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The Battle for the Cedars.

BY PRESSLY W. MORRIS.

CONTINUED.

"NO, I can't say that I am," said Dr. Gower, rubbing his head as though he were trying to remember something that had slipped his recollection.

"Massa Cashel," interrupted Sant, glad that he could at last impart some information, "dot dar lawyer had been here three or four times since you had been sick."

"Oh, I remember, now," said Dr. Gower. "The man was here wanting to see you, but I positively forbade it each time. The last time, I gave him a glimpse of you, and I think he went away satisfied that it was useless to talk about interviewing you. Ha, ha! he might as well have thought of interviewing an insane asylum!"

And jolly Dr. Gower laughed, as though the idea was very amusing to him.

"Doctor, I want you to dispatch one of my servants to Fairmount immediately, for Evans," said the master of The Cedars. "Please write him a note, telling him I want to see him on business."

"But I am not going to have any business conversations held here yet," asserted Dr. Gower. "Cashel, do you wish to have a relapse?"

"Doctor, I am in suspense," pleaded the master of The Cedars, "and a few words from Evans will relieve me of it."

He repaired to the library, and wrote the note to Evans. He had become quite well acquainted with the servants at The Cedars, and mounting one, he dispatched him with the missive. He returned to the sick-room. He gave some directions, and then, taking his hat and cane, departed.

"Sant," said the master of The Cedars, "bring me some wine."

"But Massa Cashel, de doctor says—
"Satan take the doctor! Is he master here, or am I? Bring me some wine, I say!"

Sant still hesitated.
"Be off, you black villain!" cried the master of The Cedars.

"What's this?" cried Dr. Gower, at the door. As it chanced, he had overheard the order of the master of The Cedars. "Wine, eh! Mr. Cashel, listen to me! A bottle of wine might be the death of you! You cannot have it!"

Then he turned to Sant, and said sternly:

"If you bring your master any wine, I will have you cowed, sir. I shall see that he has as much as he needs and no more."

Evidently, Dr. Gower was slightly angry.

Sant glanced first at him and then at his master, looking as though he was in something of a dilemma. The physician took his cane.

But Sant had no trouble, for the master of The Cedars was frightened out of drinking wine, for the time at least. He was not quite ready to die!

Scarcely an hour after the departure of Dr. Gower, Evans was ushered into the presence of the master of The Cedars.

"I met your messenger, Mr. Cashel," he said. "I am very glad to know that you are better."

The master of The Cedars motioned him to a seat.

"Well, Evans," he said, his breath coming in quick gasps, in his great anxiety, "was the suit of Cashel versus Cashel, tried?"

"Yes," said Evans. "Your pres-

ence was not necessary, and I concluded that the case might as well proceed, as not. You remember you told me the suspense was wearing on you. There was no burden of proof resting upon us: it was necessary for the plaintiff to make out her case. So we proceeded."

"And what was the result?"
Evans hesitated for a moment.
"Speak, man!" cried the master of The Cedars wildly. "Would you have me die with suspense?"

"The plaintiff gained the suit," said Evans slowly.
"Satan take old Wylie and his client!"

"Pray do not excite yourself, Mr. Cashel," exclaimed Evans. "I think in all probability this decision will amount to nothing. I gave immediate notice that the case would be appealed."

"And what did they pretend to prove?" asked the master of The Cedars, more calmly than might have been expected.

"They first produced what they claimed was evidence of Robert Cashel's marriage in some old English church.—Then they tried to show how he had placed his wife and child on board a ship bound for America. After that, they produced a man by the name of Gorman, who swore that he was a sailor on the ship; that it was wrecked, and he and the claimant, then an infant, were thrown out upon the shore alive, they being the only two persons saved from the wreck. He testified positively to the identity of the babe. Next, some people by the name of Ogden gave in their testimony. According to their tale, the babe was found in its mother's arms, on the sea-coast, and their story coincides with Gorman's. They gave a history of the claimant from the stormy night of the shipwreck till the present. Additionally, some infant's clothing was produced, old and faded, with the word Cashel worked upon it, in embroidered letters. That's the substance of the whole matter, I believe."

"And the whole is a base fabrication," muttered the master of The Cedars. "Ha, ha! a pretty story, truly, to work upon the sympathies a judge and jury!"

Mr. Arthur Evans was a rascal, but not a fool by any means, and in his heart was a consciousness of the strength of the new claimant's case. He was forced to the belief that unless resort should be had to some desperate means, his client would be as utterly defeated in the future as he had been in the past.

However, he did not, at that time, give utterance to his thoughts.

The master of The Cedars recovered rapidly, and was soon put of the care of Dr. Gower.

During the course of the next week or two, Evans was frequently at The Cedars. His conversations with the master of the estate were earnest and confidential.

What could be done to hold the property that the deceased Robert Cashel had left?

That was the question that harassed lawyer and client.

"There is an urgent demand that something be done," Evans said.

And the master of The Cedars was compelled to realize, unwilling though he might be, what a precarious hold he had upon the estate. He writhed and cursed under the consciousness, but the fact impressed itself firmly upon him nevertheless.

So lawyer and client came to understand each other. Bravado would avail nothing. It was best to set it down as a fact that the plaintiff had a good case, that the proofs in her favor were strong, and to proceed accordingly.

On a hot day toward the last of August, the master of The Cedars and Evans were in the library.

It was comfortable enough at The Cedars. The great, gray stone mansion was pleasantly cool, even in the hottest days of summer.

"By the beard of Pluto, I will match them yet!" the master of The Cedars was crying. "A devilish pretty idea it is, that a man can not touch anything that belongs to him. Bonds, stocks, all enjoyed! Old Wylie thinks he is very cunning, but I will!"

"I presume that you could scarcely draw a check upon the bank, Mr. Cashel, calling for your own private funds,

without finding an injunction in your way," Evans said, interrupting. "Ay, Wylie is pursuing his advantage to the utmost."

"I tell you, Evans, that means must be taken to checkmate them. We must devise some measure that will leave no doubt of the end of all this being in our favor. If the higher court confirms that cursed decision, we are defeated. I cannot afford to run any risks!"

"I suppose matters must take their course," said Evans gloomily. "Our consideration of the matter here lately, has been like butting our heads against a stone wall. What can we do? is a question that barks us continually. If Herbert Cashel had only left a will in your favor, then we could defy the world."

The master of The Cedars rose to his feet, a peculiar expression on his face, and began to pace back and forth. A will in his favor! The idea effected him strangely. His mind was carried away for the instant to a far different scene from that in which he was taking part. He stood on a ship, and a white face looked up out of the waters of the sea at him!

Then a widely different thought, suggested by those words, an idea of something that might be accomplished in future, came to him. He recovered himself. He walked to the side of Evans, and folding his arms stood silent for a minute. He smiled, and that tiger-like expression of his was apparent. His eyes gleamed with a baleful light. He spoke, uttering his words slowly and deliberately.

"Evans, why can there not be a will in my favor?"

Evans started, but he did not affect to misunderstand the question.

"I have been thinking of that," he answered, "but—"
"Well?"

"It will be a difficult and dangerous plan."

"Evans, the end to be reached will justify that we encounter danger and difficulty."

"The courts will look very unfavorably upon a will produced at this late hour," Evans said. "Ay, Mr. Cashel! even if it were genuine, it would be viewed with suspicion. It would take a very strong document to stand the tests to which a writing purporting to be the will of Herbert Cashel would now be subjected; then there would have to be witnesses."

"Gold will buy the names," said the master of The Cedars; "or we could use those of some dead persons, and establish their death. We can obtain the names of men to the falseness of whose signatures none could swear. That part will not be difficult."

"We might be fully successful," said Evans.

"I am a Cashel," continued the master of The Cedars; "who would dare attach suspicion of fraud to my name? With my uncle's name successfully counterfeited, there is no danger of detection. Evans, the plan seems feasible."

"But what story could be told as to the will being kept out of sight so long?"

"Think of this great stone house. In how many secret nooks might it lie concealed? ay! till it should moulder to dust, if it should not by chance be discovered. Evans, if we undertake this, and are successful, I promise that it shall be a mine of gold to you,—as good as that."

The eyes of Evans gleamed. That last argument was worthy of attention. If this scheme should win, what a hold indeed he would have upon the master of The Cedars!

"I believe the plan is worth attempting," he said cautiously. "At any rate, when I return to my office I will lock myself in, and shape a document for your examination. I think I can manage about the names of witnesses, as I can obtain access to many musty old legal documents in the clerk's office at Fairmount. I presume I can imitate any signatures I may find there accurately enough. Then Herbert Cashel's name will be all that will be needed."

"I have no fear but that you can counterfeit that successfully, Evans," said the master of The Cedars. "I am aware of the fact that you are very skillful with the pen."

And so this piece of villainy was

arranged. For once, Mr. Arthur Evans was in the humor of getting a little outside the limits of the law in his rascality. But the stakes were high, and, like the master of The Cedars, Evans thought that the risk need not be very great. The suit might be lost after all; but then it would be very difficult to fix the crime upon him or his client.

A Cashel would be a participator with him. Was it likely that the new claimant, if successful, would attempt to initiate criminal proceedings against the master of The Cedars? A Cashel try to make a Cashel a felon? Certainly not.

These were the thoughts of Mr. Arthur Evans, as he galloped rapidly toward Fairmount after having left The Cedars.

"But Mr. Lionel Cashel must pay something in advance," he muttered; "a good round sum. Under the circumstances, Herbert Cashel's will is worth a good many thousand dollars. I do not doubt, either, but that Cashel has plenty of gold concealed about that old stone mansion. He must pay."

Then Evans chuckled as he thought of the influence he would wield over the master of The Cedars in the future.

But if Mr. Arthur could have known the thoughts of the man whose tool he was to be, he would not have been so jubilant.

"Fool!" muttered the master of The Cedars, after he was left alone. "I can read him; he thinks he will have me in his power when he has accomplished what I ask. Let him not presume; let him beware. He cannot attempt to rule me, and live. If he will be satisfied with a reasonable reward for his services, good; if not,—ah! after death the secrets of this life are not spoken."

The night came. The master of The Cedars ordered the lamps lighted in the library, and then closing the doors locked them. Frequently he did this, but on this evening he had a better reason than usual for doing so; he wished to be entirely alone to think and plot. The schemes that were to secure The Cedars to him forever must be cunningly devised. There was danger. Snares might trip his feet, and, falling, he might lose all. All of his and Evans's plans must fit together, or the result would be disastrous, fatal. It would be a bold stroke, this scheme of the forged will.

The thought made him grow pale; then he muttered,—

"Bah! am I a child? This is not the first time I have run risks. When have I failed in my plans? Never. I will let the past be a token of my success in the future."

His mutterings ceased for a while; but presently he added something similar to a portion of Evans's thoughts.

"Besides, if she is a true Cashel, she will never attempt to bring disgrace upon the name. She can never dream—"

The man stopped his mutterings, growing paler than before. His own thoughts seemed to frighten him. It could not be that a mere idea of the peril of his undertaking was causing him to grow white; he had considered that before. What was it, then? He had been muttering the name of Cashel, drawing the inference that one of that name would not wish to bring shame upon it. Do men start and tremble generally at the mere mention of their own names?

The master of The Cedars rose to his feet, and paced the library. Directly, however, he went to a quaintly carved writing-desk, and sat down by it; he opened a drawer, and idly turned over the papers within.

That old desk had been the property of Herbert Cashel. Doubtless he had brought it from across the sea. It was a piece of rare workmanship, carved in a peculiar design.

The master of The Cedars examined drawer after drawer in a sort of mechanical, uninterested manner. All the papers that they contained were familiar to him, and he ran over them abstractedly and listlessly. At length he came to a drawer that he had always considered the most secret of all. He opened it, but when he tried to close it some papers caught between it and the carved work of the drawer.

"Curse the drawer!" cried the man impatiently.

He reached his hand under to press down the papers; it touched some slight protuberance upon which he thus accidentally pressed. There was a rattling noise, and a sound as though a small door had accidentally dropped. The master of The Cedars ran his hand all through the drawer, but found no explanation of the sounds. Puzzled, he sprang to his feet, and walked around the desk, examining it as he went.

"Seemingly there is some mystery here," he muttered.

He was interested.
He reached the opposite side of the desk. The mystery was apparent.

A small panel that had appeared to be a part of the carved work had dropped down, and thus was another drawer discovered, which the master of The Cedars pulled out.

It was full of papers.
With some curiosity, the man began to look over them.

"Unimportant," he muttered, as he proceeded.

He reached a document presently over which he glanced hurriedly as he had done the rest. An exclamation escaped him, and the drawer, with all its remaining contents, dropped to the floor. The man's eyes lighted with a wild blaze of triumph, and the tiger-like expression showed on his face.

He read the paper through from beginning to end carefully.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed wildly; "I wonder who will win now,—whether I, or old Wylie and his client?"

A man stepped off the train at Fairmount, and hastened to a hotel. He registered his name as L. Victor, and was no other than Barbara Lindsey's hero. August was nearly past.

After Victor had eaten his dinner, he returned to the office of the hotel.

"Please direct me to the court-house," he said to the clerk.

The directions were given, and Victor walked out. When he reached the court-house, which was a massive brick building, he sought for and entered the office of the Clerk of the Court. A man was seated behind a long table, the space that it occupied being cut off from the remainder of the apartment by wooden bars. He was writing.

Victor advanced to the bars, and look through. The man paused from his work, and gave him a polite salutation.

"Anything I can do for you, sir?" he asked pleasantly.

"You are the Clerk of the Circuit Court?" Victor inquired.

"Yes."

"I merely wish for some information, which I suppose of course you can give," said Victor. "Tell me, if you please, how the suit for a property in this county known as the Cashel estate was decided."

"The suit of Cashel versus Cashel," said the clerk, "went in favor of the plaintiff,—a lady as you are probably aware."

Victor's face flushed a little.

"I am not sorry for that," he said, as if speaking to himself.

"Are you acquainted with the parties to this suit, sir?" asked the clerk.

An expression as near hatred as could enter them came into the frank eyes of Victor.

"I have met the defendant," he replied.

The clerk did not notice the expression of his eyes, as it chanced.

"As I have said," the clerk pursued, "the plaintiff gained the case in this court; but an appeal was taken. The probability is that the decision will be the same in the Superior Court; but still it may not."

"Are you aware of the present whereabouts of the plaintiff?" Victor asked.

"I am not," answered the clerk. "I think you might find her in Baltimore. At any rate I can give you the address of her attorneys,—Wylie & Oldham, Baltimore."

"I thank you for your information," Mr. Victor said, as he turned away.

Reaching the office door, he met a man coming in. It was Evans. He glanced at Victor, scrutinizing him somewhat closely.

"Who was that, Douglass?" he asked of the clerk. To be continued.