

LUKE HAMMOND, THE MISER.

By Prof. Wm. Henry Peck,
Author of the "In Stone-Cutter
of Lisbon," Etc.

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CHAPTER VI. Continued.

"Tell me where you found the will," cried Elgin.

"This morning, while Mrs. Harker and I were removing the rubbish and your paintings, to prepare this room for your occupancy—the white and gold chamber being too near the main house—the missing will was found in a small box in which you kept your vials of tincture."

"Ah! I placed it there the day I was taken sick, intending to give it to a friend of mine the next day," said Elgin. "I wonder you did not find it before."

"The keenest search had overlooked it," said Hammond. "A vial of liquid vermilion had somehow been shattered upon the envelope, and having dried, its appearance was that of a mass of paint. When it fell upon the floor, the concussion shook up the dried stuff enough to reveal your writing. I carefully cleaned it, and all became clear."

"And now what do you intend to do?"

"You shall learn ere long," remarked Hammond, himself in doubt; for since morning many things had happened to perplex him. First, Elgin's restoration to speech and reason; secondly, the discovery of the mutual love of Catharine Elgin and James Greene; thirdly, the present situation of Catharine; fourthly, the tidings of John Marks; lastly, and most of all, the loss of the will.

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"Stephen," said Hammond, as this person came in, "you are to watch with the sick man to-night. Unbaid him. You are too strong for him; but if he tries any tricks—"

"I have this to tame him," said Stephen, in a hoarse, growling voice, holding up a short club, suspended to his wrist by a stout cord. "Daniel told me about the row."

"You will be careful, Elgin," said Hammond, as Stephen unbowed the unfortunate man. "Stephen was once a turnkey in the Tombs and understands the business."

"May God help and deliver me!" growled the prisoner.

"Behave yourself and you'll be all right," growled Stephen, as he drew a blanket over the invalid.

"If he asks for food or drink, Stephen," said Hammond, "furnish all he desires. But be careful to lock both doors after you between this room and the hall. I think he wants sleep more than anything else."

Stephen growled an assent, and Luke, avoiding Elgin's eye of scorn, departed.

CHAPTER VII. BROTHER AND SISTER.

Passing along the hall until he reached the white and gold chamber, Luke Hammond rapped at the door.

Nancy Harker's thin, culture-like face appeared from within instantly.

"How is it with Miss Elgin?" asked Hammond.

"She's as stiff as a gun-barrel," replied Mrs. Harker.

"Where is Daniel?"

"Gone into the main house after bedding, etc."

"Has Miss Elgin attempted to converse with you, Mrs. Harker?"

"Not a bit. She draws back from me when I go near her, as if I was a snake or a spider."

"When everything is arranged," said Hammond, "come to my library. I'd rather have her in tears or cast down than so bold."

"Oh, well, I'll come," said Mrs. Harker, with a grin that showed her yellow fangs, and loud enough for poor Kate to hear. "She's been looking around the room for a place to get out, but the windows are iron-barred and the shutters nailed to the sill outside; and she can't escape by the door, for when I am not here old Fan will be better sent old Fan here when you go into the main house."

"I will," said Hammond. And Nancy Harker closed the door, while he continued on to his library.

He glanced at the bronze clock on the mantel-piece, and saw that it was half-past twelve.

"A great deal has happened since nine," he muttered; "a great deal, and much more will certainly follow. What shall I do?"

"The first thing he did was to drink a glass of brandy; then, remembering Mrs. Harker's advice, he pulled at a bell-cord hanging at the wall, and waited for an answer."

The summons was answered after a few minutes by the appearance of an aged and much bent woman, evil-eyed, and with the face of a devil incarnate.

"This was 'old Fan,' the half crazy cobbler, a hag who would have sold her soul, such as it was, for a golden collar."

"I'm wanted, am I?" said she, in a cracked voice, and rolling up sleeves which covered long and muscular arms, upon which the muscles were knotted

and twisted, for old Fan was a giant in strength.

"You are wanted," said Hammond, without looking at her.

"Some fresh deviltry, eh?" said Fan. "What is it to you whether it is good or bad?" said Hammond, looking at her rapacious eyes, which looked more like a rat's than a human being's.

"Not a mite, Mr. Hammond, so long as I am paid for the doing," said Fan. "Right," said Hammond, tossing her a coin of gold, which she caught in her bird-like claws as it gleamed in the air. "Hasten to the white and gold chamber. You will find Mrs. Harker there. Go!"

"You may be bad, and you be," muttered old Fan, as she departed. "But a better paymaster never lived."

"The sight of that old wretch," said Hammond, when alone, "always chills my blood."

He glanced towards the decanter of brandy, which he had left upon the table.

"No, I'll drink no more to-night," said he, turning away. "The habit will be my ruin if I do not crush it. I am beginning to drink brandy like water."

He opened a drawer of his desk, and searched for some papers—that which he had said he had drawn up with much care during the day, and which he had slid into the drawer when Mrs. Harker first appeared in this story.

The paper had disappeared!

"Ha!" he exclaimed, springing from the drawer to draw in vain search. "The will I intended to forge—drawn up in my own handwriting, to be copied into Henry Elgin's, has been stolen! She took it—that girl Catharine! She has, of course, secreted it with the genuine will. A proof of my guilt, if it shall be discovered! Why did she take it? Oh! a woman's eyes are as quick as light—she noticed the heading—saw 'twas the body of a will, and thinking of wills, carried it off! I'll have the secret of the hiding-place or her life—her life!"

He stamped with rage, and was fuming like a fury when Nancy Harker entered without ceremony.

"What's the matter now?" cried she.

"You are going mad or drunk, Luke."

"Mad! Drunk! I must have been both this day to leave doors and drawers open, and I not here," thundered Hammond.

"You are getting too fond of brandy, Luke," said Mrs. Harker, as her glance fell upon the decanter.

"Mind your business, Nancy Harker!" he cried, tossing a handful of papers upon the table, and rummaging among them. "Not only has Catharine Elgin secreted the genuine will, but also one drawn up by me, and which I meant to forge."

"Mind my own business, Luke Hammond!" sneered Nancy Harker, looking at him, as he fumed and fretted. "If I did, what would become of you since you have taken to that?"

She tapped the decanter with her lean forefinger.

"You take courage and strength from that, and it will hang you yet, Luke."

"Hang me!" repeated Hammond, recoiling from the prophecy.

"I mean it, Luke. Things are getting into a snarl, and you'll work a rope-knot under your left ear, if you don't look sharp."

Hammond grew pale, and stared at her in silence.

Nancy Harker nodded her head, as if it were set on springs of wire.

"If I do," said Hammond, sitting down and pushing back his grizzled hair; "if I do, I'll have your company, Nancy Harker. But we must not quarrel; we are brother and sister, you know."

"Hush!" whispered Nancy, and shaking her finger at him. "If you let that secret out what becomes of you and your plans? I tell you, you drink too much, Luke. No one can suspect that I am your sister unless you, like a fool, set the suspicion afoot. The first thing to be done now is to find the lost will."

"Right," said Hammond. "Do you think she concealed it in this room?"

"No," said Nancy, shaking her head. "I think she has secreted it in her room in the front."

"But I had the will in my hand the instant before I went to the crimson chamber," said Hammond, "and she was there herself not five minutes after my arrival there."

"She had time to come here, to find the package, to run back to her room, hide it, and then follow you," said Nancy.

"We must search instantly," said Hammond, springing to his feet.

He lighted two lamps, gave one to his sister, and with the other led the way to Kate's late room.

In going thither it was necessary to ascend a short flight of stairs, and as Hammond placed his hand on the newel-post of the banisters at the foot of the flight the carved top-piece of the post slipped off in his grasp and caused him to stumble and bruise his face.

"Confound that post!" said he, regaining his feet and clapping the top back upon it. "It has played me that trick twice. Go into that closet there

and bring me a hammer and a couple of large nails."

Nancy Harker did so, and Hammond drove the long, strong nails into the cap of the newel-post, which was large and hollow, fastening it down hard and fast.

"That will hold till doomsday," said he, as he finished the work and ascended the stairs, followed by Nancy.

The evil pair entered Kate's room and searched it from floor to ceiling, leaving nothing undone that might give them success.

"It is not here," said Hammond, after more than an hour's hard labor.

"Then she has hidden it in the hall of the eastern wing," said Nancy, as they descended the stairs on their way back to the library.

"The hall is as bare of crack or crevice as the sole of my boot," said Hammond.

"She may have tossed it into some one of the rooms," said Nancy.

"Every door is locked on each side of the hall," replied Hammond. "But we will search it."

They did, and found nothing. They stared at each other in surprise, and both noticed a mutual paleness.

"Nancy," whispered Hammond, "this is a serious matter."

"It is," said she, in the same tone, and feeling more uneasy than she cared to tell.

"Suspicion once fastened on us," continued Hammond, "for your name is mentioned in the spurious will, and how long will it be before the detective police are on our track?"

"Suspicion does exist, Luke," said Nancy. "And in the mind of a man whom you underrate infinitely."

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"How is he?" asked Hammond.

"See for yourself," said Stephen, as he drew the door back upon his hinges.

Hammond entered with soft, cat-like tread, and gazed upon the invalid. Mr. Elgin was sleeping as calmly as a rosy, healthy child, and his features, though thin and pale, wore a noble dignity in their repose that Hammond could not but admire.

"I cannot sleep like that," muttered Hammond turning away.

Stephen heard the words and whispered:

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"Silence," said Hammond, sternly; for the man's words suggested unpleasant memories. "On speak too loud. He begins to mutter in his sleep."

Hammond held his ear near the pale and moving lips and caught these words:

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"How is she? Does she sleep?" he asked.

"Old Fan made no reply, but swung the door wide open."

Kate was still sitting in the armchair and her eyes of fire and scorn as she recognized Hammond peering in made him shrink and quail.

"She does not sleep—she plans," he muttered, as he turned quickly away. "Watch her well, Fan."

"Prop my eyelids with gold and they'll never blink nor wink," croaked the old hag, with a grimace that laid bare her toothless gums.

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CHAPTER VIII. A TRAP FOR JAMES GREENE.

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"He dreams of his child," thought Hammond; and then with Nancy, who had followed him, left the Crimson Chamber.

Before the door of the imprisoned Kate they halted again, and old Fan answered the gentle tapping of Hammond's knuckles.

"How is she? Does she sleep?" he asked.

"Old Fan made no reply, but swung the door wide open."

Kate was still sitting in the armchair and her eyes of fire and scorn as she recognized Hammond peering in made him shrink and quail.

"She does not sleep—she plans," he muttered, as he turned quickly away. "Watch her well, Fan."

"Prop my eyelids with gold and they'll never blink nor wink," croaked the old hag, with a grimace that laid bare her toothless gums.

"Right," said Hammond, and with Nancy at his heels he strode on to his library, for there he loved best to plot and scheme.

and brought me a hammer and a couple of large nails."

Nancy Harker did so, and Hammond drove the long, strong nails into the cap of the newel-post, which was large and hollow, fastening it down hard and fast.

"That will hold till doomsday," said he, as he finished the work and ascended the stairs, followed by Nancy.

The evil pair entered Kate's room and searched it from floor to ceiling, leaving nothing undone that might give them success.

"It is not here," said Hammond, after more than an hour's hard labor.

"Then she has hidden it in the hall of the eastern wing," said Nancy, as they descended the stairs on their way back to the library.

"The hall is as bare of crack or crevice as the sole of my boot," said Hammond.

"She may have tossed it into some one of the rooms," said Nancy.

"Every door is locked on each side of the hall," replied Hammond. "But we will search it."

They did, and found nothing. They stared at each other in surprise, and both noticed a mutual paleness.

"Nancy," whispered Hammond, "this is a serious matter."

"It is," said she, in the same tone, and feeling more uneasy than she cared to tell.

"Suspicion once fastened on us," continued Hammond, "for your name is mentioned in the spurious will, and how long will it be before the detective police are on our track?"

"Suspicion does exist, Luke," said Nancy. "And in the mind of a man whom you underrate infinitely."

"You mean James Greene, the carpenter," said Hammond. "No, I do not underrate him. He has a bold heart, a strong arm and a shrewd brain. We must prepare to meet him, Nancy. So again to my library that we may concert some plan to baffle him."

Hammond first rapped at the door of the Crimson Chamber and Stephen opened it from within.

"How is he?" asked Hammond.

"See for yourself," said Stephen, as he drew the door back upon his hinges.

Hammond entered with soft, cat-like tread, and gazed upon the invalid. Mr. Elgin was sleeping as calmly as a rosy, healthy child, and his features, though thin and pale, wore a noble dignity in their repose that Hammond could not but admire.

"I cannot sleep like that," muttered Hammond turning away.

Stephen heard the words and whispered:

"I've seen men in prison cells asleep that way, when the hangman couldn't catch a wink; the night before they were to die."

"Die?" said Hammond, shuddering. "Do you think he is going to die?"

"Not yet," said Stephen. "And then I spoke of had a look around the mouth that Henry Elgin can never have for—he's never done a murder, He—"

"Silence," said Hammond, sternly; for the man's words suggested unpleasant memories. "On speak too loud. He begins to mutter in his sleep."

Hammond held his ear near the pale and moving lips and caught these words:

"Poor Kate! what will become of thee?"

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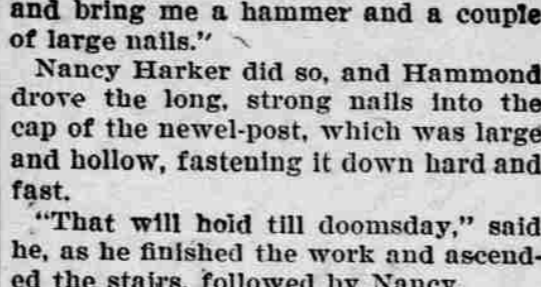
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GOOD ROADS Pleads For Good Roads.

NEW HAMPSHIRE'S unique situation, the nature of her topography and the character of her population, permanent and transient, make the good roads problem one of immediate interest and importance in the Granite State. In testimony whereof, the writer received a communication from Charles J. Glidden, the world famous automobilist.

Mr. Glidden entered a vigorous plea for better roads in New Hampshire, urging especially State highways from Nashua to Fabyans and thence to Portsmouth, thus enabling, as he says, "the automobile to reach the summer places and induce people to locate permanently among the granite hills."

What Mr. Glidden and all the other automobilists want is just what most of New Hampshire's other summer residents ardently desire, and what will be of great importance in many ways to the business economy of the State as a whole and all its interests.

This fact has long been recognized, in a degree, and for many years the State has been giving aid to the towns in the mountain and lake regions in keeping their roads in repair. As to the degree in which these appropriations have reached useful ends, opinions differ; but at any rate the State has thus shown its good will to the amount of several hundred thousand dollars.

There has been a gradual improvement, also, in the change from the highway district system of road construction and repair to the town system, and the Legislature of 1903 took a long step in advance by initiating a move for State supervision.

By this legislation the Governor and Council, with the assistance of an engineer, were authorized to investigate the highway problem and report to the next Legislature in the form of a bill their recommendations for the future policy of the State in this matter. The engineer authorized in this act is now at work mapping the roads of the State, and the Governor and the members of his council are giving personal investigation to the matter.

The question now is not one of State aid to towns in repairing roads, but of a comprehensive system of permanent road improvement, a system which can be outlined with such exactness before a dollar is expended in construction as to clearly show where the permanently improved roads are to begin and end, the expense to the State for construction and the annual expense of maintenance.

It will aim to permeate every section of the State, and while no formal decision has as yet been reached, it is very likely that it will be thought best, taking everything into consideration, to make this State system very largely of well-ballasted, well-drained and well-surfaced gravel roads, whose cost, using the present roadbed for a basis, would be from \$800 to \$1500 a mile.

On this calculation, by the appropriation of \$100,000 a year for six years the State could have at the end of that time 600 miles of the best roads in the world for travel, traversing the State from its entrances at the south-west, south centre and southeast to the White Mountains and beyond, with several cross sections. This estimate contemplates the division of the cost between State, county and town.

Some parts of this system have already been constructed by the State under special acts. In the White Mountains, for instance, there are some fifty miles of State highways practically completed, which must be inevitably the most picturesque and valuable section of the entire system. Along the sea coast the construction of a very permanent and excellent ocean boulevard is well advanced.

The people of the State are coming to recognize generally the fact that the building of permanent roads is simply a business proposition. There is no more mystery about building roads than about building houses. Let the State determine the right kind of road to be built, appropriate the money to build it and thus enter upon a policy of permanent highway in a practical and business-like way.

We know here in New Hampshire, that within a day's ride of our summer capital, Mount Washington, there are 10,000,000 people. We would like to have at least a tenth of them visit us every summer. And in order to get them in and keep them in as long as we can we are planning these improvements.—N. J. Bacheller, Governor of New Hampshire.



POPULAR SCIENCE

Charles Vergette, one of the candidates for a municipal election at Peterborough, England, has spoken his address into a phonograph, and this is reproduced at the various meetings.

Stone sawing is now done successfully by means of a simple wire in place of a saw. An endless wire works over pulleys, as in the bandsaw. It is driven at a uniform speed and the cutting is done by sand mixed with water conveyed