

**THE WIFE'S EVIDENCE:
A NOVEL, IN THREE
VOLUME, VOL. II**

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The Wife's Evidence: A Novel, in Three Volume, Vol. II by W. G. Wills

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W. G. WILLS

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THE WIFE'S EVIDENCE.

VOL. II.

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THE WIFE'S EVIDENCE.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"NOTICE TO QUIT," "LIFE'S FORESHADOWINGS,"

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE WIFE'S EVIDENCE.

CHAPTER I.

KENT rose to his feet shaken and confused by his heavy fall. He put his hand to his head and glared round him with a sort of stupified anger, till his eye fastened upon Coleman, who was just turning away to go upstairs with his wife and mother. At first he seemed inclined to retort with personal violence, but Abraham the coachman and Simon the groom held him back.

“ You cut-up rough ! ” cried he with a blasphemy ; “ so this is the sort you are : if I had not you in my power, d——n you, I'd break your neck . ”

Coleman made no answer, but, perceiving that his mother inclined to linger, pressed her on before him step by step.

“ Well,” shouted Kent after him, “ I understand how to deal with a bully better than a sneak. By G——, I'll sue you for board and lodging ! ”

With this threat, peculiarly adapted to the appreciation of his audience of servants, he picked up his hat and went out, pulling the hall door after him with a passionate bang.

They stood huddled together, the cook and the kitchenmaid, the coachman and the groom, whispering and balancing whose side they would espouse—how much it

might cost them to curtsey or lout to Mr. Coleman when they met him next, and if it were not advisable to be insolent to the old mistress previous to her approaching abdication, since Mr. Kent was master here. Abraham confidentially announced to all whom it might concern that upon battery and assault, such as they had witnessed, Mr. Kent would be like to turn the old lady and all her following out on the street. He would be supported by law, and it would be a "reet good job." The cook declared that Mr. Coleman was as likely a man to drop a bolus of poison into a glass o' wine or pot o' tay as she ever met. Lor! he was so sweet and smooth this time back, and look'ee how deadly he breaks out afore one can wink their eye.

“The ould mistress will come off the worst betwixt them,” said the 'prentice girl; “she hasn't a poor sick wench to deal wi' now. Mr. Kent knows how to manage her, he does; and I expect she'll keep her room for a spell.”

She had scarcely spoken when old Mrs. Coleman came downstairs again, and stood in the hall with them. The 'prentice girl slunk back in sudden bodily affright at the stern old face; the cook curtsied and began to retreat; the coachman muttered some apology or humble condolence; but the old lady passed them by, and, going over to the hall door, turned the large key in it with a wrench, fastened the chain, and drew the bolts. The action had a significance.

Meanwhile Mr. Kent proceeded straight to the stables, sent for Simon the groom,