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## THE LAST WILL.

BY MRS. MARY V. SPENCER.

It was a dark and dismal night, and the rain poured down in torrents. The winds whistled around the corners, or shrieked among the chimneys; the street lamps flared dim; even the watchman deserted his post, and shrunk into a sheltered corner.

In an old rickety tenement, in one of the narrowest lanes of London, sat a young couple with their only child. The mother was still young, scarcely eighteen indeed, but of unusual beauty, though sorrow had already begun to make inroads on that fine countenance. Her husband was some years older, with a face of much character though not of decided beauty; but the lines around the mouth and the careworn expression of the brow, showed that he had already waded with misfortune. In fine contrast to his face was the placid expression of the child's countenance, as it lay in its mother's lap with the light of the lamp falling shaded across it. A smile was on its face as it slept. It seemed as if an angel looked out from it.

Suddenly a knock was heard at the door. The man gazed around on the bare and desolate apartment, and did not stir. The wife seemed to read his thoughts.

"Go dear James," she said, "What matters our poor accommodations! and she tried to smile.—"Perhaps it is a bearer of good news; surely no one else would come out on such a night as this. How the wind drives against the panes!"

The husband advanced to the door, and a man in livery delivered him a note. At sight of the green and gold of the man's dress he started back, but the servant leaving the missive in his hand was gone instantly.

"It is from my father's steward," said the husband, with an excited voice, as he broke the seal.

"God be praised!" said the wife, "he has relented." I knew he would! Oh! we shall yet see happy days and she burst into tears. Her husband's agitation was scarcely less than her own, for his hand trembled violently as he held the note to the lamp.

His wife eagerly perused his countenance, and she seemed to gather hope as he read. At length he looked up.

"I must go, dearest," were his words. "My father is not expected to live over the night. He reverts, for he has sent for me. God bless you, Mary, and our child," and a large tear rolled heavily down his cheek.

"I thank thee, heavenly father," said the wife, clasping her hands and lifting her swimming eyes on high, "my prayers have been heard. Oh! my sweet babe, thou shalt no longer want," and she clasped the sleeping cherub in convulsive joy to her bosom.

The husband dashed the tears hastily from his eyes, kissed the mother and her child fervently, and snatching up his hat and cloak was rushing from the room.

"I will sit up for you love," said the wife. The husband gave her a look of unutterable fondness, and stepped out into the storm. It was raining fiercely, and, at intervals, the thunder shook the sky, an usual occurrence at the season of the year. While he is making his way on foot, against the driving tempest, to his father's princely mansion let us hurry over the events which had reduced him and a lonely wife to penury.

Sir James Hengist was descended from one of those ancient families of England, which had been great, while the Normans were still landless, and many of which still remain among the gentry of Cheshire and Lincolnshire, looking down with contempt on the new nobility. In the course of generations, however, the family had become poor, and Sir, James, to rebuild its fortunes had married a lady of great wealth in the city. Lady Hengist was as good as she was rich, and won all hearts in her exalted station. She lived to see her only son attain the age of twenty, and she died regretted by all, and by none seemingly more than by her husband.

Lady Hengist had a niece, the daughter of a favorite step-brother, whom she had educated from a child, and whose union with her son had been a favorite project. She had long secretly entertained this idea, and what then was her gratification when she beheld a passion growing up for each other in the young people's bosom. Her niece was at this time, but fifteen, yet already ripening into womanhood, and one of the most beautiful and accomplished of her sex. Sir James appeared to enter into his wife's plans, and no obstacle was placed in the way of the lovers; so that for nearly a year their lives passed away in that brightest of all dreams, a first love sanctioned by friends.

But lady Hengist had been scarcely three months in her grave before a marked change came over Sir James, in his demeanor to his son. He was continually reproving the young man, who no longer could do anything to please him, and being a high-spirited youth, the heir was at length driven from the paternal roof by his constant annoyance. Toward the lovely Mary Crawford, however, the conduct of Sir James had been unchanged, even when she ventured to expostulate with him, as she sometimes did, in behalf of his son. There were those indeed, who said he had interested motives in this, and the truth of their suspicions became apparent after the son had sought a home elsewhere. Mary was now sixteen, in full maturity of early English beauty; and Sir James, overlook his tacit consent that his son should marry her, and forgetting the ne-hearted woman whom he had lately followed to the grave, determined to make her his wife. He was still in the prime of life, and might have succeeded with others scarcely less beautiful than Mary. But her heart was already an other's and she turned away with disgust from his addresses. It was some time before she was aware of his intentions, for she would not believe he could be guilty of such baseness, but when his attentions grew so marked as to become the kitchen gossip, she could no longer shut her eyes to them. She made no effort to conceal her repugnance. But Sir James was not to be foiled. In his youth he had been a man of gallantry, and still piqued himself on his power over the sex. But he tried every art in vain. At length, however, it became impossible for her to remain any longer under his roof; and she would have left it before, only that she knew not where to go, and beside she had indulged a hope that by remaining she might bring about a reconciliation between her lover and his father.

The young heir had been for some time, aware of his father's designs, and had urged Mary to elope with him, but as long as hope of reconciliation remained she refused. Now however, there was no alternative. Hengist House was no more a place for her, and without a relative in the world to whom she could appeal, the orphan had no other resort but to throw herself into her lover's arms. Accordingly the young couple were married. And now began their sorrows.

The rage of Sir James, on hearing of the union, almost killed him. His passions were always violent, but they now seemed fiendish. He swore that he would disinherit his son, and immediately cut off the allowance he had hitherto allowed his heir. The appeals of the offenders were in vain. The father was inexorable. He wished to see them starve to death, he said, and then he could surrender life willingly. The letters which Mary, unknown to her husband, had written almost daily, were returned unopened. Every one who might have otherwise assisted them, was turned against them by the powerful influence of the angry father, and in less than three months, the young heir found himself literally starving in the heart of London. His education, however, had not been neglected, and he sought among the booksellers for employment, determined not to give up in despair. For a long time he was unsuccessful, but finally found a paltry job, on which he managed to surely live until his wife presented him with a lovely babe. After this, all means of regular subsistence deserted him. Yet he struggled on, endeavoring, when in the presence of his wife, to keep up a cheerful countenance, and almost consoled for his unavailing struggles during the day by her sweet welcome and the smile of his babe at evening. But as winter approached, and his last guinea vanished, the iron began to enter into his soul. Several times he made abortive attempts to soften his father, and his wife also secretly tried for aid in the same quarter, but in vain. For more than a week they had now subsisted on their credit at a green grocer's shop, but this could not last long, and the almost distracted husband knew not where to turn, when unexpectedly this note arrived from his father.

His heart was full of high hopes, mingled with sorrowful feeling, as he hurried through the tempest. The knowledge that his only parent was on his death bed, awoke all the associations of childhood, bringing back the days when his father doted on him. The subsequent harshness of his parent was forgotten, and with the glad hope that he was going to receive and bestow forgiveness, the son proceeded almost breathless to his early home.

The massive doors swung open at his knock, the well-known servant ushered him deferentially through the hall, a whispered consultation was held at the sick man's door, and then he was desired to enter.

With a palpitating heart he had waited during the delay, and now he rushed in, all eagerness to be reconciled to his dying parent. He saw nothing but the form supported on pillows, and the pale face of the invalid, and in an instant he was on his knees beside the bed and had clasped the sick man's hand in his, while tears gushed from him like rain; for in that moment, with recollections of childhood had come back all its softness. But the hand was rudely jerked back and a scornful laugh met his ear.

"Ha! ha!—you have come, thinking I am about to make you my heir," began the sick man, "have you? And so began playing your part thus! I have sent for you for another reason, as you shall learn, you villain."

The young heir started to his feet. He could scarcely believe his ears. Could those brutal words that scornful laugh proceed from a dying man, and that man his parent? He stared incredulously at those around, and then at the face of the invalid, but though he read pity on the former, hate distorted the latter. Again his parent laughed sneeringly.

"So you came here thinking I was about to make you my heir, eh? Did your wife and child, sir, come along, to exult in my halls before I am cold?"

"Father—father—" said the young man imploringly, as yet bewildered by this strange scene.

"Don't call me father, you unnatural child," said the invalid, half rising in bed, and shaking his clenched hand. "You have brought me to this—you have you rascal—But I'll have my revenge. You shall starve, sir, starve—I hoped to live to see it—but I'll make it certain."

"Sir James," said the son, "I will go rather than stay to hear these things. And may God forgive me and you for all that is wrong between us."

"Dare you, sir, talk of God forgiving you, you villain," shouted the sick man, almost foaming with passion, while the alarmed attendants, not daring to interfere stood trembling, looking from father to son. "I tell you he'll let you starve, and you can't help it. I'll make it sure. Yes! and I'll live to see it," he exclaimed with a horrible oath. "I won't die—it's all a lie of the doctors. You and your paramour shall beg before my face, you shall—"

"Say what you will of me, but forbear my wife," exclaimed the young man with flashing eyes, "here I stay no longer," and he moved towards the door. But three or four servants interposed.

"Keep him in," fiercely exclaimed the invalid, "make him stay till the will is read and signed. He shall see it all," and again there was a terrible oath.

"I pray you, sir," said the conveyancer, now advancing, for the young man had not seen him before. "Consider the piece," he added imploringly, as he saw the son about to knock down the servants who opposed his path, "it shall be hastened as much as possible if you will only bear it," he whispered.

The young heir, bitterly as he had been reviled, would not make his father's dying room the scene of a broil, so he bowed his head at this expostulation, and folding his arms haughtily on his bosom, prepared to hear the will. A look of bitter triumph passed over the sick man's face; it seemed as if his passion had transformed him into a fiend.

"Proceed, sir," he said, nodding to the conveyancer.

The man unrolled his parchment, and began repeating the formal language of the deed, and as clause after clause was read, depriving the young heir of his just rights, the eyes of the invalid glistened over the agony he knew he was inflicting on his victim. The son, in spite of every exertion, felt that his feelings were betraying themselves in the convulsive twitches of his face. How could he look unconcerned when his hopes were being crushed, and he saw inevitable beggary before his sweet wife and babe, with the horror of a jail, in prospect for himself? But he closed his mouth firmly, choked back his emotions, and gazed sternly on the man of the law as he read the lookers on should perceive his emotion.

When the conveyancer had finished the deed, he advanced to the bed side with it, two servants carrying a small table on which were writing materials.

"Give me a pen, quick, quick," said the invalid, rising unsupported in bed.

The conveyancer hastened to obey, the parchment was spread out, and the pen was in the invalid's hand.

"Do you see this, sir?" he said, casting a look of triumphant malice at his son, and he placed the pen to the skin.

The storm, all this while, had been increasing in fury, and vivid flashes of electricity had begun to penetrate through the closed shutters and heavy drapery of the windows. Just at this instant a peal was heard, stunning every one in the room, which seemed filled with a blinding light. Several fell to their feet in fright, and the whole house appeared to rock. For a second there was breathless silence, and then the conveyancer spoke.

"Father in heaven!" he exclaimed, in a tone of horror, and advancing to the bed, he added solemnly, "Sir James is dead!"

They rushed to his side, and found it was indeed so. The lightning had run down the wall at the head of the bed, and in a second the soul of the baronet was in eternity. The parchment was shrivelled black, while the pen, knocked three feet from the hand, lay burning on the rich counterpane.

A silence of horror chained every tongue. The death of the invalid, at that instant, seemed like a stroke of Providence.

At length the conveyancer turned to the son, and grasping his hand, said,

"As there is no will, Sir James, you are the sole heir. And from the bottom of my heart I congratulate you."

There is no happier woman now than the young Lady Hengist, for she is blessed with a husband who adores her and surrounded with a family of lovely children who inherit the beauty and virtues of their parents.

## Ladies Nat. Intelligencer.

### THE ELK RUNNERS.

Under this head the editor of the St. Louis Reveille relates the particulars of a wild, marvellous, and most singular chase—a chase which has no parallel that we wot of. He vouches for its authenticity, too—but we give the narrative in his own words:

The following extraordinary relation is literally true. It has been communicated to us by one of our oldest and most respectable citizens, and is further substantiated by the concurrent testimony of the senior editor of this paper, who knew both of the men spoken of, and has never heard the story doubted. Major John Dougherty, the Kentuckian mentioned, is still living, in Clay county, Missouri, which he has represented in the Legislature, besides having filled the important post of India Agent. He was famous in his youth, among the prairie and mountain men, as a hunter of extraordinary skill and endurance. We should like, of all things, to hear his own statement of an adventure which is, certainly, among the most marvellous ever heard out of the pages of fiction—if, indeed fiction has anything to compare with it.

In the year 1818 the Missouri Fur Company had a post just below Council Bluffs, named Fort Lisa, after the gentleman who established it. There was much competition in the trade at that time, and it was a great point to select the very best men for runners.

Mr. Lisa had with him a young Kentuckian named Dougherty, a fine daring fellow with a frame of iron, the speed of the ostrich, and the endurance of the camel. He was fortunate, moreover, in the retention of a half breed called Mal Beef, who, notwithstanding his name, (bad beef), was considered of hardly less merit than D. and between the two men, consequently, a keen rivalry existed. D. had travelled on foot from the Blackbird Hills to Fort Lisa, a distance of ninety miles in thirteen hours! Mal Beef also boasted some astonishing feats of "bottom," and both were astonished at the Fort, during the time we speak of for the purpose of providing venison.

One evening in July, the weather extremely warm, the grass high and almost unfurnished with meat, the two men were playing at cards, when their employer came up, and reproached them with their negligence, and ordered them to start the first thing in the morning on a hunt. Obedience was promised, of course, but the game continued, each moment growing more desperate, the spirit of rivalry pervading their hearts in every thing, till finally morning broke as the half-breed declared himself to be broken. They fell asleep on the spot, and the sun was well up when Mr. L., informed of the case, again approached, in no pleasant humor it may be supposed, cursed, sacred and cartho'd till the delinquents, fully aroused and a little ashamed, took their guns and started for Papillion Creek, on the edge of a prairie, about five miles off. There they discovered a gang of elk, when the Kentuckian suggested a plan of approach that would enable them to get a good shot. The half breed, ranking at his companion's triumph the night previous, observed sulkily—

"I don't kill elk with my gun, but with my knife!"

The pluck of the other aroused in an instant, rightly interpreting the taunt as a challenge to a trial of speed and bottom—and on his saying proudly, that what his companion could do, he could do as well, hung their guns in—ere, and approaching the band as near as possible, they suddenly raised the Indian yell, which has a most paralyzing effect upon the animals.

Off they went across a low prairie, a few miles in width, leaving their pursuers far behind; but steadily the latter continued their pace, nevertheless. They reached the bluff; ascended—crossed—descended—one resolve uppermost in their minds—never to say fail. League after league their chase and race continued—the men panting like hounds, cooling their mouths in crossing an occasional "branch" by throwing up the water with their palms, but still unopposing, until, approaching Elk Horn River, a distance of twenty miles, by mutual agreement they took a circuit with an increase of speed, got ahead of the elk, and actually prevented them from crossing. Leagues and leagues upon a new track, the chase continued, the animals by this time so exhausted by heat, thirst, and chafe all fright, for the hunters had incessantly sent forth their yells, in this case as much a scream of mutual defiance as an artifice of the chase, that they scarcely exceeded their pursuers in speed; the latter, foaming and maddened with excitement, redoubled their efforts until the elk, reaching a prairie pond or "sink," the hunters at their heels, plunged despairingly in, laid down, and abandoned themselves heedless of all else, to the gratification of their thirst.

The frantic rivals, knife in hand, dashed in after their prey, began the work of slaughter, pausing not until they had butchered sixteen elk! dragged them from the water, and cut up and prepared the meat for transportation to the fort, whither they had to return for horses.

Had the race ended? No! Far victory or death was the inward determination, and as yet neither had the victor gained against the mountain man, and at his side the unyielding Kentuckian. Ridge and hollow, stream and timber—no yelling now—in desperate silence were left behind.

The sun was sinking; blind, staggering, on they went; they reached the fort haggard, wild and voiceless as from the fires of the savage, the gauntlet, of fiends. A crowd gathered round the exhausted men, who had arrived together and now lay fainting, still side and side, a long time before they were enabled, by signs, and whispers to tell that they had run down sixteen elk and yet couldn't say which was the best man!

The feat brought upon D. an affection of the lungs, nor did he recover his strength for several years. He is still alive—a quiet and influential citizen. Mal Beef became very dissipated and died in a short time. Our informant tells us that he has made an examination of the country forming their race track himself, and that they, without exaggeration, must have run seventy five miles between the hours of 8 A. M. and 7 P. M. He is fond of reading the New York Spirit of the Times, and wishes to know what the editor thinks of the Barclay and Elsworth breed, when compared with the prairie runners of the West, a thousand of whose exploits remain untold, as matters of common occurrence.

The Abolitionists have nominated a candidate for Congress, in opposition to John Quincy Adams. It is remarkable that the Abolitionists, as a party, cannot be induced to support men whom we in the South are taught to believe, are deadly hostile to Southern institutions. Is it not?—Virginia.

"Mr. Cob, I am sorry to see you in this condition."

"You are, eh—well I ain't—I'm corn'd just as a cob ought to be."

SHARP.—"I cannot imagine," said Alderman A.—"why my whiskers turn gray sooner than my head."

"Because," observed a wag, "you work so much more with your jaws than your brains."

DEATH AND POLITICS.—It was recently remarked by a clergyman, that if a man desired to have a good character, he had but to die; if a bad one, to become a candidate for popular favor.

A father in Indiana lately dogged his daughter to death! The coroner's jury rendered this verdict. "Death occasioned by tight lacing!"