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Whole No. 326

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Hope. Let none look back on darker years, Where Hope's long star had set; But let us ever pursue the right, And all the wrongs forget.

Literature. The Speculator. A TALE OF MAMMON-WORSHIP. Concluded from our last.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Oakley," said Mr. Severn. "This matter will I have no doubt, be speedily cleared up. You of course received my note?"

"He did," replied Caroline Oakley, who puzzled and dismayed by the strange aspect of the circle of faces round her, except, indeed, that of Neville, had rejoined her father. "We are here in compliance with the request it contained."

"That being so," continued Mr. Severn with relaxed sternness, "this strange misapprehension can be at once terminated. The will, sir, which my uncle, Sir Martin Biddulph left in your custody, and of which I have long known the purport, you of course have brought with you?"

"The will?" murmured Robert Oakley, gazing with a perplexed and terrified expression at the speaker—"the will?"

"Yes, sir; I speak plainly I think. The will of Sir Martin Biddulph, left, as he informed me, with you?"

"Ah yes, I remember," rejoined the bewildered man, rubbing his forehead, as if to recall some circumstance to memory, and looking fixedly at Mr. Conway, who appeared purposely to avoid his gaze. "The will—it was burned last night in the dreadful fire?"

"Burned?" cried Mr. Severn—"burned! Why, this is a new invention! You said just now, Mr. Conway, and the person near you confirmed your words, that Mr. Oakley declared no will of Sir Martin's had ever been left with him?"

"Precisely; but his intellect seems deranged." "Not left with me," exclaimed Oakley, as if suddenly recalling what to that moment had escaped his memory.

"True—true—not left with me; true, I remember now, that was it." "Father! father!" exclaimed Caroline, throwing herself on her knees before him in an ecstasy of agonized apprehension, "what dreadful meaning lies concealed in your words?"

"Nothing, my child," he answered, gently raising her. "Not left with me—no, no—burned as I told you; how could I help it?" Exclamations of surprise, rage, and indignation, burst from the lips of his brother and Mr. Severn.

events," said Hardy soothingly. "Good; and that lady is your daughter? So Mr. Conway, I shall not want your assistance, and every thing will be right again—quite right." He laughed faintly, and stood up, gazing with a vacant and elated expression upon his auditors. Their stern and indignant looks appeared to recall his wand'ring mind to a sense of the reality of the scene before him.

your husband—excuse my freedom of speech, madam, pray; it was quite involuntary—spontaneous, I assure you—and the possession of sixteen thousand a year. Very melancholy and grievous indeed; quite a curiosity, I should say, and I am extremely anxious to make its acquaintance. I think I perceive continued the oily man of law, frowning no one reply to him—"I think I perceive the cause of this passing cloud. Don't you think, sir," he added, approaching Mr. Conway with his extended, snuff-box, and speaking in the blindest tone imaginable—"don't you think sir, that all matters relative to the annuity bequeathed you by Sir Martin's will would be better, more pleasantly, arranged at my office?"

"Unquestionably I do. He succeeds to the real estate, and so much of exclusive persons, though there are conflicting decision decisions, as pertain to the proper maintenance of his condition. The family plate and furniture of Oaklands, and this mansion for instance, would, in my opinion, pass to you with the realty, as the late Sir Martin Biddulph's heir-at-law, were you not—as well as you are—and really were it not that the fortunate legatee is my excellent and esteemed young friend—if he will permit me to call him so—Mr. Severn, I should greatly regret the circumstance—barred from the succession by the amiable baronet's will."

"Have you the original draft of that will?" said Mr. Severn. "Original draft! No, certainly not. Of what possible use would it be?"

"I thought perhaps, helped with your testimony, it might avail; but as it is, we are, it seems, beggars!" "Eh! what!" exclaimed Mr. Smart, springing briskly up from the chair in which he had just seated himself. "Eh! what!"

"The will is destroyed—burned!" said Mr. Severn bitterly. "What! eh! again ejaculated the lawyer, wheeling half round, and facing Mr. Severn.

"The late Sir Martin Biddulph left no will," said Mr. Conway from the opposite side; and Mr. Smart wheeled back again, once more repeating, "What! eh!"

No one seemed disposed to further enlighten him and he was compelled himself to renew the conversation. "Upon my life this is very extraordinary. Will you, sir—will your ladyship—I beg pardon, I am wrong—premature, at all events. The baronetcy is, I am a rare, extinct, in consequence of the failure of heirs in the male line; but it will be renewed, madam no question of that, looking at the steady support given to the minister by the late excellent baronet. Still I am premature; but will you, madam, prevail on some of these gentlemen to explain?"

"The explanation is as easy as it is conclusive," said Mr. Severn, and he related what had previously occurred.

"Remarkable, madam, is it not?" said Mr. Smart when the narration was finished. "Quite a drama in itself—quite so." Harry Neville's keen eye noticed that the revelation just made had not in the slightest degree diminished the lawyer's deferential manner towards his sister. "There are, you perceive, all the usual dramatic personae; la jeune premiere—a most profound blow; la dame noble—a less elaborate inclination towards Mrs. Richard Oakley; and—and—" he glanced towards Mr. Conway; but perhaps it might be deemed discourteous to pursue the analogy farther.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed that gentleman with assumed fierceness, though evidently discomposed by the calm assurance of the lawyer.

"I will tell you," rejoined that courteous personage with his pleasant smile. "Did you ever remark—but of course a gentleman of your intelligent observation must have often done so—that great

rogues—nothing personal, I assure you, Mr. Conway—this Oakley is of course, as you represent him a slandering lunatic; but still, as a general rule, you must have observed that great rogues are almost always great fools! In this very case now," continued Mr. Smart resuming his seat, crossing his legs, and evidently greatly enjoying the eager curiosity which hung upon his words—"in this very case supposing—only supposing, mind—that what we have heard is true, how, except upon the principle of 'Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat'—correct, I believe, Mr. Severn—or would you say, 'primum'?"

"Go on—go on." "How else, I say, could ordinarily sane persons imagine that the old-established firm of Smart and Fives would have left such an important document to a single chance of fire or other accident. The truth is, gentlemen—I beg ten thousand pardons—ladies and gentlemen; and, by the by, Mr. Conway, you have been in Paris I know—it appears to me that the politest nation in the world, as they call themselves, and in fact are in many respects, are strangely out with their 'messieurs et mesdames'!"

"The devil fly away with you and the politest nation into the bargain!" exclaimed Conway; "what is it you are driving at?"

"Take it coolly, pleasantly Mr. Conway, as I always do," replied the lawyer with super-blandness. "The plain truth, then, since you will have it, is, that the will of Sir Martin Biddulph was executed, as wills ought to be, in duplicate, and that here, drawing a neatly-folded parchment from his pocket, 'that here is the counterpart!'"

The surprise, joy, exclamations, mortification, and rage, excited in the breasts of that auditory by this announcement may be imagined better than described. Mr. Conway followed by his confidant, left the house in an agony of rage and disappointment. A few days' reflection brought, however, enforced calm and resignation. He accepted the considerably augmented annuity proffered by Mr. Severn, and sought employment and distinction in the ranks of the British armies then engaged in the terrific struggle with the French legions in Spain. He found both there; and in the bitter fight before Toulouse, the Gazette said, a glorious death. Hardy was never again heard of. He vanished into one of the sink of society and doubtless perished there.

The winding up of the affairs of Mr. Robert Oakley, who, it was soon authoritative, had been smitten with permanent lunacy—he had received a heavy blow on the head, it was ascertained, doubtless; it did not, thinks to the rise in the funds, and to the withdrawal of all claims due to the estate of Sir Martin Biddulph, wind up so disastrously as had been anticipated. After discharging all claims, including that directed by the dying commands of her mother to be paid the large sum of which the firm of Cummings, Brothers had been legally defrauded, Caroline found herself possessed of about £12,000—not a very splendid fortune, but sufficient with the profits of her gallant, single-minded husband's profession not only for her own and his moderate wishes, but for the future advantages placing out of their rather numerous progeny; and for the present help and support of Caroline's God-stricken parent, who, helpless, dejected, utterly crazed, but harmless, passed his days roaming about the grounds and garden ever muttering to himself fantastic schemes of aggrandisement by successful speculations in the stock and money markets. He died at the age of fifty-eight, making no sign except that of his life—sorely a vivid and instructive one to all who have the will and faculty to read it aright.

Mr. Smart's anticipation respecting the baronetcy was very speedily realised; and Sir Francis and Lady Severn, in the enjoyment of their mutual affection, their brilliant fortune and position, might be reckoned amongst the most favored of mankind. There was no likelihood, either, that this baronetcy

would lapse, by failure of heirs in the male line. A very happy woman, doubtless, was Lady Severn, for she was good and amiable as fortunate; but anything like so proud a woman as her mother Mrs. Richard Oakley, she assuredly was not, especially when that excellent lady her quiver full of grandchildhood. But it is time to close this somewhat garrulous narrative of long since passed, and, except to a few persons, almost forgotten events; and I perhaps cannot better do so than in the words of Mr. Twynham, who frankly admitted—"I think it was on the day after the christening of the fourth, perhaps the fifth child—I am not sure which—that gentleness, unselfishness, simplicity, beauty, and grace, may insure happiness even in extremely unequal marriages, a truth exemplified in the domestic lives of Sir Francis and Lady Severn."

An example, however, which ought to be set down as a precedent," said Mr. Smart, who was present; and I agree with him.

DEATH SCENES OF REMARKABLE PERSON.—Mary, Scotland's great beauty, met the 'gloomy king' with a degree of resolution not to be expected from her misfortunes, so numerous were they—deserted by every friend, except her faithful little dog. Sir Thomas More remarked to the executioner, by whose hands he was about to perish that the scaffold was extremely weak; 'I pray you see me up safe,' said he; 'and for my coming down left me shift for myself.' Cauecer breathed his last when composing a ballad; his last production is called 'A ballad made by Godfrey Chaucer on his death-bed,' lying in great pain.

"I could wish this tragic scene was over," said Quin, the actor; "but I hope to go through it with becoming dignity." Petrarch was found dead in his library leaning on a book. Rousseau, when dying ordered his attendants to remove him, and place him before the window, that he might look upon his garden, and gladden his eyes with the sight of nature; how ardent an admirer he was of nature is most poetically told in Zimmerman's 'Solitude.' Pope tells us he found Godfrey Kneller (when he visited him a few days prior to his end) sitting up forming the plans for the erection of his own monument; his vanity was conspicuous even in death. Warren has observed that Chesterfield's good breeding only left him with death.

"Give Drysdale a chair," said he to his valet, when that person was announced. Bayle, when dying, pointed to where his profuse was deposited. Clarendon's pen dropped from his hand when seized with palsy which put an end to his existence. Bede died in the act of dictating—Roccoman, when expiring, quoted from his own translation of the 'Dies Irae.' Haller, feeling his pulse, said 'The artery ceases to beat,' and immediately died. When the priest, whom Alheri had been prevailed on to see, came, he requested him to call to-morrow—'Heath, I trust, will tarry four-and-twenty hours' Nelson's last words were 'Tell Collingwood to bring the fleet to an anchor.'

A PRUSSIAN'S IDEA OF LONDON CABMEN.—A gentleman of Prussia came over to stay with me some weeks ago, and arrived in a Hansom cab. 'He did bring me safe,' cried he with full his face beaming through his spectacles 'and has nothing from me stolen.' 'Of course not,' said I. 'Why do you apprehend any such misfortunes?' 'Ha, ha!' exclaimed he with joyful sagacity: 'I do know them, those cab-drivers of yours; they ill-treat, they rob; but see, I have his name and number rightly taken. Mappin: 71 Cornhill, City, Ivory Balance Handle Cheese Knives fines steel.'—The poor deluded man had copied the advertisement upon the plash-board; and it was difficult to persuade him to abandon his fools' paradise of security, although I assured him that he might just as well appeal to the Prussian Constitution against Count Bismark.

PREACHING AGAINST EXTRAVAGANCE IN DRESS.—Several of the popular preachers in Paris have entered upon a crusade against the lavish expenditure of their lady hearers upon dress, the waste of material especially exciting their indignation. One of them, a bishop, exclaimed in the height of his zeal, in the midst of a late discourse, 'Let woman remember, while putting on their profuse and expensive attire, how narrow are the gates of Paradise!'

CHRISTMAS PLUM Pudding WITH CARROTS INSTEAD OF EGGS.—One very large carrot boiled soft, and betted into a pulp six ounces of sifted chopped fine, five table-spoonsful of flour, two ditto of sugar, one quarter of a pound of currants, one quarter of raisins when stoned; to be boiled four hours.