

AN HEIR TO MILLIONS

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SYNOPSIS.

Andy Meelen, aged and eccentric millionaire miner, is dying and orders his attorney to draw up a will leaving all his property to the son of a sister from whom he was separated years before and of whose name even he is ignorant. Andy tells the attorney that he was married in his youth, but left his wife after a quarrel in which he struck her. He learned afterward that she and his daughter were dead. The scene shifts to New York, introducing Wilfrid Stennis, who is telling his fiancée, Eunice Trevecca, what he would do if he were the possessor of twenty or fifty millions. In the law office of Carboy, Passavant & Cozine, attorneys for the estate of Andy Meelen, Roger News reports the result of his search in the east for heirs of Meelen. He conceals the fact that a daughter of Meelen is alive. Wilfrid sees an advertisement for information concerning Martha Meelen or descendants. He recognizes the description as that of his dead mother and decides to answer the advertisement.

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

"She occasionally spoke of an elder brother somewhere in this country, but she never heard from him, that I can remember, and we always supposed he was killed in the war."

"And his name—surely you have heard her mention his name, Mr. Stennis?"

"Why, certainly. It was Andrew—Andrew Meelen, of course!"

The lawyer's indifferent manner had disappeared, and he had leaned forward anxiously in his chair, pending this answer, but now he resumed his former position, with as much satisfaction shining in his fat face as the legal proprieties ever permitted.

"Well, Mr. Stennis, I am warranted in going so far as to say that this interview has been eminently satisfactory up to this point, and I am delighted to have made your acquaintance. I will have those little details to which I alluded looked up, and if you will do me the honor to call here at the same hour this day week I may have some exceedingly interesting news, in fact."

"But—but," stammered Wilfrid. "I am not a bit wiser than when I came in! You've pumped me dry, and I should like to know something about the advertisement—what it means—and so would my—my friends."

Mr. Passavant looked at the quivering Wilfrid compassionately and dispassionately over his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Your impatience is quite excusable under the circumstances, my dear sir, but until we have in our hands the collateral proofs of which I have spoken, it would be manifestly improper for me to commit myself further. Good-morning!"

"And so," as Wilfrid ruefully told Eunice that evening, "I came away like the king of France, who marched up the hill and down again, and got nothing for my trouble."

Eunice made him tell the story of the interview twice over, and then sat quietly ruminating, her forehead and eyebrows puckered in a puzzled frown.

"It must be—I am sure of it, Wilfrid," she exclaimed at length. "The advertisement has something to do with that long-lost uncle Andrew of yours!"

"Do you really think so?" said Wilfrid dubiously. "Why, all old Passavant's talk was about mother; he only mentioned uncle Andrew once."

"You silly boy!" the girl exclaimed with pretty petulance, giving him a little push, "that's the very thing that makes me sure!"

From which it may be seen that Eunice Trevecca possessed what has been called the "leaping mind."

So there was nothing for it but to wait the week out with what patience the trio could muster—for Eunice and old Trevecca were equally interested with Wilfrid. The time passed in all sorts of feverish conjectures, and Wilfrid, it must be confessed, was a somewhat idle and careless apprentice all that week.

Hence it was with a beating heart and all sorts of nameless and formless expectations that Stennis presented himself in Temple court at the appointed hour one week later.

This time his reception was cordiality itself, tempered with such marked respect as to be positively embarrassing to a youngster so inexperienced in the ways of the world. There was a third person present also, introduced as Mr. Phineas Carboy, the senior member of the firm.

Both partners impressively shook hands with their visitor and were quite deferential in manner. Mr. Passavant's demeanor might even be described as parentally affectionate.

Wilfrid sat on the edge of the proffered seat in some trepidation, and found himself focussed by a battery of four eyes and two pairs of eyeglasses, so respectfully solicitous was the manner of his reception. Mr. Passavant led off in one of his pompously rounded periods:

"It is a pleasure to renew the acquaintance of so presentable a young gentleman as yourself, Mr. Stennis, and to be the bearers of what will, I am sure, be most grateful tidings. Not the least item in our gratification consists in the fact that you bear a most dignified and euphonious name—one eminently fitted to grace the good fortune we are about to announce: Wilfrid Stennis, Esquire—ah!" He rolled out the full title in his best forensic manner, and our unsophisticated Wilfrid, who was staggered by all this unexpected homage and flattery, hardly recognized his own familiar appellation.

Here Mr. Carboy, with an impatient cough, took up the tale, as though he would say: "We have had the fancy touches and the summery; now let's get down to business."

"The facts are briefly as follows, Mr. Stennis: This firm for many years past has numbered among its most valued clients your late lamented maternal uncle, Mr. Andrew Meelen, whose reputation in the west was largely merged in the town named after him in the state of Nevada."

Wilfrid could not repress a gesture of surprise at the mention of old Andrew's name. Eunice was right, after all.

"Three months ago, Mr. Stennis, your uncle died, not very suddenly, but full of years, and childless. He



It Was More Than Poor Wilfrid Could Comprehend.

was, I am happy to say for your sake, a very wealthy man. I had the honor to draw his last will and testament, in which he named Mr. Passavant and myself as co-executors. The estate will foot up at \$25,000,000, partly in paying mining properties, but mainly in cash and available securities. Besides this principal, there is also a yearly income, at the present market values of silver and copper, of something like \$1,000,000. Your uncle's will makes you sole legatee, and it becomes our very pleasant duty, Mr. Stennis, to congratulate you upon your good fortune. From what we can learn of you personally, I have no hesitation in expressing the opinion that this vast wealth could not have fallen into better hands."

Both partners rose to their feet at this peroration, and each grasped a hand of the dumfounded Wilfrid, who "stood speechless before them, saying never a word," vainly essaying to moisten his parched lips. Then he sat down, saying piteously:

"I'm afraid I don't quite take it all in, gentlemen! You must give me time to realize the news!"

"Oh, you will soon get used to the situation, my dear sir," said the bland and beaming Passavant, with a return to his fatherly manner.

"Surely!" echoed Mr. Carboy, with a compassionate smile. "You will be

one of the richest young men of the age—twenty-five millions in ready and a yearly income of a million besides!"

It was more than poor Wilfrid could comprehend at a moment's notice. With these words ringing in his ears he staggered out of the office and gained the street, there to "walk it off."

CHAPTER V.

Horatio Passavant occupied a residence on Park avenue, that dullest of New York's many dull uptown streets. The place and its furnishings, like their owner, were heavy, eminently respectable, pompous, and quite pretentious.

The household consisted of himself, his daughter, and his spinster sister—the latter tolerated chiefly because she made an admirable sheep-dog for the second, being conveniently deaf, quite colorless as to opinions, and capable of complete self-effacement upon occasion.

Clara Passavant, the daughter, was commonly accounted a handsome woman, of a pale, blonde, stately type of beauty; she was thoroughly mercenary, brilliant as an icicle and nearly as cold, heartless, vain, and ambitious. Her all-consuming aim in life was to contract a splendid marriage; in her eyes money was the indispensable requisite for human happiness; and, although she probably never shaped the thought in so many words, she would undoubtedly sell herself to the highest bidder.

Father and daughter were sitting over their dessert on the evening of the day which brought to Wilfrid the tidings of his stupendous change in fortune. The scene was far as the antipodes from the humble interior over in Macdougal street, where another and a more momentous interview was at that very moment also taking place.

"Now tell me about this Mr. Stennis of yours, papa," said Clara after the

Passavant, rubbing his double chin dubiously at this characteristic feminine bit of logic, "the facts being as they were, we could hardly help finding him; there was really no trouble at all; any other firm could and would have done as well. I do not exactly perceive why he should be especially grateful on that score. No doubt the young man feels kindly towards me—I have every reason to believe that he does, in point of fact."

"What has he been doing for a living all these years?"

"His vocation has been that of a bookkeeper in a large export house downtown."

"I suppose he knows nothing whatever of society, papa? He could have no really nice people among his acquaintances?"

"Highly improbable, I should say," was the rejoinder. "I was thinking, Clara, that we might do the poor fellow a signal service by taking him up—introducing him in the right quarters, and all that sort of thing," with an airy wave of the hand.

"Very likely he gobbles his soup and rats with his knife! Do you suppose he ever walked through a cotillion in his life?" said Clara, with supercilious disdain. Her father gave a ventral chuckle.

"Come, come, my dear, we must not be too hard on young Stennis. He has really quite passable manners, and impresses me as a man who would quickly fall into civilized ways."

"Oh, you men do that better than women anyway," commented this mature girl satirically. "Has he any drawbacks in the way of detrimental relatives—any sisters?"

"He is absolutely alone in the world, my dear. He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. His father was a civil engineer by profession."

"That's something in his favor," admitted the daughter of the house.

"What is his full name, papa?"

"Wilfrid Stennis."

"Does he spell it with an 'f' or with an 'e'?"

"With an 'f'—W-i-l-f-r-i-d. Rather a well-sounding name—don't you think so?"

"Oh, it will do," said Clara indifferently.

"Suppose we invite him to dinner some night?" suggested Mr. Passavant at length; "just by ourselves, you know. Then you can take his measure and—er—er—form your own estimate of his possibilities."

This was precisely what the scheming Clara had been leading towards, although she knew full well that, mat-like, her father would probably claim credit for the idea should the experiment turn out well.

"As you please, papa. Shall we say a week from next Wednesday?"

"The sooner the better, my dear." And so Wilfrid's social fate was settled.

In the privacy of her own room that night, before she slept, Clara Passavant went to her dainty escritoire and, taking pen and paper, wrote several times in a dashing, bold hand the words "Mrs. Wilfrid Stennis," scanning the sheet at arm's length. Then she tore the paper into shreds, laughed softly to herself, and proceeded to make her quite elaborate toilet for the night.

Almost at the same hour another equally interesting episode of talk was in progress amid far different surroundings, and yet the subject was almost identically the same, the actors only being different.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Plague of Ants.

A singular state of things and at the same time serious exists in the commune of Gonfaron in Var. The fruit trees and all other products of the garden and even the fields bear an unmistakable odor of formic acid. The people are much concerned lest their produce be rendered useless and application has been made to the ministry of finance for a grant of 20,000 francs to rid the district of the pests which, it is scarcely necessary to say, consists of myriads of ants.

The place of origin of these undesirable aliens is Africa and, and it is considered that they have been brought over in bales of cork.

Broadminded Norwegians.

Ecclesiastical recognition has been given the sport of skiing in Norway in the special short, early services held in all the churches during the season for the convenience of skiers. These services are called sking prayers and a stranger coming into the sacred edifices on such an occasion might think he had blundered into the barracks of a ski corps. However, the services are much liked and very well attended, and there is no difference of opinion about the wisdom of the church authorities in thus encouraging a sport making so strongly for healthy bodies and therefore going a long way toward making healthy souls.

Live in the Light.

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Wearing of the Hood.

In England the hood was not finally given up until the early part of fifteenth century. The "great velvet hat furred" worn by the mayor of London, John Welles, in 1432, is cited as a singularity by Stow, who states that previously "the coverture of men's heads was hoods, for neither cap or hat is spoken of." In point of fact there are a few earlier instances of hats being worn by nobles and even the middle classes.

Swallowed Toothbrush Fatal.

Howard Bolton, on whom an inquest was held at the London, England, hospital, died from the effects of swallowing a toothbrush while endeavoring to dislodge a piece of meat that had stuck in his throat.

Desirable Locality.

"Is your suburb healthy?" "No, old chap, it ain't. My wife lost her voice as soon as we moved out here, and—" "What's the price of the lot next to yours?"—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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