

A GRIEVOUS MISTAKE



HAVING graduated from college and completed a course of legal study, Thomas Seward established himself in one of our most flourishing cities, where he soon secured a large clientele.

Fine-looking, courteous, generous to a fault, he was held in the highest esteem by all who formed his acquaintance, but he associated only with those of his own sex, as had been his custom from boyhood, on which account he was deemed "odd," particularly by the gentler sex.

As he sat alone in his office one August afternoon, pondering over an important case which he had in hand, a gentleman of about his own age (28) entered his presence, dropped into a chair, wiped the perspiration from his brow and remarked:

"It is a deuced hot day, Tom."

No other person in the city would thus familiarly have addressed him, but the caller—Frank Ashton by name, a physician by profession—had been his chum and bosom friend in college.

"I have been very comfortable," was the reply. "You know a lawyer must keep cool under all circumstances," he added, with a smile.

"As one can who has your 'frigid temperament,' to quote what I heard a lady say of you the other evening."

"So she placed a 'frigid temperament' to my credit," and again he smiled.

"Why don't you get married?"

"What do I want to burden myself with a wife for?"

"A wife is not a burden, but a blessing, if wisely chosen."

"There is just where the 'rub' comes in—in making a wise choice. Most women are influenced to marry by selfish motives, and many of them prove unfaithful."

"Ever since I formed your acquaintance you have manifested an aversion for ladies and—"

"Aversion," the lawyer interrupted,



COMPLETELY BROKEN DOWN. "is not the term to use. I have let them alone, that is all."

"I cannot, never could—comprehend why, in this respect, you are so different from other men—insensible to feminine charms. But I have no time now for discussing the subject, as I have several patients to visit this afternoon. Good day."

"Good afternoon," the lawyer responded, and was again alone.

When by himself an expression which it would be difficult to describe stole over his countenance as he muttered:

"Of a 'frigid temperament' and 'insensible to feminine charms,' am I? Having my reason thereto, other men would be so."

As the words fell from his lips his head dropped, the muscles of his face twitched convulsively, his hands clutched the arms of the chair in which he sat. Then, rising and pacing to and fro, he exclaimed in a sad tone:

"I am not to blame!"

On a bed in a handsomely furnished apartment lay a man, apparently not far from 50 years of age, whose stay upon earth would be brief, at whose side sat Dr. Ashton.

"I am afraid that he will not get here in season," the invalid said, in a scarcely audible tone.

"Yes, he will," rejoined the doctor, encouragingly. "I am expecting him every moment."

Almost simultaneously with the utterance of these words Lawyer Seward was conducted into the room.

"Here he is," observed the physician, and then, turning to the lawyer, he continued: "My patient, Mr. Walter Burns, wished me to send for some one to draw up his will, and I summoned you here."

Seating himself near the bed, Mr. Seward quietly remarked:

"I am at your disposal, Mr. Burns."

"In the left-hand corner of that writing desk," the invalid began, pointing to the article, "you will find pens, ink and paper, as you also will an inventory of my unincumbered property. Before you draw up the will I have a story to tell you."

Exhausted by the effort required to say this much, he paused and the doctor administered a stimulant. Soon after he resumed:

"Nearly thirty years ago I embezzled \$5,000 from a firm whose bookkeeper I was and went to seek my fortune in the mines of Colorado, whither I was never traced."

"Ten years later, well supplied with money, I came here, where I located under the assumed name of Walter Burns, my real name being James Stanley, and have rapidly increased my worldly possessions."

"Immediately upon my arrival here I sent a note to my half-sister to come to me at once and she did, without informing her husband whom she was to visit, as he did not know that she had a half-brother who had been a criminal."

"She remained with me a week, as I was in poor health, and, returning to her home, found that her husband and her only child—a boy some 7 or 8 years old—were among the missing nor could the gain any clew to their whereabouts. "Within a month she came back to me, unable to account for their disappearance, so completely broken down that she soon died and her remains were buried in the Woodland cemetery in this city."

"Her husband's name was Alfred Darling; the Christian name of her son was Thomas. I long ago reimbursed those who had suffered from my embezzlement, and wish my entire property to be conveyed to this son. I also desire you to take care of my executor."

"He stopped as he had many times while stating the above, and Mr. Seward inquired:

"What if Thomas Darling is dead or cannot be found?"

"Dispose of my property for the benefit of the poor," the dying man replied.

The will was drawn up and properly signed and witnessed without delay. Then, having placed it in the "inventory" in his pocket, the lawyer took the testator's hand in his own, bade him "Good by," started to go from the room, whispering as he did so in the physician's ear:

"Be sure to come to my office at 7 this evening."

Dr. Ashton promised to do so and the lawyer took his departure.

In his office we again look upon Lawyer Seward, not calmly seated, as when we first saw him there, but nervously pacing to and fro, as he was left there. His reverie, evidently of a somber character, was broken by the advent of Dr. Ashton, to whom he said:

"I have something to state to you which will surprise you, I think."

"Ah!" was the monosyllabic reply.

"Please seat yourself," Mr. Seward observed.

Both sat down and the lawyer asked: "Do you recall the name of the beneficiary of Mr. Stanley's will?"

"Thomas—Thomas Darling, was it not?"

"He and I are identical."

"What?" almost screamed the doctor.

"Read that," and, drawing a time-worn paper from his pocket, Mr. Seward passed it to the doctor, who unfolded it and read:

"B—, June 12, 18—. My Dear Kate: If you love me as you have in the past, come here without delay, to the—house. Lovingly yours,

"JAMES."

When the doctor raised his eyes from the paper Mr. Seward began:

"Two days after mother's singular departure from her home, father accidentally ran across this note, which she had left, unintentionally, it is possible."

"Having for some time suspected a man of the name of James Newton as trying to alienate her affections from himself, and as this man had disappeared from the place a few days before, father, naturally inclined to be jealous, imagined him the writer of the note. He had never known, as Mr. Stanley said, that his wife had a half-brother.

"Unable to endure the disgrace that would be his when her infidelity was made known to the world, he at once moved to a far-away place, where he assumed the name of Seward. He never looked at a paper from fear of seeing her name in it, lived in misery for six years, died and was buried.

"Naturally the supposed conduct of my mother influenced me to regard all women as fickle, and father did all in his power to incite me to shun girls. Hence was developed what you, the other day denominated my 'insensibility to feminine charms.'

"Poor mother! how you were wronged!" and tears filled his eyes, as they did those of his friend, who said:

"I do not wonder at it."

Of the thousands of dollars bequeathed him by Mr. Stanley the lawyer accepted one-half and placed the other half so as to benefit the poor.

His mother's remains were removed from their resting place and interred beside his father's.

He did not resume the name of Darling; he did change his attitude toward the gentler sex. Indeed, a year had elapsed after he had learned the truth relative to his mother before he became the husband of a most estimable lady, whom he admits to his friend Ashton to be a "blessing."

Baby Wit.

A little city boy was making his first visit in the country at his grandfather's. He was very much interested in the Jersey cows, and the first milking which he attended was watched with astonishment. The continuous stream of milk aroused his curiosity, until he suddenly burst forth with: "Say, grandpa, where do you turn it on?"

"Children," said the superintendent of the South Side Sunday school, "do you remember what is said of the lilies—how 'they toll not, neither do they spin, and yet'—will some boy or girl finish the quotation?"

And a dear little girl in a pink dress rose and said:

"Sullivan, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these."

The Old Man.

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She—Don't worry. Papa hasn't much influence in this family.

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