

SIR WILLIAM'S WILL

A dull resentment rose against the capricious act of the man who had befriended him, was befriending him still, a resentment that glowed in Hesketh's pale cheek and flashed in his dark eyes. If Wilfred had died, he, Hesketh, would have been the baronet, would have obtained his heart's desire. But Wilfred could marry Clytie, they would reign at the Hall, would have a son to bear the title. Yes; after all he, Hesketh, had done, after all his sordid toil at the works, and his still more sordid servitude to the old man, it was hard to bear.

He dressed slowly his eyes wandering now and again to the fading view, then he went down-stairs. A fire had been lit in the spacious, oak-lined dining-room, and Sir William was standing before it, warming his thick hands.

"It seems to me cold to-night," he said half-apologetically.

The butler—Sir William had taken him and most of the old servants over with the furniture and chattels—announced dinner, and the two men sat down. Sir William ate little and drank less; but he appeared as calm and self-possessed as usual, and talked of the business, the works, and the estate, and when the dessert came in, he helped himself to port, and pushed the decanter to Hesketh. As a rule, Hesketh refused; but to-night he filled his glass, drank it quickly, and filled it again. Sir William turned his chair to the fire, with a slight shiver.

"Ask them to clear, Hesketh, will you?" he said. "I'll sit here to-night. There is no fire in my room."

The servant cleared the table; Hesketh lit a cigarette and stood with his foot on the black marble fender, his elbow leaning on the carved mantelpiece; and both men were silent. Presently Sir William got up, steadying himself by his chair as he had done in the study, and left the room, returning after a moment or two with the two wills in his hand.

Hesketh glanced at them quickly, then went out; he was afraid lest he should be able to master the expression of his face, to keep back a word that would reveal the workings of his mind. He went to the terrace and paced up and down, smoking furiously, his thin lips working spasmodically round the cigarette. In his pacing he passed and re-passed the tall French windows of the dining-room, and once, half-absently, he looked in through a gap in the curtains.

Sir William was leaning back in the chair he had turned to the table, and the wills were lying open before him. Something in the old man's attitude caught Hesketh's attention. Sir William was so motionless that Hesketh started, opened the window, and noiselessly entered the room. No; the old man was not dead, but asleep. Hesketh drew a long breath and stood looking from the rug, heavily lined face to the wills; stood quite still for a moment; then he stole to the table and bending down scanned the documents. The one lying nearest Sir William's hand was that which made Hesketh master of Bramley and Sir William's fortune, the other was the will which gave it all to Clytie—or

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excusable confusion. "I was outside, smoking. This deed—will you take it? I—I cannot." He shuddered.

Doctor Morton, with some difficulty, unclenched the stiff fingers and released the will.

"Keep it," said Hesketh, shuddering again.

Doctor Morton nodded. "Better send for Mr. Granger."

"Yes," responded Hesketh dully; and one of the footmen hurried from the room to send a carriage for the solicitor.

An hour later, when all the house was hushed into an awed silence, Hesketh stood beside the fire, his head sunk on his breast, his face white and haggard. Every now and then he glanced at the chair, and it seemed to him that the limp form, looking like a bundle of clothes only, was still huddled there. Then he raised his head and stretched out his hands to the blaze and drew a long breath of satisfaction. The will that made him master of Bramley and Sir William's vast wealth was safe in Mr. Granger's keeping.

It had been almost a public funeral; his personal friends—Sir William had no relatives besides his son, Wilfred, and his nephew, Hesketh—the tenants, the work-people from the Pit, the tradespeople, made up an immense crowd of mourners, and some of them genuinely mourned; for the departed baronet, though hard in business matters, had been capable of many a generous action which, now that he was dead, came to light. The funeral was over, the crowd had dispersed, and over a small group of persons was assembled in the stately library to hear the will read.

Hesketh, it was agreed on all hands, had borne himself well. That he had been greatly affected by his uncle's death was evident by his wan and pallid face, and by the subdued voice and manner, the voice and manner which indicated the strong man's desire to suppress all show of the grief which possessed him. He had over-seen everything, every small detail, and had won the general sympathy his courtesy and his respect for the dead, which he had displayed during

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IN CLARK'S PORK AND BEANS

W. CLARK

the trying arrangements of the interment; and now as he sat at the table on the right of Mr. Granger, those who were present—Doctor Morton, the servants, the foreman of the works, and so on—glanced at him pityingly, and yet a little curiously; how would his position be affected by the will which the lawyer was now slowly unfolding?

Mr. Granger was a lawyer of the old school, a school which, it is to be feared, has but few disciples nowadays. Quiet, self-contained, reticent, the old man had said but one word, asked but one question, respecting the will, of Hesketh; and the question had not been asked until they were on their way to the library; then Mr. Granger had said:

"You do not know the purport of Sir William's will, Mr. Carton?"

And Hesketh with a shake of the head had replied calmly, almost indifferently:

"No; Sir William has never mentioned it to me. He was not likely to have done so."

"Quite so," assented Mr. Granger; and they went to their seats at the table.

With dignified self-possession the lawyer spread out the will and with the usual formal preamble of "This is Sir William's will, I drew it up," began to read it in a slow and distinct voice.

Hesketh leaned forward, his head resting on his hand which partially concealed his face, his eyes bent on the table, but for all his apparent calmness, his air of subdued grief, his heart was beating furiously and his brain was whirling in a confusion so thick that he scarcely comprehended the opening clauses.

There seemed to be an interminable list of bequests; Sir William had forgotten no one; some of the old workmen who had been fellow lads with him in the factory, the servants, the doctor, the various local charities; all had been remembered.

Hesketh listened in a kind of apathy, the apathy of suspense. When would come the awakening sound of his own name?

Mr. Granger read on for some time with scarcely a break; then suddenly he paused and in rather a slower and more impressive manner resumed.

There was a stir among the audience, heads were turned quickly, and eyes sought eyes, with wonder and amazement in them, and presently every one's gaze was fixed on the man who

was sitting with bent head and screened face. It was the subtle influence of the battery of eyes that aroused Hesketh.

What was the old fool reading? What silly nonsense was he mouthing? Why did he not come to the real kernel of the will, the clauses that left Bramley, the old man's money, to "my nephew, Hesketh Carton"? Why did he keep repeating the names "Clytie Bramley," "my son, Wilfred Carton"?

The voice, which seemed to drone in Hesketh's ears with a maddening persistence, ceased, and the lawyer laid the will down and looked, not at Hesketh, but straight before him. A faint murmur rose from the group at the end of the room; Hesketh was conscious that all eyes were still fixed on him, and he raised his head and looked expectantly, and yet in a confused fashion, at the lawyer, as if asking him why he stopped why he did not continue.

Mr. Granger met the questioning eyes with a grave and steady regard.

"You understand?" he said, in a low voice.

Hesketh put up his hand as if to clear away a mist, then let it fall on the table.

"No, he said hoarsely; and at the sound of his voice the rest of the audience, who were moving toward the door, stopped and looked back at him.

Mr. Granger took up the will and began to read the fateful clauses again; but before he had finished, Hesketh rose, rose slowly and starting at him, laughed. It was a strange laugh, one that startled all who heard it, for there was almost a touch of insanity in it. Then he sank into the chair again and gazed straight before him, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, conscious of one fact only—he had burned the wrong will!

"It is incredible—it is monstrous!" The clear, sweet voice, low as it was pitched, rang through the room.

Clytie Bramley, the speaker, had risen from the chair which Mr. Granger had courteously placed for her, and stood, her slim, graceful figure straight as an arrow, her eyes flashing, her lips parted with a curve of something like scorn. So beautiful a picture did she make, with her dark brows raised, her dilating gray eyes—they were almost a violet shade at this moment—that Mr. Granger gazed up at her with grave admiration as he shrugged his shoulders.

"Are you sure that you are not mistaken?" she demanded, and her bosom heaved before the word. "It sounds like—like something in a sensational novel. Do you mean to tell me that—that Sir William has left"—she looked round the room—"this on condition that I—I—Oh, I cannot believe it!"

"Nevertheless, it is quite true," said the lawyer quietly. "I can understand, sympathize with your surprise, my dear young lady; and I hope that you will acquit me of all blame in

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the matter. I drew up the will, but not until I had exhausted all my efforts to dissuade Sir William from carrying out his project. But here it is, and nothing you or I can say can undo it."

"But why not?" she said quickly. "I mean, why not as far as I am concerned in the matter? I suppose you know, must feel, that nothing would induce me to—to carry out this absurd condition."

(To be continued.)

Had to Bow to Custom.

The late King Oscar of Sweden was the least conventional of monarchs, but he had to courtesy to custom nevertheless. The King and M. Bonnier, the botanist, met as strangers while out in search of flowers near Stockholm. They were soon the best of friends, and Bonnier suggested lunch at his inn.

"Come home with me instead," said the other.

When the way led to the palace gates Bonnier hesitated.

"I'm sorry," said his companion, "but I happen to be the King of this country, and this is the only place where I can entertain my friends."

HIS COME-BACK.

Magistrate—"What is the prisoner charged with, constable?"

P.C.—"Assault and battery, on his mother-in-law, your worship."

Magistrate—"Are you guilty or not guilty?"

Prisoner—"Guilty, your worship."

Magistrate—"I fine you ten and six."

Prisoner—"But why the extra six-pence, sir?"

Magistrate—"That's the war tax on amusements."

FATEFUL YEARS FOR ALL WOMEN

HOW BEST TO OVERCOME THE TROUBLES THAT AFFLICT WOMEN ONLY.

The most fateful years in a woman's life are those between forty-five and fifty. Many women enter this term under depressing conditions through overwork, worry, or a neglected condition of the blood, and so they suffer heavily. Still, variations of health at this time can be relieved by home treatment.

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