

saluted me. Fifteen times was I stopped. I denied my identity with Mr. Mann the first time, but was met with a look of such pained disbelief that I had not the courage to do so again.

Altogether we had an exciting walk. We went out once again, but when I found that Chatham was getting credit for some clothes at a prominent downtown tailor's on the strength of my waiting outside for him, I told him I could do no more in that direction, and a coolness resulted.

It was one evening in September that I saw him next. My landlady had gone to pay a visit of a few days to a relative in the country, and I was strangely excited.

"Greetings," he said, as soon as he was in my sitting room. "My uncle, Henry Mann, died tonight—an hour ago."

"I'm sorry to hear the news. It will be a bad job for you if what we know of his will is correct."

"A very bad job. So much so that if you do not help me I shall be in the poorhouse in a month. I have nothing in the world but the miserable pittance he allows me, which he said would stop with his life."

"How now can I help you? You know I can barely pay my own way."

"I don't mean that sort of help," said Chatham. Then he drew his chair nearer to mine and lowered his voice. "Dr. Vane saw him this afternoon and said there was no immediate danger. Nobody knows that he is dead but Vane, his personal doctor, who lives in the house; his valet, Clayton, and myself."

"But what of that? The whole world will know of it tomorrow."

"Before then he must have made another will."

"I am afraid I don't understand you," I answered.

"You say that Mr. Mann is dead?"

Chatham laid his hand upon my arm and looked at me with a strange, nervous expression on his face.

"Yes, uncle is dead, but you are not," he said meaningly.

In a moment it all flashed upon me. He wanted me to impersonate his uncle.

"You wish me to commit forgery?" I gasped.

"I'll make it worth your while."

"How?"

"By the will you must make tonight in uncle's bed you leave me \$500,000. Vane and Clayton will be paid for their assistance, and you shall have \$50,000 for your share of the trouble."

Fifty thousand dollars! My brain reeled at the thought. To be independent—may, to be rich; and all by a few strokes of the pen. But—

Chatham watched me keenly.

"There's no time to be lost," he said. "We have put uncle in the dressing room. You must return with me at once. Clayton has the coast clear. The moment you are there we shall send for Gregory—uncle's regular lawyer—and you will have to dictate a fresh will to him. You will have to sign your name, of course, but any sort of a scrawl will do as you are ill. I've brought you a few of his signatures, which you had better copy, so that you may get somewhere near them. You won't have much to do, and you'll be paid \$50,000 for doing it."

"But it's forgery," I expostulated.

"It's something like it," Chatham admitted, "but you don't attempt to copy his signature exactly. A smart counsel might get you off on that ground if it came to trial, but I don't see how it could. We are going to square Gregory," he added triumphantly.

"Square Gregory?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, old man, that's a master stroke, and it is you who must do it. You must lead up to it touchingly. Tell him you always intended to remember him, and put him down for \$10,000. See how he takes it. Double it if you don't think ten enough, or if he doesn't. We can afford to be liberal at times like these. That will clinch the matter. Even if he smells a rat he'll never upset the will

after that. Here are the autographs. Just try your hand at a few copies."

I made a dozen attempts, and arrived at a passable imitation, which satisfied Chatham.

"Come along now," he said eagerly, "we'll get a hack as soon as we are a safe distance away."

"But I haven't agreed," I expostulated.

"Come on, you fool!" said Chatham. "It isn't the time for agreeing. It's acting we want now."

And I went.

At last we reached the house. A solemn and highly respectable individual at once appeared in the doorway.

"Clayton," explained Chatham.

We followed him upstairs without a word and without meeting a soul. Finally we reached the bedroom—a large apartment with a four-posted bedstead. There was a door at the far side—the dressing room, I reflected.

A sandy bearded man jumped up as we entered.

"Dr. Vane," said Chatham, while Clayton took up a position with his back to the fire.

We bowed and shook hands.

"It is, indeed, a remarkable resemblance," said he. "Now, Clayton, you must send for Mr. Gregory at once. Send Collins to his house and wire to his club, Mr. Sterling. I must trouble you to change. Chatham you'd better go altogether."

I must confess the doctor's authoritative and business-like methods gave me confidence. I followed his instructions and in ten minutes I was clad in Mr. Mann's nightshirt and in his bed.

Then Dr. Vane powdered my face and rubbed it in to produce the melancholy effect desirable.

"There," he said, when he had done, "if you are not Mr. Mann, I don't know who you are. By the bye, I suppose Edward has primed you up about the Mann family?"

"No, not particularly. He has mentioned various members of it from time to time."

"Confound him, then, for a fool! You ought to have the family tree at your finger ends. Listen to me. The late Mr. Mann had three brothers and five sisters—John, James, Rupert, Mary Elizabeth—and on he went. I didn't attempt to follow him after the first sentence. Finally the door opened.

"Mr. Gregory, sir," whispered the discreet Clayton.

The doctor held up a warning finger and advanced to meet him.

"Mr. Mann wished to see you, Mr. Gregory," I heard him say. Then, in reply to a question: "I hope not. Still, I thought it better to send for you, even at this late hour, as Mr. Mann has asked for you several times."

"Quite right. Is he awake now?"

The doctor came over to the bedside and leaned over me.

"Mr. Gregory is here, sir," he said.

I nodded feebly and stretched out my hand. I felt a gentle pressure and opened my eyes. So that was Gregory. The face seemed familiar, yet I couldn't say where I had seen it before.

"Perhaps Mr. Mann would rather we were alone, doctor," said Mr. Gregory.

"Now, sir," said the lawyer, when the door had closed behind Vane.

"I'm bothered about my nephew, Edward Chatham," I said in a whisper scarcely more than audible. "He's Mary's son, after all."

"Elizabeth's," corrected Gregory.

"Elizabeth's. Did I say Mary? I can't concentrate my thoughts Gregory, somehow. Yes, Edward is Elizabeth's boy, as you say, and I don't want to leave him penniless. The secretary won't miss it, you know."

"The secretary?" queried Gregory.

"The secretary of the treasury."

"O, the secretary of the treasury. He won't miss it, as you say. How much did you think of leaving to your nephew?"



"All Right, Gregory," I Answered. "You May Put Yourself Down for \$15,000!"