

on condition that they took the name of "Gwynne."

Sir Fowler Gwynne Gwynne entered and died at sea in 1683; when his brother, Glendower Fowler Gwynne, entered on the titles and estates—was afterwards married and had two children—

"Both of whom *died*!" interrupted Sir William eagerly, who had been listening with undisguised and intense anxiety.

"But one of them left *issue*!" continued Oxleigh, calmly, "and that issue I can produce! Gavin Evans, son of Ellen Evans, (your father, Sir William,) entered in 1740; and had about as much *right* to do so as I.—Do I make myself clear Sir William?"

"And do you pretend, Mr. Oxleigh," said the baronet, rather faintly, yet striving to assume a smile of incredulity, "do you dare to assert, Mr. Oxleigh that there is now living lawful issue of Sir Glendower Gwynne?"

"Yes, Sir William, I do—and can prove it. I can reduce your infirm title to the dust with a breath, whenever I please; and thus:—Sir Glendower, as doubtless you know, Sir William, died in 1740, and without male issue, as you imagine, leaving him surviving; but I can show you that though his daughter Ellen died, unmarried, his son William Fowler Gwynne was married in 1733."

"It is false as hell!—It is false!—It is false!" exclaimed the baronet, vehemently, half choked, yet continuing in his chair, with his eye fixed on Oxleigh.

"Tis too true, Sir William, too true for you, I am afraid. I say William Fowler Gwynne was secretly married to Sir Glendower's housekeeper in 1733, and had a son by her in 1738, a few months only before he himself died. I can produce all the necessary registers and certificates, Sir William I can! The marriage was in the proper full name of William Fowler Gwynne, but immediately afterwards his wife dropped the name of Gwynne, and settled in a distant part of Somersetshire, under the name of Fowler: But her son was carefully christened by the name of Gwynne. It is a strong case, Sir William, what we call, in law, a *very* strong *prima facie* case," continued Oxleigh, bitterly. "I can, at a day's notice, produce that son, who is the proper heir and holder of all you have—who is now more than of age—"

"Why, sirrah! even on your own showing, I am safe, you — pettifogger, if by right of *possession* only —"

"Pardon me—pardon me, Sir William! There are nine years and a quarter, and more, yet to expire, before that can be the case. I have calculated the time to a minute! And now Sir William Gwynne," said Oxleigh, with a startling change of tone, "pay me for the *kick* you gave me!"

The baronet continued silent; though the

working of his features showed the prodigious tempest that agitated him within. Let me be frank, Sir William, I do not presume to blame you, for calling yourself a baronet, and enjoying those fine estates; it was done in ignorance; but it is hard, very, *very*, hard to give them up, Sir William."

"Why, there glares an improbability, if not a falsehood on the very face of what you say!" said the baronet in a low tone. "How could the damned vixen that swindled William Fowler out of his name and land forget to put in claim in behalf of her son till now?"

"You cannot escape me, Sir William! Mrs. Fowler died in childhood, and had changed her residence by her husband's order, but a week before her confinement. She did not live to explain the nature of her son's right and birth. I, however, know them well, tho' at first through blessed accident; and have for months ferreted out every fact that can establish the right of that woman's son to the titles and estate you now hold. There is not, however, another person breathing but our two selves, that know of this—indeed there is not, Sir William!"

"Have you here proofs of all this? inquired the baronet, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, and looking anxiously at the packet of papers that lay in Oxleigh's hat. Mr. Oxleigh instantly untied them, and proffered them to Sir William, who suddenly snatched them up, crushed them together, and with frantic violence of gesture flung them into the fire, where, in an instant, they were reduced to ashes.

Mr. Oxleigh looked on with composure, making not the slightest effort to rescue them, "Well! it is but the trouble of another copy from the originals —"

"Copy! Copy!" murmured Sir William, aghast, sinking back overwhelmed into his chair.

"Yes! you have burnt *copies* only, Sir William, and could you really suppose I should bring here the original documents, on purpose for you to destroy them? We lawyers, Sir William, are generally considered a cautious set of men, and do not usually fling ourselves bound hand and foot into the hand of the enemy! And look'e, Sir William," continued Oxleigh, fiercely, taking a small pocket pistol from his bosom, cocking it and levelling it at the baronet—"since I cannot otherwise obtain civility, I shall avenge any farther insult you may dare to offer me on the spot. If you menace me never so little, if you lift but your little finger threateningly towards me, by —! I'll shoot you through the heart. I cannot be insulted even by Sir William Gwynne!" said he with a sparkling emphasis. The baronet looked at him as if he were stupefied with what he had seen and heard.