

How the Will was Found.

THE scenes which I am about to describe occurred about the year 1860, to a respectable family by the name of Culverton, in Orange county, New York.

The Culvertons had lived in the family mansion and enjoyed the revenues of the family estate for many years without the slightest doubt that they had a right to it, when suddenly there started up, from goodness knows where, an individual who laid claim on the property, and seemed likely to prove his claim to all but the Culvertons themselves.

It was certain that Jabez Hardy was the nearest relative, and certain that Mr. Culverton was only grand-niece of Hiram Hardy, deceased; but the Culvertons had lived with the old man for years, and he had promised time and again, to leave them everything. He had even declared that his will was made in their favor; and that such a document was actually in existence, Mr. Culverton could not doubt; but diligent search had been made in vain, and Jabez Hardy, whom the old man had never seen, was to take the place of people he loved so fondly and who had been his comfort in his last hours.

"It was a shame!" said every one. "A cruel wicked thing!" sobbed Mrs. Culverton.

And Mr. Culverton, who had never expected a reverse, was quite crushed as the pending law-suit progressed.

A thousand times a day he said: "How providential it would be if Uncle Hiram's will would only turn up at this moment."

"I wonder how he rests, poor man with such injustice going on."

But no matter what they said, or how they managed, no will was found and Jabez Hardy rubbed his hands in triumph.

It was strange that while things were in this condition, one so deeply interested as Mrs. Culverton could dream of anything else, but dream she did, night after night, of an entirely different subject.

Inevitably, for a week at least, she had no sooner closed her eyes than she found herself in an intelligence office full of employees of all ages and nations, and face to face with a girl of small stature, with white Scotch features, and singular blue eyes wide apart and staring, who desired the situation of a cook.

At first she did not like the girl, but in every dream her aversion seemed to vanish. After a few minutes' conversation, the girl looked up at her and said:

"I'd like to hire with you, ma'am." It was always the same office—always the same words uttered—until Mrs. Culverton began to think there must be something in the dream.

"Though it can't come true," she said, "for while Johanna remains here I shall never hire another cook."

And just as she said this there was a scream in the kitchen, and the little errand girl ran in frightened out of her senses, to tell how Johanna, lifting the wash boiler, had fallen with it and scalded herself.

Mrs. Culverton followed the little girl to the kitchen, and found Johanna in a wretched condition; the doctor being sent for she was put into bed and declared useless for her domestic capacity for at least a month to come. A temporary substitute must be had, and Mrs. Culverton, that very afternoon went to New York to find one at the intelligence office.

Strange to say that in the bustle she had quite forgotten her dream, until she suddenly stood face to face with the girl she had seen in it—a small young woman with very singular blue eyes, in a white face, and whose features betrayed Scottish origin. She had risen, this girl from a seat in the office, and stood before her twisting her apron strings and courtesying.

"I would like to hire with you, ma'am," she said.

The very words of her dream. Mrs. Culverton started, and in her confusion could only say:

"Why?" The girl blushed. "I don't know," she said, "only it seems to me I'd like to live with you."

It seemed a fatal thing to Mrs. Culverton, but she put the usual questions and received the most satisfactory answers except as to references.

"But I can't employ you without references," said Mrs. C. knowing that fate had decreed that this girl should take a place in her kitchen.

"If you can't I must out with it," said the girl. "There is my lady's name, ma'am. She will tell you I am honest and capable; but she turned me off for frightening the family."

"How?" asked Mrs. Culverton.

"Seeing ghosts!" replied the girl. "Every day I saw a little child in white playing about the house, and all said there was no such a child there, though there had been once, but he was dead. Mistress said I pretended to see it for the sake of impertinence, and she discharged me, but I knew by her trembling that she had thought I had seen a ghost. I went to a doctor and he called it optical delusion, and it would pass away; and sure enough, I have not seen it since I left the house."

It was a queer story, but Mrs. Culverton

believed it, and before she left the office had hired Jessie to fill Johanna's place for the space of one month from that day. That evening she appeared and went to work with a will.

Dinner time passed pleasantly, and tea time came. The Culvertons never ate anything but a biscuit or cake at this meal, and cups were handed about in the sitting room. Jessie came in at the appointed hour with her tea, served every one, and stood smiling before Mrs. Culverton, as she said:

"Please ma'am let me pass you, the old gentleman has not yet been served. "Yes sir, in a minute."

"The—old gentleman?" cried Mrs. Culverton.

"Yes, ma'am—behind you in the corner there, please."

"There's no gentleman, young or old, there," said the lady. "I can't imagine what you took for one."

The girl made no answer, but turned quite white and left the room. Mrs. Culverton followed.

At first she could extort no explanation, but by-and-by the girl declared she saw an old gentleman sitting in an arm-chair in the corner, who beckoned to her, and she fancied was in a hurry for his tea.

"What did he look like?" asked Mrs. Culverton.

"He was thin and tall," said the girl, "his hair was white and very long, and I noticed that one of his knees looked stiff, and he had a thick gold headed cane beside him."

"Uncle Hiram?" cried Mrs. Culverton, "upon my word you've described my great grand-uncle, who has been dead for twenty years."

Jessie began to cry. "I shall never keep a place," she said, "You will turn me away now."

"See as many ghosts as you please," said Mrs. Culverton, "as long as you don't bring him before my eyes," and went back to her tea without saying a word to any one of the family on the subject, although she was extremely mystified.

Surely, if the girl had never seen her Uncle Hiram, which was not likely, considering that he had been dead nearly her whole life time, she must have seen something in the ghost line; and, if, indeed, it were Uncle Hiram's spirit, why should he not come and aid them in their trouble? Mrs. Culverton had always had a superstition hidden in her soul, and she soon began to believe this version of the case.

The next morning she went into the kitchen, shutting the door, she said to Jessie: "My good girl, I do not intend to dismiss you, so be frank with me. I do not believe these forms are optical illusions—I feel sure they are actual spirits. What do you think?"

"I think as you do, ma'am," said the girl. "Our folks have always seen ghosts, and grandfather had the second sight for ten years before he died."

"If you should see the old gentleman you told of again," said Mrs. Culverton, "besure and tell me; I'll keep the story from the young folks, and Mr. Culverton would only laugh at it; but you described my dear old grand-uncle, and my belief is you saw him."

The girl promised to mention anything that might happen to her mistress, and from that day an interchange of glances between them and a subsequent conference in the kitchen was of frequent occurrence.

The girl saw her apparition seated on the center table, walking in the garden; and so life-like was it that she found it impossible to refrain from passing plates and cups and saucers to it, to the infinite amusement of the people who saw only the empty air in the same spot.

By-and-by she invariably spoke of her ghost as the old gentleman; and was no more affected by his presence than by that of a living being. If it was an optical illusion, it was the most singular one on record.

But all this while—ghost or no ghost—the figure never did anything to help the Culvertons in their dilemma, and the law-suit was nearly terminated, without the shadow of a doubt, in Jabez Hardy's favor.

In three days all would be over; and the Culvertons, who had earned their property, if mortals ever did, by kindness and attention to their aged relative whom they truly loved and honored—would probably be homeless.

One morning Mrs. Culverton sat over her breakfast after the others had left the room, thinking of this, when Jessie came in.

"I have something to tell you, ma'am," she said. "There's a change in the old gentleman."

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Culverton.

"I've seen him twice at the foot of the bed in the night," said the girl, "and although he always, before me, has been kind and pleasant looking, now he frowns and looks angry. He beckons me to go somewhere, and I don't dare, in the night time."

"You must," said Mrs. Culverton, "I know he will come again, and I'll sit with you all night and go where you go. It may be of great use to all, Jessie."

"I shan't be afraid, ma'am, if I have company," said Jessie in the most matter-

of-fact manner, and then carried out the breakfast dishes.

All day they never spoke on the subject, but on retiring to bed, Jessie found her mistress in her bed-room wrapped in a shawl.

"I'm ready you see," she said, and Jessie merely loosened some buttons and hooks, and lay down dressed.

Ten o'clock passed—eleven—twelve. Mrs. Culverton began to doubt, but suddenly she saw Jessie's eyes dilate in a strange manner, and in an instant more, the girl said:

"Why, here he is, ma'am!"

"There's no one here," said Mrs. Culverton.

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I see him," said the girl. "He's in great excitement, ma'am, he's taking out his watch to look at, and the chain is made of such bright, yellow hair, I thought it was gold."

"His wife's hair," said Mrs. Culverton. "It was buried with him. You see old Uncle Hiram. Does he look at me?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Jessie.

"Uncle said Mrs. C., 'do you know me after so many years.'"

"He nods," said the girl.

"Have you come to help us, dear uncle?" said the lady.

Uncle Hiram was described as nodding very kindly and beckoning.

"He wants us to follow him," said the lady, and took up the light. The moment she opened the door, Jessie saw the figure pass through it. Mrs. Culverton still could see nothing.

Obedient to the girl's movements, Mrs. Culverton descended the stairs and entered the library.

The ghost paused before a book-case.

"He wants me to open it," said Jessie.

"Do so," said the lady.

"He signs to take down the books," said the girl.

And Mrs. Culverton's own hands went to work. Book after book was taken down—novels and romances, poems and plays.

A pile of volumes lay upon the library carpet and still the ghost pointed to the rest till they were all down.

"He looks troubled, ma'am. He seems trying to think," said the girl.

"Oh, ma'am, he's to the other case!"

And so, to cut a long story short, the four great book-cases were emptied without apparent result.

Suddenly Jessie screamed:

"He's in the air. He has risen, ma'am, to the top of the book-case. He wants to climb up."

"Get the steps, Jessie," said her mistress, and Jessie obeyed.

On the top of one of these cases, and covered with cobwebs, she found an old German book, and brought it down.

"This was there," she said. Mrs. Culverton took it in her hand and from between the leaves dropped a folded paper, fastened with red tape and sealed.

The lady picked it up and read on the outside these words:

"The last will and testament of Hiram Hardy."

For a little while she could only weep and tremble; soon she found words.

"Dear Uncle," she said, "in the name of my husband and my dear children, I thank you for my soul."

"Do you think he hears me, Jessie?"

"Yes, ma'am, he nods and smiles," said the girl.

"He has gone," said the girl. "He waved his hand and has gone."

And so he had gone for good, for from that moment he was never seen again by mortal eyes.

Anecdote of Judge Keys.

Elias Keys, in his old age, was a Judge of Windsor county, Vermont. He was a strange composition of folly and good sense of natural shrewdness and want of cultivation but honest and humane to the core. A poor ragged fellow was once brought before him and clearly convicted of having stolen a pair of boots from General Curtis, a wealthy man of the town of Windsor, on which occasion old Keys pronounced sentence as follows: "Well you are a fine fellow to be arraigned before a court for stealing. They say you are poor. No one doubts it who looks at you. And how dare you, being poor, have the impudence to steal a pair of boots? Nobody but rich men have a right to things for which they do not pay. And they say you are worthless. That is evident from the fact that nobody has asked justice to be done you, all, by unanimous consent, pronounced you guilty before you were tried. Now you being worthless, were a fool to steal, because you might have known you would be condemned. And you must know that it was a great aggravation to your offence that you stole them in the large town of Windsor! And not only go into that large and important town to commit such a horrible act but you must steal from that great man General Curtis! This caps the climax of your iniquity. Base wretch! why did you not go and steal the only pair of boots which some poor man had, or could get? You might then have been let alone. The great town would not have been convulsed. For your iniquity in stealing in the great town of Windsor, and from the great General Curtis, the court sentences you to three months imprisonment in the county jail. And may God take care of you beyond that!"

SUNDAY READING.

The Boy John.

S. C. Kendall says some very true and suggestive things about "The Boy John," in the April number of Scribner's. We quote as follows:

John is young. His tastes are unformed. His feelings are very far from being refined. In fact he is a little gross in his sympathies. He wants amusement. Every bone in his body aches for recreation, for play, fun, laughter. He does not care—he has never been taught to care—what the fun is, if only it will give relief to the fidget that stings him. Not at all refined, he will go for what he wants where others go. And going where others go, he finds the hunger of his nature coarsely met—just as the tainted meat will fill the hunger of a starving man—in the low revelry, vile stories, unclean mirth of drinking cellars and saloons. The boy does not discriminate very closely, and to the longing of his crude appetite, the entertainment of these places is infinitely better than any he ever could find in that place he has been taught to speak of as home. For eating and sleeping and getting his clothes mended, he feels that no place can be like a Christian home, but for a good time, for passing a dull evening hour, for learning something new, for words of cheer, for professions of sympathy, for those genial ways which any boy but a Uriah Heep must love, John will tell even a minister to his face that home is nothing to a street or corner, or a billiard room with the attachment of a beer shop.

Well, by and by, just before the clock strikes ten, the father wakes from his doze, the spectacles falling and the paper sliding upon the floor, and looking around with a bewildered gaze, asks, "Where is John?"

Where is he? Why, for want of better instruction, he is out practicing our modern plan of training himself up in the way he likes to go, having no thought that when he is old he will care to depart from it. But the father who has inquired for his boy rubs his eyes looks out into the darkness and listens; but he hears him not. He wishes that his boy would go out so much at nights; but then he does go out. He wonders that John cannot sit down at home like other boys. What other boys? And then, with a very feeling remark that, "If John does not do better and become steady, he will make a miserable shirk of himself," the father goes to bed. The mother waits till her boy comes.

By and by he does come in,—his restlessness blown off, the uneasy fidget of the early evening spent in the relaxations which, of some kind, a boy must have,—and then at last the house is quiet. Sleep and rest prepare the household for another day and evening like this.

And when an other evening comes, out goes the boy again; and the father again wonders, and wishes that John would be steady and stay at home, and very feelingly predicts that, "If he does not change his course; he will very likely come to a miserable end."

But, good father, why should your boy spend his evenings at home? What is there at home for him? What pleasant recreation, what happy plan for whiling away the hour, does he find inviting him there, or that would invite any boy there? What have you done to make home attractive and winsome to him as John's home? He would like amusements suited to his young, restless, brimming nature; how much real thought and care did you ever give in schemes, devices, plans, efforts, with a view of meeting this passionate yearning of his mind? How much do you play with him, talk with him of what you have done and seen, of what your father did and saw? What games, what sports, what efforts at skill with slate and pencil, with knife, saw and gimlet, have you devised for him, while your look and action were saying, "My boy, I want you to love your home more than any spot on earth?"

Punishment of Envy.

An eastern potter, it is said, became envious of the property of a washerman, and to ruin him, induced the king to order him to wash one of his black elephants white, that he might be "lord of the white elephant," which in the East is quite a distinction. The washerman replied that, by the rule of his art, he must have a vessel large enough to wash him in. The king ordered the potter to make him such a vessel. When made it was crushed by the first step of the elephant in it. Many times was this repeated; and the potter was ruined by the very scheme he had intended should crush his enemy.

The words which Walter Scott put into the mouth of Jennie Deans, in her memorable address to the Queen, are as true as they are beautiful: "When the hour of trouble comes—and seldom may it visit your ladyship—and when the hour of death comes to high and low—long and late may it be yours, O my lady!—it is not what we have done for others, that we think on most pleasantly."

If we stop the first lie, we stop all the rest. If we are not disobedient the first time, we shall never be disobedient.—It is doing the first sin that does all the mischief.

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