

"Oh!"

St. Udo Brand raised his level brows and subsided into stolid indifference.

A messenger carried a line from Mr. Davenport to Miss Walsingham's room, and carried down again a message from her, which promised her presence in a few minutes.

Some time passed in irksome silence, during which the captain beat the devil's tattoo on the table, and darted mocking glances at the important Mr. Davenport.

Then the sound of a slipped foot crossing the black and brown hall floor sent the captain sauntering to the remotest window, there to watch the struggles of a sparrow caught in the wire framework which protected the espaliers; so that there was no one to welcome Margaret Walsingham in, save old Dr. Gay, who compassionately pressed her cold hand as he led her to a chair, and with his heart pitied the captain's future bride.

She passed, with heavy eyes cast down, to a seat behind a bronze statue of St. George and the dragon, where the deepest shadows lurked, and kept the giant warrior between her and that distant window until the will should be declared.

Then the lawyer cleared his throat, adjusted his spectacles, and read:

"THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF ETHEL BRAND.

"SEVEN-OAK WAASTE, SURREY, 1862.

"To all whom it may concern:--I, Ethel Brand, being on this, the twenty-eighth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, in infirm health, yet in possession of sound mind and memory, and all my natural faculties, hereby declare this to be my last Will and Testament, and that I revoke, rescind, and disannul any and all Wills, Testaments, or Codicils previously made by me.

"To my dear grandson, St. Udo Brand, only son of my late son, Cathcart Brand, all other lawful issue being dead, I bequeath the whole of my personal property, estates, houses, and moneys as held by me and in my name, together with the Seven-Oak Waaste estate and house known as Castle Brand, on one condition:

"That he shall, not sooner than one month, and not later than one year, take to be his wife, and the legal mistress of Castle Brand, my beloved and faithful friend, Margaret Walsingham, who held the cup of love to the lips of an otherwise forsaken old woman, and for four years served her without thought of reward.

"Should my grandson, St. Udo Brand, fail to marry Margaret Walsingham within

twelve months after my demise, I bequeath all my property, lands, houses, and moneys as above mentioned, to Margaret Walsingham, to be enjoyed by her until the day of her death, and to descend to her children, or next of kin, forever.

"Should St. Udo Brand or Margaret Walsingham die within the year, the property shall revert to the survivor."

Then followed generous bequests to various charitable schemes, and annuities to the old servants of the castle, the whole concluding in the clause:

"I appoint, and do hereby declare Rufus Gay, M.D., my trustworthy physician, and Andrew Davenport, Esq., my faithful lawyer, to be the executors of this, my Will, bequeathing to each the sum of five thousand pounds, as an humble token of my regard for, and gratitude to them; and adjuring them to see the contents of my Will faithfully carried out.

"All of which I confirm by affixing this my signature, in the presence of these witnesses.

"ETHEL BRAND.

"RUFUS GAY, M.D.

"ANDREW DAVENPORT, Attorney-at-Law."

The lawyer laid down the will upon the table again, and turned a searching glance upon each of the principals. Again he cleared his throat, which had grown husky at the last clause referring to himself, and it bore an admonitory, as well as a reproachful import to the ears of Captain Brand.

"Miss Walsingham," blurted Dr. Gay, rising nervously, "no one has presented you to Captain Brand. May I?"

"Sir, be pleased to lend your attention for a moment," cried Mr. Davenport, pugnaciously.

So Captain Brand was pleased to lend his attention. He wheeled from his dark reverie, and marched, with the reckless tread of the desperado going to the cannon's mouth, up to the group, and his flashing eyes boded no tenderness in their first scathing glance towards his future bride.

"Miss Walsingham, my dear, this is Captain Brand."

The doctor stepped back, and the lady glided from her shadowy nook; and the rich gold lights from the tinted panes fell full upon her.

"Ye gods, what a Medusa!" muttered the captain, staring.

"We have met," said Margaret Walsingham, panting and white-lipped, her wild gray eyes burning with red heat, and meeting his screeching gaze with loathing, "we have met, sir, by no will of mine."

A loud, insulting "Ha! ha! ha!" burst from Captain Brand.