

"My good man, will you do me the favor of walkin' home with me?"

"I said 'yes.' I thought he knew he was too weak to walk alone, but 'twan't that. When he got to his house he made me witness his will, me an' his head farmer.

"I'm a-goin' to set that poor girl right," says the old man. "God only knows how I've suffered since she went away. This will is my last." He was standin' straight an' spoke low. I was kinder scared with it all. "I leave everything to my daughter," he went on. "Now I'm goin' to fix her children."

"He was half cryin', but when he wrote he was as stiddy as an oak. He wrote on the will that if the daughter should die, the property should stay just as it was till the children was of age. If the children didn't claim the property, then it was all to go to his dear friend who had been like a son to him.

"While the old man was talkin' I saw a shader move by the doorway. The Marshfield farmer saw it too, 'cause he nudged me in the side an' motioned toward the place. I was sure a man was there an' that he was a-listenin'. Old Marshfield just stood an' thought, an' bye'n bye says he—

"I'll just make the property to Phoebe an' her children. It belongs to them. They can have an unlimited time to claim their own."

"The Marshfield farmer was scared, an' begged the old man to wait a week afore he made any other changes. The farmer wanted to get out of the house, an' so did I when it comes to that, for I didn't like that skulkin, in t'other room. I told the Squire that any time he wanted to change the will I'd come over—I knew it stood safe enough for Phoebe an' the children." The old man yielded to us, an' the farmer an' I started away. When we was goin' through the front gate we met the young man that the Squire said was like a son to him. He was smokin' a cigar, an' speakin' to us pleasant like, said—

"The Squire's lookin' better, don't you think?"

"I asked Marshfield's farmer who he supposed was in t'other room when we was signin'. He looked knowin' an' jerked his head toward the young feller at the gate. The Marshfield farmer told me all about the will an' I was quite a gun on the point for bein' a witness. A few days later a queer sort o' chap turned up in Essectown, who talked with some o' the folks about a Marshfield girl that he'd seen across the water. Some o' the townspeople sent the man to me. He told me he was a sailor an' had met Phoebe an' her two children on a wharf in Liverpool, that the women an' children had sailed by another vessel about the same time he did. The feller looked honest, an' talked straight enough, so I thought I'd take him to the Squire. He told the Squire the same story, only he

said Phoebe hadn't any money, an' that he was just paid his earnin's an' he lent her enough to pay her fare, an' she let him have a stone she wore about her neck. The feller said t' little boy an' girl had the same kind o' ornaments hangin' around their necks. The Squire was awful excited an' wanted to see the stone. The feller had it done up in the corner of a han'kerchief. I'd sc'm the same stone on Phoebe's neck myself. When the Squire saw it he went about wild.

"She said," said the sailor, "that she had folks in Essex, an' I come down here thinkin the ship she sailed in must 'a' got to port, an' p'r'aps she'd get her folks to buy back the trinket."

"I guess the feller got back all he lent Phoebe, an' a sight more. The Squire just loaded him with money. While he was a-talkin' the friend of the Squire came into the room, an' the Squire told the story over. The young friend seemed to be glad. Then the Squire hired the sailor to stay around the place for a time. The old man only wanted to talk about Phoebe to him. As I was a-goin' out, the Squire said—

"I'll have Hicks here to-morrow, an' if you're at liberty I'd like you to come over, an' we'll fix up those papers."

"I said 'all right,' an' went home. Course I had to tell mother about everything, an' it was nigh onto 'leven o'clock when we begun to think about goin' to bed. Then we mulled a jug o' cider an' set talkin' some more about how happy Phoebe would be with her father, now he was so changed. 'Twas about twelve o'clock when I went around to lock up the house. All of a sudden the fowls begun to crow an' cackle like all possessed, an' the dog begun to bark. I thought 'twas a fox or some four-legged critter in among the fowls. I grabbed the old gun an' opened the door. There was such a queer light in the sky that I sung out to mother—

"We've made a mistake, it's mornin', an' the sun's a-comin' up."

"The sun don't come up over there," says mother, then she begun to shake an' cling to my arm. "It's a fire!" says she.

"It's the Marshfield house!" says I, just like I was wakin' up, then I begun to git ready to go out.

"You sha'n't go," mother kept sayin', "I won't stay here alone."

"Somehow the idea of a fire scared her mightily, so I called the boys an' took 'em all along. When I got to the fire the house had tumbled in an' everything that could burn was gone off in smoke. There was quite a crowd gathered around the Squire's friend. The young gentleman was a-cryin' an' beggin' some one to go an' get the Squire out o' the ruins. He said he'd pay ten thousand dollars to the man that saved