

THE HOWLAND WILL CASE.

Who the Parties Are—Amount of Property Involved—A Complete History of the Case—Nature of the Bill in Equity—A "Contract" Between an Aunt and a Niece on Account of Family Difficulties.

Boston, October 8.—The "Howland will case" is in the Courts again, and is attracting a good deal of attention, not only locally but publicly. For more than thirty years the leading firm in the wealthy city of New Bedford has been that of Isaac Howland, Jr. & Co., the junior member of the firm being Gideon Howland, a son-in-law of Isaac. The firm was established in 1812, and with a capital of less than \$50,000 invested in the whale fishery, the business of the firm increased to nearly \$5,000,000. They were agents for a large number of ships. Whales were plenty. Kerosene was then unknown and gas was but little used, and consequently the profits made were enormous, and a fortune was made very rapidly. In 1859 Mr. Thomas Mandall was admitted into the firm as a partner, and at the death of the senior member the business was continued and conducted by Gideon Howland and Mr. Mandall.

In 1853 Mrs. Robinson married Miss Abby S. Howland, a daughter of Gideon Howland and Mr. Mandall. In 1855 Mrs. Robinson married Mr. Mot, and she became a member of the firm, and the business continued as successful as ever. In 1856 Gideon Howland died, leaving a large amount of the original house, died, leaving an immense property, which was divided between Mrs. Robinson and his only daughter, Miss Sylvia Ann Howland. Following the death of Mr. Howland, Miss Howland became a tenant of the house, Mr. Mandall being at the head of the same, and doing all the business. He also managed the immense property of Mrs. Robinson, and conducted the business to her satisfaction. Mr. Mot was generally liked by all persons who came in contact with him. He was universally known as a hard-natured, close, business man, yet he was sometimes inclined to call me his "dishonest" partner. "Thomas Mandall," in 1861, Mr. Robinson withdrew from the firm in New Bedford and removed to New York, where he made a business connection with the firm of William T. Coleman & Co., shippers and commission merchants. Before leaving the scene where he had accumulated so much wealth from out of the deep waters, and while a member of the firm of Isaac Howland, Jr. & Co., a large portion of his private capital was employed in the shipping business. Mr. Robinson died in New Bedford in 1859, or some time prior to her husband's removal to New York. Miss Hetty Robinson, his daughter, continued to reside with her aunt, Miss Howland, in New Bedford.

Mr. Robinson died in New Bedford in 1859, leaving a property estimated at four millions of dollars. By the provisions of his will he contemplated leaving an amount of \$30,000, and gave to his daughter Hetty \$1,000,000 outright, and leaves the balance to her executors in trust. One would suppose that Miss Hetty would be satisfied with being a millionaire, but she is not satisfied, and is now endeavoring by her lawyers to get the lion's share.

Miss Hetty is now thirty-two years of age. She is not only peculiar in her habits, but decidedly eccentric. The people of New Bedford are highly indignant that she should take measures to break down the will of her aunt, Miss Howland, thereby depriving many worthy and needy persons of the property which, by that good lady, as well as keeping a number of charitable institutions from enjoying the bequests made them by the provisions of the will. The city of New Bedford is also interested in the will of the amount of \$2,000,000.

Miss Howland, the aunt, died in June, 1855, after a long illness, at the age of fifty-nine. She left a property amounting to between two and three millions of dollars. Her will is dated September 1, 1853. A codicil is attached to it, dated November 18, 1854. By the will she bequeaths the sum of \$1,100,000.

already mentioned, made another will in September, 1855, and is referred to in the will of November, 1854. No notice whatever was given to Miss Hetty of this new order of things. The will was admitted to probate. Therefore it is that Miss Hetty undertakes to break her aunt's will, contending by her eminent counsel, that "Miss Sylvia Ann, being bound in equity not to make a will, the executor is bound by the contract, and should deliver up all the property to the complainant." So far as the nature of the case is concerned, Miss Hetty makes a strong point, but there is, as later developments show, something mysterious about the whole matter.

Some months have elapsed since notice was given to the respondent, Mr. Mandall, and all accounts to correct, a large amount of secret investigation has been going on in the interior. If all the facts in the case could be known, the public would have a rich dish of pabulum to feast upon. But of private matters of deposition and examination of witnesses has taken place lately before Judge Pitman in the Probate Court. The judicial atmosphere in court circles is full of rumors of "forgery," "fraud," and "conspiracy." So far as the facts are concerned, there will soon be music and astonishing developments. The amount involved in the case is too large to be carelessly or hurriedly dealt with, and the lawyers, who have got fat pickings, will probe the matter to the quick, and unfold, in due time, the true version of the family difficulties, and whether or not somebody is trying to make a big fortune out of the "Howland" case, the exact nature of the case, and the time, President of the Metropolitan National Bank of New York, in reference to the signatures appearing in the will of Miss Howland, may perhaps prove to be an important one, not least of all in the development. It is surmised that the second will is a forgery, for it is known that the aunt and the niece were sincere in their intentions when they agreed to change wills. The influence brought to bear upon Miss Sylvia Ann, if a second will will be the subject of no inconsiderable talk, and it yet remains to be seen who the party is that was successful in bringing about its consummation. According to one source, the "Howland" case is in a clandestine manner, it appears that Mr. Mandall, executor of the will, has been withdrawing funds from the property and dealing it out according to the provisions of some of the legacies, in the great confidence of Miss Hetty Robinson, the complainant, and who seeks to stop everything of the kind. That there is a looseness about the whole affair is transparent, but sufficient facts have not yet transpired to prove how much of the property has been thus disposed of, or to show the parties mixed up in the scheme of thwarting the designs of Hetty. It is a knotty state of things at least. Miss Hetty is now in the possession of more property than she knows what to do with, but her grasping and selfish nature naturally excites a good deal of gossip, if not indignation, in the community in which she resides.—New York Times.

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