

THE DEED MUST BE EXECUTED

OPINION OF JUDGE VOSBURG IN COBLEIGH CASE.

It was begun for the purpose of compelling the Executor to execute a Deed for a piece of land belonging to the Estate—he restrained on the ground that the price bid was not as high as the minimum amount fixed.

The following opinion was handed down yesterday by Judge A. A. Vosburg in the Orphans' court:

In the orphans' court of Margaret Cobleigh, deceased. The case presents many difficulties. The deposition of the late delayed somewhat, by the necessity of carefully examining the amount of testimony which has been taken by both of the contending parties, and as to certain points, this evidence is quite conflicting. The testatrix, in her will, which is duly probated in Will Book 12, page 229, provides, inter alia, as follows: "All the rest and residue of my estate, real, personal and mixed, I give, devise and bequeath to my son, E. J. Thomas, my stepson, John H. Powell, my daughters, Mary Jane Griffith, Elizabeth Davis, and Kate Powell, and my sons, Thomas J. Powell and David Powell, in equal parts, share and share alike, the said devisees to be allowed to hold said real estate as tenants in common and enjoy the same in undivided interest, to be agreed upon by all, otherwise the same shall be sold at public sale by my executor and the proceeds to be divided as above directed."

A certain piece of real estate in the borough of Taylor was included within the terms of this general devise; and as the devisees failed to agree, the attorney advertised this property to be sold at public sale, and the same was difficult in finding the facts, but there appears to be a misunderstanding as to what agreement was made between the parties in interest and the executor, about the sale of this real estate shortly before it was sold. It is contended upon the one side that all of the devisees made an agreement that the property should be bid up to at least eight thousand dollars, and that this would be no sale unless that figure was reached. Mr. Farr, the executor, testifies that he

"After you got down there, there was then any conversation about this matter of the price, and where did it take place?"

"It took place in the drug store. Mr. Edwards and myself went in, and we told David that like this, that there would be no sale unless it came to those figures."

"Repeat the figures over."

"A. \$8,000 to \$9,000."

He is corroborated by other witnesses. On the other hand there is evidence tending to show that the agreement was, that if the property went above \$8,000, it was to be let go, but if it sold for a like sum, it was to be sold. The devisees were to bid higher. Mr. Walker's testimony: "Then we said we will bid as high as \$8,000; if it goes any higher we will let it go, if it goes no higher we will bid it in. That was the final arrangement as I understood it there."

THE ONLY PARTIES.

The same witness also testifies that the four devisees who afterwards bid off the property, viz.: Thomas J. Powell, David J. Powell, Samuel Powell, and Kate Powell Evans, were the only ones who were parties to the agreement that the property should be bid up to \$8,000. He says: "Q. When it was agreed that these four should make the purchase? A. Well, that I can tell you, I am not sure when it was made, but when I arrived there, that four were to bid in the property; I asked Mrs. Davis, 'aren't you in this arrangement?' She said, 'No.' This testimony is also corroborated by other witnesses, but it is not necessary to quote from the evidence further. The property was then exposed to bid by the counsel for the executor, several bids were made, and the bidding off to the four parties named above, for the sum of \$6,200.00. The executor testifies that he called off at once that it was no sale, while other witnesses say that he simply stated that it went for too small a sum.

He conceded that the executor made some objection to receiving the money to be paid down by the purchasers, and that he finally yielded to the advice of his counsel and accepted a note from them. The money was afterwards tendered to the executor by the purchasers, but he refused to accept it, and also declined to execute and deliver a deed to them for the property they sold. There can be no doubt but that the buyers had a valid demand for a deed, and in their right in refusing to receive a deed, as well as in their right in calling off. Total sales, par value \$1,000,000. United States bonds were all unchanged on the last call.

The application to the court is in the form of a motion to compel the executor to execute a deed, and as such a proceeding is very unusual, we find much difficulty in discovering any precedents to guide us in the determination of this unfortunate controversy.

It needs no citation of authority for the proposition that fraud vitiates any transaction into which it enters; but the difficulty lies in the application of this rule in the present problem. Taking the plain letter of the law, the devices at whose instance he has taken his present position, and concluding for the moment the correctness of the evidence presented by them, we have the following stat of facts.

An agreement between all the devisees who own in common a piece of real estate, into which this plaintiff has the title in the present proceeding. Taking the plain letter of the law, the devices at whose instance he has taken his present position, and concluding for the moment the correctness of the evidence presented by them, we have the following stat of facts.

It is necessary to decide whether the executor for whom he was acting, and who refused to accept the down payment, but he thus plainly ratified the act of the attorney, proceeded to conduct the sale. After several bids, his counsel declared the property sold to the highest bidder, at the sum of \$8,000. The executor immediately gave notice that it was "no sale," but under the advice of counsel accepted a note for the cash payment required, the money being afterwards tendered by the purchaser.

MIGHT HAVE ADJOURNED.

The executor's counsel might perhaps have adjourned the sale without accepting the sum of \$8,000, but through some apparent misunderstanding, or it may be in a moment of unadvisedness, to the proper course to pursue when the bidding stopped, he declared the property sold to the present petitioners. It is not necessary to decide whether or not the executor for whom he was acting, and who refused to accept the down payment, but he thus plainly ratified the act of the attorney, and made it his own. He cannot, therefore, legally oppose the execution of a deed to the purchasers by reason of (in law) his own act. In the event of a sale, he said, the other devisees have been defrauded of this transaction, and they should be protected in this proceeding. This brings us to a question of remedies, as well as of rights. Is this refusal to deliver a deed to the purchasers, the proper remedy, even assuming that there has been such fraud upon the part of the purchasers as would deprive them of any of the advantages of their purchase, which do not now accrue?

As between the purchasers and the executor, representing the estate, the purchasers are entitled to receive the deed, because they were the highest bidders at the sale, the property was struck down to them, he accepted their note for the full purchase price. If the other devisees were allowed to assert any rights by intervention in this proceeding, we would be trying a collateral

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lens, which it seems to me does not properly arise.

I am of the opinion that any rights of the other devisees against the purchasing devisees should be tried out in a direct issue between them, either in an action of ejectment, by a bill in equity, or in some other appropriate proceeding. In *Mayer v. Senyard*, 7 W. N. C., 221, an action of ejectment was brought by the proper remedy to recover a property sold by an administrator, where there was an allegation of fraud and misconduct upon the part of the purchaser, who was the administrator of the estate. If the sale is void, the complaining devisees can assert their title in a proper proceeding; but the authority of the orphan's court to determine such a question is not clear. See *Disputed Old Peoples' Bank*, App., 129 Pa., 356.

I have purposely refrained from expressing any opinion as to the merits of the controversy between the devisees, as I do not feel that it can be legally and properly adjusted in this proceeding. In accordance with the views heretofore expressed, the prayer of the petitioners should be granted; and it is therefore ordered, adjudged and decreed that the note be retained and delivered by the executor, to the purchasers, for the land sold, upon the payment by them of the purchase money, within ten days from the date of the filing of this decree. The costs of this proceeding to be paid by the estate.

By the Court, A. A. Vosburg, P. J.

THE MARKETS

Wall Street Review.

New York, April 15.—The dimensions of the trading in Southern Railways, and any record ever before seen in New York Stock exchange. The total number of shares of common stock outstanding is 1,200,000. The dealings during the week were to the number of 4,500,000 shares. On April 21, the Morgan-Patterson deal was dealt in to the extent of 662,000 shares, during the struggle between the Morgan and Harriman interests in the transcontinental field. The market was very active, and the stocks dealing in a single stock until today. The tremendous volume of these dealings dwarfed the rest of the market and yet there were a number of stocks which were not so active, and which were only seen during periods of great speculative activity. The opening in Southern Railways was quiet enough and the opening bulge in Louisville was quiet enough and the opening points over last night awakened some momentous developments in the overnight reports of a settlement of the dispute for control of Louisville and Nashville. But the market was still very active, and the scrapping for stock had terminated and the scramble to get out by the smaller operators who had followed the deal carried it down to the lowest point. The market was still very active, however, left it at 127, a net loss of only a point. Southern Railway suffered at the last from profit-taking on the part of the professional speculators, which was not so evident in the stocks of the railroads, and the stocks of the oil companies. Southern Railway was also considered to be a misnomer, that the struggle for stock had terminated and the scramble to get out by the smaller operators who had followed the deal carried it down to the lowest point. The market was still very active, however, left it at 127, a net loss of only a point. Southern Railway suffered at the last from profit-taking on the part of the professional speculators, which was not so evident in the stocks of the railroads, and the stocks of the oil companies.

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