

useful to me as you, Mr. Varens," replied the lady, briefly, and then proceeded at once to the business of the occasion, telling her story clearly and concisely, and finishing by laying the will, the certificate, and the picture before the lawyer.

He examined all with the utmost attention, paced a few times up and down the room with the restless, feline motion of a cat suspecting the near vicinity of a mouse, then sat down again to say:

"It can be done, Miss Foljambe. There is very little doubt that it can be done; but how soon or how satisfactorily I cannot yet say. Shall I take these proofs away with me? and will you be so good as to wait patiently until you hear from me before attempting any action on your own part?"

"You mean I made a mess of it by advertising for Bunker, and nearly allowing him to escape before you could catch him?" said Miss Foljambe, coolly. "Well, I won't do so this time. Take your own way about it, only succeed."

To this injunction Mr. Varens only replied by a bow that might mean anything, everything, or nothing, and remarked that it was a very cold night.

Miss Foljambe rang the bell for refreshments, including some of a spirituous nature, and for the chaperone. She liked people who did much and talked little, and treated her detective all the better that he made no promises.

Ten days passed away. Bruce had finished repairing the card-table; and Miss Foljambe was still vainly racking her mind for something to hide in the secret drawer—something which should startle and interest some future explorer as much as her discovery had her, when Mr. Varens wrote a vague little note to say that he should present himself at Miss Foljambe's that evening.

"Well!" exclaimed that young lady as the little dry old man entered her drawing-room. Mr. Varens's look of mild astonishment gently rebuked this impatience, and he replied:

"Very well, thank you, Miss Foljambe. I hope you are well."

"I meant to inquire what you have to tell!" persisted Miss Foljambe, sturdily.

But not until his own time, and only in his own fashion, did Mr. Varens impart his intelligence. Then it was to this effect:

Jonas Bascombe, an eccentric old bachelor, reputed to be extremely wealthy, had, in the latter portion of his life, retired to a country house near the city, where he had for many years carried on an immense and profitable business. Here he lived so retired a life that, had he chosen to indulge in the wildest or the most varied eccentricities, the probability was that no one outside his own house would have been the wiser; and as for those inside, whatever they knew they were very unlikely to impart, as, besides a natural taciturnity, amounting almost to want of speech, Philip Waters, the manservant, was nearly stone-deaf; and Betsey Andrews, the cook and housekeeper, never stirred out of her own domains, or admitted any visitor therein.

Besides these, rumor and tradition spoke of a young woman variously known as the Chamber-maid, the Housekeeper, the Seamstress, or the Guest of the establishment. Whatever her position, it did not appear that she had been a constant resident in the house, but had visited it at intervals.

Matters stood in this position when, one fine day, the quiet and the privacy of this demure household were invaded by a guest who would not be denied admittance, and who, in leaving, carried with him all that was worth mentioning of Jonas Bascombe and Betsey Andrews, his handmaid. This fact was at last made known by Philip Waters, who, opening the door of the doctor's office in the village, thrust in his head and remarked:

Bascombe's dead. Fit. Betsey's dead. Broke her neck tumbling down cellar. Yesterday."

Before the doctor, a slow and pompous man, could collect his ideas, or his words, the grizzly apparition withdrew, and was seen no more, then or

ever. Whether the crabbed old man feared to be questioned as to the catastrophe so briefly described, whether he dreaded to be accused as the agent of one or both of these mysterious deaths, or whether he had acquired possessions before or since his master's demise of somewhat doubtful title, no one ever discovered. All that could be said was that from the moment he closed the door of the doctor's office Philip Waters disappeared as wholly from the face of the earth as if, mole-like, he had burrowed beneath it.

Jonas Bascombe was laid in his grave, and hardly was decently composed there when two rival claimants appeared beside it, each demanding what the dead man had left behind.

The younger, prettier, and more demonstrative of these was Miss Fanny Bellows, or, as she declared herself entitled to be called, Mrs. Fanny Bascombe, lawful widow of the late Jonas, and mother of an interesting infant claiming that gentleman as his father. The other would-be heir was Mrs. Mehitable Foljambe.

"My grandmother!" exclaimed Miss Winifred Foljambe at this point.

"The same, and also half-sister of Jonas Bascombe," replied Mr. Varens, briefly, and then went on with his story.

Fanny Bellows, claiming to be Fanny Bascombe, averred not only that her marriage and the birth of her child was undeniably lawful but also that her late husband had, at her earnest and oft-repeated request, drawn up a will bequeathing his whole property to herself and her possible heirs; that it had been witnessed by Mr. Bascombe's two servants; and that he had then taken possession of it, as well as of her marriage certificate, and had assured her that both would be forthcoming whenever they should be wanted.

To this statement and this claim, made with much unnecessary vehemence and angry menace upon the part of Mrs. or Miss Fanny, Mrs. Foljambe quietly replied through her lawyers: "Prove it;" and this was precisely what the unfortunate Fanny found herself unable to do, the marriage certificate, the will, and the witnesses thereto having all and sundry disappeared from the face of the earth.

So Mrs. Foljambe took possession of Jonas Bascombe's estates, sold the old house and the furniture, and offered Fanny a very moderate sum as compensation for her losses in the lawsuit, which was indignantly refused. After this Fanny disappeared, and Mrs. Foljambe, living out her respectable life, finally departed, leaving her fortune to her descendants.

Here Mr. Varens paused and looked at Winifred, who was gazing intently at him.

"Well," said she, "what is to be done?"

"That depends upon yourself, Miss Foljambe. The law gave this property to your grandmother. At her decease a portion came to you, afterward another through your aunt, another through your sister, and another through your cousin. In fact, this property has become identified with that of your family in such a manner it would be impossible to separate it equitably."

"But yet none of it belongs to us. This marriage certificate and this will gave it all to Jonas Bascombe's widow and children."

"If you choose to make the law known, said the lawyer, quietly, as he tied up his papers."

Miss Foljambe looked him steadily in the face for a moment, then said:

"I was not bred to your profession. Mr. Varens, and do not understand what you can mean. My unprofessional conviction is that the sooner this property is restored to its rightful proprietors, the better, and I shall next employ you to find them out."

"I have already done so," said the lawyer, not in the least discomposed by his client's scorn.

"What! found these people?"

"This person. Yes."

"Explain, pray!" exclaimed Winifred, breathlessly.

"Mrs. Jonas Bascombe," began the lawyer, a little more deliberately than usual, "after losing her lawsuit, retired to a small cottage presented to her by Mr. Bascombe some time be-

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