

The Battle for the Cedars.

BY PRESSLY W. MORRIS.

CONTINUED.

"YES, THEY ARE," answered the German plyingly. "Poor young woman! Her husband put her on board at Liverpool. I think her destination was Baltimore. That is about all I can tell you."

"Her husband's name was"—  
"Cashel. Mrs. Cashel was very much liked by all of us poor devils of sailors. I will never forget her, poor thing! She was a lady, and kind and gentle as an angel."

That was all the sailor knew. That the woman's name was Cashel, was sure, for she had proofs enough about her clothing to establish her identity. It was likewise with the infant's clothing.

And what could Farmer Lindsley do about the child? He could think of but one thing. That was to keep it. He could not search over two continents for its relatives.

So it came about that the Lindsleys adopted as their own the little waif that had been sent to them by the ocean.

It was a day in summer. Richard Ogden was walking slowly over toward the Lindsley farm-house. He was accompanied by his wife. Their faces were sad, for Farmer Lindsley was lying in his house, pale and still. The hand of death had fallen upon him.

It was ten years after the wrecking of the ship upon the coast.

Richard Ogden and his wife reached their destination. Entering the house of death they found there quite a collection of the rude people of the coast, among their own sons.

A hymn was sung, a prayer uttered, and then James Lindsley was carried out into the orchard, and laid to rest by another grave.

The other grave was that of his wife, who had died nearly a year previous to this time.

The clouds were heaped on James Lindsley's coffin, and then the little procession returned to the house. Many tears had been shed, for the kind-hearted farmer was beloved by every one that knew him. But the bitterest mourner was a little girl rather more than ten years of age. She wept piteously over the coffin, and clinging to Richard Ogden and his wife after all was over, continued to sob pitifully.

"Oh, what am I to do!" she cried, after they had reached the house. "Poor papa has left me alone!"

"Babara, you are not left alone," whispered Mrs. Ogden soothingly, bending over the girl. "Dear child, you are to go home with me, and I will take care of you."

Barbara was comforted in some degree, for she loved Mrs. Ogden dearly.— However, she could not entirely restrain her grief for the death of her "dear papa."

The assemblage dispersed, and Richard Ogden carried the still sobbing child to his house.

But the grief of childhood does not endure forever, and in the course of a few days Barbara was running about the residence of the Ogdens, bright and smiling, an occasional shadow falling on her face, however, when she remembered the death of her "dear papa" Lindsley.

She was a pretty child, with a slender and graceful form, and dark hair and eyes—a sweet little girl, who gave promise of a glorious womanhood. Need it be stated that she was the little babe grown taller, who had been saved from the wreck on that stormy night of a little more than ten years previous?— She was the same, and from that hour till the hour of his death James Lindsley had been a father to her.

One evening, a week after the funeral, Richard Ogden was seated in front of his house. The glories of the dying day were shining over land and sea. He could behold the ocean spread out calm and peaceful. Sea-birds winged their flight over the quiet waters. Banks of golden-hued clouds were piled up in the horizon, and the sails of a distant vessel were faintly outlined to view.

Barbara Lindsley came up the path that led toward the sea. She was about to enter the house when Richard Ogden called her.

"Barbara," he said.

The little girl walked to his side and stood waiting for him to proceed.

"Barbara, the will of your papa Lindsley has been read," Richard Ogden continued kindly, "and gives his property to you, appointing me his executor."

Barbara was wise beyond her years, so she comprehended—at least, all but the last word; and she guessed pretty well what that meant, from the others. Her face flushed and her eyes filled with tears.

"As I am not his own little girl, he was very kind," she murmured.

Richard Ogden stroked her hair.

"What would my little girl wish done with her property?" he asked gravely.

"Is there very much?" asked Barbara hesitatingly.

"Not a very great deal," Mr. Ogden replied. "I suppose five or six thousand dollars may be realized from it.— Does that seem like a great amount to you?"

"Yes, sir," Barbara murmured.— "Mr. Ogden"—  
The child stopped.

"Well, my dear?"

"If I could go to some school where I could learn a great deal, I would like it very much. Can I?"

Richard Ogden was a plain, practical, far-seeing man. He was not highly educated, but his common sense had caused him to see that Barbara was no common child, and the very thought that this would be her choice had prompted him to consult her. If he had held council with his neighbors, most, or perhaps all, would have advised him to save the child's money, and let her take her chance for obtaining knowledge with the rest of the children along the coast; a slim enough one was that, indeed!

But Mr. Ogden saw matters in a different light.

"I think you can go, my child," he said, in answer to the question Barbara had asked.

He entered the house, leaving her outside. He found his wife, and told her the child's choice.

"Certainly, she shall be sent to school," cried Mrs. Ogden. "Richard, rude people that we are, what little we know lifts us higher. But Barbara is purer and finer than common people.— I believe that her parents were wealthy and aristocratic, and some day her relatives may find her out. Give her an education so as to enable her to fill any station in life that may be hers. My idea is romantic, but neither absurd nor unlikely."

"No, not unlikely," said Richard Ogden gravely. "But, wife, if the girl is given a chance, she will make her way in the world, herself, I am satisfied."

"Ay," exclaimed Mrs. Ogden. "It would be like shutting my birds away from the sunshine to keep her in ignorance, with no better chance than she will have here."

Richard Ogden returned to Barbara.

"My dear," he said, "you are to have as good an education as any school in the land will afford."

So Barbara was sent away to a famous school in a distant city.

Honest, practical Richard Ogden managed to make the income from Barbara's money sufficient to support her, so that the principal was not troubled.

And the years sped on.

In the library, by a quaintly carved table, sat the master of The Cedars. He was busily engaged in writing.

In a certain sense the man was handsome; but, to the student of human nature, the face was not an attractive one. Cruel lines were there, and at times something about the thin red lips and white teeth suggested the cruelty of a tiger.

The master of The Cedars was proud and haughty. He had the manners of a gentleman, and was always elegantly dressed. Doubtless he had seen much of the world. Most people would feel themselves honored by his acquaintance.

His white hand was moving rapidly over the smooth surface of the paper, when a negro servant appeared bowing and showing his teeth in a grin.

"What is wanted?" asked the master of The Cedars, pausing from his writing.

The servant reached out a card.

"Gentleman's at de door, Massa Cashel, and him wants to see you."

The master of The Cedars laid down his pen.

"Show the man in," he said.

The servant turned away. In a short time he returned, ushering in a gentleman in neat apparel, with shining gold spectacles on his forehead.

"Are you Mr. Lionel Cashel?" he asked of the master of The Cedars.

"I am," was the reply. "Be seated, sir."

"Thank you. My name is Wylie, as you doubtless perceived by my card, of the firm of Wylie & Oldham, attorneys at law, Baltimore."

The lawyer's manner was straightforward and business-like. The master of The Cedars looked him in the face, paling just a little.

"I presume you have business with me, Mr. Wylie," he said. "If so, proceed."

The lawyer hesitated a little. Probably he was slightly embarrassed, man of the world though he was. His mission was rather an unusual and peculiar one—that of coolly demanding the splendid estate known as The Cedars, together with all other hereditaments, real, as well as personal property, that

had belonged to the deceased Herbert Cashel.

"Ahem!" coughed the lawyer. "My business is somewhat unpleasant, Mr. Cashel. But my duty is plain and unavoidable. You inherited The Cedars, sir, as you believe, from Herbert Cashel, lately deceased."

"I did."

"You are his grand-nephew?"

"I am," returned the master of The Cedars coldly.

The color had returned to his face.

"Permit me to ask"—  
"Are you aware," interrupted the lawyer, "that Herbert Cashel had a daughter? and that that daughter is still living?"

"Sir!" exclaimed the master of The Cedars, springing to his feet.

"That Mr. Cashel, lately deceased, had a daughter," said Mr. Wylie, quietly, "and that daughter is still alive."

The lawyer was speaking very courteously. But the effect of his words on the master of The Cedars was marked. He lifted his hand and ran it nervously through his dark hair. The tiger-like gleam of his teeth became apparent.

"I believe that is false," he cried in blind rage; "false as Satan's heart!— Hear me, sir! No rascally attempt to blackmail me will succeed!"

The lawyer sat perfectly quiet.

"Pray, me calm, Mr. Cashel," he said. "I assure you this no attempt to blackmail you."

With an effort the master of The Cedars restrained his anger.

"I believe it is," he muttered, sinking back in his seat.

There was a change in him; instead of being crimson, his face grew very pale.

"Go on, for I presume you have not finished," he said with a sneer. "What does the heiress of Herbert Cashel demand?"

"The heiress of Herbert Cashel," said Mr. Wylie, still as calm and courteous as ever, "desires to know whether or not you will surrender the estate that you hold, if she produces indisputable proofs of her rights. Will you?"

"Proofs! what are the proofs?" said the master of The Cedars.

But the attorney was too cunning to so soon show to his opponent the hand he held. A scarcely observable smile flitted across his face. He had been studying the features of the man before him, and had arrived at the conclusion that he was unprincipled. He felt beforehand that the request of the heiress of Herbert Cashel would not be answered favorably.

"You answer my question, Mr. Cashel, by asking another," he said, with the first show of impatience or anger he had made. "The question was simple and easily answered by an honest man. Will the distant relative himself surrender to the daughter her property, upon the production of conclusive proofs that she is what she claims to be?"

The anger of the master of The Cedars flamed out again.

"A thousand devils!" he cried. "I will pledge myself to nothing. Is that sufficient? If it is, I wish you a very good-day."

"Before I go," said Mr. Wylie, "I wish to state that a court of law will speedily determine this matter. I can say that I believe Miss Cashel would have been generous to the relative who would surrender to her her just rights. But to the man who proposes to keep her out of them, I promise nothing. And I say this, feeling that he has already been too defiant to hope for aught."

"Go to your courts of law!" cried the master of The Cedars mockingly. "You will find that I have possession, and I will battle with you to the last! If I do not prove that your client is an impostor, then condemn me for a fool!"

With a slight bow, Mr. Wylie turned from the library. The master of The Cedars, when he was left alone, bowed his face upon his hand, and held it there long. He lifted it presently, his eyes blazing with evil passions.

"Curse me if I do not give them trouble ere they dispossess me here!" he muttered. "They will find that they are fighting neither a child nor idiot.— They will have something of which to boast when they conquer me."

He reached out his hand, and pulled the bell-cord. The same negro servant that ushered in Mr. Wylie appeared.

"Bring me a bottle of wine," said the master of The Cedars.

When the wine was brought, he dismissed the servant, and, pouring out a glass of wine, swallowed it in a draught.

"That story disturbs me, after all," he continued to soliloquize. He was calmer than he had been. "It would be terrible to have to surrender my life of ease, and be cast upon my oars again."

Draught after draught of wine he drank. Presently the man seized his pen, and rapidly dashed off a few lines.

"I will have Evans down, and consult him, at any rate," he muttered.

He enclosed in an envelope what he had written, and addressed it to

ARTHUR EVANS, Esq.,  
ATTORNEY AT LAW,  
FAIRMOUNT, VA.

Then he rang the bell once more.— When his servant had responded to his ring, he said:

"Sant, have Prince saddled, and return immediately to me."

"Prince am saddled, sah," said Sant, returning after an absence of five minutes' duration.

"Take this letter," said the master of The Cedars, "and ride to Fairmount with it. Deliver it to the lawyer, Evans. You know him?"

"Yes, sah."  
"Now be off; and hasten."

A few hours later, Mr. Arthur Evans, attorney at law, was in the presence of the impatient master of The Cedars. It is not necessary to further describe him than to say that he was smooth and cunning—by no means a fool—and his rascality had been of that kind upon which the law could not secure a hold sufficient to give him any trouble.

"I received your summons," he said to the master of The Cedars, "and came immediately."

There was a silence. Mr. Arthur Evans was content to await the pleasure of his rich client.

"Evans," burst out that gentleman presently, "a Baltimore lawyer has waited on me, and coolly me that The Cedars does not belong to me."

"The devil!" cried Mr. Arthur Evans, in astonishment. "Then to whom does he say the estate belongs?"

"That astute legal gentleman claimed that it belongs to a daughter of my uncle, the late Herbert Cashel."

"Singular that nothing has ever been heard of this daughter till this time," exclaimed Evans mockingly. "Where has she been hiding, that nothing has been known of her existence?"

"I know nothing of her," was the reply. "The impudent scamp of a lawyer made me angry, and I terminated the interview as soon as possible. The whole affair is no doubt a base plot; still it may give me trouble."

The eyes of Mr. Arthur Evans, attorney at law, shone with a little added light. Of course he wished the great master of The Cedars, his best client, no harm; but the prospect of a great lawsuit was cheering. Perhaps he might render some peculiarly important service, that, not quite exposing himself to the vengeance of the law, might bring him great reward. The Cedars in litigation, and he in the confidence of the defendant in the case! Surely the prospect was cheering!

"What was the lawyer's name?" asked Evans.

"Wylie."

"Of the firm of Wylie & Oldham?"

"Yes."

Mr. Arthur Evans had started slightly at mention of the name. Now his countenance fell.

"I know something of Wylie," he said, "and"—  
He paused.

"Go on, Evans," cried the master of The Cedars impatiently.

"I do not believe Wylie would take the case unless he thought there was something in it," said Evans slowly.

The matter was easily balanced in the mind of Mr. Arthur Evans. The prospect of litigation about The Cedars, and, by the aid of a little sharp practice, winning the case in the end, was pleasant. But the having opposed to him a talented and an honest lawyer, who would sift all rascality to the bottom, and who would not have taken the case had it been a bad one, was another matter.— And, as Evans had hinted, the very fact that Mr. Wylie, of the firm of Wylie & Oldham, had taken the matter in hand augured unfavorably.

The master of The Cedars turned toward Evans.

"Do you wish to conspire against me, too?" he cried angrily.

Mr. Arthur Evans raised his hand with a deprecatory gesture.

"By no means," he exclaimed.

After a moment's pause, the attorney continued:

"Did Wylie give you any hint as to the proof that could be produced of the claimant's identity?"

"No. He stated merely that it is indisputable."

Evans rose, and began to pace the floor. Presently he paused before his client.

"The estate that the late Herbert Cashel left," he uttered deliberately, "is, as you very well know, immense. Divided, it would make two very large fortunes. Mr. Cashel, I advise you to examine the proofs; and if the new claimant has any claim, as I fear she has, buy her off."

"By the Imps of Satan!" cried the master of The Cedars fiercely. "I will consent to no compromise."

"Doubtless you could still retain The Cedars," said Evans smoothly. "Of course she can have no affection for the place as her home, and stocks and bonds will doubtless satisfy her. What do you say?"—To be Continued.

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