would in this manner have sustained my identity in New York, and thus have saved me many days of fearful misery.

Of the voyage I have only to say that it was an ordinary one. On the morning of the 26th Dec., fifteen days after starting, we passed Sandy Hook, and a few hours after anchored in the river a little above Castle Garden. Soon after, the Custom-house officers came to examine our luggage, and everything proving satisfactory in this respect, we were taken ashore to the emigrant depot. Here we had offers of boarding from one or two parties, who advised us to go along with them, as we should probably be fleeced if we ventured to seek boarding for ourselves. In despite of this kindly advice, two of the passengers and myself, after we had changed our gold for greenbacks, started to see if we could not get something cheaper than what those worthies offered. After a few hours' search we discovered a house in Frankfort street, where we could get clean beds for thirty-five cents a night, and there we resolved to tarry. In the basement there was an eating-room, where cheap meals were to be had, and as cheapness was a most important consideration in my eyes, I suggested to my companions that we should take our dinner here. As we turned from the office we met a lame man who made such an unnecessarily sharp inspection of us that we thought he was about to beg; but in this we were mistaken, for he turned to the clerk and proceeded to make a bargain for a room.

Thinking nothing more of the circumstance, we descended to the eating-room and ordered dinner; but we were scarcely seated when the same individual made his appearance, and, after looking round the room as if in search of some person, he advanced to us and, with his piercing eyes fixed on my face, said:

“Gentlemen, I was a soldier and was wounded at Gettysburg. I have, as you see, much difficulty in walking, and yet what I earn is done by acting as a messenger. I have not been very successful for the past two days, and am now hard up. After paying upstairs for my bed, I have only five cents left. Will you, Mr. Wilson, or any of you gentlemen give me a little assistance?”

I started at hearing my assumed name mentioned (for I had not resumed my own, owing to the presence of my fellow-passengers,) but he laughingly said:

“Don't be astonished at my knowing your name, sir. I saw it on the book at the office, and knew it must belong to one of you.”

This explanation dispelled my astonishment, and I replied that I was very sorry that my funds were at such a low ebb that I did not think myself justified in giving away the little I had, as I might soon be as hard up as himself.

With a singular glance, he replied:

“Although we are stewards of what God has given us, it is not always right to keep the whole of what has been committed to us,” a speech which I afterwards found was intended to shake my seeming composure, although I looked on it then as a piece of cant from an old hypocrite. To get rid of the man, however, we each of us gave him a few cents, with which he procured himself food.

For a day or two after my arrival in the city I tried to get some appointment where the knowledge which I had would be brought into use, and where, at the same time, I could get study and practice. But I found this up-hill work; for, although my collegiate certificates were good, I met with no doctor who would receive me as a student. On the evening of the second day I had an interview with a physician of good standing, who, though he could not employ me himself, conversed with me for some time on medical subjects, and said at the close of the interview that he was so much satisfied with my acquaintance with those subjects which I professed to know, that he would do what he could for me. He at the same time invited me to call on him again within a day or two, and he would in the meantime try what could be done. With a heart full of gratitude I left him, and with better hopes of success than I had before felt, I returned to the F—House. On my way home, very soon after I left the doctor’s door, I noticed a man whom I had observed as I entered to make the call, and happening to stop to look at some object in a store-window, I again perceived him walking with a careless and unoccupied air a short distance behind me. I had seen the same person repeatedly during the two days, and had not thought anything of the circumstance; but now I began to think it strange that he should so often be where I was. Had I had money about me, I should have thought that theft was his object, but the fact that I had not been seen spending much made me feel secure on that score. As I walked along I looked suddenly over my shoulder on several occasions, and always found him at the same distance behind me; but only once could I fancy that he was looking at me. I, however, resolved that I should try before I got home whether he was following me intentionally or not. Accordingly, when I gained the first corner, I turned it quickly and sprang into a doorway and there waited the result. In two or three seconds he also came hastily around the corner, and I at once saw by the look of disappointment on his face, that, whatever his object, he was watching and dogging me. He stopped short, considered for a moment or two what he should do, and then took up his position at a lamp-post, to wait till I should make my appearance. I thought of wearying him out, but at the same time I could not think of any reason for his pursuit of me, and therefore I thought it better to appear not to shun him. I accordingly left my hiding place, and walked rapidly down the street towards home. By this time the lamps were lit, and, looking back at intervals, I could see as he approached the light that he was still on my track. When I reached the house, I at once went into the eating-room where my friends were seated, and where, also, I found I found the same lame man whom we had met on the day of our arrival. During the evening I mentioned to my friends that I had been dogged, and at their request I told them the whole affair. While I was talking I observed that the cripple was listening to my words, though his attention seemed to be fixed on a newspaper in his hand, and when I mentioned how I had detected the man’s pursuit of me, I heard him distinctly mutter, “The clumsy fool!” Somehow it struck me that there was a connection between the two, but of what nature I could not imagine. Various surmises were started as to the object of my suspicious follower, but the only conclusion we could come to was that he meant to rob me.

Two more days passed away in the vain attempt of getting something to do. Like myself, my companions could find no employment. The war had ended seven or eight months previously, and the city was filled with returned soldiers, to whom situations were naturally given in preference to strangers. In my case matters looked fearfully serious. I had only \$10 in my pocket, and had no prospect of hearing from friends to whom I had written before five or six weeks, so that, unless I could get work of some sort, I must literally starve before their letters could reach me. My only hope was in Doctor Clarke, who had received me so kindly, and now I resolved to call on him again. In the meantime, I had not seen anything more of the man whose motions had astonished me so much, and yet I had a conviction that I was watched, and that every movement I had made was under the surveillance of some person unknown to me. The idea, too, began to grow upon me that my lame acquaintance had something to do with the matter. He was always in the room where we sat during the evening, but he generally appeared to be dozing as if fatigued by the day's labor; and yet, when I would be engaged in conversation with any person, I would sometimes catch his eye fixed on me as if he would read my very soul. Nothing, however, very startling occurred until I paid my second visit to Doctor Clarke. When I arrived at his house, he received me not only coldly, but with such evident distaste to my visit, that, had I not been so kindly treated on the former occasion, and was so unwilling to leave without any hope, I would not have remained a moment in the room. As it was, I candidly told him my history, and expressed a hope that in conformity with the kindness of his demeanor two days before, he would try to give me some encouragement. After hearing me out he said, "Well, Mr. Markham, if that be really your name, you are either a consummate actor, or there is some dreadful mistake with regard to you." My astonishment may be conceived at hearing such an address, nor was it lessened when he asked me what name I bore on the ship coming over, for I had not stated to him that I had assumed the name of Wilson. My confusion as I told him I had done so, coupled with my inability to give any reason for the change, evidently wrought unfavorably on his mind. I had no sooner made my blundering explanation that he coldly said:

"Well, sir, I was prepossessed in your favor by your last visit, and was anxious to do something for you; but since I saw you I have got a warning which I cannot disregard, coming from the quarter it did, to be on my guard respecting you. Our present interview has not tended to clear away any difficulties, as you yourself will allow; and therefore I am sorry that though I am able to get you a good position I must decline to place you in that position on my own responsibility."

Here was my only gleam of hope suddenly cut off, and soon I must be at my last cent. And yet when I thought of it, I could not blame the doctor. He had intended kindly by me, and it was no fault of his that someone had thrown suspicion on me. He could not be expected to give a suspected person a position, to fill which he could find many others both capable and with irreproachable reputations. I therefore thanked him for his kindness in considering my application at all, and added that though I had now only the prospect of want before me, yet I would remember his kind intentions with gratitude.

On leaving the house I felt all the depression which my gloomy prospects warranted. What was I to do? For hours I wandered about the streets without any object, at one time wondering what the doctor could have meant, and who it was that had filled his mind with suspicion; at another, listlessly staring at the rich stores, and wishing that I could get employment in them in any

capacity, however humble. Towards evening I made up my mind to go to the country on the following day, and try to obtain work on a farm, and with this resolution I returned to F— House. In the course of the evening I mentioned my disappointment to my friends, and stated that in the morning I was to start for the country. A few minutes after I said this, the old cripple, who had been sitting a little distance, hobbled out of the room, when I could not help saying that I thought he had something to do with the matter. They scouted this idea, and asked, with evident reason, what influence a man like him could have upon a gentleman in the doctor's position. We had not, however, stopped talking about him, when he returned and along with him two policemen. Their appearance created some excitement, which was heightened when it was observed that the cripple was no longer lame. He seemed to have been miraculously restored to full use of his limbs, as advancing towards me he laid his hand on my arm and said:

“James Wilson, you are my prisoner.”

Starting to my feet, more through astonishment than with any intention of resistance, I flung off his arm and asked him by what authority and what charge he did this.

He replied that he arrested me by authority of the United States, on a warrant issued by the English Government, and on a charge of having embezzled £50,000 from a firm in Yorkshire, England. While this was going on a crowd had gathered round us, and a desire to be clear of any scene induced me to request the officers, who were standing with their clubs in their hands, to lead the way to a magistrate. They accordingly placed themselves beside me, and thus I was led to prison. The excitement consequent on my arrest prevented me from at once sinking into despondency; but when the report had been given to the chief officer at the prison, and I was left in the cell allotted to me for the night, a bitter darkness, like that of death, came over my soul. It must surely be a horrible dream. During the whole of that terrible night I tried to persuade myself that I would wake in the morning in my old bedroom in my father's house. Every incident that had happened since I left it seemed like one continued nightmare. I had thought on the voyage that my prospects were black enough; and that evening, as I turned away from Dr. Clarke's door, I fancied that the cup of my misery was full to the brim. But what was it all compared to this? To be thrown into prison, and appear at the dock as an accused felon. It was horrible.

Slowly the hours passed away in that cold cell; but of the cold I did not think. Numbed as my limbs were, there was a fever in my blood which rather resembled the seething of a boiling cauldron. I longed for the morning as I would for life, thinking that surely, when I should be brought before the magistrate, this hideous mistake would be cleared up. It could not be that, because I had assumed the name of Wilson, I could be condemned to such punishment as a felon merits. What had I done that I should have this terrible imputation cast upon me? I tried to pray and could not. I felt almost like cursing the hour I had been born. Terrible, terrible night. Even yet I dream of it, and wake up expecting to find the cold damp walls of the cell around me.

At last the lingering hours stole away, and the time approached for my examination before a magistrate. With intense anxiety I waited for it, knowing that, if the judge should give credence to the accusation brought against me, I should be carried back to England. Back to England! And accused of embezzlement and *forgery*, for this I had learned was one of the counts against me. About twelve o'clock a policeman entered the cell, and told me to accompany him. Cramped as

my limbs were with the intense cold, I could scarcely use them, but with his assistance I at last managed to reach the court-room. As usual the place was filled with idlers, who had lounged in to wile away an hour in hearing the reckless answers and in seeing the shameless bearing of hardened and depraved men and women. It was with difficulty that I could summon courage to look around, and when at last I did so, my composure was not increased by seeing among the crowd my two fellow-passengers, with whom I had become a decided favorite, and who were therefore anxious to hear the result of the arrest. The charge against me was at last brought forward. It was to the effect that, while acting as confidential clerk and cashier to the firm of Grimsby & Holt, woolen manufacturers in Leeds, Yorkshire, England, I had absconded after forging the name of the firm for various sums, amounting in all to £50,000. It was stated that I had obtained leave of absence for a couple of days to visit friends in Lincolnshire, and that when I had not returned at the proper time, suspicions had arisen that all was not right. My books had been examined and it was found that these suspicions were only too correct. Detectives had been set on my track, who had discovered that I had gone towards Liverpool, to which city they followed me, and there they found that I had sailed in the steamship "City of Cork" on the morning after I had left Leeds. On this there was no doubt, for I had even had the hardihood to give my own name, and the description of my person given by the clerk at the steamship office, tallied exactly with that of the fugitive. My employers had also obtained a portrait of me, which had been handed over to the detectives; and other marks by which I could be known, were given to them. As soon as they discovered that I had sailed by the "City of Cork," they had telegraphed for instructions, which proved to be to the effect that one of them should procure a warrant, and follow me by the Cunard steamship "Scotia," which was to sail that afternoon. This was done, and the "Scotia" passed the "City of Cork" on the way. Immediately on his arrival in New York, the detective put himself in communication with the police of the city, and one of the smartest men of the detective force there was detailed to assist him. On the arrival of the "City of Cork" I had been at once recognized, but it was thought advisable to give me a little line in order to ascertain where the money was. As has been already seen, I was closely watched by the American detective in the guise of a lame man, and was only apprehended when it was thought I was about to start for the West.

Such was the terrible indictment against me—an indictment which appalled me as it was being read. My only hope lay in there being a dissimilarity between the portrait and myself. To be sure, I had my collegiate certificates with me, but these might be looked upon as forgeries, considering that I was an adept in that science. When asked what I had to say to the charge against me, I was so agitated as scarcely to be able to give a coherent account of myself—a fact which was evidently assumed as an indication of my guilt. They asked me if, after the evidence was given, I could deny that I was the James Wilson mentioned in the warrant, hinting at the same time that my story was of the lamest, I reiterated that my name was Henry Markham, as was stated in the certificate taken from me when searched the night before. The portrait was produced and shown to me.

The likeness was perfectly wonderful, even to the mark of a cut on my forehead which I had received in childhood; and I was more than ever staggered when the detective said that this very mark had been mentioned to him by my employers as a sure means of identification. My heart sank within me as I saw that the judge considered this as an indisputable proof of my being the fugitive. I, however, at once stated that I was willing to accompany the officer to England, as

there I could prove that I was not a criminal; but, at the same time, I protested against their taking me back and warned them that I would hold Messrs. Grimsby & Holt responsible for my loss of time and my expenses in returning to New York, which I said I would do as soon as I obtained my freedom. It seemed that the detective was anxious, if possible, not to return with a half-finished job; in other words, he wished to take back the money with him, if it could be found. On the other hand, the New York detective assured the judge that I had been so closely watched since my arrival that I could not have disposed of the money in any shape; that it was probable that I had remitted it in some other way; that the sooner Mr. Ferret and I should return to Liverpool, the sooner it would be restored, as traces of the mode of remittance would be found there; and that, meanwhile, he would set to work to discover whether it had arrived on this side. With this view the judge concurred; and, finally, Mr. Ferret was brought over to it also, and therefore it was arranged that we should sail on the following day in the very steamer in which I had come over.

During the voyage I was closely confined in a small room in the steerage, where I wrote letters to my father and several of my friends, telling them my story, and asking them to come to Liverpool as quickly as possible to procure my liberty. These letters Mr. Ferret was obliging enough to mail for me at Queenstown, while at the same time he sent a telegram forward to Liverpool to intimate his arrival with his prisoner. By the time we reached that city my spirits were much restored, as hope was strong within me.

The day after we arrived, I was brought up for examination, but was not detained more than an hour or two. Mr. Holt had gone to Liverpool on receipt of the telegram regarding Wilson's capture; and as he saw me he declared that I was *not* James Wilson, although he said the resemblance was such as to astonish him. My father, too, had come express to my assistance as soon as he got my letter, and one or two of his friends in Liverpool accompanied him to the court-room; where they arrived just at the moment that Mr. Holt was declaring my innocence. He showed no signs of a wish for a reconciliation; but gave his evidence that I was his son, as his friends could bear witness, and demanded that I should be set at liberty. To be brief: this was done; and, once more, I was a free man.

My father received me with the same stern visage as he wore when I had last seen him. He said that I had as yet given no proof that I was able to do what I had undertaken; that I had only failed, and that failure ought to be no characteristic of a son of his. He hoped that henceforth I would consider the name of Markham as good enough for me; and concluded with handing me the same amount of money as he had done before, at the same time hinting that if I wished to pass my examinations for my M.D, before I should return to America, he would pay my expenses for that also. I accepted his offer, returned to this country, and in a fair way to attain my object, thanks to the kindness of Dr. Clarke, who has endeavored to make amends for his former mistake by doing all he could to assist me.

Three or four months after my second arrival in New York, the scoundrel who had brought me into all this trouble was captured in Chicago, and for curiosity's sake I telegraphed to Mr. Ferret to call on me on his way home, that I might see the man who had proved himself my evil genius, and get an explanation of his escape when I became the victim. This was done, and when we met, the likeness between us astonished even the criminal himself. He had pleaded guilty when

he was taken, in order that he might appear as a witness, and if possible save a wretched woman who had been his ruin. He said that he had stopped at Liverpool to wait for the arrival of this girl. When she reached Liverpool, he had disguised himself as a priest of the Catholic Church, and with her in the guise of a nun had sailed in the "Scotia," and thus reached New York along with the detective who had been sent in search of him. When it was ascertained that a passenger answering to his description had sailed in the "City of Cork," no further search was made for him in Liverpool, and thus my adoption of his name had saved him. After their arrival in America they had lived quietly for some time; but the girl's vanity had at length reduced her to persuade him to travel, which they did under the title of Lord and Lady Chesterfield. Meanwhile the continued absence of the girl from her former haunts became known to the police and this coupled with the knowledge of Wilson's former intimacy with her had, after my liberation, been the means of putting them on the scent. Mr. Ferret, whose professional skill was at stake, moved heaven and earth for traces of them, and at last, from several circumstances, came to suspect that the so-called priest and nun with whom he had formerly crossed the Atlantic were the parties of whom he was in search. He obtained permission to follow them a second time, got a warrant against Wilson and the girl as an accomplice, crossed to this side, and, after nearly six months' search, found his birds living in splendid style in Chicago. I have little more to add. Wilson in his infatuation for the wretched girl confessed his own guilt that his evidence might, if possible, save her. In this he was so far successful that she got off with one year's imprisonment, while he himself is at present undergoing five years' penal servitude. A.R.M.A.

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