

MRS. HARDINE'S WILL.

By ARGAIL SCOTT DUNWAY,
AUTHOR OF "GENTLE REED," "ELLEN POWELL,"
"AMIE AND HENRY LEE," "THE HAPPY
HOURS," "FRANKIE MURKINSON,"
"FRAT, PATZ AND FANZ,"
Etc., Etc., Etc.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.
A DECADE AND A HALF.

The reader is now invited to span a
space of intervening years—a decade and
a half of them—and come with me to
the beautiful Chemeketa Valley and be-
hold the homes of the Hardines.

Fifteen years—ah! The time seems
short when you have lived it; but it
forms a third part of an average human
lifetime.

The day is warm and balmy, and the
mellow sunshine paints the landscape
with a shimmering radiance that softens
Nature's rugged outlines on the hills,
and casts purple shadows in the
tree-trimmed hollows.

Youder, on a sloping eminence in the
prairie, stands a stately farm-house,
gable-ended, dormer-windowed, white,
shutterless, shadeless and glaring. In-
side, the house is bare and stark and
comfortless as an empty barn; but that
word empty will not hardly apply, for
the comfortable abode is filled with
children in slattern attire, scold, dirty
and half-battered. Their feet and hands
are bare and chapped and brown, and
the clothes of the feminine element are
replete of grease and dishwater. A
pale woman, with wrinkled face, limp,
sallow hair, two prominent eye-teeth
with a broad red gap between them, and
hands with enormous knuckles and dyed-
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ing rocker and sings a soothing lullaby
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Good reader, are you thinking of "Lize
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the fields, his breeches laded with
mud, and his soiled hickory shirt torn
at the elbow and open at the wrists.

"Where's your father, Henry?" asked
the patient mother of the boy, to whom
the reader is now to be introduced as
the crawling babe that he last beheld
reposing in Tirzah Hardine's first cradle.

"Over to old Sapp's, as usual, mother.
And I swear to you that if he wasn't my
father, I'd kill him quicker than I'd
shoot a dog!"

"Henry!" and the weary mother
coaxed the waiting babe to stifle its
cries at her bosom, "you forget your
son! John Hardine is your father, my
son!"

"God knows I can't help that! He's
a grasping, niggardly tyrant! A chip
from the old block! A politician! A
trickster!"

"Henry! for shame!"

"I know you think I'm wicked,
mother; but I can't bear everything! I
gave father a little of my slack this
morning. I couldn't help it! He tore
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didn't go on to suit him, and I told him
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be very smart, but I'm not quite a blank
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and so he tries to lay the blame on
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now, and harvest will soon be ready
and rushing, and the ole man's off half
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engineer in 't bet Sam Hardpan to office,
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age; and then, 'cause I can't see to
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"My son, will you hush?"

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shoe-tracks on the floor and the
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sleep upon her bosom, and closed her
eyes wearily.

"I've tried to do my duty during all
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she sighed. "And yet, if my work has
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tree-trimmed hollows.

Youder, on a sloping eminence in the
prairie, stands a stately farm-house,
gable-ended, dormer-windowed, white,
shutterless, shadeless and glaring. In-
side, the house is bare and stark and
comfortless as an empty barn; but that
word empty will not hardly apply, for
the comfortable abode is filled with
children in slattern attire, scold, dirty
and half-battered. Their feet and hands
are bare and chapped and brown, and
the clothes of the feminine element are
replete of grease and dishwater. A
pale woman, with wrinkled face, limp,
sallow hair, two prominent eye-teeth
with a broad red gap between them, and
hands with enormous knuckles and dyed-
stained nails, sits wearily upon a creak-
ing rocker and sings a soothing lullaby
to a waiting babe.

Good reader, are you thinking of "Lize
Hardine"? Well, for once you are mis-
taken, for it is not she.

A tall boy, overgrown, loose-jointed
and slovenly, comes strolling in from
the fields, his breeches laded with
mud, and his soiled hickory shirt torn
at the elbow and open at the wrists.

"Where's your father, Henry?" asked
the patient mother of the boy, to whom
the reader is now to be introduced as
the crawling babe that he last beheld
reposing in Tirzah Hardine's first cradle.

"Over to old Sapp's, as usual, mother.
And I swear to you that if he wasn't my
father, I'd kill him quicker than I'd
shoot a dog!"

"Henry!" and the weary mother
coaxed the waiting babe to stifle its
cries at her bosom, "you forget your
son! John Hardine is your father, my
son!"

"God knows I can't help that! He's
a grasping, niggardly tyrant! A chip
from the old block! A politician! A
trickster!"

"Henry! for shame!"

"I know you think I'm wicked,
mother; but I can't bear everything! I
gave father a little of my slack this
morning. I couldn't help it! He tore
round worse'n Satan 'cause the work
didn't go on to suit him, and I told him
that a man that 'tends to his own busi-
ness' is the fellow that always gets
the best! There's no use in your preach-
ing my duty to me, mother. I mayn't
be very smart, but I'm not quite a blank
idiot. Father's displeased with himself
because he knows he isn't doing right,
and so he tries to lay the blame on
everybody else. Haying season's on us
now, and harvest will soon be ready
and rushing, and the ole man's off half
the time after politics—foolin' round,
engineer in 't bet Sam Hardpan to office,
and leaving me this big farm to man-
age; and then, 'cause I can't see to
his eyes about everything, he threatens
to fly me! Better let him try it!"

"My son, will you hush?"

"Yes; now I've had my say, I will.
But, just let the ole man dare to fling
me, and I'll teach him a trick worth a
dozen of it, I will!"

The boy stalked through the great
barrel sitting-room, leaving his muddy
shoe-tracks on the floor and the
barrel-drops on the floor, and I have
hushed the little babe—her tenth—to
sleep upon her bosom, and closed her
eyes wearily.

"I've tried to do my duty during all
these weary years, as God is my judge,"
she sighed. "And yet, if my work has
to be known by its fruits, am I justified?
Would it not have been far better for
me and my children, when I learned in
the beginning, as I did to my shame
and disappointment and sorrow, that I
had made a grievous matrimonial mis-
take, if I had fled, like Hagar, to the
wilderness? I thought to save my son
from the fate of Ishmael, but I have
failed. I have learned, alas! too late,
that children begotten in hatred and
brought up in discord, however securely
the hatred and discord may be hid-
den from the world, are the innocent
victims of a mighty wrong. Poor Henry!
He is only one of half a score of these
discordant rebels with whom I am now
compelled to deal. They are Ishmaels,
every one of them, and no wonder!
They have honestly inherited their
fate!"

And then Tirzah's thoughts went
wandering back through the departed
years, and searching through them all
for justification of her constant adher-

ence to the letter of a contract which
had been killed in spirit in its very out-
set, what wonder that she failed to find
it?

I am aware that I am treading now
upon forbidden ground, good reader. I
well know that there be those who read
these pages who will cry out in well-
assimilated horror, as though the wrong
were in my own imagination rather
than in the facts I state. But all the
outrage of all the Pharisees in all America
will not cause me to avert a single
inch from my duty, which consists in
declaring to you the whole power of the
truth, God-made and humanity-violated,
which visits the sins of the parents
upon the children to the third and
fourth generations of those bound to
wedlock who, whether openly or se-
cretly, hate each other, instead of being
"one flesh," or one in heart and thought
and love and purpose, as only those
should be who unite to bestow existence
upon the children of a new world.

The day is warm and balmy, and the
mellow sunshine paints the landscape
with a shimmering radiance that softens
Nature's rugged outlines on the hills,
and