

"Oh! if I but knew this thing, I would leave nothing to my niece. He, and none other, should be my heir."

These words closed my lips, and when she mentioned my grandfather's name I pretended not to understand. Madame Jansen sighed.

"How well preserved everything is here!" she continued, in her usual affected manner. "Let us settle this affair of the will."

"If you really wish to revoke your will in favor of Matilde, madame, you had better give me the necessary instructions."

As I spoke I drew out of my pocket a blank sheet of paper, upon which I scribbled the following words:

"This is to certify that, being of sound mind, it is my will and pleasure to revoke every previous testament which I may have made in favor of others, and to bequeath the whole of my worldly possessions, without exception, unto my niece, Matilde Alten, eldest daughter of Henri Alten, at present chef de police in the city of —."

Having affixed a date to this document I handed it to her for signature. She looked at me for a moment in evident perplexity, and I saw in her eyes the strange light which had puzzled me more than once. I drew a chair toward her and offered my pencil. Her hand did not shake as she took it and signed the codicil.

"To-morrow we will draw up a formal document."

She made no reply and took my arm. She was so feeble that I almost carried her down stairs. On reaching the ground floor she contrived to drag herself to the front door, and as I emerged into the street I heard her fasten the chain.

Early on the following morning I was seated at my desk drawing out the codicil. While thus employed my wife came in and told me that strange noises had been heard during the night in the house of Madame Jansen.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"The servants say that they heard sounds as though heaps of money had been upset on the ground."

"What nonsense they talk!" said I. "Why, the poor old woman has not so much as a bag of crowns in the house. She has but a handful of gold coins. Servants are always imagining all kinds of impossible things."

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and an old woman stood on the threshold.

I was rather annoyed, because I did not wish people to get the idea that the house was worth robbing.

"Something must have happened to Madame Jansen," she said. "At six o'clock I knocked as usual, but could get no answer. I tried again at seven, but no answer; this time I knocked so loud that people came out of their houses to see what was the matter."

I rose quickly and left the house. When I got into the street I found that a neighboring locksmith had been summoned. I requested him to open the door, and that done to force the chain, which was fastened on the inside. We entered the room on the ground floor. Wardrobe and cupboard had been dragged away from the walls; the bed taken to pieces; the mattress and pillows strewn about

the floor; the large mirror between the windows was hanging by one loose support. The floor was strewn with thalers; and in the midst of this confusion lay the old soldier's cloak beside a bag from whence the thalers had come. A rigid form was huddled beneath the cloak, the lifeless body of the little old woman!

After the funeral an official visited the house for the purposes of inspection. In the cellar, and behind the wainscot even, quantities of valuables were found; but the red silk purse with the strange gold pieces had disappeared forever.

The new will not having been signed made me feel anxious as to the validity of the document which I had induced Madame Jansen to sign. As might have been expected, a vigorous attempt was made to invalidate the codicil, but that attempt happily failed.

Public opinion, which had long been adverse to the institution in whose favor the original document had been signed, seized upon this incident with avidity. The institution was subjected to a rigorous examination. A committee of citizens was appointed to report upon its administration, and, as a result, a thorough reform was determined on. The idle vagabonds who had hitherto infested the public highways were restricted within proper boundaries, and in time its pensioners dwindled to about six brave men who richly deserved its bounties.

Now that fortune smiled upon Matilde the world smiled also, and of her many admirers one only held aloof. Nothing would induce him to come forward. Matilde, as a penniless girl, he had loved. To him, Matilde as an heiress was quite a different person. But I knew the story, and, as I had been instrumental in making her wealthy, I resolved to help her to marry the man she loved.

I contrived one evening to bring them together at our house.

It was summer time. The air was soft, and the sweet moonlight lit up the garden where I had climbed the apple tree to pay my first visit to Madame Jansen. I took Matilde's hand and led her to the foot of the tree.

"Look!" I said. "Yonder is the ballroom where, if she had lived, you would have met your husband."

"My husband?"

"Yes." And I told her exactly how it all happened. "If she had lived, Matilde, you would never have married the man who still loves you with all his heart and soul."

"And who is he?"

"I will send him to you."

Before Matilde had time to stop me I was gone.

In due course the old house was reopened. The faded curtains were replaced by gorgeous hangings. The bats and the spiders, much against their will, were driven to seek shelter elsewhere.

Matilde and her husband—the happiest people in the town—are still living, and can verify my story if need be.—*Temple Bar.*