

CHARLIE'S LUCK.

"Any news from the case this morning, Hutchinson?"

This question was asked by Mr. John Holbrook, senior partner of the firm of Holbrook and Hutchinson, solicitors and land agents, one certain morning, in the latter end of September, as he entered his office in the principal street of the old cathedral town of Dullminster.

His partner, Tom Hutchinson, without looking up from the papers he was reading, answered in the negative.

"Well," continued the senior member of the firm, "we must exhaust every effort to find the missing deed. There is a letter by this morning's post from Mr. Arnold, authorizing us to increase the reward to a thousand pounds."

"That ought to bring it to light, if it is in existence," said Tom Hutchinson.

And he threw down his papers, and wheeled his office chair to face Mr. Charles Wilson, aged twenty-two, with legal aspirations, who was "reading" in the office of this celebrated firm.

"Wilson," he said, "write out another advertisement in the Arnold case, and take it round to the 'Gazette' office."

"Yes, sir," answered the young man.

And he took a sheet of paper and began to write.

After awhile he read the following, and the firm agreed that it was the proper thing,—

"TO SOLICITORS' CLERKS AND OTHERS.
—Information wanted of a certain parchment deed, given by Andrew Sharp to Archibald Arnold, conveying to said Archibald Arnold a certain plot of valuable building land, containing about five acres, more or less, situated in the City of London, said deed having been given in the year 1645. This deed was lost or stolen some fifteen years ago, and anyone furnishing information which will lead to its recovery will receive a reward of One thousand pounds, by applying to HOLBROOK AND HUTCHINSON, Solicitors, &c., Dullminster, Chalkshire."

"You'd better take it round at once," said the head of the firm.

And the young man left the office to perform the errand.

Messrs. Holbrook and Hutchinson's articled clerk was a poor young man—poor—but he had a stout heart and great ambition, and although he found it a serious matter to make both ends meet, he was studying very hard to perfect himself for his profession, after which auspicious event, he felt that all would be plain sailing.

He had rosy day-dreams sometimes of the future, after fame and wealth should have fallen to his share, and the central figure of these dreams was pretty Madge Bevan, who was nearly as poor as himself, and whom he had loved ever since he was a boy at school.

"If I could find the missing deed," he thought, as he hurried to the newspaper office, "all would be well. A thousand pounds would give me a good start in life, and I could make dear Madge happy, and lift the burden of the support of her mother from her frail shoulders. I shall be admitted to practice on my own account next term, and it will be pretty up-hill work at first, unless I have a reserve capital. By-the-way," he muttered aloud, "I promised Madge to take tea with them this evening."

Charlie Wilson had expended a great deal of thought on the most important factor in the great land of Arnold v. Sharp, the missing deed to the immensely valuable lot of building land, and for the past month he had spent his idle moments visiting marine stores, in the faint hope of somewhere running across the parchment.

In the course of his search he had overhauled tons of old paper, but so far he could discover not the slightest trace of the missing document, and hundreds of others who had been tempted by the large reward offered for its discovery, were equally unsuccessful.

To-day he thought more about the deed than he did of Coke and Blackstone, and was so restless and pre-occupied that when the clock struck three he laid aside his books and left the office.

Mrs. Bevan and her pretty daughter lived in an old farm-house in the suburbs of Dullminster.

Madge was employed as a copyist in a private firm, and usually finished her day's work at four o'clock.

Until that hour, Charlie paced slowly up and down the pavement in front of the tall building where she worked.

They walked home together, and Charlie of course spoke of the missing deed.

They amused themselves with discussing what they would do with the reward, supposing they should chance to find the important document; and were talking in this ridiculous strain, when they reached Madge's home.

"Tea is ready," says Mrs. Bevan.