

confined me to my bed for six weeks, and when after three months I returned to New York from the West, I was confronted with the announcement in the morning *Herald* of the marriage of Stephen Downs and Miss Ellen Jewett. Then it was that for the first time the thought occurred to me that I was the victim of a villainous, deep-laid, scheme to rob me of the dearest prize on earth. Still, here was my father's will, which disinherited me of the major portion of his property and giving it to my adopted brother.

"Suspicious and doubtful of all mankind, I felt it my duty to investigate, and for that purpose called on one of the detective agencies for the purpose of unravelling the mystery.

"When I stated my case, the detective asked me:

"Did you give any reason for Miss Jewett to break off the engagement?"

"None in the world."

"You are satisfied she loved you?"

"Yes."

"And you think she was actuated by a belief that you had been guilty of some act that outraged her sense of propriety?"

"I think she would not have broken the engagement if she had not believed me guilty of some mean act."

"And you loved her?"

"As my life, and do now."

"Why didn't you go to her and seek a personal explanation?"

"I was too proud, and felt it would be too humiliating—then my father's death, and his will, threw me into a fit of sickness from which I am just recovering."

"Well, your pride has broken two hearts—yours and hers," said the detective, "for no doubt some villain poisoned her mind against you; in fact, invented the reports which she claimed she had heard about you, and did it for the purpose of supplanting you in her affections. The man that did that no doubt forged your father's name to a will which disinherited you and made himself the heir to your father's property. Have you searched for your father's will?"

"No."

"Have you any of your father's furniture in your possession?"

"Only my father's office furniture."

"Then let us go and search that."

"That afternoon we went to my

rooms, and in a secret drawer of the desk used by my father, we found his last will, made just before I left for Europe, making me his heir, with a proviso that I should pay ten per cent of the profits of the estate to Stephen Downs for twenty years, after which, if I was alive, he was to have twenty-five thousand dollars in lieu of a dowry.

"My feelings when I read the will can better be imagined than described. I asked the detective what I should do?"

"Arrest him, of course," said he, "and send him to Sing Sing."

"Ah, but there is Ellen Jewett, she is happy; she believes her husband to be honest, and that I am the guilty one. Let it be so, I will not disturb her, at least for the present."

"Fool," muttered the detective.

"I will think over it; good night," I said to him.

"I did think over it for a month—three months, and still retained the will in my possession. I became solitary, shunned society, and felt like one alone in the world. I could not turn the object of my affections out into the world and make her a convict's wife.

"The war broke out. I welcomed the chance to drift into a channel of excitement, raised a company and joined our regiment.

"The government sent a commission as major to Stephen Downs, he being a West Point graduate, and ordered him to join his command. I now feel happier for that one act than if I owned the entire earth.

"Oh, Ned! there is a supreme gratification, a supernatural joy at the moment of death, from the memory of the good deeds we have done during life. I prefer to carry that one act to my God than all the wealth of mankind.

As he spoke, a priest came up and said:

"My son you speak well; I hope your acts have been equally good."

We withdrew a few paces to permit the priest to administer the dying rites of his religion, after which the captain beckoned to me to draw near. Every moment made it more difficult for him to breathe, and the muscles of his face showed the intense pain he suffered. Making an extra effort, he opened his coat and took from an inside pocket a parchment like paper, and handed it to me, and said: