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The Columbian.

BLOOMSBURG, PA., FRIDAY, AUGUST 17, 1883.

THE COLUMBIAN, VOL. XVII, NO. 33

Table with columns for advertising rates: One inch, Two inches, Three inches, Four inches, Half column, Full column.

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SELECT STORY. THE SERGEANT'S WILL.

"Mr. Warrington, I believe? Simple words and as far as I am Mr. Warrington; but this I can assure, that never had words so taken me by surprise, nor has my name ever been put to me under more singular circumstances. That this may be clear, I must explain. As shortly as I can I will do so, for I desire explanation, and would have my Judge when I am moving the Court, know beforehand, if possible, what my point is. I am a barrister, as you guess, and my chambers are in Hare Court, it is the most ancient, quiet and retired spot in the law, especially a dull, heavy, or most unprofitable, or constant hearing-down day. I have one room in which I sit myself, and the undivided half of a clerk's room and a passage; the rest of the set are occupied (I am talking of those six months back) by the Sergeant (Greathead), C. of the Western Circuit, whose large room in the rear is the only comfortable and well furnished one, my rooms being as dingy and cheerless as most ground floor apartments in the temple. A couple of doors shut us in, but the oak is only spotted when the clerks leave it at 7. Then our chambers, not very lively during the day time, are abandoned to darkness, silence and the mice. In a word they are merely offices.

Well, about the time I have mentioned, I was obliged, no matter why—perhaps because over my dinner at the Suffolk Street Club, I discovered a fallacy in the opinion to be sent out the next morning—I found myself obliged, for the first time for certainly a year, to go to my chambers after dinner. The clock at St. Clement's was striking the half hour after 7, as I turned into the passage, and echoing temple, I opened my outer door with my key, after ascertaining that I had some matches in my pocket, and did the same to the inner door, drawing the oak to behind me and slapping it; then I stood still. It was very odd—all should have been dark, but from the doorway I perceived the sergeant's room a bright ray of light shone steadily, and from within came the familiar sound of the rustling of papers. It was very odd. I had known the Sergeant to say he never worked at night, and certainly I had never seen a light in his room, and his chambers in the evening. Very singular that we should both be there on this particular night! At any rate I would see if it was all right. I opened the door and walked in quietly, an apology on my lips. The room, as I expected, was dark, and I felt my way with papers and books; but no Sergeant Greathead was there! Some one was though, with a vengeance. "Mr. Warrington, I believe?"

companion's face—it had turned white again and had the same nervous, expectant expression I had first observed. Her nerves had not recovered the surprise of my sudden entrance. "It would hardly do for any one to find me here," she said, with a forced laugh, finding my eyes fixed upon her face. "No? But that is so like your uncle's footsteps that it did not alarm me." She did not smile as I expected. On the contrary, she helped to unfasten the outer door with almost petulant eagerness. Once in the open air she breathed more freely, but she hardly spoke again, except to thank me when I put her into the cab. "He hopes the Sergeant will sleep tonight and not need his papers," were my last words, which she only acknowledged by a bow, as she threw herself back. But I had cause, as will be seen, to remember them. I did not get much work done that night, quiet as it was; my visitor had unsettled me, I suppose. Twice I thought I heard some one in the Sergeant's room on the Monday I received a most serious shock. Among the items of intelligence in the Morning Post appeared this paragraph (it will save me much explanation): "We regret to have to announce the sudden death, at his residence, Gloucester Road, of Mr. Sergeant Greathead, Recorder of the Middlesex. His disease, which took place very suddenly Saturday evening, was caused by a heart complaint, from which the learned gentleman had for some time suffered."

"Umph," I said to myself, and, being a lawyer, began to think and put two and two together, not without now and again a little eerie feeling down the small of my back. Mr. Sergeant Greathead died on Saturday evening. On Saturday evening, before the event is not proved, a lady is occupied all alone and it is no particular business of mine. I don't know, or will come so in the end, doubtless. And I put on my boots and coat and went down to chambers and discussed the old gentleman's death, with the due amount of sympathy, with my own boy, showed in to "our Mr. Ford," the Ford, Ford & Bittle, of Staple's inn, whom I knew to be the late Sergeant's solicitors. "A new client," said I to myself, with excitement. With a judicious mixture of courtesy and dignity I walked into a seat, which was all thrown away.

"Now perhaps you can help me, Mr. Warrington," he said, after a few preliminary observations which sufficiently enlightened me. "Have you any idea where our poor friend is likely to have put his will?" "Not the slightest. We were not very intimate with him, though the best of friends. Have you searched his cupboards and books?" "Carefully. Yet I feel sure that it is here. The day he signed it he said to me: 'Here you'll find it when it's wanted, Ford,' and he tapped the table, so I took it for granted he meant to lock it up there." "What family has he left, Mr. Ford?" "He was never married. His niece, a remarkably nice girl, has lived with him for a year. Except a distant cousin, who has acted as a kind of housekeeper, she was his only connection." "Was his niece a great favorite of his?" "Yes, of late, very much so. Her mother and the Sergeant did not get on, a year ago the mother died, and Mr. Greathead, who was as good a man at bottom, took the girl home. I don't mind telling you that the missing will leaves her nearly everything." "What?" I cried, in huge astonishment, "leaves her nearly everything?" "Yes; and very naturally, too." "Up to this moment I had had, since the lawyer opened his business to me, but one idea, which was that on the night of the old man died, his niece, this 'very nice girl,' had come to his chambers, searched for the will, and for her own advantage, abstracted it. I had, however, been told that I had to bargain, started in the room, and fooled me afterward. But how about this theory now? Cui bono?" "I can't make it out," I said, slowly nursing my chin.

"Nor can I!" cried the other briskly. "Is the niece, Miss Greathead, as of a Quixotic spirit! At all likelihood to burn the will to benefit some one else?" "She's not so mad as to throw away £70,000 if you meant that. Good heavens, sir, what suggested such a thing to you?" "I told him that had occurred on the Saturday night, just as I have related it above. If my readers feel a title of the wonder he expressed, I am satisfied with my powers of description." "If you had not told me face to face, sir, I would not have believed a syllable of it," he said emphatically, "not a syllable!" "Could you"—after I had thought a minute or two—"could you procure me a glimpse of Miss Greathead or of her photograph?" "Mr. Ford actually blushed. 'Well, I could. Perhaps it would be more satisfactory if you saw herself.' 'Not at all.' 'What in the world made the man blurt out that?'" "Then I think—I have—somewhere, if I've not left it, the very thing you are looking for. Have I it?" "And, after fumbling in all his other pockets from his breast-pocket, Mr. Ford, a little red in the face, produced a neat little Russia leather case. He opened this and held the portrait within for my inspection.

"Well! he uttered, impatiently, while with a critical eye I was examining a very pretty, very youthful, wholly good face. "None a little—just a little—too reticent," I murmured. "Eh?" shutting it up with an angry snap. "But however, that is not the lady who was occupied here on Saturday night. That is one point clear, Mr. Ford. Now, who would profit by the destruction of this will?" "Is an earlier one in existence?" "Yes. There is a former will discovered in the Sergeant's desk at home. It was made before Olive—I mean Miss Greathead—came to live with him." "Its date?" "January, 1879." "Well?" "It leaves two-thirds of the estate to the cousin who then kept house for him." "A tall, pale, dark-eyed woman, decidedly good-looking?" "Yes. By Jove, I see! She was your visitor, and with instinctive caution gave Olive's name, or rather description," he cried. "And has destroyed the last will?" "I don't know so much about that," he answered, slowly wiping his forehead. "She did not burn it here, as you say the fire was out. She might keep it to see how things would turn out. It gives her £5000, too." "Ah! does it? Wait a moment. Does it really? Well, then, we can get it back by a bold stroke. I'm with you in this, Mr. Ford. It gets interesting. The first will, which must be proved if the last be not found, gives the housekeeping cousin two-thirds, about £7000; the later and missing will gives her £2000. But suppose one were—only suppose—one were to turn up between the two give her nothing, eh?" "No chance!" said the lawyer; "I don't think I quite follow you." "I can explain in two words. You see, as the words lengthened themselves to 200, as two words always do, I need not go through any more of our conversation. Its drift will be guessed by the sagacious reader." "At parting, 'tis rather a serious thing, you know," said the lawyer, ruefully. "Yes, I answered, mischievously; "it's five years."

We were assembled in the dead man's house in Gloucester road to hear the will read. It may seem odd that I should have been present at this merely family matter, but the fact is that I, John Warrington, of the Inner Temple, barrister-at-law, was not a silent and humble gentleman, with a beard and glasses, with also a seely coat to match, and a habit of taking snuff surreptitiously, yet with a certain amount of ostentation, was present. But he was merely Mr. Ford's clerk, and if his figure and face were not familiar sights in the offices of Messrs. Ford, Ford & Bittle, why, Mr. Ford had a right to engage a special clerk for business of so confidential a nature as this. There were not many present. The tall, gracious, almost queenly woman sitting near the fire with her back to the window, was my friend, and her hand is Miss Chilling, "third cousin to the deceased," as the newspapers would say. The fair, nervous girl by the table is Miss Olive Greathead; observe that her pale face flushes a little as she shakes hands with me, and her eyes meet mine. In the background are old Humphreys, the clerk, and several servants. "I have two wills here which I think I ought to read," says the lawyer, softly, taking his seat at the end of the table. "The first is dated 1879, the second about a year ago. The first will was made within the last six months, but I regret to say that our poor friend must have destroyed it, intending, of this I have no doubt, to make another in its place. In the midst of life we are—yes, indeed!" Having uttered this in low but clear tones, he turned to me, and said, "Now the clerk, who produces them from his black bag—some papers, and proceeds in more business-like tones to read the 'last will and testament of Jonathan Greathead, of Gloucester road, in the county of Middlesex, and of Hare Court, the Parsonage, in the city of London, barrister-at-law, who died on the 17th of the month of August, 1883, said he, after the usual flow of verbiage had passed—for the most part harmlessly—over our heads, that the bulk of the testator's estate would go to his cousin, Miss Chilling, and a share, very much smaller than considerable, to Miss Greathead. In one respect I very much regret that my task does not end with this will."

"Then we all listen to another last will and testament, and a fresh current of conveyancer's English, much shorter than the last, however, is let loose upon us. One person in the room, I can safely assure, feels on the rack, and Miss Chilling's fan never stays but flutters, now slowly, now with a sudden impetus. And no wonder. Her fortune of £45,000 is swept away by a stroke of the pen, and a miserable £500 left that is given her instead. Of the residue, after payment of certain legacies to the servants, clerks and others, the whole is given to Miss Greathead. When he ceased the woman by the fire rose grandly to her full height. "I told him that had occurred on the Saturday night, just as I have related it above. If my readers feel a title of the wonder he expressed, I am satisfied with my powers of description." "If you had not told me face to face, sir, I would not have believed a syllable of it," he said emphatically, "not a syllable!" "Could you"—after I had thought a minute or two—"could you procure me a glimpse of Miss Greathead or of her photograph?" "Mr. Ford actually blushed. 'Well, I could. Perhaps it would be more satisfactory if you saw herself.' 'Not at all.' 'What in the world made the man blurt out that?'" "Then I think—I have—somewhere, if I've not left it, the very thing you are looking for. Have I it?" "And, after fumbling in all his other pockets from his breast-pocket, Mr. Ford, a little red in the face, produced a neat little Russia leather case. He opened this and held the portrait within for my inspection.

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rington, who, you may be aware, has chambers—had, I should say—with the Sergeant, and the landlady, who died some months ago. So it is evident that it was made at chambers. There was an unaccountable silence for a moment. Then Miss Chilling crossed the room and rang the bell. "Is Mr. Humphreys still here?" she said to the servant. "Yes, Miss." "Ask him to come to me, if you please." "My clerk shall fetch him," cried Mr. Ford, hastily, with a glance first at the servant and then at his unprepossessing follower. "No," said Miss Chilling, imperatively. "We all stood still and listened to the old clerk ticking solemnly, till the old clerk appeared. "Humphreys," she said, with a strange yearning in her tone, a sudden softness, as it were, "please to examine this signature, and tell me if it is your late master's?" He was a little startled, and he and his clerk slowly took out and put on his glasses. Miss Greathead, nervous and frightened, covered in the window seat. Mr. Ford looked steadily into the fire. I fancy he saw there a short law report, headed, "In the matter of Charles Henry Ford, gentleman, one, etc., or it might be more shortly, 'In the matter of a solicitor.' As for his clerk, I can answer for it, that no heart in the room was going pit-a-pat like his. How long Humphreys was poring over it! At last he spoke and then with torturing slowness: "Ah, that's his writing sure enough. God bless him!" Then two of us drew such a sigh of relief, as well, I am at a loss for a sufficiently strong metaphor, but at any rate it was a very deep sigh. Mr. Ford murmured a few words of condolence to the one lady and of congratulations to the other; and he and his clerk got themselves out of the room as well as they could. The last seen of Miss Chilling she was brooding over the fire, with a face over so much older, as it seemed to us, than that which had shone in dusk behind her fluttering fan. "Upon my honor," Ford whispered to his confidential clerk, as the door closed behind them, "I am almost afraid to leave them together." "Pooh! your young woman hasn't made a will."

"Why? what? you don't think she'll do it?" "The Sergeant? No, I don't. I've seen his doctor. She's the first on the scene, that's all a couple of hours before anyone else, I expect." "What if our plan doesn't answer? How long are we to keep it up?" "A week won't do us harm; then if nothing turns up we may as well do something wrong with our precious document. But I don't think she's inclined to do it." And the confidential clerk of Ford, Ford & Bittle linked his arm with that of "our Mr. Ford" with astonishing freedom and an utter forgetfulness of his second hat and boots. John Warrington, barrister-at-law, was sitting alone in my room next day, when Thomas came in. "A lady to see you sir," I was not greatly surprised. "Show her in. Good gracious! How do you do? Please take a seat. Miss Olive Greathead, my dear friend, very glad things have happened since I saw you last. It was my former visitor, the Sergeant's niece. "Yes indeed; they are too fresh to speak of. I have called to ask you a question, Mr. Warrington, and I am sure I may trust in your discretion. The matter Mrs. Call was there. No one else, I think. If I can help you any further I will think it out." "Thank you," he said, with a half-audible sigh, drumming softly on my table with his gloved fingers. "That is all, I think that I wanted to say. Now that I am here, I should like to see my uncle's room for—the last time, Mr. Warrington if you please." "Most certainly. Nothing has been disturbed since you were here. I led the way into the room. She stood in the middle and looked around with a steady, scrutinizing gaze. "I will leave you for a moment," said I, considerably, and, half-closing the door, stepped into my room and sat down—to finish the statement of claim in Davey vs. Davey—nothing of the kind, but executed upon my heart-rug a silent exclamation, "I have gained for me a lucrative engagement at the Aquarium. After five minutes of this I composed my face and went back to the old gentleman's room, stumbling carelessly over the mat as I did so. She was apparently standing exactly where I had left her. It cost me all self-command to avoid glancing around the room. "Thank you," she said, sweetly. "I am so much obliged. I am very glad I came. You will not mention my visit to—" "You may depend upon my reticence," I said, with a bow, in which I flattered myself that I showed sincere devotion and an overabundant appreciation of her affection for her uncle appeared to mingle. The moment, however, that I had got her out of the chambers, and the doors closed behind her, I sent Thomas off with a note and a blank paper to the Sergeant's room. There I stood in the middle, where my visitor had stood, and looked around everywhere. Quickly I opened the drawers, east my eye over them, felt behind them, as I expected, nothing. Then I procured a chair and a candle, and with a care and a minuteness that would have done credit to a Fonceu, I looked along the top of row after row of the call-bound books, that, on three sides, concealed the walls from the floor to ceiling. Two sides had I examined before I found what I had expected. Low down between the drawers and one of the windows it was, almost within reach of the writing table. Then I sat down on the floor, put the candle beside me, and took out my watch. Seven minutes passed before Thomas returned, and some one with him. "Ford! here I am; come in and