SIR WILLIAM'S WILL

Jack had written a renunciation, and dated it thirteen months after his father's death.

The old lawyer nodded. "Very clever, Sir Wilfred; very clever; but ——" He advanced to the fire with the paper in his hand.

"Hold on!" said Jack. "If you destroy that paper, I shall write another and post it to Miss Bramley!"

Mr. Grainger did not drop the renunciation on the fire, but stood regarding the young man grimly.

"You appear very determined to cut your own throat," he said. "And I am determined to prevent you—both of you—if I can. Please remember, Sir Wilfred, that I was your father's solicitor, and the 'Bramleys'. I have an honorable post to sustain, to live up to. In a word, I've got to do my duty, and, if possible, save two exceedingly foolish young persons from making a miserable hash of their lives. Of course, I should have suggested a compromise long before this—I mean, tht one of you should renounce the proposed marriage and receive the allowance from the other who would then be in possession——"

"Nothing would induce me to receive a penny from Miss Bramley—or any other woman," interrupted Jack.

"You are spared the temptation," said Mr. Granger, dryly. "Sir William guarded against that; he especially barred any compromise. No, it is marriage or—or nothing."

"It's nothing, as far as I am concerned," said Jack. "I'm sorry you have been so badgered, sorry that my refusal should worry you, but—I think I'll be going. The least I can do is to take myself off."

"One moment," said Mr. Granger. As he spoke, he laid on the table the renunciation, which in his absorption he had folded, so that it looked like an ordinary letter that had been enclosed in an envelope. "As your legal adviser—I suppose I am, Sir Wilfred. Thanks! May I ask what means you possess?"

"I'll count 'em," said Jack; and he took a five-pound note and a few sovereigns from his pocket and spread them out on the table.

"Good heavens! Do you mean to say that that is all you possess? Was there ever such a young foo——"

"Don't mind me," said Jack, who was growing more cheerful in the warmth of the room, and after the glass of good port. "I can stand any amount of abuse——"

"But no reason, no logic?" retorted ed Mr. Granger. "Perhaps I can produce another argument. Wait a moment, please."

He went from the room with a quick step, but returned after a few minutes with a slow one.

"I have been in search of a photograph of Miss Bramley—as she is now. You remember a child, unformed; no doubt, gawky. She is now—I'm sorry I can't find the photograph."

"I should like to nave seen it; but it wouldn't have induced me to change my mind," said Jack. "And, I say, don't let us worry about the matter any longer. I shall leave Bramley as I came; unnoticed and unrecognized. I'm disappointed, of course; though I didn't give much thought to the estates or the money; but I'm not going to grouse about it; certainly, I'm not going to chuck up my life and become a waster. I've got a chance over there'—he jerked his head in the supposed direction of Australia—"and I shall go back and work it for all it's worth."

"Not yet, not immediately!" pleaded Mr. Granger. "Remain in England for a time——"

"Can't," said Jack, as he took up the small heap of money significantly. "Shall have to work my passage out as it is."

The old lawyer uttered a wicked word in his exasperation; a word he had not uttered for many a year. But we must admit that he was sorely tried.

"This—this is insensate folly, worthy of a silly child!" he exclaimed. "I must—yes, as your solicitor, I must insist upon your accepting a loan from me. Refuse me, and—and—well, I don't think you will be so ungracious, so ungenerous."

"Right," said Jack, but rather reluctantly. "I'll borrow fifty pounds; and I'll promise to remain in England—till it's spent. I'm rather a careful man, and it will last me a couple of months. I'll send you my address, I think; I'm not sure. And now good-by. Sorry I have worried you. Oh, by the way," he added, "of course, you will not tell any one that you have seen me, that I have been here?"

After a moment's thought, Mr. Granger nodded.

"Yes, I will give you that promise," he said, reflecting that, if he told Clytie that he had seen Sir Wilfred, he would have to tell her—she would get it out of him—the fact that Sir Wilfred had refused to marry her; and he did not want to do that.

"Thanks! Oh, ah, yes. I wanted to ask you. My father left the works to my cousin, Hesketh Carton. What sort of a man is he?"

Mr. Granger frowned. "What sort of a ——He is a clever young man, with a good business head. I wish I could say the same of—of other persons—and he will make his fortune at the works."

"He's welcome to it," Jack declared cheerfully. "I've never seen him My father was right to leave him the works; he stood in the place of a son to him. Good-by, once more."

Mr. Granger followed Jack into the hall and stood at the door watching the tall, well-built form go across the street, then he went into the dining-room and stood frowning at the fire. He was too great a judge of character not to have seen that Sir Wilfred had developed into a fine young fellow. No sign of dissipation in that tanned face, those clear eyes, and the firm, and musical voice. He had grown into a man worthy of his father, worthy of the title, the estates—and Clytie Bramley.

"Obstinate young fool!" he muttered impatiently and regretfully; for he had taken a fancy to the young man.

The door-bell rang, and footsteps sounded along the passage. The maid entered.

"Mr. Carton, sir. He said he came on business, so I showed him into the study."

Mr. Granger smiled to himself curiously. A few minutes earlier, and the cousins would have met! He lingered in front of the fire, too absorbed in Sir Wilfrid and his case to be eager to take up another and a less interesting business; then he went into the study. Hesketh Carton was standing at the fireplace, quite away from the large writing-table.

"Good evening," he said, as they shook hands. "It is a shame to disturb you at such an unbusinesslike hour but the matter is rather pressing."

Mr. Granger nodded. "Quite so. I am very gald to see you. I hope you are better?" he added, as he looked at the pale face and thin lips.

"Thanks. I am quite well again. That property of Brown's, opposite the works, is for sale—I hear. It would be well to buy it. Brown is pushed for money, and an immediate and liberal offer——"

Mr. Granger nodded again and sat down at the table.

"I'll go over to Brown to-morrow," he said, after they had discussed the matter. "Won't you come into the next room and take a glass of wine, whiskey—something?"

Hesketh Carton declined; and Mr. Granger rang the bell for the servant to open the door; he did not accompany Hesketh as he had accompanied Sir Wilfred. When Hesketh had gone, Mr. Granger leaned back and stared before him thoughtfully.

"A good man of business, that," he said to himself. "How unlike they are! And, if Sir Wilfrid doesn't marry—and he's just the man not to do so—Mr. Hesketh will be the next baronet! Ah, speaking of that, where is that renunciation the young fool wrote? That must be put away carefully, or destroyed—which, now?"

He got up quickly and looked for the paper on the table where he had dropped it. It was not there. He turned over the various papers and documents; but he could not find the one by which Sir Wilfrid had given away a large estate and a vast fortune; and he stood staring vacuously at the spot on the table on which he had dropped it.

"Strange!" he muttered. "I could have sworn I put it there, that I saw it there when I went for Miss Bramley's portrait. Ah!" A thought had struck him, his face cleared, and he laughed.

"That's it!" he said. "Yes, that's it He changed his mind while I was out of the room, and tore up the thing"—he snatched at the waste-paper basket, but there were no fragments of the paper there—"or burned it." He glanced at the fire, but there were no signs of burnt paper on the coal or in the fender. "Must have taken it with him. Well! He must have been ashamed of changing his mind; might have been much more reasonably ashamed of sticking to it! So he's taken it back, has he? Right! that looks more promising; there's a chanee yet!"

Hesketh Carton walked slowly, with his usual preoccupied manner, from Mr. Granger's to the works house. Every now and then he glanced about him, but in a casual and apparently incurious way, and once or twice he touched his hat as a man saluted him. He let himself into the squalid gray little house, and went into the sitting-room. As he closed the door he softly turned the key. Then he stood by the fire looking throughtfully at it.

It was some minutes before he took from his breast pocket the folded paper which he had picked up from the floor to which Mr. Granger's arm had knocked it as he followed Jack out of the room. Hesketh had taken it up intending to place it on the table; but he had glanced at it mechanically, and his eye had been caught by two words, a name—"Wilfred Carton"—and he had read the remainder. Even when he had done so, he had not, for the moment, the intention of, let us say, abstracting the paper. Had even hesitated when the temptation had assailed him; but the temptation had proved too strong.

The consequences of the written words were too momentous, bore with such fearful import on his own life, his own future, that he yielded; and—with a guilty flush, be it noted—he had stuffed the thing in his pocket.

Now he read the paper for the second time. It was a mere scrawl, the kind of scrawl a boundary-runner, a man who had been roughing it for years, would write, and written with evident haste, and the statement, the assertion was framed and phrased just as such a man would frame it. It ran thus:

"I, Wilfred Carton, Banquet, do hereby refuse to marry Mill Bramley; and so I renounce all the benefits of my father's will.

Wilfred Carton."

And it was dated thirteen months after Sir Wilfred's death.

Hesketh Carton gazed at it, his eyes narrowed to slits, his brows lined with thought, speculation, conjecture.

"How did it get there?" he muttered. He turned it over, held it to the light. "By post? It is folded. Yes, that is it. So he renounces—the fool!" It was rather strange that he should apply to Jack the same epithet Mr. Granger has bestowed on him. "The fool! Renounces! and post dates it. So, if he does not change his mind, if he should die, Clytie Bramley comes into the property, and is free."

He moistened his lips and glanced at his reflection in the glass over the mantlepiece.

"A valuable document! a very valuable document!" He read it again, as if it were something precious; then he enclosed the paper in an envelope, sealed it, and placed it in the safe embedded in the wall.

He formed no plan, constructed no plot, as he turned the key in the safe; but it seemed to him that, in some way, fate was vaguely, nebulously, working for him.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mollie, after her exchange of civilities with the stranger in the churchyard, went into the church and seated herself in a pew, her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands, and her sharp eyes narrowed contemplatively.

She was thinking that it was rather singular that a young and good-looking stranger should be lurking about Bramley Church on an early September evening, and wondering who he was and why he should be there; and when, after a time, Clytie came down from the organ-loft, Mollie said casually:

"Did you see anyone about when you were coming in, Clytie?"

Clytie woke from a reverie induced by the music she had been playing, and replied absently:

"No. Why, dear?"

"Oh, nothing," said Mollie. "I saw a young man prowling around in the twilight, and wondered whether you had seen him.

"No," said Clytie, still absently. "And yet I thought I saw a light among the tombs."

"Ugh! How gruesome! or goodness' sake, let's get home!" exclaimed Mollie, with a shiver, and she caught Clytie's arm and would have had her run, but Clytie pulled back after a moment or two, and pressed her hand to her bosom.

"I can't run," she said, with an apologetic laugh.

"You're getting fat and scant of breath, like Hamlet; that's what's the matter with you, my sweet sister," said Mollie severely. "Fat! I wish you were! You have got thinner every day since we have been here, Clytie; it is because you 'worrit' so; and I think it is disgustingly selfish of you."

Clytie laughed. "Yes, I am thiner," she confessed. "I fancy that Bramley doesn't suit me."

"Rubbish!" retorted Mollie contamptuously. "Why, you were born here, and everybody knows that the place one is born in suits one better than any other. I suppose you imagine that you are pining after the fresh and salubrious air of London."

"Perhaps I am," said Clytie, rather wistfully.

"Then I'm not! The fact is, Clytie, that you possess a wickedly discontented mind. What you want is a really good slapping; and, if I weren't so incorrigibly lazy, I'd give it to you."

She bullied Clytie all the way home; and the next morning declared she had an attack of neuralgia.

"Regular churchyard neuralgia," she grumbled, rubbing her soft and downy cheek.

Clytie was at once all tender enxiety.

"You must see Doctor Morton. Now, don't argue, dear!"

But Mollie, who usually received an offer of medical assistance for her small ailments with indignant scorn and fluent contumely, on this occasion made no protest; and assented with a careless, "Oh, if you like."

Clytie sent for Doctor Morton, and gave him full particulars, as previously supplied by Mollie, while the sufferer sat on the sofa with her legs curled underneath, and a wicked look in her dark eyes; and, when Doctor Morton turned his attention to her, she laughed mockingly, and said coolly:

"There's nothing the matter with me. The neuralgia was only a plant, beg pardon, a subterfuge. I wanted you to see Clytie, and I knew she wouldn't send for you; so——"

Clytie rose, crimson and indignant.

"Really, Mollie——"

"She eats nothing and drinks less," went on Mollie calmly; "and she doesn't sleep. She's got thinner——"

"Mollie!"

"Oh, yes, you have. You used to measure——"

"Oh, please don't listen; please go, Doctor Morton!" pleaded Clytie. "She'll say anything, the most dreadful things."

Doctor Morton screwed up his eyes and scanned Mollie's face for a instant—he had known the young lady as a particularly trying but unnaturally shrewd brat—then nodded and turned to Clytie.

"Miss Mollie's right," he said; "you are not looking well. Humph, yes. Been worried lately? You have got an attack of the nerves."

"That's it!" exclaimed Mollie confidently.

"Thanks for your unsolicited endorsement of my diagnosis, Miss Mollie," he said gravely but with a twinkle in his keen eye. "Don't you think you had better go and play with your doll?"

"That's my doll," retorted Mollie, pointing to Clytie, and evincing no indication to accept her conge. "It's nerves, and it's no use giving her tonics. I've tried 'em on her; keen giving her nux vomica in her tea for the last week."

"There'll be a case of poisoning for the carner presently, and you'll find yourself in the dock on a charge of murder, young lady!" remarked Doctor Morton definitely. "Why don't you send her to—to boarding-school, Miss Clytie?"

(To Be Continued).

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ONLY COLD TEA

An impressive entry in the influence-of-mind-over-mystery contest is submitted by the Flushing correspondent. A prominent turner of an honest penny of Flushing, it seems with many a sly, knowing and suggestive wink passed the word about that he was now in a position to supply prominent residents of that legally dry district with what he with an air of infinite facetiousness denominated cold tea, to be drunk on the premises.

Prominent rakes of Flushing thronged to the premises at once, a thriving business soon was built up and many a lip was smacked and many a genial jest was exchanged over the so-called cold tea, the consensus of the best opinion being that our turner of an honest penny must have procured for his patrons the private stock of some old Kentucky cellar. Finally one day there came along a phlegmatic, unimaginative fellow who ordered a beaker of cold tea in the accepted important but secretive manner, started to quaff and laid down the tipple with something, we are sorry to say, very like an oath. "Why, that's nothing but cold tea," he exclaimed with kindling anger.

Our turner of an honest penny frankly acknowledged that such in very sooth was the fact that had been the fact in very since the inception of his little venture, smilingly reminding all present that he never had offered them anything but cold tea or sold them the beverage under any other name.

Our prominent rakes of Flushing, satisfied that they had been put upon and yet had no recourse, dispersed in no little confusion, thoroughly humiliated, chagrined and ashamed, for such is human nature, because they had been trapped into betraying their unfamiliarity with what it would have served them ill to know.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Intelligent Dog.

The family doctor was making a professional call one afternoon, when Johnny, who happened to be the patient on this occasion, suddenly gave a chuckle just as the physician had completed his examination and remarked in a half-confidential whisper: "Say, just look at my doggy! I guess he knows you're a doctor, all right. He's got his tongue out."

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