

His Only Chance.

"I DON'T see why it would be very wrong for me to know what is in the will."

The speaker was a bright, handsome girl of seventeen—Rena Crocker—the grand-daughter of old Steven Crocker, whose death a day or two before had brought sorrow to few hearts. Two grandchildren—Horace Wharton and Rena—were his only relatives and constituted his family.

"I don't see how it would be any harm" continued Rena, "as I wouldn't do anything but read it, and there's no knowing how it might be tampered with by that rascally cousin of mine before it is read next Saturday."

Rena was alone in her chamber. To think was to act with her. She knew that a will, drawn up and signed by the old man a year before his death, was in a desk in the dingy old library.

"But I'm no better off than before," she muttered. "I can't open it."

It was useless to peep into its fold—only detached words could be seen. But Rena was not inclined to be baffled in her curiosity. And she was as fertile in resources as the wildest of her sex.

"The miserable old dotard!" she cried.

The cause of her displeasure was the unpleasant and surprising fact that her grandfather had not left her a solitary cent. Every particle of his ample fortune went to Horace Wharton.

After the first gust of rage had somewhat subsided she sat down to quietly think the matter over. There seemed but one way to retain any portion of the fortune, and that was by marrying her cousin Horace.

"But five days remain before the opening of the will," she mused, "before that time I must lure Horace into an offer of marriage."

About the time that Rena was gaining her surreptitious knowledge of the contents of the will, her wealthy cousin Horace was seeking after precisely similar information. Betaking himself to the office of Harmon Nesbit, the lawyer who had been intrusted mainly with the legal business of his grandfather, he found that gentleman alone.

"You drew up my grandfather's will, did you not?" he asked.

"Yes."

"How long ago?"

"About six months. He had prepared one a year ago, but this makes an entirely different disposition of the property."

"And what is that disposition?"

The lawyer smiled.

"I have no right to tell you," he said.

"But you would tell me if sufficient reasons were advanced?"

"Would two hundred dollars convince you?"

"No."

"Five hundred?"

"Yes."

Horace counted out the sum from his pocket-book, which he had filled for exactly this contingency, and the lawyer took it, carefully counted it, and transferred it to his own wallet.

"Now," he said, "you may prepare yourself for the worst possible news. You are, by this will, cut off from every dollar of your grandfather's estate."

"You are certain of this?"

"Of course I am. I drew the will, and saw it signed. The previous will left all to you, but your grandfather was whimsical. There came a change in his feelings, caused by some real or fancied misconduct of yours, and so he left all to your cousin Rena."

Horace was angry. He cursed his dead relative roundly, until the lawyer reminded him that curses were useless.

"But what can I do but curse?" he asked.

"I'll tell you. The will is to be read on Saturday—five days from this. In the meantime ask Rena to marry you."

"But she wouldn't do it, she hates me."

"It's your only chance, and is worth the trial."

"Couldn't you destroy this last will?"

"No, it is not in my possession. The old man had it among his papers somewhere; and, besides, there were two honest witnesses. Has your cousin a lover?"

"No, I think not."

"Then, believe me, your best and only chance is to play for the fortune through marrying her."

"Well," said Horace, with very little hope in his tone, "it's a mighty slim chance, but I'll try it," and went away.

That afternoon the cousins met in the parlor. Each greeted the other with a cordiality long unknown in their cousinly intercourse. They even chatted pleasantly congratulating themselves upon the manner in which they were opening the game.

"You must be quite oppressed with the gloom of this old house," said Horace, as he was about to go, "and I think a ride might do you good. I will be pleased to take you this afternoon if you would do me the honor."

"Nothing would please me better," replied the beauty, with a winning smile.

The ride was had. Each of the plotters endeavored to be agreeable. Horace was bland and attentive. Rena sat distractingly close to him, was as amiable as a woman knows how to be when she tries, and used her matchless eyes with killing effect. They dined on the road, and returned in the evening. And when they parted for the night Rena allowed Horace, for the first time in her life, to kiss her.

This great change in their demeanor toward each other should have aroused mutual suspicion, but it didn't. They were blinded by the glitter of the golden stake.

During the next day Horace remained nearly all day in the house, and in the society of his cousin. He proposed going to the theater in the evening, but Rena urged the impropriety of so doing. Their grandfather's recent death would make it highly improper in the eyes of their friends.

"But we can go to Brooklyn," suggested Horace, "nobody will know us there."

To which the beauty assented, and Horace kissed her. She didn't resent his impudence. On the contrary, her lips clung to his in a gentle, thrilling rejoinder.

They went to the theater, grew confidential and loving, and supplemented their good-night kisses with a hug.

"I'm progressing tremendously," thought Horace. "To-morrow I will propose to her."

"I'm bringing him round famously," thought Rena. "He will come to the point in a day or two."

And come to the point he did on the following Friday—the day before the opening of the will. He swore undying love for her. She affected surprise; was sufficiently coy for appearance, but confessed to an ardent passion for him. Both lies found believing ears. After a large amount of the hugging and kissing which an occasion like this demands, they discussed the practical details.

"I am impatient for the happy event," he said squeezing her hand.

"And so am I," she replied, returning the pressure gently.

"But grandfather's recent death—"

"Both grandfather," pouted Rena.

"Couldn't we manage it somehow?"

He feared for his chances when she learned that he was penniless.

"We can try."

She was only anxious to have it settled before he discovered her poverty.

"I'll tell you, Rena," he said, as if struck by a new idea, "we might get married privately, and keep it a secret until a becoming amount of time has elapsed."

"As you please, dear Horace."

"When shall we have the ceremony performed?"

"As soon as possible—that is, I mean as soon as you desire it."

"To-morrow morning?"

"Yes."

Two happier people than the cousins didn't go to bed that night. Each was self congratulatory and triumphant.

In the morning they went in a carriage to a minister unknown to either and were married.

"Why, it's one o'clock?" said Horace as they re-entered the carriage. "We have just time enough to go to the surrogate's office and have grandfather's will read."

They arrived there to find several lawyers and the executors assembled. One of the latter was speaking. He held some documents in his hand.

"Here are three will," the first, leaving his property to Horace Wharton, was made about a year ago. The second, dated six months later, leaves the estates to Rena Crocker. The third and last, dated three months ago, leaves all to charitable institutions. Of course, only the last is valid—the others are of no consequence."

Rage and blank amazement filled the faces of the plotting cousins; but they could do nothing. They rode disconsolately home in the carriage. They unburdened themselves of their real sentiments toward each other. They expressed the most cordial and mutual hatred for each other. And they unanimously agreed to regard the marriage ceremony as null and void.

For the Bloomfield Times.

Knights of Pythias.

MR. EDITOR—Being in town on the 22d of Feb., I walked over to the Court House hearing there was a man there who was talking about the boy of "little hatchet" notoriety. On entering I found the speaker was speaking words of cheer to the Knights of Pythias in particular and Secret Societies in general. His theme as far as I could learn was a eulogy on those societies. He said the Church of Christ was slow in its movements or words to that effect, and therefore we must call to our aid as auxiliaries Odd Fellows, Masons, Pythian Brothers, etc. After listening awhile I fancied (under the influence created by so great eloquence) that I could almost see the bright cloud overshadowing us which was to receive the Pythian Brothers and their eulogist into regions of unalloyed bliss and leave us Galilean sinners stand gazing up into heaven without the consolatory promise that "they should so come again in like manner." One serious drawback to so great an event was that Amos had not furnished the needful for a journey of such magnitude!

One speaker said "Every person has secrets, every family has secrets, God has shrouded himself in secrecy." The speaker had evidently forgotten that secret things belong to God but those which are revealed to us and to our children. If I as an individual have secrets it concerns no one else to know them. My family secrets would benefit no one outside, if known. But here we have societies who maintain that they are of incalculable benefit to the community and hide themselves from the people. Do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? or do they put it on a candlestick for the purpose of giving light? Let your light so shine! If the secrets of my family would largely benefit the community I would be reprehensible for not divulging them. God has not shrouded himself in secrecy. He has revealed himself in his word—He was manifest in the flesh. O but say these Societies the only things secret about them are the grips, signs, etc., and these are secret as a matter of course, because if known every one would belong without paying etc. And so that is all, is it?

Where is William Morgan of western New York who was foully dealt with in 1826 because he announced his intention of publishing a book in which the secrets of Free Masonry were to be disclosed. His blood cries for vengeance to-day.

One of the speakers said we must judge them by their acts not by their secrets etc., and so judging I would send Belshazzar's hand to write over the door of every Lodge *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*.

If the secrets amount to nothing why make away with Morgan?

But you cry, "How benevolent they are?" The Catholic Church never showed more benevolence than when plotting treason! The Monks and Priests would walk about barefooted with a piece of old rope around them with all seeming humility, in public. While in private they were engaged in carrying out the "Gun Powder Plot," or carrying out something else for the purpose of overthrowing governments.

"Auricular Confession has been the mighty lever by which those things have been brought about. And does any one suppose that, if the Knights of Pythias or any other Secret Society had the majority, they would elect any one but a brother to office? Oakes Ames knows the benefit resulting from having friends at Court! Let not the community be deceived! These Societies who profess to be innocent now may at no distant day bind you hand and foot.

Look at this for a moment. A Mason before taking the third degree must take an oath that he will assist a Brother Mason whether right or wrong. And every Mason who has taken all the Degrees knows that to be a fact. Was there anything more corrupt in any of those mighty Republics which once flourished but are now no more?

One of the speakers cast some light on this subject by showing that a man lost his life by entering a burning building to rescue a Brother. There might have been a

thousand others perishing in that same building but his commission only reached a Brother. Christ says "if ye love them which love you what thanks have you, the Publicans do the same." I submit if Counterfeiters do not love Brother Counterfeiters? robbers brother robbers? conspirators brother conspirators?

These societies would have us heap fulsome laudations upon them for doing the very thing which God has commanded them not to do. Christ says "love your neighbor as yourself." Secret Societies say love a brother, whether right or wrong!! Christ says "as ye would that men should do to you do even the same to them."

Secret Societies change man to a Brother Mason, Odd Fellow, etc., and ministers are found who will eulogize them. But Cotton was king you know! Secret Societies are all the rage now and a man would endanger his precious popularity who could not stretch his conscience up to the eulogizing point. We live in an age of Church Fairs, Church Lotteries etc., and when in Rome we must do as Rome does or we might lose our standing!! Some men instead of braving public opinion when wrong, will servilely foudle upon it. Ministers especially should create and direct public opinion instead of blindly adoring it!

But said one speaker "We can trace Secret Societies back 6000 years—yes possibly to the garden of Eden," and if his memory had been more retentive he might have found evident traces of these pet Societies when the earth was without "form and void and darkness covered the face of the great deep."

We can trace murder back to the first family and Idolatry to a period little less remote.

They might have existed before the flood as the historian says "The earth was covered with violence."

Because Secret Societies have hoary heads does it follow that we should bow in adoration before them? Then must we bow at the shrine of idolatry. Then must we let murder go free!

But enough. I think it is soon time the American people would arise and pull down all those temples into which God's sunlight can not penetrate and drag those nocturnal devotees forth to public scrutiny.

ANTI SECRET SOCIETIES.

NOTE—"Anti Secret Societies" is evidently writing on a subject he knows little about. We have had some experience and knowledge in regard to those matters and do not fear the effect of a little criticism. We consequently give place to the above article. If our friend would join some of these societies he would be better able to form an opinion of their merits.

Eccentric Cats.

In the Plymouth Journal for the year 1828 a writer states that "there is now at the battery in the Devil's Point a cat which is an expert catcher of the fony tribe, being in the constant habit of diving into the sea and bringing up the fish alive in her mouth, and depositing them in the guard room for the use of the sailors." This remarkable cat was indirectly trained by her instructor to sport in this manner, having long been accustomed to dive into the sea after water rats. Her love for the water, says the writer, was as great as that of any Newfoundland dog. This anecdote proves how the nature of the beast may be changed by circumstances. No doubt, had she had kittens, and fish and water rats been the only food they could obtain, they might have followed the mother's curious habit, and in course of time, the instinct becoming hereditary, they might have been a race of sea diving cats.

Cats can reason—or put two and two together in a quiet way. Sam slick tells a tale touching this faculty which might not be believed were it not backed up by other irrefragable evidence. A servant continually entering the master's library upon the summons of the bell, and as continually told that it had not been rung, persisted in saying that he had heard it, the domestic began to suspect that the house was haunted; and so it turned out to be—not by a ghost, however, but by a cat, who, wishing the company of her master, and not being able to gain admission by reason of the closed door, must have noticed that when a certain bell within her reach was rung it was opened by the servant. Puss, noticing cause and effect, used to ring the bell, and always ran to the door and entered when the servant did—the fact of the simultaneous entry leading, of course, to the discovery of her cunning trick.

This, it will be said, was but a Sam Slickism; but here is a still cleverer trick, which is related of an Angor cat belonging to a Carthusian monastery at Paris. This cat having observed that the cook always answered a certain bell, just before the dinner portioned out in plates were served out to the monks, leaving them in consequence unprotected, had wit enough to take advantage of this fact—for she used to ring the bell outside the kitchen door, watch the cook of guard, spring through the window, help herself to a portion, and then return before he had time to come back.

Remarkably Cheap Spense.

At Farelly, Dubuque county, Iowa, a few days since, a wood chopper named Wicks lost his spouse and a small sum of money. It seems that Mr. Wicks pursued his wife, found her in the company of one Charles Nash, and after pleading unsuccessfully for her return, actually sold her to Nash for \$10 and his expenses! And the woman has gone with the buyer to Hardin county.

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