## The Lost Will.

A Story of Old Virginia.

CONCLUDED.

DERHAPS FRIEND COX saw it on my face and thought it had better be broken abruptly.

"Thee comes to say that the will is lost, friend John?" she said.

"I came to saysir," looking in the fire, avoiding all eyes. "Gone. Sholter, as proxy for Saturel Pierse, takes possession of the plantations to morrow."

"And the people?" cried Hester, start-

"They are all to be transferred to the place in Georgia."

Sold ?"

"No; not immediately."

The girl burst into tears, pacing the floor. "My own people! They were kind to me when no one else was kind-not even my own mother! Old Maumer! that nursed me in her arms! They shall not go! They shall not !"

"Cannothing be done?" said Friend Cox, half-crying.

" Nothing ! I proposed taking the house servants off Sholter's hands; but 'he would.

"Hester forgets her own loss," she said in a whisper.

"I do not," the girl stopped. "It is unjust. God knows I feel that ! I am no meek saint. But I can help myself. What can they do-my poor people? You think me silly, perhaps; but they were all I had to love for years!" her face growing crimson as she looked at Bob.

A silence followed. Bob leaned his head on the window-pane. The girl paced to and fro, controlling herself.

"Hester," said the Quaker, at last, "I see but one hope for thy house people. It may be that, in time, this man Pierse will relent, and dispose of them to me or friend John here. Then it will all be right. Thou art my child now, thee knows?"

"Except my share in her," I said.

Hester was near the old lady. She turned impulsively and threw her arms about her. "You know I thank you both !" Her voice was clear enough now. "But, listen to me. I have made up my mind. My Father, nor his daughter, ever took back a promise, and I have made one in my heart to my people. I can not be dependent on you-on any one. I will earn my own bread, Friend Cox, and, after a time, I'll buy them back." Friend Cox smiled and smoothed her hair. But I saw the fashion in which the girl's lips closed, and knew she would keep her word.

Bob Johns pushed away the curtain and came up to the hearth. I don't think he remembered that I or the old lady were there: he saw, spoke to Hester only.

"Do you know what I think of myself, Hetty?" he said in a tone whose bitterness seemed to come scalding out of his heart. "Do you see me standing here-a man of twenty-five ignorant, penniless years, and chances squandered! when I ought to have been strong to help you and these wretched souls? Squandered! God help me!" He covered his face with his hands. She put hers trembling on his shoulder. "I've a strong arm yet, and a strong will!" he broke out, catching the little hand. " You work ! Never ! if there is any trace of manhood left in me! I can dig if nothing better! Hetty! Hetty! Make a man of me! Let me work for you! Give yourself to me now! I have been. Only believe in me-believe in me !"

"I do-I always did, Robert, You shall work for me. But not together. Let us try our strength first. Let me do something for my people." The girl's strength was giving way. She grew pale trembling. "Come, child," said Friend Cox, "thee

has borne enough. To-morrow we will talk this matter over," and led her from the

Bob Johns and I soon after took our leave. Friend Cox had upbraided me with too lax a manner in dealing with young people. I thought this a good time to reform. So as we rode down the avenue, I began in a tone calculated in itself to carry conviction.

"Young man, you might have been prepared for this. I have warned you of the helpless, inefficient thing you were making our host's champagne. of yourself, time and again, but to no purpose. A more stiff-necked, hardened youth | Page," he said; "did you know? May I in following his own idle fancies never fell under my control. What can I do now ?"

"Well, Uncle John," said Bob, turning his face with a miserable smile, "you might as well just call me 'Bob' again, and let me work out my own salvation. Little Hetty's tears have preached more to me tonight than all your counsel."

"Bob, you're a reprobate," I answered. "However, we'll try and have you admitted next month, and I can throw a good deal in your way the first term."

Somehow I had no doubt of Bob's earnestness and perseverance, nor was I disappointed. He "took hold," as the Pennsylvanians say, of work and study, gave up wine and eards with scarcely an effort. After all, a man must have stimulant. Bob had found the purest earthly strength-giver the hope of working for a heart that loved

She did love him, httle Hetty. Loved the windows.

him enough to work at her task cheerfully' trustfully. She worked hard, no shrinking or make believe. She was employed as a teacher in Richmond, and a good thorough little teacher she made by-the-way. Friend Cox would not give her up altogether, so kept her with her; and every dollar the girl owned was laid up for the one great purpose, to bring back her "people" to their old home.

Years passed. Strange enough, you think, that two true, honestly loving bearts should be kept apart for years by the want of dollars and cents. Yet I have known such things happen more than once in novels, if not in real life.

Now comes the unusual part of my story. Immediately after the property passed into the hands of Samuel Pierse and his agent, the negroes were sent, as I before stated, to Georgia, and the house offered for rent. An Alabamian planter and his family took it, who were spending the winter in Richmond. He leased it, he informed me, for two years. I was surprised, therefore, when I met him in the reading-room of one of the hotels a month after and learned that he had removed to town. "The house was unpleasant." Very soon after another tenant occupied it; but only for a few weeks. Another followed, and another. Strange stories began to be bruited about of noises and lights unnatural, and not to be accounted for by any rational theory. The negroes talked; the white tenants themselves, half-ashamed, whispered mysteriously, said it was nothing, but presently decamped. Sholter was in despair. Satan himself was in the house, he said. Other people said it was only the ghost of old Pierse. To make a long story short, things went from bad to worse, until the house was utterly deserted a year after Pierse's death.

So it stood for about five years. In the meantime Bob Johns had been gradually taking his place among the reliable thorough members of the Virginia bar. 1 belped him to practice, of course; so did Brady; so did everybody. But he helped himself most. Earnest, eager, throwing himself into every cause as if the cause were his own, and gaining every day a deeper, more subtle knowledge of the science of jurisprudence, Bob Johns bade fair to rank among our highest jurists. He came to me one day, as I was leaving the office, and leaned over the back of my chair in his old boyish way. "Uncle Page," for he had a fashion of calling me this when anything touched him, "uncle Page wish me

I looked up and said, "Hester has re-

"Not altogether. She will be my wife; but she will persist in helping me bring back the servants. God knows when we will be able to accomplish it. Hetty had a scrawl from uncle Joe, last week, that would touch your heart. We'll have to struggle hard enough, but we'll get on, I don't fear." Neither did I, looking in his

The wedding I learned was to be in a month. It so happened, that very night, that I was riding out past the Pierse plantation. I called Pine up to me as we reached the house.

"I thought, Pine," I said, "that house was vacant now?"

"So 'tis, Mars' John. Lord save us, see

"Certainly. Sholter must have a temant

"Not a tenant. De house am haunted, You shall see me other than the idle wretch | dem ignorant niggers say. No truf in dat, ov course."

> "Very well, Pine, suppose you ride up and see about the light. It only would be right to give Sholter notice if the house is tenanted by vagrants. The furniture is there just as Pierse left it."

Pine turned a sickly yellow.

"Mars' Sholter's no friend of mine. Guess I'll not go if marster'll 'xcuse me."

There never was a more arrant coward, I well knew than Pine. His horse kept in advance of mine a few paces out to the country house where I was going to dine Coming home, I was joined by Brady. We jogged along together, slowly, for the road was muddy. Arriving near the Pierse house, I perceived the light again, and pointed it out to him. Brady was a young man, reckless, and, to be honest, excited by

"They say that house is haunted, Mr. never die if I don't go up and have a bout with old Pierse's ghost !"

He turned his horse to the roadside, hitched him to the fence and began to cross the field.

"Come back, Fred," I cried. But he would not. "Well then, I'm with you," I said, and followed, determined to see it

What would the junior members of my law-school have said if they had seen me lumbering over a stubble-field at midnight in search of a ghost? However, they did not see it, and impelled by some boyish whim breaking out under my gray hairs, I pushed on, followed by Pine, his teeth chattering. "Gor-a-mighty," he said, "old Mars' is done cracked! Hope he'll pay for dis in his gouty too !"

We reached the house at last. Brady scrambled up the porch and peeped in

"Old Pierse has met with congenial com-pany, if his ghost is about," he whispered, coming down. "Though I thought the woman led him such a termagant dance as he wouldn't care to repeat."

What woman, Brady?'

"The mulatto-don't you recollect?that he kept as housekeeper, and who ruled the old wretch with a rod of iron."

impossible. He sold her a year before he died to a Louisana trader.'

Et he did, Mars' John," said Pine, taking courage, when he found the conversation was reasonably un-diabolic, "she comed back. Ole Kit you mean? Fore old Pierse died she was hangin round the swamps, they say, an I heard got in an saw him once when none knowed it but Jake. After the rumpus bout dat box he wor feared to tell."

The same thought struck us all. Pine, forgetting his fears and rheumatism, climbed up and peeped in. "It's Kit," he said, descending. "She's sittin' in style there."

"Mr. Page said Brady, "will you ride into town and bring out a couple of policemen? I will be better able to keep watch if she have any accomplices."

An hour after Kit and a big strapping boy, her son, were safe in custody. The boy was recognized as Beefsteak Jim, a notorious thief in the neighborhood. Under cover of the reputation of the house as haunted, the woman had now occupied it for years unharmed.

While the magistrate was committing them to jail, Brady and I held a short consultation in my office, determining on what course to pursue with the woman, to ascertain if she were an accomplice of Sholter in destroying the will.

Early the next morning we went to her cell. She was an old negro, with high cheek bones and sallow eyes, denoting Indian blood, and more than Indian crafti-

"Before the death of your Master Pierse," I said, (assuming the assertant scheme for extracting evidence), "you got into his chamber alone, and terrified him into confessing that his will was made and hid in a box under the mattress. You carried the box off and concealed yourself and it somewhere in the house, until after the funeral was over." I saw by the woman's face I had guessed correctly, and despite her oaths and curses persisted, threatening her with the utmost punishment of the law if she refused to confess. Aided by Brady and the magistrate, I succeeded in eliciting the truth. She had not acted as Sholter's agent. We had wronged him there. Partly to revenge herself on Hester for having caused her dismissal, partly to ensure the house as her own hiding-place, she had devised and carried out the plan. Under the granaries there was a secret cellar, communicating with the house by a passage in the wall. In this cellar, of which she only was cognizant, she had concealed herself, and by means of the hidden passage had produced the unnatural lights and noises that had brought upon the house the name of

"oneanny." "But the box ?" said I, eagerly.

"What will you give me if I tell you?" she demanded, her beady eyes sharpening. "Liberty, and a pass to Ohio," I 're-

"I couldn't burn or break it," she said. moodily. "I tried, Lord knows. It's here in the cellar."

It was there safe enough; and when we opened the rusty lock with the key which I had always retained, there lay the yellow paper that gave Hester Wray her own

For reasons that we had, our discovery was kept a secret from every one but Sholter, and Friend Cox, who, for the first time in her life, I suppose, became a partner in a conspiracy. It was a busy month for Brady, and Pine, and me. However, our work was accomplished in time. The wedding night arrived, clear and starlit, A quiet wedding, being at the house of a friend, yet full of deep content. Little Hester's cheeks were paler, it might be, than five years before; but the grave smile in her eyes was more constant and pure. As for Bob, he had worked long years for his Rachel, you saw the marks of that on his face; but you saw, too, that Rachel satisfled the innermost want of his soul. So we had a happy, holy wedding; one which, I doubted not, the God of the orphan girl could smile on and bless.

When it was over, when the tears and good wishes were past, and the suppertable (ah ! what cooks these Friends have !) attended to, I joined the group where the bride and groom stood.

"You are going to the North for your bridal tour?" I asked.

"To Canada. Yes, uncle Page," said Hester, blushingly claiming share in Bob's relationship.

"I have a favor to ask you. It's ten o'clock now, and the train you travel in leaves at twelve. Let me carry you off to pay a visit.'

'Isn't it a little unreasonable?" said Bob, glancing at the wondering faces.

"Not a bit. Thee must go-thee must go," hurried out Friend Cox.

She and Brady entered the carriage with us, leaving her husband to explain. When we drove in the gates of the Pierse plantation, little Hetty began to tremble. " Why do we come here?" she asked. "It hurts five dollars."

me to remember my people, and

I hurried her out of the carriage as it stopped. "Only some friends," I said, "who want to wish you joy, Hester.

She stopped; some quick thought flashed over her face, and, in her old impetuous way, she sprang up the steps and opened the door.

The lighted hall was crowded with black faces bright with joy. We heard a tumult of laughter, and shouts, and weeping. "Uncle Page, this is your doing," said

Bob, "No Canada now; this is better."

I pointed to the hall table where lay the abestos box. Hester heeded it but little. "Oh! Maumer-all of you," she sobbed, "thank God! You are all here to-night."

Old uncle Joe held her by the hand. "Hush !" he said, in a husky voice, kneeling down. "Let us give thanks unto de name ob de Lord!"

### One of Mr. Lincoln's Merciful Acts.

Cel. Forney tells the following in the Washington Sunday "Chronicle," among his interesting "Anecdotes of Public Men:" "While I was secretary of the Scnate

there was scarcely an hour during any day that I was not called upon to help somebody who had friends or kindred in the army, or had business in the departments, or was anxious to get some poor fellow out of the Old Capitol Prison. These constant appeals were incessant demands upon the oooo time of a very busy man, but a labor of love, and I am glad to remember that I never ooo o and I am glad to remember that I never undertook it reluctantly. One day an energetic lady called on me to take her to the President and aid her to get a private sol-President and aid her to get a private soldier pardoned, who had been sentenced to very next morning. We were much press- 0 0 0 0 ed in the Senate, and she had to wait a 0 0 0 long time before I could accompany her to 0 0 0 0 when we got there, and the Cabinet was 00000000000000000000000 still in session. I sent in my name for Mr. Lincoln, and he came out evidently in profound thought and full of some great subject. I stated the object of our call, and leaving the lady in one of the aute-chambers, returned to the Senate which had not yet adjourned. The case has made a deep 0 0 0 0 impression on me, but I forgot it in the excitement of the debate and the work of my office, until perhaps near 10 o'clock that night, when my female friend came rushing into my room, radient with delight, with the pardon in her hand. "I have been up there ever since," she said. "The Cabinet adjourned, and I set waiting for the President to come out and tell me the fate of my poor soldier, whose case I placed in his hand after you left; but I waited in vainthere was no Mr. Lincoln. So I thought I would go up to the chamber of his Cabinet and knock. I did so; and, as there was no answer, I opened it and passed in, and there was the worn President asleep, with his head on the table resting on his arms. and my boy's pardon at his side. I quietly waked him, blessed him for his good deed, and came to tell you the glorious news. You have helped me to save a human life."

This is the material if not for solemn history at least for those better lessons which speak to us from the lives of the just and

## A Singular Case.

In the Summer of 1866, in Luzerne Valley, Pa., Mark Wilson and Miss Wallace, a lovely girl of eighteen, had been engaged for some months, when she suddenly jilted him, and without explanation forbade him to enter her house. Wilson plunged into dissipation, and rapidly lost his character, his business, and his small means. He was frequently heard, with fevered energy, to lay his ruin at her door, and vowed revenge with the most determined bitterness .-Shortly after he made preparations to leave for Europe, but before doing so by some means persuaded the girl to take a drive with him. He gave out at the livery stable that he was going to an occasional picnic resort, in a wild gorge among the neighboring hills. Neither of them returned, and days after the body of the girl, stabbed to death with a pocket knife, sworn to as Wilson's was found in the turbid water of a brook that threaded. " Picnic Gorge."-She was buried in an agony of sorrow, by her loving parents, and the day after the funeral Mrs. Wilson, nec Miss Wallace, returned from New York with her newlywedded husband. Who the murdered girl was, and how a knife like that of Mark Wilson's came in her heart, the most rigid investigation never could discover.

Blarney.

"Ah, Jemmy, Jemmy," said the Bishop of Derry to a drunken blacksmith, "I'm sorry to see you beginning your evil course again : and Jemmy, I am very auxious to know what you intend to do with that fine lad, your son?"

"I intend sir," said Jemmy, "to do for him what you cannot do for your son." "Eh, ch! How's that-how's that?"

To which Jemmy, with a burst of genu-ine feeling, said, "I intend to make him a better man than his father!"

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