

Select Story.

A Strange Forgery.

What Grew Out of It.

(Continued.)

I SHALL take a flight now over three years, during which the only thing connected with the subject of my story was the receipt from Valparaiso of a regular executed set of documents put in by Mrs. John Barrett, once Lydia Pennypacker, claiming the old house, and giving directions that it should remain closed and remain untouched until her own or her husband's return. This occurred about six months after John's departure, and the time for me to arrive at their destination, and it brings me to my sixth incident which relates to the house of Pennypacker & Son.

One night—and a bitter cold night it was—there was an alarm of fire. I was returning from the theatre, a kind of disposition I now sometimes indulged in, for I was no longer under a cruel discipline, I did as a young man is apt to do, and took a run with the engines. Off they brought up next door to the old house, at a pork-packer's, which was in full blaze. Poor as a good thing to burn, and burn it did, with such effect that I was surprised the flames did not take the Pennypacker house and one or two more with it. As it was, the gate of the old place, and the fireman took full range through the building, which did not by any means improve it.

The next day came the insurance people, and in a few days the workmen to repair, under the directions of the authorities who held the property in trust. And now came a most extraordinary revelation. I got it long before it became public, from a young man whose acquaintance I made in the office of public administrator.

The workmen, in pulling down the shattered parts unheeded some suspicious-looking packages, and in a few moments the whole of Mr. Ephraim's lost property—bonds, stocks, money and securities—lay in the hands of the master-workman who fortunately was an honest man. Ephraim had used as a hiding-place a wooden panel under a window, where stood a heavy desk, in a room to which he was wont to retreat at times from the office and look himself up. He had been so suddenly hurried into eternity to reveal his hiding place to any one.

Of course, this was a serious matter, as there was a good deal of picking for lawyers and public functionaries. Mr. John Barrett was communicated with at Valparaiso, immediately expressing great joy at the finding of the property, but regretting that the dangerous illness of Mrs. Barrett would prevent her immediate return to Philadelphia. As soon as her health permitted she would set out. Within a month came a second letter from Barrett, announcing the death of his wife, a will made by her in his own favor, and his intention of being in Philadelphia almost as soon as this intelligence, with all legal documents to dispose of the matter.

And sure enough, within two weeks I heard of his arrival. I called at his hotel, sent up my card and received the answer that Mr. Barrett was too ill to see anybody. My pride started at this. Could it be the rich man out of his acquaintance? I contented myself with sending up a second card with my address, in order that if he wanted to see me he might be able to do so, and went my way. From my friend in the law office I heard that John Barrett had put in all his property, amounting in all to about three hundred thousand dollars, he had left the city, in what direction nobody knew. He never saw fit to call on me and I did not meet him.

Twelve years now pass over, and I come to the seventh incident of my story, which is nearly concerns my story than all the rest put together. You know that whatever share of this world's goods I now possess I have won within the last five years: in other words, five years ago I was poor, and of course in no position to fall in love or marry, and yet absurd as it is for a man of thirty-three to talk of being romantically in love, I was in love for the first time in my life, the object of my passion was Katie Earnshaw, of whom I will say nothing except that she was as good as she was pretty. Kate was on my side, but I am sorry to say that I had all my other branches arrayed against me. They heaped in my little life marrying somebody with mints of money, and the father had especially just the man picked out for her, and he thought he would suit. This man, Waring de Ville, claimed to be of French extraction, born in New Orleans. He was tall, dark, bronzed by exposure to a tropical sun, wore a heavy mustache and dressed exquisitely, and was about forty years of age. He had been but a few months in Philadelphia when I met him, but certainly in his conversation, which was slightly tinged with a foreign idiom and accent, showed more knowledge of the city than that time warranted. He was rich. (Earnshaw senior was not a man to be deceived on such a point) and Katie told me as coming from him that De Ville had large investments in New York, almost enough to constitute a millionaire. What chance could I have against such a rival? Of course my intentions were repudiated by pa and ma and as warmly encouraged by Katie, until I felt that we stood on the brink of an open rupture, and perhaps a runaway affair, providing Katie would consent to so summary a mode of settling the matter.

This affair stood, when one day, as I was walking slowly down Walnut street, ruminating on the situation, a lady came from a building used for lawyers' offices, and approached me. She was about the shady side of thirty-five, rather handsome, but with a complexion that indicated that much of her life had been spent in Southern lands. As she came near she gazed inquiringly into my face, started slightly, colored, and stood still. There was something in her look which memory recalled, but only in a vague way.

'Warner?' she said. 'My name, madame.' 'You do not remember me?' 'I am sorry to say I do not.' 'I am Lydia Pennypacker.' 'I am Lydia Pennypacker?' 'I almost shouted, seeing both her hands in mine. 'Why, I thought you were dead!'

'Not yet,' she said laughing, 'though they have tried hard to kill me. It is to prove myself alive that I have just been among these gentlemen of the law.'

Then the whole story came fresh to my mind after a lapse of twelve years, and I said: 'But your husband produced evidence that you died at Valparaiso.' 'Not my husband, but an impostor. I never was in Valparaiso in my life.' 'I was struck dumb.

'Do you mean to say that John Barrett was not your husband?' 'I never saw John Barrett from the day before I left my father's house. My husband was Alexander Graham. We were married in this city the day I left home, and I went with him to Rio de Janeiro, and from there into the back country, where he became engineer on a large sugar estate, and where we lived until his death, one year ago.'

'Good heavens! what a revelation! I could not speak. I could do nothing but tuck the little woman's arm under my own, and march her off to my office, that I might gather breath and know all about her. She came back to Philadelphia, she said, after fifteen years a stranger, having during that time secretly met an American, led alone a native of this city, and rarely caught sight of a newspaper. I came back to see the spot I was born in, and to forgive those who drove me out into the world, and I find that an impostor has persecuted me, and received my birthright! Thank Heaven! I shall not suffer for the want of it: I am independent.'

'But Barrett—where is Barrett?' 'My attorneys can find no trace of him. He turned all the estates and securities into money, and went abroad.' 'And the woman he called his wife—who was she?' 'Some one married in this city, immediately after my departure, and who assumed my name. Thus far the detectives have reached, but who she was they cannot discover. We have the evidence of a gentleman who saw her at Valparaiso, and he describes her as a blonde (I am the opposite) with a cold, blue eye, and hard expressive face.

'It all flashed upon me in a moment. This was the woman of the forged check, and John Barrett's wife. As rapidly as I could I went through the story to Mrs. Graham.

'Why,' she said, 'you are valuable evidence in working up our case. But what is the use now? The rogue, as well as the property is gone.'

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THE CULVERWELL MEDICAL CO., 4 ANN STREET, NEW YORK—P.O. BOX 4688.

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John McDonald. Frederick, Feb. 5, 1877.

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